

# Shasta County Coping with the Carr Fire

We have been affected by a fire that has burned more than 110,000 acres of our community. Never in our recent history have we had such devastation. During the next days and weeks we will be struggling to make sense out of the destruction. The fire, evacuations, loss of homes and of lives creates anxiety, sadness and stress for all of us. Shasta County Employees also have the responsibility to be disaster relief workers and therefore as we struggle to manage our own emotions surrounding this event we also are supporting the community with theirs. Over the next several days, weeks, and months, you may begin to have some of the following common responses:

## COMMON RESPONSES:

- Fear and Anxiety
- Disbelief and Shock
- Disorientation; difficulty making decisions or concentrating
- Sadness and Depression
- Irritability and Anger
- Crying for “no apparent reason”
- Increased use of alcohol or other substances
- Emotional Numbing
- Apathy
- Nightmares; reoccurring thoughts about the fire/evacuation
- Over Eating/Not Eating
- Feeling Powerless
- Difficulty Sleeping/Falling asleep
- Headaches, Back pain, Body aching

All staff should know that it is “normal” to have difficulty managing your feelings after an incident like the Carr Fire. What is important is how you deal with the emotions and stress you may be feeling. The following are some helpful tips:

**TALK ABOUT IT:** once you share your experience you realize you are not alone.

**SPEND TIME WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY:** loved ones can help you get through it. If you have children, encourage them to share their feelings and concerns about the fire.

**TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF:** make sure you rest, drink water, and eat properly. Take breaks and practice deep breathing and relaxation techniques hourly. Avoid coffee, alcohol, and nicotine.

**LIMIT EXPOSURE TO IMAGES OF FIRE COVERAGE:** try to limit the amount of time you watch news coverage or read about the Carr Fire.

**MAKE TIME FOR FUN ACTIVITIES:** read a book, go to the movies, go to the gym, take a bubble bath, journal. Healthy activities take your mind off the fire.

**FIND YOUR PURPOSE:** Viktor Frankl an Auschwitz concentration camp survivor wrote the book: Man’s Search for Meaning. Frankl concludes that “the **meaning of life** is found in every moment of living; life never ceases to have meaning, even in suffering.” So find your purpose, your meaning during this time.

**AS DISASTER RELIEF WORKERS:** pair up with a co-worker, keep an eye on one another, share and listen to experiences you have on the job, communicate your basic needs and limitations, and take breaks.

**ASK FOR HELP:** if your feelings are interfering with your functioning within your daily life, talk with a relative, friend, doctor, or spiritual advisor about getting help. Make an appointment with a mental health professional who will support you learning additional coping skills. Remember EAP is available: 800-932-0034

