

After the Storm:

SPECIAL WILDFIRE EDITION



**A guide to help children cope
with the psychological effects of a wildfire.**

AFTER THE STORM: SPECIAL WILDFIRE EDITION

A GUIDE TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF A WILDFIRE

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After The Storm was originally created for children and families affected by the devastating 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons by Dr. Annette La Greca (www.psy.miami.edu/faculty/alagreca) and Scott Sevin and Elaine Sevin of 7-Dippity, Inc., who donated their time and services. For information about 7-Dippity, Inc., please go to: www.7-dippity.com.

This book is dedicated to all current and former firefighters, who go into harm's way to keep others safe, and to their families who support them. Thank you all for your service!

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Dear Parent or Caring Adult,

Although a wildfire may last only hours, its effects can last for months or even years. In the aftermath of a wildfire, many parents and caregivers express concerns about how the fire and events related to it might affect their children. Common questions are: “What should I tell my child?” “How can I tell if these events are bothering my child?” “What can I do to help my child cope with this disaster?” This book is designed to help parents address these questions.

Children and adults’ reactions to a wildfire will vary depending in part on how much they were directly affected. Because of this, some parents and children may be more interested in the materials in this book than others. We suggest you:

- **Read the book first** before choosing which topics and activities to do with a child.
- **Evaluate your own stress level** before beginning work on this book. If you feel you are having difficulty with stress, talk to another adult before working on this book.
- **Take care of yourself.** In order to support and help your child, please take care of yourself. Use some of the tips in this book to help yourself (e.g., limit your media exposure, stay healthy, establish a routine, do something fun, etc.). All parents need a break from dealing with the many stressors that accompany a natural disaster, such as a wildfire.

This book contains activities that parents and caring adults can do together with children. The activities are appropriate for children ages 6 to 12 years, but may be adapted for older or younger children as well. We encourage you to adjust the activities and their pace to the child you are working with. Younger children (ages 6 to 8) may need extra help from an adult, and may prefer to complete some activities by drawing rather than by writing. Younger or active children may also prefer working on one topic at a time; others may be able to complete two or more topics in one sitting. Keep in mind that some children prefer to seek out more information than others.

There are 12 Topics covered in this book. For each topic, there is an “Adult Page” on the left and a “Child Page” on the right. Some of the Adult pages have “Joint Activities” for adults and children to complete together.

Each Adult Page has instructions and activities for adults -



Each Child Page contains parallel information and activities for children -



There are four sections in this book. The first section, Topics 1-3, will help you understand a child’s reactions to a wildfire. The second section, Topics 4-7, covers coping skills that should be helpful for most children. The third section, Topics 8-12, focuses on coping skills to help children with specific situations. The fourth section contains answers to some common questions and additional useful information. Even though the topics have been put together in a suggested sequence, feel free to “skip ahead” to those that may be especially useful for your child.

Find a quiet time and place to complete the activities. Explain to your child that the activities in this book are informative and fun and will help them cope with any bad feelings that they are having as a result of the fire.

With our best wishes,

Annette La Greca Scott Sevin

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Understanding How Your Child Feels

Wildfires, like other traumatic events, affect people in different ways. Life history, personality and a person's experiences during and after a fire all play a role in shaping a person's response to a wildfire. Because some people will be more affected than others, reactions to a fire may differ greatly from individual to individual.

For many children and adults, an upsetting event such as a wildfire can bring about strong feelings and mixed emotions. As time passes, their feelings about the fire may change. This is normal for those who experience a natural disaster or other distressing event. Keep in mind that there may be days and times when you will feel better than others.

The Importance Of Asking Children How They Are Feeling

Research conducted after previous disasters reveals that parents, teachers, and other caregivers are often surprised by how much a child was affected by the disaster. There can be many reasons for this. During one study (by La Greca and colleagues, 1996), children said that they did not tell their parents or other adults about their true feelings because the children noticed the adults were already upset and they didn't want to upset them further. Research also shows that parents are often not good observers of their child's post-disaster reactions. This is another reason why it is important for you to talk with your child directly to learn about his or her thoughts and feelings.

The activities in this section will help you understand how you and your child are feeling about the wildfire or its aftermath. They will also assist you in talking about feelings with your child. It is a good idea to occasionally repeat these activities, as your child's feelings may change over time.

Adult Activity: How Do You Feel?

How do you feel about the wildfire? Write your feelings in the columns below. How have your feelings changed since the fire first struck? What has stayed the same? If there are any strong emotions you still have that you feel uncomfortable with, such as a lot of anger or an overwhelming sadness, it may help to talk to someone about them.

How I felt after the fire first happened

How I feel now



How I Feel About The Fire

When a wildfire hits, people usually have many different kinds of feelings. Some of those feelings may change or go away after a few days or weeks. Complete the activities below to show how you have been feeling about the fire that hit your area.

1. Below are pictures and words that describe how some people feel during a wildfire. Circle the faces or create new ones to show how you felt during the fire. You can circle more than one.



SURPRISED



WORRIED



SCARED



ANGRY



CONFUSED



CONFIDENT



CURIOUS



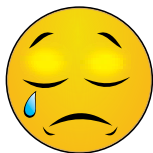
ENRAGED



STRESSED



OPTIMISTIC



SAD



UPSET



FRUSTRATED



HAPPY



HURT



LONELY

2. Below, draw or write about how you feel now about the fire. You can use the words or pictures from above to help you tell about your feelings.



Tips For Talking To Children About Feelings

Over the next few weeks and months, there may be more developments as your family and community recover from the disaster. In order to understand how your child is reacting to these events, it will be important to keep the “lines of communication” open. This means creating a comfortable time and place for your child to talk with you about feelings or worries. It will help if you pick a quiet place to talk, away from distractions. Also, try to have a regular time to talk, such as before dinner or after school. Talking before bedtime is not a good idea because your child may have trouble sleeping after discussing upsetting events.

Sometimes your child’s concerns may have to do with the fire. Other times, he or she may focus on other events. Either way, the guidelines on this page will help you identify how your child is feeling and the focus of his or her worries. Remember to speak with another adult before speaking with your child if you feel you are having trouble with your own feelings.

Here are some guidelines you can use when talking to your child:

- Listen to your child’s feelings rather than controlling the conversation yourself.
- Acknowledge and normalize your child’s statements by making comments like these:
“It sounds like you were very scared.” “That part made you feel sad.” “It’s okay to feel that way.”
- Be neutral. Do not judge or criticize your child. Make comments like these:
“That’s interesting.” “Tell me more about it.” “What do you mean?”
- It’s okay to say *“I don’t know”* if your child asks a question you cannot answer.
- Express your own feelings, but try to avoid alarming or upsetting your child.
- Pay attention to behaviors that show your child has strong feelings, such as:
 - Fidgeting or squirming.
 - Poor eye contact (doesn’t look at you while talking).
 - Facial expressions that show anger, sadness, or worry.
- Keep in mind that listening to your child is a good way of showing emotional support. Research shows that children with greater emotional support after natural disasters report less stress (La Greca et al. 2010).

