



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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ANXIETY, WORRY EXPERIENCED IN AFTERMATH OF SAN DIEGO FIRES

San Diego County Mental Health Offers Advice for Coping After the Disaster

The tragedy of the San Diego County wildfires goes beyond the loss of life and property. Many people will experience mental health challenges following such a disaster.

Anxiety, worry, and depression may be experienced not only by those directly affected by the disaster, but also other residents who, though not faced with immediate threats, watched as the fire drew closer to populated areas than any other fire in San Diego County history. Such feelings are normal, and there are ways to cope, said Jack Shale, M.D., medical director, San Diego County Adult Mental Health.

“Talking about your feelings has a dramatic effect, and it is even better if it is done soon after the disaster,” he said. One of the best places to talk with others affected by the tragedy is at a Red Cross shelter, where San Diego County Adult Mental Health crisis teams are available to provide resources and facilitate informal support groups.

Shale’s other recommendations include:

- Schedule the day. Too much unstructured time during a crisis can be unsettling and cause increased stress and anxiety. Even those who have lost their homes may want to consider volunteering.
- Limit television news watching to brief periods.
- Vary activities. Play board games, read books, watching entertaining TV, do light exercise (indoors, until air quality improves).
- Ensure your family’s safety, provide shelter and clothing, make sure your family is fed (becoming cold, tired, hungry or lonely can increase stress), give love and support – and ask for it, too.
- As the crisis subsides, talk about how you and your family can help others.

For more information, call the Mental Health Access and Crisis Line at 1 (800) 479-3339.

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