



Lake County Behavioral Health Services
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PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Promoting Health and Well-Being in the Face of Wildfire-Related Stress

Lake County, CA (August 19, 2021) – Many in our county are once again facing loss and displacement due to wildfire. Despite the fact that Lake County has seen more than its fair share of fires, Lake County residents remain remarkably resilient. However, it is common for folks who endure these situations to experience strong emotions during and after the event.

Wildfires, in particular, can be stressful due to the fact they are unpredictable, and can gain strength and change direction at any moment. Suddenly, communities that seemed to be clear of any danger need to evacuate. Although well-orchestrated firefighting must be recognized and appreciated, sometimes destruction of property and even loss of life is unpreventable.

Denial and shock are common reactions to natural disasters, particularly immediately after the event. These are normal protective reactions. However, once the shock subsides, people react differently from one another. These are common reactions to a traumatic event such as a wildfire:

- Recurring emotional reactions are common. Reminders such as sirens, fire engines, ash and smoke can create anxiety. Flashbacks may occur for no obvious reason, and could lead to negative mental and physical reactions. It can make it difficult to make rational decisions and some may become disoriented or confused. Eating and sleeping patterns can also be disrupted.
- Feelings can become unpredictable and intense. Moods may dramatically change back and forth. Some individuals experience depression and anxiety.
- Relationships can become strained, especially if living in a shelter or temporary housing.

It is critical to remember there is no one “standard” reaction to the stress. There are a number of things one can do to restore health and well-being including:

- It’s okay to allow time to mourn any losses you or your loved ones have experienced.
- Take a break. Manage your intake of news about the disaster. While getting updated information is important, being over-exposed can potentially increase stress levels.
- Healthy behaviors. Avoid drugs and alcohol, as they can suppress feelings rather than helping manage and ease stress. Eating well-balanced meals and getting exercise along with proper rest are further best practices to minimize stress and restore normalcy and security.

“Some folks are able to deal with the emotional demands brought on by wildfires by utilizing their own support systems. Deeper problems can persist and can get in the way of everyday living,” says Todd

Metcalf, Lake County Behavioral Health Services Director. "People experiencing prolonged stress should consult with a mental health professional."

For help and more information, please visit the Lake County Behavioral Health Services website at <http://lcbh.lakecountyca.gov/> or call 707-274-9101 or 707-994-7090. If in crisis, please dial 800-900-2075.