



How to Cope in this Challenging Time

Everyone is talking about it, the story is all over the news, smoke is in the air, and many people can see the forests burning. It is no surprise that people are having trouble sleeping, eating, and concentrating on normal day-to-day things. While you are left to wait and see what will happen, there are things you can do to manage your worry.

Your personal coping will respond well to any or all of the following strategies:

- * Consider some of the practical aspects first. If you are on an evacuation alert and you need to prepare, consider packing the following items: clothes (including school clothes for the children), medication, eye glasses, photographs and important documents.
- * Your life's routine has undoubtedly been very disrupted by the fires. Wherever possible try to maintain old routines and also establish some new routines that will provide predictability and a sense of order.
- * Spend lots of time connecting with those you are close to. Talking and sharing (on the phone or during a visit) can be very therapeutic. Remember the saying, "In times like this all we have that really matters is each other." Talk about good times and the fun you plan to have when the crisis is over.
- * Do your best to focus on good habits. You may not feel like eating properly or resting, but these activities will assist your body in coping. Physical activity will also help you to feel calmer which in turn will make it easier to think and act in constructive ways.
- * Stay informed about what is developing in your area. Limit your exposure to media related to other events around the world.
- * Remember that assistance is there for you at any time. Interlock has a team of counsellors that are trained to assist people in the midst of a crisis.

How to talk with your kids about the current fire situation and give them the reassurance they need

During this most difficult time parents will need to find the personal resources to talk with their children about the unfolding events. This will be particularly challenging given the continuing uncertainty and the stress associated with this event. It is most important that you provide the kind of information and support that is appropriate for the age of your child. This may mean you will need to have separate conversations with your children if they differ significantly in age.

With children of all ages the focus is on listening to their concerns, providing age appropriate information, and extra assurance at this time. While you cannot assure them that the fire will not directly impact their lives, you can reassure them that many people are working hard to bring the fires under control. Also remind them that you will do everything in your power to make sure they are safe. You can expect that they will be most concerned if you are away from them. Keep them informed as to where you are and when you will return. If there is a change of plans do what you can to keep them informed. Remember that talking in a calm voice will be very reassuring for your child.

Children under 6 years of age should not be exposed to the television news and other media images. You can provide them with the information they require along with extra time, hugs, and reassurance. In that most routines will likely be disrupted, try to engage your children in activities that will help take their minds off the immediate worry. Sharing family time during these tense periods will be a real source of comfort for everyone.

Remember that Interlock professionals are available if you need some suggestions or support.

You may contact Interlock toll free at 1-800-663-9099 or after hours at 1-800-324-9988. A counsellor is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to respond to your needs.