On the next page are sentences for your child to complete that will help him or her talk about their day and how they are feeling. You can photocopy the page and have your child keep a daily journal. Each evening, go over your child’s answers and talk about what he or she wrote.





How I Feel Today

How are you feeling today? Below are some sentences that will help you tell about your day and how you are feeling. Finish the sentences as best you can. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

My Name: _____

Today's Date: _____



Today, I _____

The best thing that happened to me today was _____

The thing that bothered me the most today was _____

Today, I played _____

What I thought about most today was _____

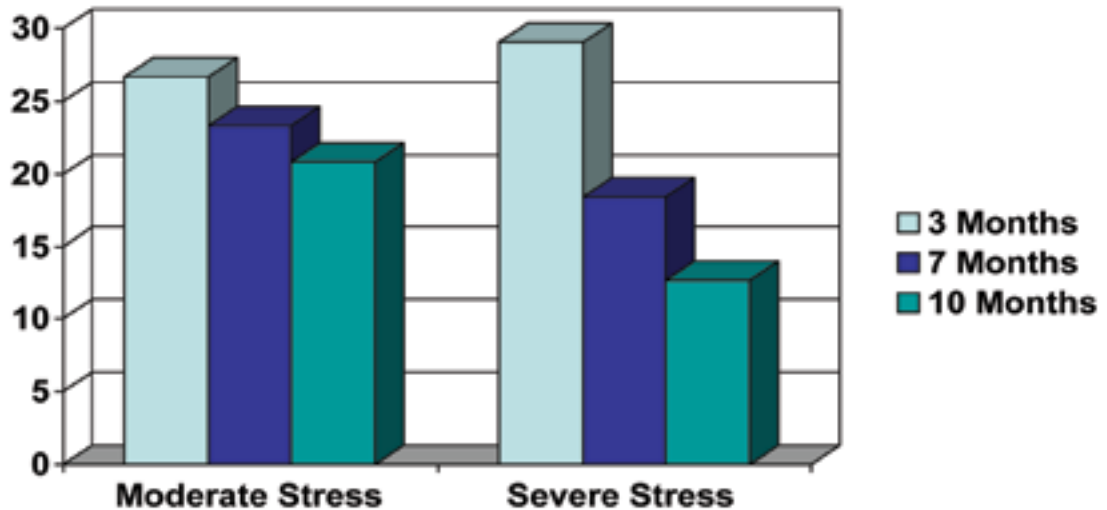
Tomorrow, I want to _____



Understanding Your Child's Stress Reactions

Feelings of anxiety, frustration, anger, and fear are common reactions to a disaster. Other reactions such as nightmares and difficulty sleeping are common as well. It is normal for children and adults to experience a variety of stress reactions after going through a traumatic event. In fact, thousands of people have reported suffering from stress reactions after previous disasters, such as wildfires.

Percentage Of Children Reporting Stress Reactions After Hurricane Andrew



Although stress reactions are normal, they can create problems. For example, difficulty sleeping may make a person more tired, affecting their work performance. Trouble concentrating can hurt a child's performance in school. While stress reactions are common after a disaster, usually they will lessen after a few weeks. However, if reactions last longer than a couple of months or interfere with everyday activities, a person may need professional assistance in dealing with them.

Sometimes, reactions to a disaster are severe and can signal a person is suffering from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a set of trauma symptoms that occur in response to a traumatic event. PTSD can occur in both adults and children. People who suffer from PTSD will need to speak with a mental health professional. For more information on PTSD, ask a counselor or visit the National Institute of Mental Health website at: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml>.

Adult Activity: Evaluate Your Child's Stress Reactions

Have your child complete the activity on the next page. If your child circled "A LOT" or "SOMETIMES" to any of the questions, use the answer key below to see what coping strategies in the book may be used to help your child with that problem.

Questions circled

- 5 and 14
- 1, 2, 3, 4 and 11
- 6, 7, 8 and 13
- 9, 10, 12 and 15
- 16, 17 and 18

Possible Problems

- Fears and Worries
- "Re-experiencing" the event
- Avoidance or Emotional Numbing
- Physical Symptoms
- Other specific reactions

Helpful Coping Sections

- see Pages 4, 12, 16 and 24
- see Pages 4, 12, 16 and 28
- see Pages 4, 12, 24 and 32
- see Pages 12, 16, 18 and 28
- see Pages 14, 22, 30 and 32



How I Have Been Feeling

The sentences below ask your thoughts and feelings about the fire. Show how you have been thinking or feeling for the past few weeks by checking the box that best explains how you feel. Do this for each sentence.

	A LOT	SOMETIMES	NEVER
1. I get scared, afraid, or upset when I think about the fire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I keep thinking about what happened.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I think about the fire, even when I don't want to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I have bad dreams.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I worry that another fire or something bad might happen.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I don't enjoy things I usually like to do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I feel that people really don't understand how I feel now.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I feel so scared, upset, or sad that I can't even talk or cry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I feel more jumpy and nervous now than before the fire.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I have not been sleeping well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Thoughts or feelings about the fire get in the way of my remembering things, like what I learned in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. It is hard to pay attention in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I try to stay away from things that remind me of the fire.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I worry about things that didn't bother me before, like being away from my family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I have more stomachaches, headaches, or other sick feelings since the fire.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I have been doing things now that I wouldn't do before, like getting into fights, talking back, or disobeying more.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I get mad or angry at friends and family more than normal.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I feel sad about all the things that have happened.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Adapted with permission from Frederick, C.J., Pynoos, R., & Nader, K. (1992). *Reaction Index to Psychic Trauma Form C*. Manuscript, UCLA.)



Who Is At Risk For Stress Reactions?

If you pay attention to your child's reactions, you will have a good idea of how to help your child. In general, most children will be able to cope with their reactions to a disaster or other stressful event when provided with some assistance from caring adults. The coping activities on Pages 14-21 will be helpful for most children in coping with a wildfire or other traumatic event (for more specific coping strategies for certain reactions, please see Pages 22-33). Some children will need more support than others in coping with their reactions. A child may be at risk for more severe reactions and will need to be watched more closely if they::

During a wildfire....

- Lost a loved one, friend or pet in the fire.
- Were hurt or felt they were going to be hurt during the fire.
- Thought they were going to die in the fire or felt very upset during or right after the fire.
- Lost their house or belongings in the fire.

Before or after a wildfire...

- Have academic difficulties.
- Have experienced previous trauma.
- Have a history of behavioral or emotional problems (from before the storm).
- Have had other major stressful events happen to them (parents get a divorce, parent loses job, new sibling born, etc.).
- Have a significant change in their way of life because of the fire (attend a new school, move to a new home or town, etc.).

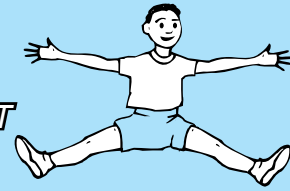
Keep in mind that a child who was experiencing stress before the wildfire will be particularly vulnerable to experiencing stress afterwards. Also, if another wildfire or other stressful event occurs, many children and adults may re-experience some of their initial stress reactions. If you are unsure about how your child is feeling later on, you can repeat the activities in this section.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Keeping A Balance

One way to help children cope with the stress of a wildfire or other natural disaster is to build up the number of "resources" available for support. Use the balance beam below to help with this activity. On the left side, write down the "risks" or things causing stress for your child since the fire. On the right side, list the "resources" your child has available for support. Resources can be people such as family members, friends, teachers, or school counselors. Resources can also be organizations such as a club, a Scout group, or places like a YMCA or a house of worship. Try to get the "resources" to balance or outweigh the "risks."



