

**SUPPORTING CHILDREN IN A
BUSHFIRE EFFECTED COMMUNITY
PARENT INFORMATION SESSION**

PERCEPTION OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Adults	Children
Threat to own or child's life	Separation from parents
Injury	Injury to self
Loss of property	Injury or loss of parent
Loss of business and livelihood	Loss of pet
Loss of pet	Loss of favourite things
Loss of community	Disruptions to routines

FACTORS INFLUENCING CHILD'S RESPONSE

Characteristics of child	Characteristics of environment	Characteristics of event(s)
Age and developmental stage Prior history Intelligence Personality style, coping style and resilience	Immediate reactions of caregivers and those close to the child Type of and access to support Sense of safety after the initial threat has passed Community attitudes Cultural and political context	Frequency, severity and duration Degree of physical harm/violation experienced and witnessed Level of terror Proximity to the event

SYMPTOMS OVER TIME

Immediate	Intermediate	Long-term
Fear Agitation Crying and distress	Depressed mood	Clinical level symptoms
Problems concentrating	Poor concentration	Decreased functioning
Difficulty sleeping, eating	Sleep and/or appetite problems	Increased risk taking
Concern regarding distance from parents	Reliving the trauma	Interpersonal difficulties
Stress response	Prolonged stress response Tiredness	Ongoing behavioural change
Regression	Loss of social skills/withdrawal	Ongoing distress
Physical complaints	Avoidance	

NOTICE

1 month after the event.....

Symptoms worsen

Ongoing distress

Decrease in functioning (daily, social)

Atypical behaviour

Problems with age appropriate tasks

Indicators that they are reliving the trauma

Separation anxiety

Regression

New fears

Increased physical complaints

Withdrawal from previously enjoyed activities

FIRST: BIOLOGICAL BASELINE

Eating

Sleeping (dealing with nightmares)

Exercise/activity (where possible)

HOW TO SUPPORT — CORE NEEDS OF CHILDHOOD (SCHEMA THERAPY MODEL)

Safety

Autonomy

Realistic limits

Expression

Spontaneity

HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S NEEDS

SAFETY AND PLAY

Core need	Suggestions
Safety	Highlight safety personnel, adults making safe choices, monitor media exposure, reassurance, safe/quiet space, safe self-talk, thought passing
Nurturance	Physical contact, connection time, pet time
Stability	Maintain routines where possible, knowledge of plans
Spontaneity	Free play with child, go somewhere new, play dates (mind break), swim, mind break/distraction, humour

HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S NEEDS

REALISTIC LIMITS

Core need	Suggestions
Realistic Limits	Maintain expectations for behaviour, compassionate delivery of consequences.
Self-regulation	Separate feelings (normalise, validate, engage) and behaviours Practice <u>slow breathing</u> , yoga, mindful moments, <u>grounding</u> , rest, progressive muscle relaxation, calming space, sensory box (pencil case)

SELF SOOTHING

Slow Breathing practice



HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S NEEDS

AUTONOMY

Core Need	Suggestions
Autonomy	Create opportunities for making developmentally appropriate decisions
Competence	Create opportunities to feel a sense of accomplishment (games, craft, physical activity)
Identity	Play with friends, tasks they previously enjoyed, highlight coping strategies

HOW TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S NEEDS EXPRESSION

Core need

Freedom to express needs and feelings



Suggestions

Creative expression: writing, comic strips, drawing, creating a collage, 'bear cards', narrative, play (toys available related and unrelated to event), music, worry dolls/worry eaters

Expression (release via words or action) →
acknowledge feeling (active listening) →
empathise and comfort (words, touch) →
gently place to the side (breath, stretch, shower) →
re-engagement to present (pleasant distraction, physical movement)

Opportunities to express safety, hope, gratitude

SELF-CARE

Biological: Baseline – eat, sleep and exercise

Physical calming (eg slow breathing)

Psychological: Notice thinking traps – balance cognitions

Relax and play when possible

Problem solve and thought pass

Mindfulness

Creative expression

Kindness to self/allow time for sadness – comfort – gentle moving forward

Social: connect with the right people for the moment

EXTRA SUPPORT

Organisations: Kids helpline, Parentline, Beyond Blue, Headspace

Resources: Fact sheets

<https://emergingminds.com.au/our-work/guiding-principles/trauma/>

Apps: DreamyKid, Headspace, Kids Yoga Deck, Stop Breathe and think Kids, Breathing Bubbles, Smiling Mind, Positive Penguins

Attaining assistance from an external psychologist – mental health care plan

Local list available includes: women's resource centre, farm gate counselling, centrelink payments, Bushfire Recovery Centre

https://www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/cp_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-TYF-05-80-61