ARCHULETA COUNTY
Public Health
DEPARTMENT

Mental Health After a Wildfire

The aftermath of a wildfire can include mood swings, sleep disruption, and stress reactions. It is important to be alert to how you are feeling so that the emotions do not become overwhelming.

Protect Your Emotional Well-Being

Feeling emotional after a disaster is normal, but there are things you can do to take care of yourself and others.

- Find opportunities to spend time with other people so that you stay connected.
- Talk to a trusted friend or adviser about what you are feeling.
- Participate in activities that you enjoy.
- Take frequent breaks from cleanup efforts.
- Write in a journal.
- Exercise (indoors if air quality is poor).
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Practice good sleep hygiene.
- Avoid relying on substance like alcohol or marijuana for stress relief. During times of great stress, their use can be counterproductive and lead to more stress, anxiety, and physical symptoms.

Help Your Children through the Crisis

Parents are advised to pay close attention to their children's emotional well-being. Children may cry more, act out, have some regressive behavior like bed-wetting, or show other changes in demeanor. These are normal stress responses and are usually temporary. Reassure your children that you are there for them. Watch for physical symptoms like stress-related stomach aches and headaches. Pay attention to your child's questions and let them know that you are there to listen. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- Be honest with your answers to your children's questions, but don't provide more information than necessary.
- Validate your children's feelings. They may be feeling scared, confused, or angry.
- Provide opportunities for your children to talk and explore other outlets for them to express themselves like drawing or playing.
- Limit exposure to media.
- Avoid irrational promises like, "This won't happen again."
- Maintain the same daily schedule as possible (e.g., bedtime rituals).
- Ensure that your children are eating healthy food, exercising, and maintaining healthy sleep patterns.

Seek Help if You Need It

It may take a while before you feel back to normal. If you are experiencing any of the following, please seek professional help.

- Difficulty managing your emotions
- Trouble completing daily tasks
- Caring for yourself or your family

Axis Health System Crisis Line | 970-247-5245
Colorado Crisis Services | 1-844-493-8255
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline | 1-800-273-8255

Sourced from https://www.bouldercounty.org/safety/fire/mental-health-after-a-fire/