

Feelings are okay!



step
1

Name

KR
KidsReach

A debrief tool to help children after the 2019/2020 bush fires.

step 2

Let's talk about what has happened.

Australia has just suffered from some of the worst fires in our history :

- Thousands of homes have been burned to the ground and many lost their possessions.
- Some people died, and many more had to go to the hospital with serious injuries.
- Communities have been almost completely destroyed.
- Australia has had many bush fires, but it has hardly ever been this bad before.

The fires were caused by several things happening all at the same time. These things included:

- Many parts of Australia have been in drought for a long time. This meant there was a lot of dry wood and bush for the fires to burn.
- There were very hot temperatures before and during the fires.
- Most of the fires were started from natural causes such as lightning. A small percentage of property damaged came from fires that were deliberately lit.



But!

Let's talk about now.



Australia is still the BEST place in the world to live because Australians are strong and loving. Millions of people in every part of the country and across the world are doing every thing they can to help.

- People have given large amounts of money and goods to help those who have been hurt.
- Firefighters (most of whom are volunteers) have risked their lives and saved thousands of homes and many thousands of lives.
- Workers in relief organisations and community groups as well as the police and the army and navy have worked day and night to help in different ways.
- Almost everyone has prayed for the fires to stop
- Everyone has learned a lot from this tragedy about fires and will be doing all they can to keep everyone safe in the future.

Australians will do everything they can to help people overcome problems caused by the fires. It makes us proud to be AUSTRALIAN!



All About Me

My name is:

My age is:

The town where I live is:

My favourite colour is:

My favourite book or author is:

The TV programs I enjoy most are:

My favourite food is:

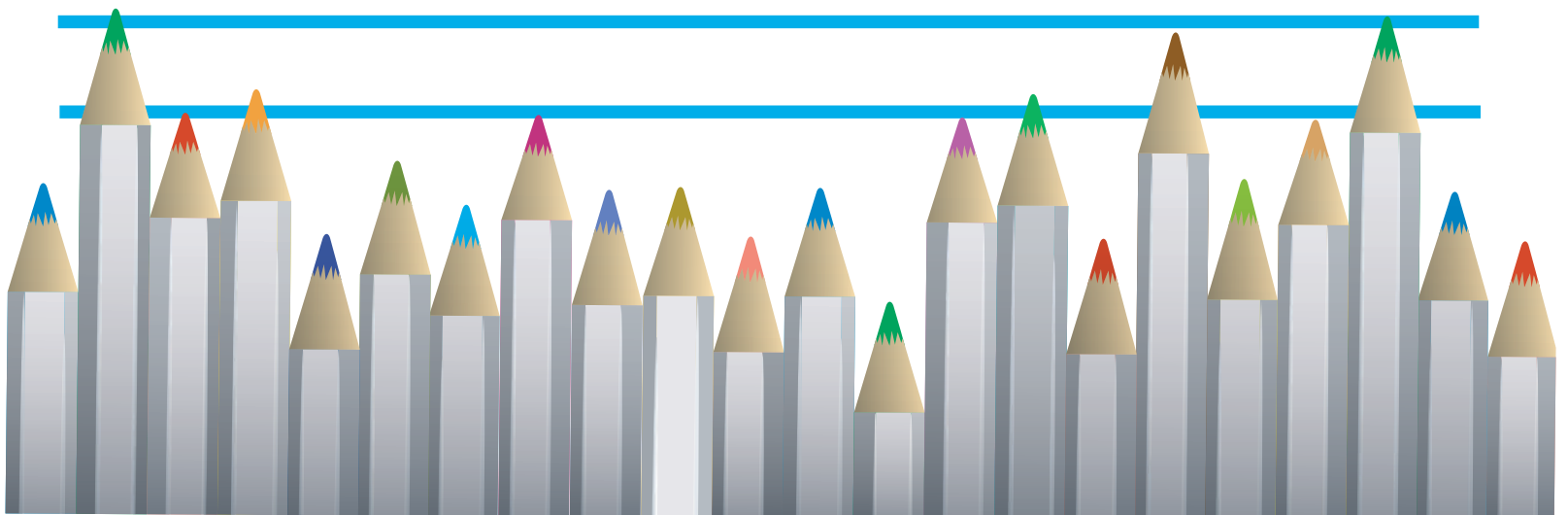
My favourite game or sport is:

