

Tips for Youth: Helping Kids with Wildfire-Related Stress



Know the Signs of Stress

Infants and Toddlers

- Increase in safety and security concerns, clinginess and separation anxiety.
- Decrease in playful and engaging behavior.
- Increase in irritability, difficulty soothing or sleeping.
- Temporary loss of developmental abilities such as self-feeding, diapering after potty training and going back to babble talk.
- Frequent expressions of anger, sadness or disappointment due to loss.

Preschoolers

- Increased temper tantrums, irritability and disruptive behaviors.
- Frequently talking about the fire.
- Fear of separating from parents or caregivers.
- Anxiety and uncertainty about continued danger.
- Disruptions in sleep and eating patterns.
- Loss of developmental skills such as speech and toileting.
- Fear for their safety and those around them.

School-Age Children

- Helplessness.
- Persistent safety concerns for themselves and others.
- Overwhelming feelings of fear and sadness.
- Withdrawal from people and everyday activities.
- Difficulty concentrating at school.
- Headaches and stomachaches.
- Acting out at school and home.
- Changes in relationships with siblings, such as becoming more competitive or aggressive.

What You Should Know

During stressful times, it is important to pay attention to physical and mental health. Know the signs of stress and take action to keep yourself and loved ones healthy.

During and after a disaster it is common to go through intense emotions and become easily overwhelmed.

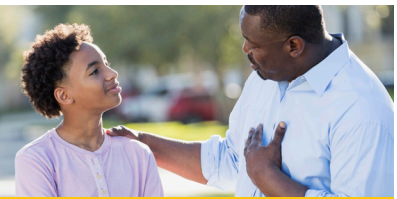
Texas Youth Helpline

800-989-6884

(free, confidential, 24/7)



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services



Adolescents

- Fear, overwhelming thoughts and other similar symptoms that may persist for weeks or months.
- Trouble concentrating.
- Changes in school performance.
- Experience a range of emotions such as sadness, anxiety, anger, agitation or irritability.
- Mood swings that are more frequent and intense.
- Loss of interest in activities they normally enjoy.
- Feelings of guilt for not preventing an injury or death.

How to Help Children and Adolescents

- Seek support. Don't do it alone!
- Provide a safe environment.
- Remain calm. Children and adolescents will mimic your behavior.
- Accept temporary setbacks in developmental skills.
- Keep normal routines.
- Motivate older children to express their emotions through writing or drawing.
- Talk about the community response and recovery efforts.
- Share age-appropriate information.
- Calm any worries about their friends' safety.
- Prevent or limit media exposure.
- Practice active listening.
- Teach coping skills:
 - Slow breathing
 - Counting
 - Calming music
 - Using soft pillows, blankets or stuffed animals

More Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

emergency.cdc.gov/coping

SAMHSA National Helpline

800-662-HELP (4357) or
TTY: 800-487-4889 (call or text)
info@samhsa.hhs.gov

SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline

800-985-5990 (call or text)

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

988 (free, confidential, 24/7)

For additional information, contact your health care provider or your local health care authorities.

Texas Panhandle Centers (Local Mental Health Authority)

Crisis Hotline

806-359-6699 or
800-692-4039 (toll free crisis line)

1. Coping with trauma and stress in the face of wildfires (2017, December 6). Zero to Three. <https://www.zerotothree.org/?s=wildfires>
2. National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2010). Parent guidelines for helping children impacted by wildfires. Retrieved February 29, 2024, from <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-guidelines-helping-children-impacted-wildfires>
3. National Institute of Mental Health (2022). Helping children and adolescents cope with traumatic events. (No. 22-MH-8066). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health. Retrieved February 29, 2024, from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/helping-children-and-adolescents-cope-with-disasters-and-other-traumatic-events>
4. The Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation (2018, April 27). Children & Recovery from Wildfires: Helping children and families respond to the psychological impact of wildfires. Children and Recovery from Wildfires Final Version (2).pages (aarf.org)