MAINTAIN A BALANCE OF SUPPORT



Risks/Stressors:

Resources/Support:



Gauge Your Stress

A rain gauge is used to measure how much rain has fallen from a storm. Rainwater that falls from a storm gets caught in the rain gauge. As more rain falls, the water reaches a higher number on the scale.

The "Stress Gauge" below is like a rain gauge, except it measures feelings instead of water. How scared or upset are you because of the fire or what has happened since the storm hit? Read the Stress Gauge first. Then, starting from the bottom, color in the gauge to the number that best shows how you are feeling. The number 1 means you feel very little stress. The number 10 means you feel a lot of stress and need some help.

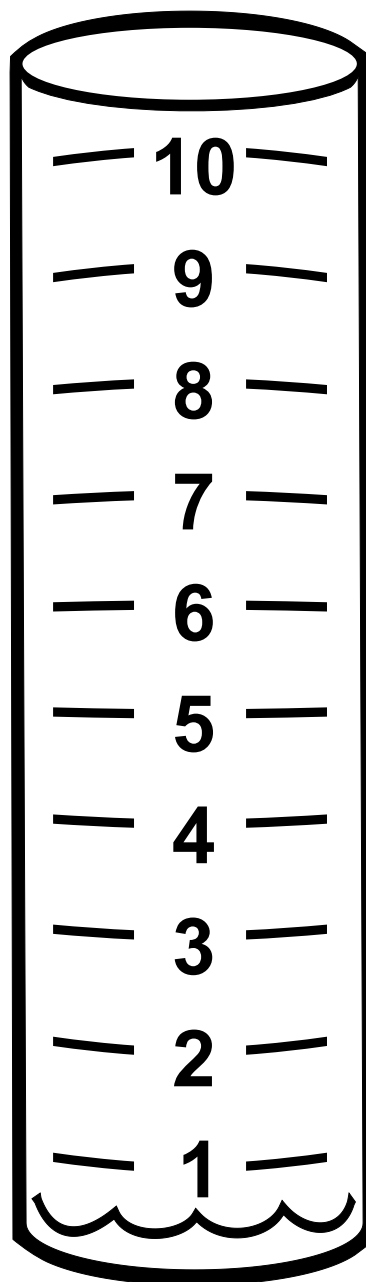
I'm really, really scared and upset. I need help.

I'm very scared and upset. I need extra help to get through this.

I'm scared, but I'll be okay with a little help.

I'm a little scared, but I'm okay.

Nothing scares or bothers me.



HELP! Too much stress!

Very Much

A Lot

Some

A Little Bit

Not At All



Understanding How Your Child Copes

People cope with their reactions to stressful events in many ways. You and your child have to find ways that work best for each of you. Some ways of coping are more effective than others. For example, some positive ways to cope with stressful events include talking about how you feel, solving problems, trying to remain calm, and trying to look at the positive side of things.

Some ways of coping are not as helpful and can actually cause more harm than good. Yelling, getting angry, and blaming others are all examples of unhelpful ways of coping. These ways of coping can lead to new problems. Children who use unhelpful ways of coping with stress tend to have more difficulty dealing with their reactions to traumatic events such as a wildfire. It is important to recognize when your child is doing something unhelpful and assist him or her in finding a better way to deal with things.

The questions on the next page will help your child reveal how he or she copes with stressful events. Use the answer key below to help you understand your child's responses. Try to encourage positive ways of coping when dealing with upsetting events related to wildfires or other stressors. Although you may not always know what specific events are upsetting your child, it is always helpful to have your child use positive coping strategies.

Some Positive Coping Strategies

- Maintain normal routines.
- Talk with friends/family/coworkers.
- Take up a new hobby.
- Exercise/stay physically healthy.
- Get some rest/take time off/vacation.
- Reduce exposure to news media.
- Write about thoughts and experiences.
- Listen to soothing, calming music.
- Volunteer in the community/help others.
- Look at the positive side of things.
- Talk to a counselor/join a support group.

Adult Activity: Identifying How Your Child Copes

While your child is completing the activity on the next page, think about how he or she usually copes with bad events. On a separate sheet of paper, write in the positive and negative ways your child copes. When you are both finished, go over your answers together.

Positive Ways My Child Copes

Negative Ways My Child Copes

Answer Key To Child Coping Test On Page 13

Items #3, 6, 9 and 12 are positive coping strategies that you can encourage your child to use. For example, item #3 reflects "having a positive outlook," item #6 reflects "problem solving" and "talking about things that are upsetting," item #9 reflects "keeping calm," and item #12 reflects "seeking support and comfort from others." These coping strategies can help your child deal with stress better. Additional ideas for coping are covered in other sections of this book. "Seeking information" and "finding distraction" can also be helpful ways of coping.

The remaining items on the child's page (#1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, and 11) are unhelpful ways of coping. They usually don't help a difficult situation and sometimes can make things worse. For example, items #1 and 2 reflect "social withdrawal," items #4 and 5 reflect "blaming self or others," item #7 reflects "wishful thinking," items #8 and 11 reflect "angry feelings" and item #10 reflects "feeling helpless." If your child circled some of these, try to help him or her focus on more helpful ways of coping with stress. Again, some sections in this book will give you some good ideas.



How I Cope With Things That Happen

Below is a list of things that people do to solve problems or feel better when bad things happen. Think about what you have done to feel better about the fire or other bad things that have happened to you. Circle YES or NO to tell if you do the things listed in each sentence.

	<u>Do you do this?</u>	
	YES	NO
1. I stay by myself.	YES	NO
2. I keep quiet about the bad things that happen.	YES	NO
3. I try to see the good side of things.	YES	NO
4. I blame myself for causing the fire to happen.	YES	NO
5. I blame someone else for causing the fire to happen.	YES	NO
6. I try to fix the bad things by doing something or talking to someone.	YES	NO
7. I always wish the bad things had never happened.	YES	NO
8. I yell, scream, or get mad.	YES	NO
9. I try to calm myself down.	YES	NO
10. I don't do anything because the bad things can't be fixed.	YES	NO
11. I get mad or angry at others.	YES	NO
12. I try to feel better by spending time with my family, other grownups, or friends.	YES	NO

(Adapted from the KIDCOPE with permission of Anthony Spirito from: A., Stark, L.J., & Williams, C. (1988). Development of a brief checklist to assess in coping in pediatric patients. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 13, 555-574.)



Things That Can Help – Normal Routines

One of the most upsetting aspects of wildfires and other disasters are the disruptions they cause to everyday life. Normal activities and routines provide children and adults with a sense of comfort, as their days are more predictable. If these activities and routines are abruptly changed or disrupted, they can shake a person’s feelings of safety and security.

