

BC Wildfires 2017: Mental Health and Wellness Recovery

Community evacuations are stressful and returning home does reduce some, but not all, of those stressors. The following resources are meant to assist Cariboo Regional District community members impacted by wildfires. In addition to these resources, 2017 Wildfire Recovery Mental Health and Wellness Working Groups have been established in both Williams Lake and 100 Mile House, to plan for and support the long-term mental health and resiliency within the community.

1. Understand the Signs of Stress

(The following material on the physical and emotional reactions to stress, as well as the self-care suggestions are provided by the Canadian Red Cross).

Those who experience crisis situations are very likely to experience extreme stress – this is normal. However, extreme stress can affect your health and daily life. It is important to understand how you may react and what you can do. Recovering from these feelings will take time.

Recognize some physical and emotional reactions you may experience, include:

- Sleeping problems
- Muscle tension and bodily pains
- Headaches and/or poor concentration
- Guilt, anger and/or sadness
- Trying to avoid being reminded of the crisis situation
- Fixating on the event
- Nausea
- Withdrawing from other people
- Some people may not feel anything at all – this too is normal

2. Practice Self-care

If you are experiencing stress, use these tips to take care of yourself:

1. Allow yourself to feel sad and grieve
2. Accept support and assistance – there are many who want to help
3. Take time to socialize with other people (e.g., go for coffee or a walk)
4. Make plans for the future, but don't take on too much too fast
5. Give someone a hug
6. Eat healthy foods, get sleep, and exercise if possible
7. Maintain daily routines
8. When you can, take time off to do things that make you feel happy

3. See your Doctor or a Health Professional

See a doctor or other health professional if you are concerned about yourself or someone in your care who is struggling to function or still feeling stress.

4. Support Children and Youth

Children and teens are especially vulnerable during times of crisis. For information resources about how to help kids recover, check out the guide to disaster recovery for parents and caregivers at www.redcross.ca.

5. Seek Help

Understanding the signs and symptoms of stress and practicing the above self-care may help alleviate your stress; however there are many additional supports available. Needing additional information, support or counselling is very normal after a traumatic event and affected individuals are encouraged to seek help.

Call 8-1-1 – HealthLinkBC is toll free and available 24 Hours

Visit: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/explore-health-topics>

Call the BC Crisis Line – offering confidential support 24/7:

1-888-353-2273 (Cariboo Regional District Crisis Line)

1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) if you are considering suicide or are concerned about someone who may be considering suicide

TTY: 1-866-872-0113

Call the KUU-US Crisis Line – a 24-hour Aboriginal crisis line

1-800-588-8717 toll free line

Visit: <http://www.kuu-uscrisisline.ca/> for specific adult/elder or child/youth supports

Call the Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868 – confidential support and online resources for children and teens

Visit: <https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

Call 310Mental Health Support at 310-6789 (no area code needed) for emotional support, information and resources specific to mental health

Visit BC211 – this online resource is provided by the United Way and will help you find appropriate health and wellness resources within your community

Visit: <http://www.BC211.ca>