



"Preserving Our Families... Strengthening Our Communities"

Why do I feel this way each year?

With the anniversary of any crisis or disaster, distressing feelings can re-emerge. Those feelings are simply normal anniversary reactions to an abnormal situation.

After a traumatic event, it is common to expect delayed reactions. Reactions such as nightmares, anxiety, sleep disturbances and depression may occur weeks and months after the event.

Knowing about these normal reactions can be helpful. Often, remembering and talking about the event can aid in the healing process.

Memories, Dreams, and Feelings – Memories and dreams may reoccur, reminding you of events of the crisis.

Grief and Sadness – Grief and sadness can be related to the loss of loved ones, pets, homes, income, even one's sense of security.

Frustration and Anger – Bureaucratic aspects of the recovery process can cause frustrations, such as dealing with the slow process of rebuilding and recovering financially.

Physical Symptoms – Headaches, sleep disturbances, stomach aches (common in children) may be present as the anniversary approaches.

Fear and Anxiety – These emotions can be caused by the continued fire danger in the mountain communities. Evacuation preparedness can greatly reduce anxiety.

Stress – The anniversary may cause survivors of any crisis feel more stress than usual. It can rekindle many of the feelings experienced during the crisis.

Avoidance – Some people try to avoid reminders of the crisis and attempt to treat the anniversary as just another ordinary day. This is not necessarily a negative reaction if it helps.

Triggers – Certain sights, sounds and smells may trigger thoughts and memories. Feelings can be triggered unexpectedly over seemingly trivial occurrences. A few triggers for people who experienced the Old Fire may include the occurrence of Santa Ana winds, hearing helicopters or sirens, odd cloud formations, the smell of smoke or Halloween activities.



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Don't Forget to Take Care of Yourself

Take Care of Your Body – Remember to exercise, eat healthy and get plenty of rest. These can make a big difference in how your body feels and how you feel about yourself.

Make Time for Fun – Play, fun and laughter are critical to your good health and help you work more efficiently.

Learn to Relax – Relaxing gives you the benefits of a vacation without the travel. A few methods include deep breathing, meditation, prayer and quiet time

Dealing With Disaster isn't Easy – Give yourself permission to feel bad occasionally.

Allow Yourself to 'Express' – It can be beneficial to cry, sing, scream, dance, write, etc. There may still be a real need to retell your evacuation story and fire experience.

Maintain Relationships – Talking to family members and friends is healing. Children need to know that the adults around them will take care of and listen to them.

Learn to Say "No" – Bow out of projects that you don't have the time, energy or interest to complete.

Remembrance – Welcome the cleansing tears, commemorations and fellowship that an anniversary offers. Share favorite memories and stories or attend a worship service.

Seek Additional Help if Needed – Feel free to call Rim Family Services to talk to someone about your feelings and experiences with a crisis. The good news is we are here for you!

The Rim Family Services Wildfire Outreach Project of San Bernardino County is funded through the Federal Emergency Management Agency and is administered through the County of San Bernardino, Department of Behavioral Health.