When a wildfire hits an area, everyday activities and routines may be disrupted for a long period of time. Schools may close, power may be out, and clean water may not be available for weeks or longer. Extracurricular activities your child may participate in such as dance classes or sports leagues may be cancelled. Further, your family or your child’s friends may have to move to another area.

To assist in coping with these disruptions, it will be helpful to keep your child in as normal a routine as possible. Although this may be difficult, particularly if your area is hard-hit, try making arrangements with family and friends who can assist. If your family has evacuated or moved, try to establish a new or temporary routine for your child. For example, have your child do chores at a given time each day, have a regular reading or study hour, and have a regular time for exercise. Be creative and develop a plan that is as similar to your child’s normal routines as possible.

This section is designed to help you and your child identify “normal routines.” You may wish to photocopy Page 19 and let your child complete their activities for both normal weekday and weekend routines, as these routines usually differ. For younger kids, this may be best done as a joint activity.

Adult Activity: Identify Your Normal Routines

In times of stress, it is important that you monitor your own routines. Over the next few weeks, keep track of your day. On a sheet of paper, write down each activity you do and the amount of time you spend doing it. Break down your activities into the following categories: Children, Home, Family (other than children), Friends, Work, and Self. At the end of each week, calculate the total amount of time spent in each category.

	Children	Home	Family	Friends	Work	Self
Mon.						
Tues.						
Wed.						
Thurs.						
Fri.						
Sat.						
Sun.						
Total						

You may find that you need to have more time to yourself. If so, adjust your routines and make extra time to relax, spend with a friend or loved one, or have more fun. If you feel relaxed and in control, you will be better able to cope with your own concerns and assist your family with theirs.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Add Some Fun To Your Daily Routines

Together, review your child’s routine list from Page 15. It may be the case that your child’s routine has changed since the wildfire – this is okay. Have your child highlight or star his or her favorite activities. Then, make a list of favorite activities you and your child enjoy doing together. When possible, try to add some of these favorite shared activities to both of your daily routines. Also, make time for your child to see his or her friends, as friends are an important source of social support.



My Daily Routines

What is your daily routine? On the left side, list things that you do on a normal day. When you are done, complete the clocks on the right side. Draw in the missing hands on each clock to show what time you normally do that activity.

What I normally do

In the morning:

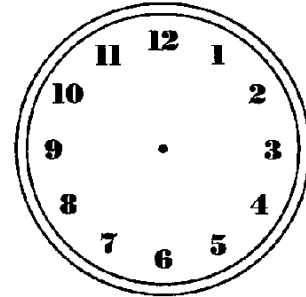
In the afternoon:

In the evening:

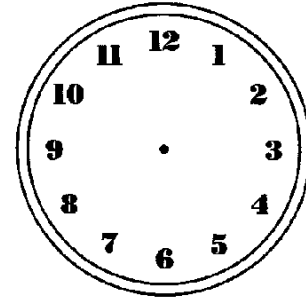
Before bedtime:

Are there any favorite activities you have not done recently that you would like to do? If so, write about them below.

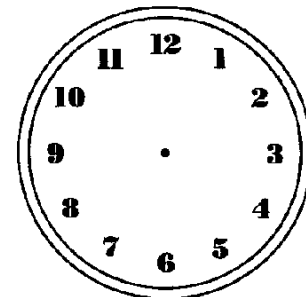
Complete the clocks



What time I normally wake up.



What time I normally eat lunch.



What time I normally go to bed.



Things That Can Help – Reducing Exposure

Another way to help children cope with a wildfire is to reduce their exposure to upsetting images that may “remind” them of the disaster. Children who are exposed to upsetting pictures or video of a traumatic event usually report more distress than children who are not exposed to such images. This is because visual images are ways of re-experiencing a traumatic event. These disturbing reminders can lead to reactions such as increased fears, bad dreams and trouble sleeping. Try to help your child avoid images of fires, fire-related damage, or other disasters.

Because media images can be disturbing, it will help to limit your child’s viewing of disaster-related programs on TV or of photos and video on the Internet. This is especially true if another wildfire approaches your area. In particular, limit programs or websites with images of destruction or stories about families who were hurt by disasters. These types of programs may be most available when another wildfire approaches your area, at the beginning or end of the fire season, or around the anniversary of a previous wildfire.

Prepare vs. Scare

Many news stations report on wildfires and other disasters in a dramatic and sometimes scary way. One way to reduce stress is to turn the television or computer off once you and your family have the information you need (e.g., updates from your local emergency management agency). Be sure to check in periodically in case the situation changes, but keep in mind that too much viewing will scare, rather than prepare.

Adult Activity: Develop Your Own Media Viewing Guide

Develop a plan to promote positive viewing habits. This will help limit your child’s exposure to upsetting pictures or videos of wildfires or other scary events. Follow these rules:

LIMIT – the amount of time your child watches television or surfs the Internet unattended. Choose ahead how much time your child can watch TV or use the computer or smart phone each day. Limit your own time as well to set a good example. Use parental settings on devices whenever possible.

PLAN – with your child, in advance, what shows he or she will watch. Use a TV Guide or newspaper to help you decide with your child, in advance, what TV programs to watch or which websites to visit. Use parental control features to restrict access to certain cable channels, television programs or websites. Turn off electronics when time is up.

PARTICIPATE – in watching TV programs or surfing the Internet with your child. You can occasionally ask if there is anything that your child has questions about or that bothers them. Turn a program off if it becomes upsetting and talk to your child about it.

ENCOURAGE – your child to participate in other fun activities like reading, sports, or other hobbies. Make sure you have non-electronic games available in case you lose electricity. These activities will provide a distraction from upsetting events and help your child feel more in control.

JOINT ACTIVITY: A Fun Distraction

When a wildfire forms, the media will focus on events related to the fire. It is important to stay informed as to what is happening, but do not spend too much time watching fire-related information on TV or the Internet. It can add to already high stress levels. You have to find a balance. If your area is under threat, make sure your family makes the necessary preparations. Involve your child in “getting ready.” However, once the preparations are complete, do something fun as a distraction. If possible, do something together as a family, such as playing cards or board games or watch a movie. You can also let your child participate in some favorite activities (see the next page).



What I Like

Fill in the blanks. Tell how many days a week you do each activity listed.

ACTIVITY DAYS PER WEEK

- Watch TV _____
- Listen to music _____
- Play with friends _____
- Do family activities _____
- Read a book _____
- Play videogames _____
- Play sports _____



List your favorites for each category:

My favorite hobbies are: _____

My favorite sports are: _____

My favorite musicians are: _____

My favorite books are: _____





Things That Can Help – Staying Physically Healthy

Stress affects people physically as well as mentally. After a distressing event, many people do not feel like eating or may have trouble sleeping. These changes make it harder for a person to cope with stress. Just as it is important to continue normal everyday activities, it is also important to stay active and healthy. This is especially true for children. A child who is healthy and physically fit will find it easier to cope with stress. In fact, all of us do better when we feel strong and healthy.

The activities in this section are designed to help you identify changes in your child’s eating, sleeping, and exercise habits. They are also designed to help improve your child’s overall health, including diet and physical condition. Have your child complete the activity on the next page while you finish the one below.

