

REACTIONS

- There are many common normal reactions to disaster. People often experience irritability, sadness, loss of concentration, find it hard to pay attention, have difficulty planning, and feel overwhelmed or fatigued. Remember there is no right or wrong way to experience a disaster, we all manage in different ways.
- Disaster events have a well understood process, from those first action and survival responses, to a regrouping after the event, moving on to immediate tasks afterward, then confronting all the tasks ahead and wondering how and if it will all get done.
- Often people get so busy just getting on with it they say, "I can't stop or take a break, there is too much to do". The body is running on 'cortisol' (our primary stress hormone) to fuel the tasks, the mind is always going and there's a lingering tiredness – *Does this sound familiar?*
- People will have their own thoughts, feelings and fears about the approaching fire season it's normal that some things might trigger a reaction. You might experience a racing heart or feelings of dread. This is normal and grounded in an important and ancient biological survival function. However, if you find these feelings becoming more uncontrollable or your distress is too much, you may benefit from seeking support - *Who could you talk to or ask for help in this situation?*

RECHARGE

- Stress distracts us from ourselves, we stop listening to our bodies, minds, emotional & social needs. It is important to take time to assess your energy levels. Recovery is a marathon not a sprint and it is important to conserve and protect your energy.
- Identify and focus on the things within your control, like regular sleep patterns, relationships, social activities, your thoughts and where you focus your energy.
- We know from the evidence, making times for a regular break or social contact not only helps us feel better, it also makes us far more efficient than if we just kept going because we're too busy and there's too much to do - *What does taking a break look like for you?*
- Oddly enough – if you take a break – you get more done because you function better. Doing something enjoyable and putting aside your tasks is giving your brain a rest, this makes you more efficient.
- Prioritise quality of life, recreation and things that give you energy, joy and meaning. Think about before the bushfire – *What did you do for fun? Who did you do it with? When did you do it?*
- Take a break from the location of your situation - visit friends and relatives, take a day trip or a small trip away if you can. *Who could support you to do this?*

ROUTINES

- Often, we underestimate how important our basic routines are for general wellbeing. Things we might have normally done day to day, in an automatic way. When routines are interrupted or disrupted it throws us off balance.
- Routines can provide security, familiarity and a sense of safety
 - *Which of your daily routines have been impacted post bushfire?*
 - *How might you restart these, or what new routines could you make?*
- If you find yourself stuck in a routine driven by worry, stress and busyness think about how you might build leisure time or even something new or out of the ordinary to break the stress driven autopilot mode that it is so easy to fall into.

RELATIONSHIPS

- We know from well-established evidence that relationships and social connections are important for getting through hard times
 - *Who are your important connections?*
- Our social, family, friend, colleagues, neighbours and other community connections are nourishment for wellbeing. Deliberately making time for this is essential for recovery.
- Unplanned things are great for telling people you really care, or that you are cared about - like getting a surprise phone call, someone dropping in to say hi, or giving someone a call - this helps restore community after disruption, especially on that longer road.
- Keep talking to people, they may offer solutions that you can't see or support you didn't realise you needed.

FURTHER SUPPORT

If you found any of this content distressing, please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14

If you would like to know more about the range of services you can access through BRV, please call 1800 560 760.