The country I most want to visit is:

My favourite person or people are:

My favourite team is:

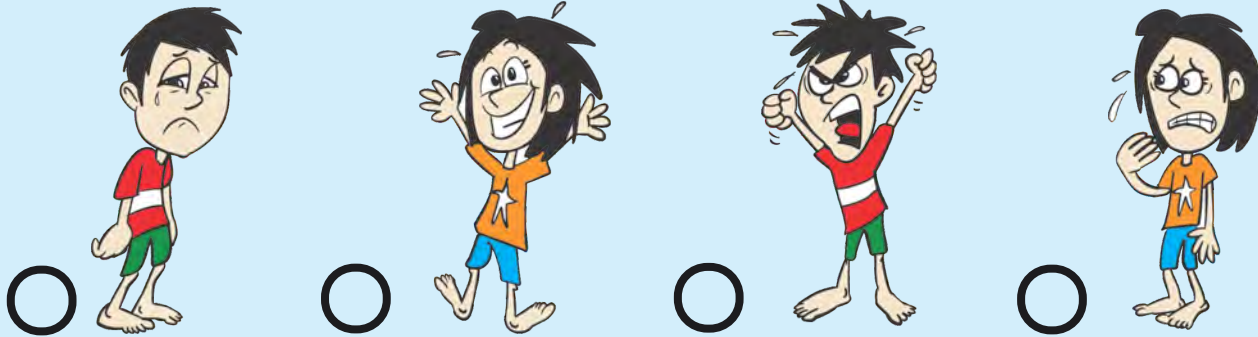
How the fires affected me:



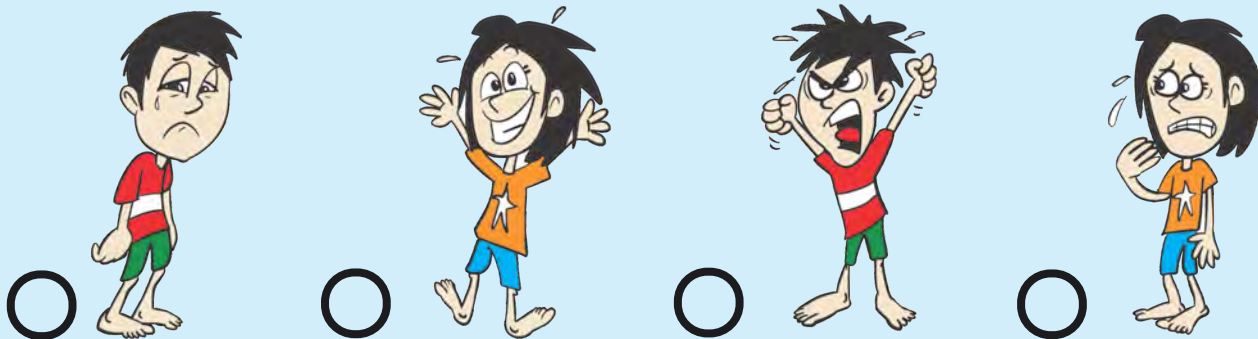
step
4

Sad, Glad, Mad or Troubled?

