



How to Support Others Affected by the Fire

The current State of Emergency has had an impact on the lives of everyone in the fire-affected areas. Many have lost their homes and possessions, still more have had to evacuate their homes, and everyone in the area has lived with the fear of what might happen.

Many people have commented on the heroic efforts of the emergency personnel and the many people in the community that have made exceptional efforts. We can all feel proud about how our communities have responded to these most challenging circumstances.

The needs of those most directly affected will continue well beyond the end of the fires. Homes will need to be rebuilt. Lives will need to be put back together. People will need the ongoing support of their community. For those that have escaped the worst of the fires the question often is “What can I do to support someone more directly affected by the fires?”. Here are some suggestions for how you can continue to support those in need:

- * **The Practical Concerns:** Ask the person directly “What can I do to help?” If they are reluctant to accept your offers remind them that they would do the same for you. Remind them that you are there for them. Don’t wait for them to reach out to you. Offer to run errands for them. Ask yourself what you would need at such a time.
- * **Diet and Exercise:** Remember that it is often the small things that make a difference. Deliver a meal; offer to take care of their children while they take a break, get some exercise or attend to things.
- * **Isolation:** Having so much to consider at a time like this, we sometimes forget our social needs and become isolated. We need to talk with others. Make contact. Listen without interrupting or giving advice. Talking through the experience is very therapeutic as they make sense of what happened and how their life has changed. Many people feel more comfortable talking while they walk so invite them to take a short break with you.
- * **Confusion of Emotions:** Let them know that it is understandable to have a strong reaction to the event. Remind them that there is no right or wrong way to feel or react to such an event. We are all unique and come to this with very different experiences. We will all find our own way through the experience, and they will overcome this loss.
- * **Self Care:** Encourage them to keep a journal. It will help them work through their thoughts and feelings and in the future be a record of their triumph over adversity. Encourage them to take time for leisure activities – do what they enjoy. Take a break.
- * **Get Help if Necessary:** Remind them not to hesitate in seeking the assistance of a counsellor. Interlock has a team of counsellors that are trained to assist employees and their family members in the midst of a crisis.

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.