



Reachout is a targeted teen and young people website with excellent tools, language and tips to assist in better mental health and coping strategies. Below is one article from their page which may be of assistance to the teens and young people in your community.

How to deal with the Stress of bushfires (for teens and young people)

(Source: Au.Reachout.com)

If you've been personally affected by a natural disaster such as a bushfire, flood, earthquake or cyclone, you're probably feeling a whole lot of different emotions. It's common to feel shocked, scared, stressed, helpless, sad or even angry. It's important to remember that you're not alone in having these feelings.

While natural disasters are out of your control, there are things you can do to feel better and to get help. A bunch of young people have shared their best tips for dealing with the stress caused by natural disasters.

Talk about how you're feeling

When you're trying to cope with the stress of a bushfire, flood, earthquake or cyclone, one of the best things you can do is to talk to someone. Sharing what you're going through can help you to feel supported and can put things into perspective. If you have a friend or family member who has also been affected by a natural disaster, they could be a good choice.

'My friends and I have learned that by being honest about our feelings, we can feel less alone. We have been making sure to check in with each other, as well as finding small ways to help, like fundraising or donating. With my friends' help, I feel a lot more hopeful and certain that we will get through this together.' – Emily, 23.

Have a look at our infographic on the [5 steps to talking to someone you trust](#). If you don't have anyone in your direct circle that you feel comfortable talking to, there are other options available. We've listed some of these in the 'Get extra support' section below.

Spend time with family and friends

During or after a natural disaster, you and your family may have a lot to deal with. Even when you're pressed for time, try to organise a family dinner or a catch-up over tea with a friend. Being around people helps you to feel less isolated, even if you don't talk about the difficult stuff.

'To deal with the stress, I made sure I ate some food with my family and had a plan in place on what to do if we needed to evacuate. Also I had lots of cuddles with my dog that night!' – Mimi, 23.

If you don't have or feel comfortable with family or friends, look for opportunities to be involved in your community. You can also hop on to the [ReachOut Forums](#) and chat with other young people who understand what you're going through.

Make time to chill

When you're dealing with practicalities such as making an evacuation plan, checking for warning alerts and making big decisions like whether you should leave your house or not, taking care of yourself might not be your number one priority. But by taking time out to chill, you'll feel better and you'll be more able to support those around you.



'Self-care is extremely important in times of crisis because your mental health is just as important as your physical health; they impact on each other. To quote Ety Hillesum, "Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take in between two deep breaths."' – Summer, 21.

Do our quiz to figure out what your chill style is, and to see suggestions for self-care activities. If you're stuck, try listening to some of your fave music, reading a book or going for a walk.

Focus on what you can control

It's all too easy to get caught up in worrying about things outside your control, and natural disasters fall into that category. You can, however, take care of yourself, make sure you have support around you, and be involved in your community. It could be as simple as asking a neighbour if they need help with anything, or taking them a home-cooked meal.

'For those people who are going through those really tough times at the moment: It's normal to feel like you're down, or you're letting your family down. But it's not in your control – you can't control the weather.' – Ben, 27. Have a look at our article on [how acceptance can help you cope with things out of your control](#).

Keep a regular routine

Your routine may go out the door as you deal with preparations for, or the aftermath of a disaster. Where possible, keep doing the things you would normally do (such as going to school or work). If that's not an option, you could try creating a new routine for sleeping and eating, and for spending time on activities you enjoy. A routine can give you a sense of stability during difficult times.

Turn to the community

Often, the worst of times brings out the best in people. When the media is only feeding us negative stories, it can become too much. That's when looking out for positive stories about community resilience can help.

'I also focus on the good that is coming out of the bushfires – people helping other people. It makes me realise that there is good in the world even in times of crisis.' – Erin, 25.

'Something that really helped us was catching up with our neighbours. We'd have a night where we went down to our neighbours' house and everyone would bring a casserole dish and we'd just catch up. It's really important to continue to connect with the people around you.' – Ben, 27.

If you search on Facebook, you'll find groups in your area where members post about what's happening or ask questions. Feeling a part of your community, even in a small way, can help you to feel less alone.

Get extra support

If you're feeling overwhelmed by stress from a natural disaster in your area, there are support services that can help you.

While it can feel daunting, a visit to your GP is always a great place to start. Tell them you need more support, and they'll be able to connect you with a professional who can help.

If you're looking for someone to chat to now, [Lifeline](#) (13 11 14) and [Kids Helpline](#) (1800 55 1800) are available to talk 24/7.



For services that specialise in natural disasters, check out [Emergency disaster assistance](#) for assistance in your location.

Although natural disasters can be really stressful, you can lighten the load by trying out some of the strategies above.