Adult Activity: Track Your Child’s Health

Observe your child over the next few days. Note any parts of your child’s health behaviors that are a problem or that have changed recently. Write down any problems or changes you have noticed in the following categories:

<u>Eating meals:</u>	<u>Sleeping or resting:</u>
<u>Exercise:</u>	<u>Increased complaints:</u>

JOINT ACTIVITY: Coping Chart

Take a look at the physical changes you noticed in your child. If there are areas that need improvement, work together on creating a “Coping Chart.” List things you and your child can do to better cope with any physical changes. Include some of your child’s answers from the next page. Some examples are:

<p><u>Eating (lack of appetite):</u></p> <p>Drink a milkshake with fruit. Take vitamins. Have a regular family mealtime. Purchase healthy snacks (raisins, carrots).</p>	<p><u>Trouble falling or staying asleep:</u></p> <p>Sleep in a cool, dark room (or with a night-light if afraid of the dark). Snuggle with a favorite doll. Play soft music. Count backward from 100.</p>
<p><u>Exercise (lack of):</u></p> <p>Join a sports league or youth group. Learn a new sport (tennis or dance lessons). Develop a personal exercise routine. Do outdoor activities (hiking, biking, etc.).</p>	<p><u>Increased physical complaints:</u></p> <p>Have child checked by family doctor. Practice a relaxation exercise to reduce stress.</p>



How I Stay Healthy

By keeping healthy, you can deal better with the things that bother you. In the boxes below, write or draw what you do to keep healthy for each category. Some examples are given to help you get started.

My favorite healthy foods

Apples



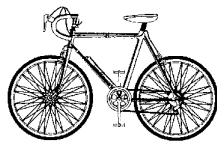
How I relax before bedtime

Listen to music



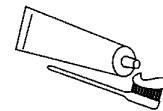
My favorite ways to exercise

Ride my bike



How I keep my body healthy

Brush my teeth





Things That Can Help – Helping Others & Giving Thanks

Helping others and giving thanks can be positive ways to cope with feelings. In fact, research shows that “helping others” and “expressing thanks” leads to positive emotions. These activities can help your child feel that he or she is contributing something positive after a disaster. Helping others and giving thanks also teaches children about the virtues of compassion, kindness, and doing good deeds.

Helping can be done in many ways. It can be as simple as opening a door for somebody, completing chores at home, donating goods to families in need, volunteering time at a local animal shelter, or helping a neighbor with their cleanup efforts. Be creative; use your talents and strengths to think of ways to help others. Below are some ways you and your child can help others in your community. What are some other ways you can help others?

Volunteering

Volunteering your time to assist a worthy cause or help others is an excellent way to support your community. Getting started is easy. Research different community-service and charitable organizations in your community and choose ones that interest you. Then, give them a call. Encourage your child to volunteer as well by choosing projects that you can work on together. If you have friends or family who were affected by a wildfire, volunteer to help them with chores, errands, or babysitting. Many people affected by wildfires cannot afford, or are unable, to repair or rebuild their homes. You can assist by helping them repair damages or clean up debris.



To find out about volunteer opportunities in your community, dial 2-1-1, go to www.unitedway.org, or contact your local United Way.

Donating

You and your child also can help by donating to a local charity or disaster relief drive. Children can donate toys, clothes, books, games, and other items. Adults can donate money, goods, or services. Businesses can even help by donating in-kind services or goods to the community. Contact an agency that is working with wildfire survivors to find out how you may be able to assist.

Giving Thanks

Expressing gratitude also can be done in many ways. Giving thanks works best when it is a routine practice. It involves both feeling and expressing thanks for the world you live in, for your family or friends, or for any other aspect of your life or community. For example, you could keep a diary and write down one thing you are thankful for each day. Or, you could write a note to a family member, friend, or community helper (e.g., firefighters, police) to thank them for their help and support. Notes of appreciation also can be sent to teachers, family members, and others. Parents and other caregivers can be wonderful models to children for expressing thanks!

JOINT ACTIVITY: Everyday Can Be Thanksgiving!

Parents can model “giving thanks” and also encourage their children to practice gratitude daily. Choose a time each day (dinner, bedtime, etc.), and share something you are thankful for with your child (a sunny day, a nice meal, a polite gesture, etc.). Then, ask your child to share something that he or she noticed that day and are thankful for. Your child can write what they are thankful for in a daily log (see Page 21). Make this a routine practice.



Helping Others and Giving Thanks

Many people like to help others after a wildfire. No matter how old you are or where you live, you can do things to help other people. For example, you can open a door for somebody, complete an extra chore at home, or offer to help an elderly person. You can even join a service club and participate in community-service projects.

How I Can Help!

Below, list things you can do to help others. When you are finished, go over the list with an adult and choose which ones you would like to do. You can even add some of these to your daily routines. For example "I can help my teacher by cleaning the chalkboard."

I can help _____ by _____.

I can help _____ by _____.

I can help _____ by _____.

I can help _____ by _____.

Giving Thanks Everyday

In life, there are a lot of things to be thankful for, such as having a good friend, being given a present, or watching a beautiful sunset. Even in a disaster, there are things to be thankful about. For example, some people are thankful for firefighters who rescue them from damaged buildings. What are some of the things you are thankful for? Below is a weekly chart. For each day, write down at least one thing you are thankful for.

Today, I am thankful for:

Mon: _____

Tue: _____

Wed: _____

Thu: _____

Fri: _____

Sat: _____

Sun: _____



Coping With Changes

Wildfires can be life-changing events. They have the ability to alter landscapes, as well as the lives of people in their path. Those who live through a wildfire or other traumatic event commonly experience changes. For some, changes may be dramatic, such as a change in their way of life (e.g., a move to a new city, a new job, or changes brought on by the loss of a loved one). Others may experience more subtle changes, such as a change in the way they feel about something (e.g., they no longer feel the same way about their neighborhood). Still, some people may experience little or no change.

How you cope with any changes, and your attitude toward them, will ultimately determine how changes impact you. It helps to look at the positive side of things, no matter what changes occur. The activities in this section will help you identify changes that have occurred for you and your child since the wildfire. For each change that you identify, try to think of a way to help you better deal with that change.

Adult Activity: Changes Since The Fire

Like others who have faced wildfires, you and your child are coping with the aftermath of the disaster. Some people may feel that they were not as impacted by the fire or events surrounding it. For others, the wildfire may have brought about significant changes. What changes, if any, has the wildfire had on you? Divide a sheet of paper into five columns: Home, Work/School, Community, Thoughts/Feelings, and Other (parts of your life). In each column, write down changes that have occurred in that part of your life since the fire. Have these changes been for the better or for the worse? How have you coped with these changes? Remember, you can have a change in thoughts or feelings as well as physical changes.

HOME	WORK/ SCHOOL	COMMUNITY	THOUGHTS/ FEELINGS	OTHER

JOINT ACTIVITY: Positive Changes

In every disaster or tragedy, there are some positive outcomes. For example, after Hurricane Andrew, building codes were made stricter in Miami-Dade County so that safer buildings would be built, saving more lives in future hurricanes. This is an example of a positive change that can come out of a disaster. While it may be difficult to find positive outcomes, looking at the positives can help keep a disaster in perspective, and help you and your child cope with changes and any feelings of sadness and loss.

