

TOOL KIT

Getting through extreme climate events.

How can climate events affect individual wellbeing?

The stress caused by these events can affect our wellbeing in several ways.

Some common signs of stress may include but are not limited to:

- Physical symptoms: tiredness, headaches, difficulty sleeping, changes in appetite
- Behavioural: increased use of alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs to cope or escape the situation
- Psychological: poor concentration, poor memory, indecision, confusion
- Social: withdrawal, less contact with family and friends
- Emotional: feelings of anger, fear, sadness, irritability, helplessness, worry.

Most people experience these signs of stress at some point in their lives. However, if you are experiencing several at the same time or if they interfere with your ability to carry out daily activities, you should talk to someone you trust (e.g. partner, friend, relative) or seek help from your GP or another health professional.



Lifeline are here 24/7 to listen on 13 11 14 via text at 0477 131 114 or chat via lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat

Strategies to help you manage the stress of extreme weather.

Here are some practical tips for managing the stress.

01

Recognise when it's getting too much.

Learning to listen to your body and recognising the signs of stress is the first step in understanding how to take care of yourself. Take notice of any changes in your physical health, your behaviours or your emotions that might indicate that things are getting too much for you. Listen to concerns from loved ones about your wellbeing or behaviour. Seek help immediately if you have thoughts of suicide or harming yourself.

02

Talk about it.

Talking calmly and openly to someone you trust about how you're feeling allows you to release negative emotions and helps to relieve tension. If you don't feel comfortable talking to someone you know, telephone helplines like Lifeline and online options (e.g. email, online chat, forums) are also available for confidential support and advice.

Remember, during bushfires, flooding and extreme climate events, everyone in the community is likely to be experiencing similar emotions, so talking to family members, friends and neighbours can help everyone to release negative feelings and come up with practical ways of managing their stress and dealing with the situation.

03

Connect with your GP or health professional.

Talk to your GP about your situation and let them know if you've experienced any negative changes in how you feel. Your doctor can provide useful advice on how to manage stress and give you referrals to other services that might be able to offer you support.

04

Helping children and adolescents.

Sometimes we don't discuss stressful situations with our children and adolescents because we don't want to worry them. However, children and adolescents usually pick up on when you are stressed and know when things aren't right, particularly if they witness their parents upset or arguing. Not knowing what's going on can make them worry and they may blame themselves for what's happening.

It's important to include children and adolescents in discussions about the situation and involve them in decision-making as much as possible. Help them to understand their responsibilities (e.g. concentrating at school, doing homework, helping at home) and reassure them that, although things are tough, you will get through it together. Talk to them about their feelings and notice any changes in their behaviour or mood that may indicate that they are feeling stressed.

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05

Take care of yourself.

Eat healthy food, get at least eight hours of sleep each night and exercise regularly. Limit intake of alcohol and other drugs, as these can leave you feeling worse - agitated and anxious, flat or unmotivated. Remember to take time out to relax – read a book, listen to music, watch a movie or try something new, like yoga or meditation. It's also important to do fun activities that you enjoy, both on your own and with family and friends. Spending time with friends and family helps to prevent isolation and loneliness.

06

Seek and accept help from others.

Research shows that people with strong connections with family, friends and their community cope best in times of crisis. A strong support network reduces your sense of isolation and gives you people to talk to when things get rough. It takes strength and courage to ask for and receive help from others, but people are usually more than happy to help! Make a list of where to go for different types of help and advice and keep it in a handy place.

07

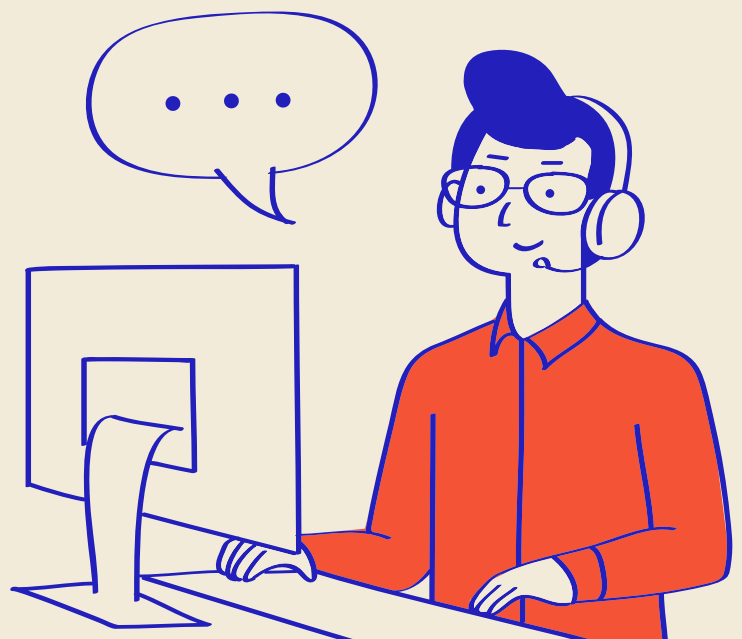
Routine.

Try to keep the rest of your life as normal as possible during the period of stress; establish a daily routine with regular times for sleep, meals, being sociable and physical activity.

08

Seek support.

Some people who experience extreme climate events may feel helpless and hopeless. If you or someone you know is experiencing distress or thoughts of suicide, help is available. Seek immediate support by talking to someone you trust, contacting **Lifeline (13 11 14)** or other support services. If life is in immediate danger, call **triple zero (000)**.



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