



maintaining a healthy headspace during the bushfire season

The timing and duration of bushfire danger seasons vary across different regions in Australia.



The threat of bushfires can directly affect people living in high-risk areas. It's also normal to have reactions if you live further away and are indirectly affected (e.g., by media exposure or hearing from others).

People respond in very different ways to the bushfire season and it can be a tough time. There is no 'right' response and reactions can change over time. Some people may not feel impacted by the bushfire season and that's OK too.



Taking positive action and anticipating your emotional reactions during the bushfire season can be helpful for your wellbeing during and after this time.

What might I feel?

Some common experiences people have during bushfire season include:

- Feeling overlooked because information is often directed at adults.
- Feeling stressed or overwhelmed by the threat of bushfires or even the memories and experiences associated with past bushfires.
- Feeling distressed by things that remind us of previous bushfires (e.g., smells, sounds, images or even anniversaries).
- Having work, school, studies or relationships disrupted.
- Feeling fearful, anxious or worried.
- Wanting to avoid thinking about memories of previous bushfires. This might feel helpful, but this can make things feel worse in the long run.
- Feelings of shock, anger, confusion, helplessness and sadness.



Tips to maintain a healthy headspace during bushfire season

Talk to others

Talking to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher or counsellor about any concerns and feelings you are having can be helpful. Talking to your family is also a good opportunity to ask questions you might have about your family's plans in an emergency.

Get involved

If you feel able to, you might want to get involved in preparation activities. Talking to your parents and family members about what steps you can take to prepare for an emergency can help you feel calmer and more in control. It's important to focus on one step at a time. This could include packing an emergency kit or helping your parents prepare the house. Talking to your family about what to do if you are separated during an emergency can also help you feel prepared.

Connect with others

Keeping in contact with friends, family, and neighbours, especially during days with a high risk for bushfires, can help you feel connected. You might feel like participating in community activities – even those that aren't about the bushfires. Getting connected with people who are reassuring and comforting, and who allow you to be you, can help you get through tough times.

Practise calming techniques

Some people might want to practise techniques to help them feel calm. This can include breathing exercises. Find a quiet place, close your eyes and slow your breathing. Try to focus your attention on your breath. It can help to count your breaths as you go (e.g., 'one' for every inhale and 'two' for every exhale). You might also want to use apps or websites that help with regulating your breath.

Be aware of your media exposure

Although many people want to keep up-to-date with what's happening, being around too much bushfire news can feel overwhelming. If you notice that the news is making you feel anxious or stressed, take a break if it's safe to do so (e.g., set yourself limits for media use, manage your app notifications, or unfollow pages or accounts that make you feel uncomfortable).

Look after yourself when you support others

During the bushfire season, your family members may be busier than before and you might spend more time looking after others. Some young people might feel responsible for others' wellbeing. You can help others by being calm and listening to their worries. You can link younger family members with a trusted adult or a service who can help them.

Some young people may also feel overwhelmed or guilty if they feel they can't meet the needs of others. It's important to look after your own wellbeing and to talk to other family members about how you're feeling.

Have hope

Remind yourself of the steps your community has taken to prepare for the bushfire season or to recover from it. Thinking of how your community has successfully dealt with difficult situations in the past can help you feel hopeful. Some people might like to explore ways of getting involved with bushfire preparedness or the repair and recovery of their community. This can help give a sense of hope. It's also OK if you don't feel ready for that.

Do enjoyable things

While it's important to be prepared for an emergency, it's also important to look after your headspace by doing things that create good feelings. If there's no immediate danger, this can include making plans, seeing family and friends, engaging in hobbies, or relaxing.

Getting support

It's normal to experience a variety of reactions to the bushfire season. This doesn't mean you'll have ongoing problems. For some people, using these tips will be enough to manage the social and emotional impact that can come during bushfire season. If you're noticing a significant impact on your emotions, your daily activities or you're not finding any improvement, it's important to get professional help.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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