Together with your child, list positive changes that have occurred as a result of the wildfire that hit your area. You can divide them into categories, such as positive changes for your family, for your community, and in other ways. Also, list what lessons you and your child have learned that will help you better prepare for and cope with future fires.



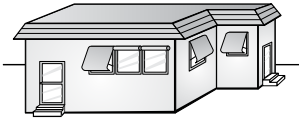
Changes Since The Wildfire

Wildfires are powerful forces of nature that can change a lot of things, including the landscape around you. For example, wildfires can burn down trees and buildings. They can also change how and where people live. When a fire damages or destroys a home, it can force the family that was living there to move somewhere else. Sometimes fires can change the way people think or feel about something. For example, a person whose home was burned by a fire may not feel like living in that home anymore.

What changes has the fire had on you? Below, write down changes the fire caused in each of the categories. Some changes may last only for a short period of time. Other changes may last longer. Circle the changes that have gotten back to normal (the way they were before the fire hit).

CHANGES CAUSED BY THE FIRE:

Changes at home:



Changes at school:



Changes in my neighborhood:



Changes in how I feel about things:



Other changes the fire caused:



Coping With Fears And Worries – Identifying Fears and Worries

After experiencing a traumatic event, children and adults often feel more fearful and worried. These feelings are common after a natural disaster that causes a lot of damage and disrupts lives, such as a wildfire. Disasters can bring about a whole new set of fears and worries for people that may not have been present before. They can also increase fears that already exist. For example, after a wildfire strikes an area, it is common for children and adults to have heightened worries about their personal safety, the safety of loved ones, and fears of future fires.

In general, fears and worries are normal. However, if they interfere with your child's activities (e.g. such as keeping them from going to school or playing with friends), then your child will need more help in dealing with them. In order for you to be able to help your child cope with his or her worries, you must understand the kinds of things your child worries about. This section is designed to help you and your child identify and cope with some of your fears and worries.

Keep in mind that although your child may express fears related to a wildfire, he or she may be worried, or even more concerned, about things unrelated to the fire. Also, since worries can be learned through TV and other media sources, we have included a section to help reduce media use (see Page 16). You might also find a relaxation exercise helpful. Because the focus of your child's worries may change over time, it is a good idea to repeat this section periodically.

Adult Activity – What Are Your Worries?

Children, especially young children, can learn about potential sources of fear and worry by observing or listening to the adults around them, such as their parents and teachers. Because of this, it will be helpful for you to identify the things you worry about, and that you might unintentionally communicate to a child. On a sheet of paper, write down the fears and worries you currently have. You can divide these into subjects, such as worries about your family, your job, or your community. When you are finished, highlight the things that bother you the most.

Adult Activity – Your Child's Worries

Do you know what your child worries about? Often, parents are surprised by the kinds of things that bother their children or underestimate the degree of their child's concerns. While your child completes the activity on the next page, make a list of the things that you think he or she worries about. Highlight the ones you feel bother your child the most. When finished, compare your answers with your child's. Which worries did you get correct? Which ones did you miss? Which of your child's fears or worries, if any, surprised you?





What Do You Worry About?

Everybody has worries. Sometimes a worry can make you feel upset. This is because you think something bad might happen. For example, you might worry that you will get a bad grade on a test or that you will get a shot when you visit the doctor's office. Below, write down some of your worries that bother you.

Some worries can be very scary and may upset you more than others. To the right of each worry, circle the words that best explains how much that worry bothers you. Circle whether you think about that worry a little bit, sometimes, or a lot of the time.



My Worry

My worry bothers me:

A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot



Coping With Fears and Worries – Lessening Fears and Worries

Although fears and worries are common and normal, they can become a problem. Learning how to cope with them is important. In general, talking to someone, gradually facing fears, and finding practical solutions are all positive ways of coping with fears and worries.

Talk to someone – Sometimes worries lessen when a child has someone to share them with. Help your child identify “worry friends” he or she can talk to when feeling worried or scared (see activity on Page 27). List people in school (e.g., school counselors, teachers), at home (e.g., parents, older siblings), and in the community (e.g., friends, relatives). Keep a list of your child’s worry friends’ names and phone numbers on a piece of paper, and let your child carry a copy with them. This may help your child to feel better.

Gradually face fears – Children who are able to face fears in a gradual and safe manner may become less fearful. For example, a child who is nervous about being left alone with a babysitter while a parent leaves the house may become less fearful if a parent does leave and return home safely on several occasions. Reward your child for facing fears. Do not reward your child’s fears by letting your child avoid school or chores, or by giving in to your child’s wishes because of fears and worries.

Find practical solutions – Often, a worry can be lessened or overcome by thinking of a practical and simple plan to cope with or overcome that worry. For example, if your child is worried about starting a new school, try to think of ways to help your child cope with this worry. You can take a tour of the school ahead of time with your child, have a family member drop off and pick up the child at school, and suggest the teacher assign a “classroom buddy” to assist your child. These simple solutions may help your child feel better about entering a new school or making new friends.

Joint Activity – Develop A Worry-Buster Plan

Developing a “Worry-Buster” plan to help your child deal with fears or worries can be a fun activity. Obtain some blank note cards. On one side, have your child write down a fear or worry that bothers them (see Child Activity on Page 25). Then, together, think of positive things your child can do or think of to “bust that worry” and feel better! Write these helpful ideas on the back of the card. Your child can memorize the cards or carry copies with them. See the example below.

Front (Worry):

Another wildfire will hit

Back (Solutions):

Limit viewing of media coverage about wildfires.

Let child help with preparations.

Go over family disaster plan.

Talk with child and answer any questions.



Coping With Worries

Sometimes worries can be very upsetting. When a worry upsets you, it is important to talk with a parent or other adult about it. Talking about the things that bother you will help you feel better about them. Who can you talk to about your fears or worries? Think of some "worry friends" and list them below. A "worry friend" is someone you trust and can talk to when you feel upset or worried. Choose one or two adults at home, in your school, and in your community who can be your "worry friends." Ask a parent or other adult to help you with this activity.

My Worry Friends:

At Home: _____

At School: _____

In The Community: _____

Another way to help you feel better about your worries is to create a Worry-Buster plan. Pick five of the worries you listed on Page 25 that bother you a lot and write them below. Then, with an adult, think of things you can do to beat that worry! Write your plan to **BUST THAT WORRY** on the right side.



My WORRY



My WORRY-BUSTER PLAN

1.

1.

2.

2.

3.

3.

4.

4.

5.

5.



Coping With Intrusive Thoughts And Dreams

Sometimes after a traumatic event, children keep thinking about the event or “see images” related to the event in their mind, even though they don’t want to. For example, a child might keep thinking about a wildfire or might visualize trees falling or their house burning, even when they are in school or doing other activities. Sometimes these upsetting thoughts happen at bedtime and make it difficult for children to fall or stay asleep.

