



## BUSHFIRE RECOVERY SERIES

### Early warning signs that someone may not be managing

After a bushfire/traumatic event, many people deal with memories and ongoing feelings by drawing on their own strengths, as well as the support of others, and will gradually rebuild their lives and achieve a sense of wellbeing again. It is also common to have negative feelings and thoughts that result from a bushfire or from the tragic losses that may occur and impact a person's wellbeing. The below can be early warning signs to look out for that may suggest that someone is not coping well following a bushfire/traumatic event.

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**Change in thoughts and speech.** Following the bushfires, many people's way of thinking about the world and themselves may have shifted to have a very negative focus. They might now see the world as dangerous and unpredictable, and be thinking/saying things like, "Things will never be right again", or, "No-one can keep me safe".
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**Uncharacteristic changes in behaviour.** A traumatic event such as bushfires can cause disruption in someone's life and they may experience a range of intense and sometimes confusing emotions such as: anxiety, fear, sadness, anger, numbness/emptiness and regret which can manifest as someone having a lower tolerance, losing their temper more quickly, constant worrying, low self-esteem and loss of their sense of humour in the workplace.
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**Social isolation/ Avoiding Social Connections.** Sometimes people avoid others because they don't want to be reminded about the fires. Some people feel too sad and dispirited to bother meeting or talking with others. This could manifest in less engagement with colleagues and avoiding work social gatherings and appearing more quiet than normal.
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**Reports of increase in uncharacteristic physical symptoms.** Early warning signs for an employee not managing following a stressful event may manifest with increased susceptibility to illness such as headaches, infection and back ache which can lead to an increase in sick days/ absence from work.
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**Employee changes in appearance and work.** Changes might include; less pride in their appearance, reduced productivity or work quality, excessive tiredness at work, working excessively long hours, poor time-keeping, increase in accidents, disruptive behaviour, concerns about substance abuse and interpersonal conflicts. If you start to observe these changes you can start by asking them if everything is OK, in a private setting were neither of you will be heard.

*Reference:*

Australian Psychological Society, 2020. "Australian bushfires 2020: Psychological preparation and recovery."

<https://www.psychology.org.au/Australian-bushfires-2020>

Beyondblue, 2021. "Bushfires and mental health." <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/bushfires-and-mental-health>

If you would like to book an appointment and /or speak with one of our Counsellors, it's as easy as calling 1300 66 77 00 or visit our website [www.accesswellbeingservices.com.au](http://www.accesswellbeingservices.com.au)

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