

# Looking after yourself following a traumatic event

Natural disasters are traumatic and overwhelming events that can affect everyone in the community. Current bushfires have a widespread impact on the state and many members of our community have encountered emotional, physical and financial stress.

Everyone will feel different in the days, weeks and months that follow an event like this. It is important to take notice of how you and those around you feel and behave in case extra support is needed.

## What to expect

It is normal for people to have a strong reaction following a traumatic event. You might experience one or more of the following reactions:

### SHOCK

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling numb and detached

### PHYSICAL REACTIONS

- Cannot eat
- Feeling sick
- Cannot sleep

### THOUGHTS

- Confusion
- Forget things

### IMAGES

- Nightmares
- Flashbacks of what happened

### EMOTIONS

- Fear
- Sadness
- Anger

### BEHAVIOUR

- Increased alcohol consumption

### ATTITUDES

- Guilt or failure
- Questioning your actions

### SOCIAL

- Avoiding people
- Needing to talk about it

## Taking care of yourself and others

Staying in touch with friends and family and talking about how you feel will be important in recovering after a traumatic event.

### LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

- Keep in touch with people you trust
- Talk about it
- Exercise
- Try to relax
- Give yourself time
- Take a pause and breath slowly

### LOOKING AFTER OTHERS

- Listen to their worries
- Help with simple things
- Give them time to recover
- Let them show their feelings
- Remind them to eat and rest
- Ask what is important to them
- Reassure them about safety and security

## When and where should I get help?

Do not wait until things become too hard or you feel that you are doing it tough before speaking to someone.

### WHEN TO GET HELP

- If you are worried
- There is no-one to talk to
- You continue to feel upset
- Physical feelings worry you
- Loss of hope or interest in the future

### WHERE TO GET HELP

- Family and friends
- Your doctor
- Social Work Services at your local Community Health Centre
- Local community groups
- Employer assistance programs

## WHO CAN I CONTACT?

You can speak to or see someone now.

### SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

- South: 03 6166 8354
- North: 03 6777 4155
- North West: 03 6478 6119

### RURAL ALIVE AND WELL

1300 4357 6283

### LIFELINE

13 11 14  
(24 hours / 7 days)

### beyondblue

1300 224 636  
(24 hours / 7 days)

### Kids Helpline

1800 55 1800  
(24 hours / 7 days)