Many children have bad memories of a prior wildfire and may have worries, fears, or nightmares when there are “reminders” of the fire (e.g., strong winds or fire trucks with sirens blaring). If this is the case with your child, you may find that experiencing another wildfire can make your child’s stress reactions even stronger.

Although these reactions are common, especially during the first few weeks or months after a wildfire, the unwanted images may be very stressful. If your child has these kinds of thoughts or images, or has nightmares and trouble sleeping, the activities in this section may be helpful. If these unwanted thoughts or images persist, even after trying these activities, it may be a good time to seek professional help (see Page 35 for suggestions).

One way to stop intrusive thoughts is to encourage your child to redirect thinking away from the upsetting thoughts and focus on something more positive. If the thoughts happen at bedtime, it will help to have a routine that focuses on something pleasant and distracting, such as a bedtime story or playing relaxing music (see Normal Routines on Page 14). It will also help to limit TV and other media viewing (see Reducing Exposure, Page 16), promote good health (see Staying Physically Healthy, Page 18) and encourage your child to do more enjoyable things. Also, encourage your child to tell you about any nightmares, as it will help them go away.

JOINT ACTIVITY: STOP Bad Thoughts

Ask your child if he or she has any thoughts about wildfires, or if any “pictures” or “images” come into their head that bothers them. If so, tell your child that this is normal after something scary like a fire happens. Try and find out when these bad thoughts normally occur (at bedtime, in school, etc.). Next, explain to your child that when he or she has bad thoughts or images, they should **STOP** and think about something else. Tell your child that you will make a Stop Sign together to remind them to STOP and do something else when they have bad thoughts.

Together, complete the next page. You may want to copy the page before you work on it so your child will be able to carry a copy with them. On the top half of the page is a STOP sign. Let your child color it in. Below the sign is a space for you and your child to write down **OTHER** things your child can do when he or she starts to have bothersome thoughts. This may depend on whether the thoughts occur during the day or at night. The following are examples to give you and your child some ideas.

DAYTIME

Call a friend

Call a parent

Read a book

Ride a bike

Hug a parent

Sing or hum a song

NIGHTTIME or BEDTIME

Read a story

Listen to music

Count backward from 100

Practice relaxation (see page 34)

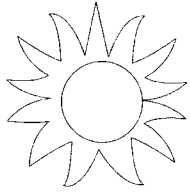
Draw a picture

Have a parent “tuck” you into bed

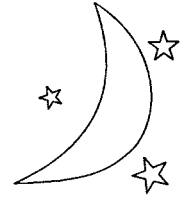
(Adapted with permission from Robin Gurwitsch and Anne Messenbaugh, *Healing After Trauma*.)



When You Have Bad Thoughts Or Dreams:



...and think of OTHER things to do.



DAYTIME

NIGHTTIME or BEDTIME

When you have a bad thought or dream, it will also help to STOP what you are doing and think of a peaceful or happy place. Below, draw or write about a peaceful place that you can think of when you have a bad thought or dream.



Coping With Angry Feelings

It is not unusual for children and adults to have angry feelings after a disaster, especially if they were personally affected by it. In fact, everybody feels more stressed after a fire, as life is more difficult. Disruptions caused by a wildfire may last for a long period of time, which can add to already high levels of stress. While things may be frustrating, it is important to remember that many people are in a similar situation. You and your child must find positive ways to deal with any angry feelings you have.

Often, children may want to “blame others” for bad things that happened, or may just be more irritable than usual. If your child is feeling angry or irritable, explain that it is okay to feel that way. This is a very normal feeling. Explain, however, that it is NOT okay to take out angry feelings on other people. For example, it is okay to feel angry, but not okay to fight and argue with others. Also, it is not okay to do something mean to someone else or to an animal.

The activities in this section will help your child manage angry feelings and resolve conflicts with others. They also will help you develop a plan to assist your child in managing his or her anger.

Adult Activity: Develop An Anger Management Plan

Keep a brief diary of your child’s behavior over the next few weeks. Take notes on what happens before, during, and after each angry outburst. Use this to develop an “anger management” plan.

Before – Who does your child get angry at? What situations trigger the anger?

During – What does your child do when angry? What is his or her behavior?

After – What happens after? Do you discipline your child? Do you ignore the behavior?

If your child gets angry or annoyed at the same person or in the same situation, try changing the situation to prevent the angry outbursts. For example, if your child gets angry when a sibling changes the television channel, it may help to have family rules about television viewing. You also can have your child “talk through” angry feelings with the person who is the target.

Also, look at what happens after your child gets angry. Does your child get his or her way? Try not to ignore angry behavior or to “give in” to your child’s misbehavior. Instead, calmly explain that “feeling angry” is okay, but “acting angry” is not. Have your child sit quietly until he or she calms down and then talk over what is bothering them to see if the situation can be resolved. If this doesn’t work, you may have to discipline your child. For example, depending on your child’s age, you can have them miss a favorite TV show, go to bed a half hour early, or do an extra chore.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Role Playing

Have your child complete the activities on the following page. Afterward, go over your child’s ideas for positive things to do when feeling angry and help identify additional things they can do (e.g., writing, drawing). Then, play a “pretend” game with your child. You pretend to do something annoying and your child has to practice one of the positive things he or she listed in the activity at the bottom of Page 31. Involve other family members as well.



Managing Angry Feelings

Some people may feel angry or upset after a fire. They may feel this way because a fire can cause a lot of damage and make life harder for them and their families.

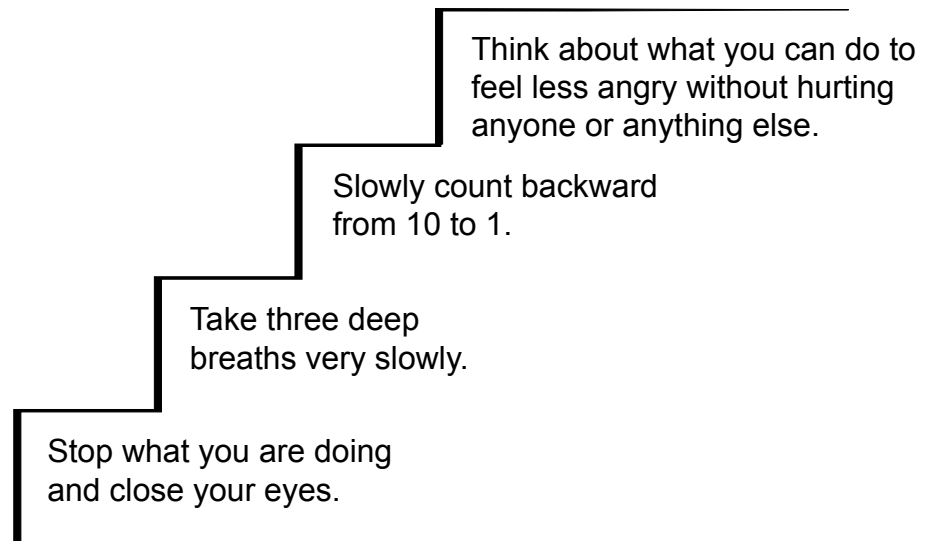
1. Below, write down the ways in which the fire made life harder for you (both at home and at school). Use another sheet of paper if you need more room.

