

Information for Schools and Kindergartens

Suggested activities to promote healing after a bushfire

Providing information

Be mindful of rumours and ensure that parents are informed about school/kindergarten timetables, routines and the supports available to them.

Ask parents to monitor media coverage their children see or hear in relation to the bushfires. If adolescents want to watch and listen to media coverage, sit with them and answer their questions.

Promoting a normal routine

Try to maintain as normal a routine as possible. Making the kindergarten/school day as predictable as possible can assist children to have an alternative focus to that of the bushfires. Monitor children throughout the day, accepting that for some there may be difficulty concentrating on the task at hand. With gentle assurance and guidance, normal routines will help children through the day.

Promoting positive problem solving skills

There are a number of activities that can be used to teach children how to use problem-solving skills to bushfire-related stressors. For example, ask children to identify a

problem and then do a brainstorming to come up with possible solutions. Work through each suggested solution to identify the best possible strategy. Discuss how the chosen strategy might work.

Promoting positive coping skills

Encourage children to use good coping skills to develop mastery of their anxiety. You may want to model good coping skills by teaching them quick relaxation strategies, such as breathing in to the count of four, holding to the count of four, releasing to the count of four and holding to the count of four. Ask children to give you a list of ways of coping with things that upset, anger or frustrate them and discuss how to use these skills to deal with their experiences.

Promoting children's support systems

Children with good support systems from parents, family members, peers and teachers are able to cope better with their adversity. It is important that children are connected to friendship groups and are shown ways of supporting each other by working or playing together.

Children identified 'at risk' may need a referral to a mental health professional. This can be discussed in consultation with a parent or carer.

Promoting the school or kindergarten community

Keep in close contact with families. Send home resources explaining possible reactions children may have and strategies for managing these reactions. Parents may want to assist by putting information in the school newsletter about support agencies and how they can assist. Hold parent information sessions to engage the school community. You may want to invite a guest speaker to provide a sense of shared experience.

Empowering the school or kindergarten community

School community projects and fundraising activities can assist the school community to feel empowered. Activities such as these can assist school community members to have positive collective experiences.

