

## How Do I Cope With Present Events?

People in your region are facing the prospect of wildfires affecting their homes, neighborhoods and communities. While some have been displaced or evacuated, others across the area are anxious and uncertain about what will happen next and what measures to take.

While wildfires aren't the norm, it's clear they can happen, and at present, the prospect of personal or financial loss is on your mind. You, family members and co-workers may experience reactions that seem to come out of nowhere. These types of reactions and behaviors are normal and are a way of helping us to process the anxiety and uncertainty of the present situation.

Many of us feel helpless and perhaps powerless as we witness events beyond our personal control. These events cause us concern for our security and our future.

### SAFETY TIPS:

1. **Cooperate fully** with local authorities and rescue squads
2. Always tell someone (family member) where you are going and when you will return (make your whereabouts known!)
3. Close all doors in your home, and shut off gas valves and pilot lights.
4. Obey health and safety regulations and directives. They have been issued to protect you, your loved ones and co-workers

We are each being impacted. We have feelings about what is going on and how we are trying to handle things. It is important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to cope with our present circumstances. We all cope in our own personal and private way.

Some of the emotional and physical responses might be:

- Quiet, distracted
- Heightened sensitivity
- Questioning priorities
- Fearful of sudden changes
- Increased irritability
- Nightmares
- Verbal outbursts
- Changes in appetite
- Increased anxiety
- Reluctance to travel

The emotional strain of going through a period of uncertainty can bring out a number of physical and emotional reactions. These reactions can be uncomfortable, impacting concentration, productivity and focus even disrupting sleep patterns.

For each person there is a trigger that reminds us of feelings linked to an emotionally difficult event. It is important to be alert to these triggers and to be aware of what you can do if they happen to you, a co-worker or to a family member.

## So what can you do?

For your family member or your co-worker:

- Be aware/more alert to changes
- Talk to each other/ check in
- Allow for some changes in normal day-to-day activities and create some changes to help acknowledge one's concerns
- Encourage lots of talking and be open to conversation and reflection about what is going on
- Remember that media coverage of these events may be difficult for you to experience, but the media will also help you stay up to date on what is happening around you too.

For yourself:

- Make sure that you are talking too/ don't keep feelings inside
- Eat healthy well-balanced meals and get some exercise (go for a walk, a bike ride or go to the gym)
- Review your priorities/rediscover what's important to you
- Make time to reflect
- Limit alcohol and caffeine consumption
- Routines are a way of maintaining stability in a period of uncertainty.

It's important you, your family member or co-worker, understand that the reactions displayed are automatic, individual and not predictable in any way. Here is a list of stress reactions that you can use as a guide to check your own responses.

### Normal Reactions to Stress:

#### *Physical:*

- Profuse sweating/night sweats • Upset stomach • Nightmares • Overall sense of fatigue • Headaches
- Muscle tension • Disruption in normal sexual functioning • Disruption in menstrual cycle

#### *Cognitive:*

- Problems concentrating • Short term memory problems (forgetting where you put your keys etc..)
- Difficulty making decisions • Poor attention span • Re-occurring thoughts of the situation

#### *Emotional:*

- Sadness • Irritability/anger • Guilt • Grief • Fear of repetition of the event • Anxiety • Feeling disconnected/ emotionally numb • Feeling alone

### How do I deal with these responses?

- Avoid excess caffeine or alcohol
- Drink lots of water to stay hydrated
- Rest and try to get a good night's sleep
- Talk about the specifics of the event with your friends, family and co-workers
- Eat well and include fiber and green vegetables in your meal
- Participate in moderate exercise i.e. take a walk at lunch/break
- Keep to your normal routine as much as possible
- Maintain regular activities outside of the home (i.e. work, errands, appointments, volunteer work, sports, etc.)
- Take a walk or run
- If you wake up in the middle of the night have a drink of water, read a little if you can't get back to sleep
- If you are experiencing re-occurring thoughts, take some good deep breaths breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth to the count of ten and take notice of your current environment.