Example: My house lost power and I was very hot.

2. Life may also be harder for your family, friends, and teachers. Below, write about how you think things are harder for the rest of your family, friends, and teachers.

Example: My teacher couldn't go to work because of the fire.

Sometimes when bad things happen, people get angry or upset more than normal. It is okay to feel angry, but it is not okay to take your angry feelings out on other people. If you are angry with someone or get into an argument, it will help if you follow these simple steps:



3. On a separate sheet of paper, draw or write about "helpful" things you can do when you feel angry or get into an argument with someone. If you need some ideas, ask an adult for help.



Coping With Sadness And Loss

After a traumatic event, children and adults may have feelings of sadness and loss. These feelings are common after a wildfire, especially for people who lost a loved one or a pet in the disaster, whose way of life has changed significantly since before the fire, or whose personal belongings were damaged or destroyed in the fire. Even if people did not lose anything in the fire, they may still feel sad. There are many reasons why people feel sad. Sometimes they feel badly for the people who lost their homes or businesses, they don't know what to do to help the situation, or because things just "aren't the same" since the fire.

The activities in this section will help you and your child identify and talk about feelings of sadness and loss. If you are concerned about your child feeling sad, review the information below on "Recognizing Signs of Depression."

In general, some things that can help when you feel sad are:

- Focusing on the positive things you still have (e.g., health, loved ones, etc.).
- Talking to a friend or family member when feeling "blue."
- Doing activities you normally enjoy.
- Doing things to help others (see Helping Others on Page 20 for some ideas).

Special note for parents: Recognizing Signs of Depression


Feeling sad, depressed, and irritable is common after a traumatic event. These feelings may be a part of normal bereavement or mourning. However, if the feelings last for several weeks or interfere with your daily life, it may help to seek professional advice and counseling.

Some signs of depression in children include:

- Persistent sad or irritable mood
- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Feeling worthless or unloved
- Repeated thoughts of suicide or death
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping
- Loss of energy
- Lacks interest in playing with friends, bored
- Poor school performance
- Unexplained irritability, crying, complaining
- Increased anger, hostility or irritability
- Extreme sensitivity to failure or rejection
- Frequent, non-specific physical complaints
- Difficulties in personal relationships with family or friends

JOINT ACTIVITY: Positive Coping Ideas

Together, complete the activity on the next page. Focusing on the things you did not lose is a helpful way of coping with sadness and loss. Your child may need help because some things can be hard to name or draw (e.g., loss of a sense of safety). When your child is finished, discuss some positive things he or she can do to feel better. Adding fun activities to your daily routine (see Page 14) may also help.



I may have lost some things because of the fire,
but I still have...



Some Common Questions And Answers

My child is worried about another fire. What should I say?

Children who have experienced a previous fire or other traumatic event may be especially worried or scared about another wildfire occurring. Children are often comforted by hearing that family members love them and will do everything they can to keep them safe. You should be honest with your child about the approach of another fire, but also be reassuring. Tell your child something like this:

“Being scared of another fire is normal. Many people are nervous because another wildfire may happen. However, everyone is working very hard to keep you, your family, and your friends safe. People at the National Weather Service and people at the fire and police departments are all working together to help us stay safe. If another fire does come near our area, we will have plenty of time to get ready for it.”

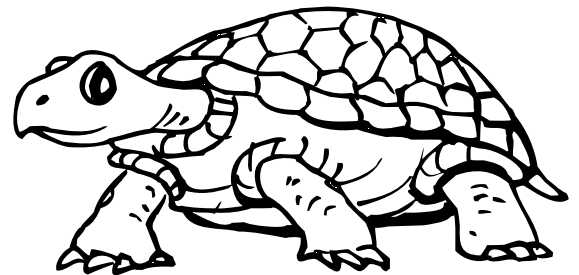
(Adapted from the National Association of School Psychologists)

How can I teach my child to relax?

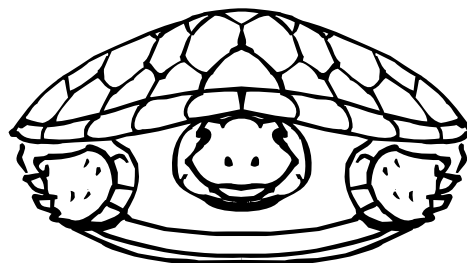
Use the Turtle Technique: Talk to your child about what turtles do when they feel scared. Tell your child that turtles go into their shells to calm down. Say that he or she can also create a shell to relax in when feeling mad, scared, or stressed. Your child can create a shell by doing any of the following: putting his or her head down, going to a quiet corner or a separate room, or just closing his or her eyes.

Once your child is in his or her shell, it is important to relax. Here are some things that can help:

- 1) Sit in a comfortable position, with feet flat on the floor.
- 2) Take a couple of deep breaths; feel your stomach go in and out like a balloon.
- 3) Count to 10 or 20 very slowly.
- 4) Imagine something you really enjoy, such as sitting on the beach in the sun, floating on water, or some other calm image.
- 5) Remind your child that he or she can practice this before going to sleep or when nervous or scared.



Note: It's also important for parents to relax! Try to “take a break” from feeling tense and worried, by doing the turtle activity with your child. Or, find a quiet place - even if it's only for a few minutes each day - and follow the breathing and relaxation instructions above.



My family had to relocate because of the fire. How can I help my child?

The same strategies that help most children after a traumatic event (see Pages 14-21) will be helpful for children and families who have to move because of a fire. In addition, here are some special considerations that may be helpful:

- Enroll your child in school as soon as possible, so that they don't miss out on important learning activities. School attendance also helps to normalize children's daily routine, provides an opportunity for making new friends, and occupies children with productive activities. If your child enrolls in a new school, ask the teacher to assign a "big brother or sister" in the classroom to help your child's transition to this new setting.
- Children miss their friends. If you have contact information for "friends from home," encourage your child to communicate with them (email, call, text, etc.). If contact information is not available, have your child keep a diary or take pictures to share with their friends when they see them next.
- Try to make the best of a difficult situation. Treat the relocation as an "adventure." Have your child keep a "travel log" or journal. Your child could keep track of daily activities, draw pictures, or insert photos to capture the adventure for future storytelling.
- Try to do one fun family activity each day, even if it is just for 15 minutes. This will provide a needed distraction from the challenges everyone in the family is facing.

How can I tell when to seek professional help for my child?

It is a good idea to seek the help of a mental health professional when either:

- Your child has a number of stress reactions (see Page 8) that don't seem to be getting better or going away after a few months.

OR

- Your child is so bothered by the fire or related events that he or she is having a very hard time in school, at home, or with friends.

* This advice applies to adults as well. If your stress reactions do not improve or interfere with your everyday life, you should seek professional help.

Where can I obtain professional help for my child or another family member?

If you or your child needs emergency help right away, call **9-1-1** or check the government listings of your local phone book for "mental health crisis hotlines." The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number is 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

For non-emergencies, you can find a psychologist via the American Psychological Association's website at <http://locator.apa.org/> or contact **2-1-1** for a referral. If the 2-1-1 service is not available in your area, try contacting your local mental health association or ask your child's doctor for a referral.