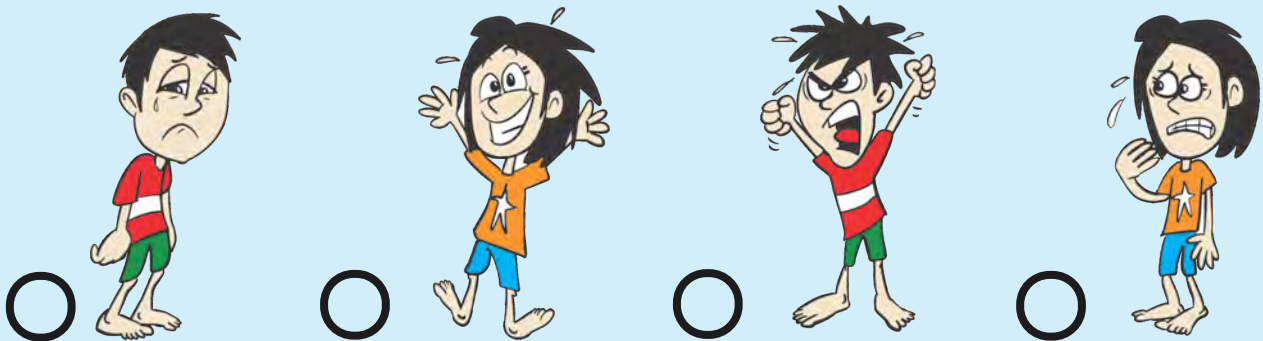
What my life was like before the bush fires.



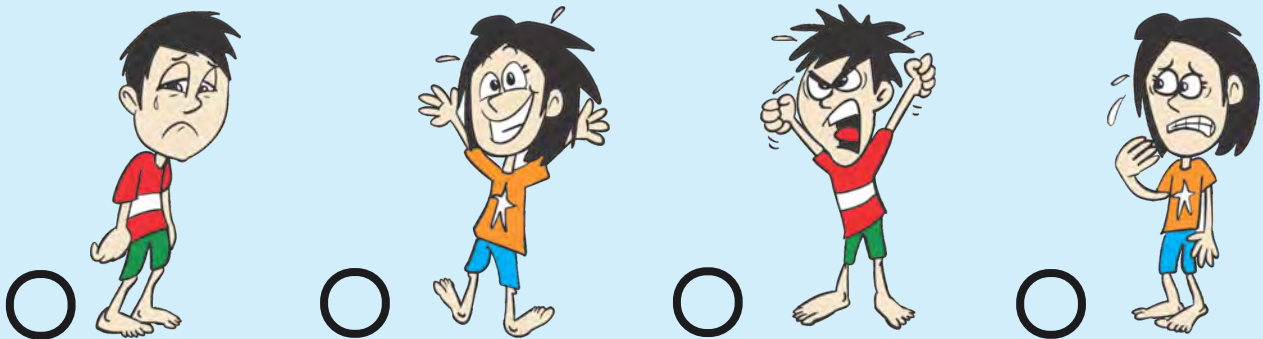
What I felt like during the bush fires.



What I have been like since the bush fires.



What I think my life will be like in the future.





This is My Life.

You can draw or write

My life before the bush-fires.

What happened to me and where I was during the bush-fires.

What my life will be in the future.

step
5

Have a plan!

What to do when you feel upset, worried or angry.



Everyone gets angry sometimes, especially when going through a difficult experience. Other feelings we all have include sadness, frustration, embarrassment, shame and loneliness. These feelings are not nice but they are not wrong either - they are normal. However, you need to have a plan - a strategy for what you can do when these feelings are strong. Below are some ideas. Choose at least four. You know best what calms you down so try and think up at least one idea of your own.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask a trusted person for help | <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to a teacher, counsellor or minister |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to an adult | <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to a best friend or your parents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play with a friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Do some physical tasks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Draw how you feel | <input type="checkbox"/> Do some colouring in |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Takes some deep breathes | <input type="checkbox"/> Think about something positive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go for a walk (or a run) | <input type="checkbox"/> Give yourself some time-out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write how you feel in a journal | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do any physical exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to some music | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Above all - Keep safe! If what you are doing is not helping you, then tell a trusted adult how you feel. Learn the anger rules on the next page.

step
5

The 'Anger Rules'

Keep safe when you feel upset, worried or angry



It's okay to be angry

BUT

Don't hurt property

Don't hurt yourself

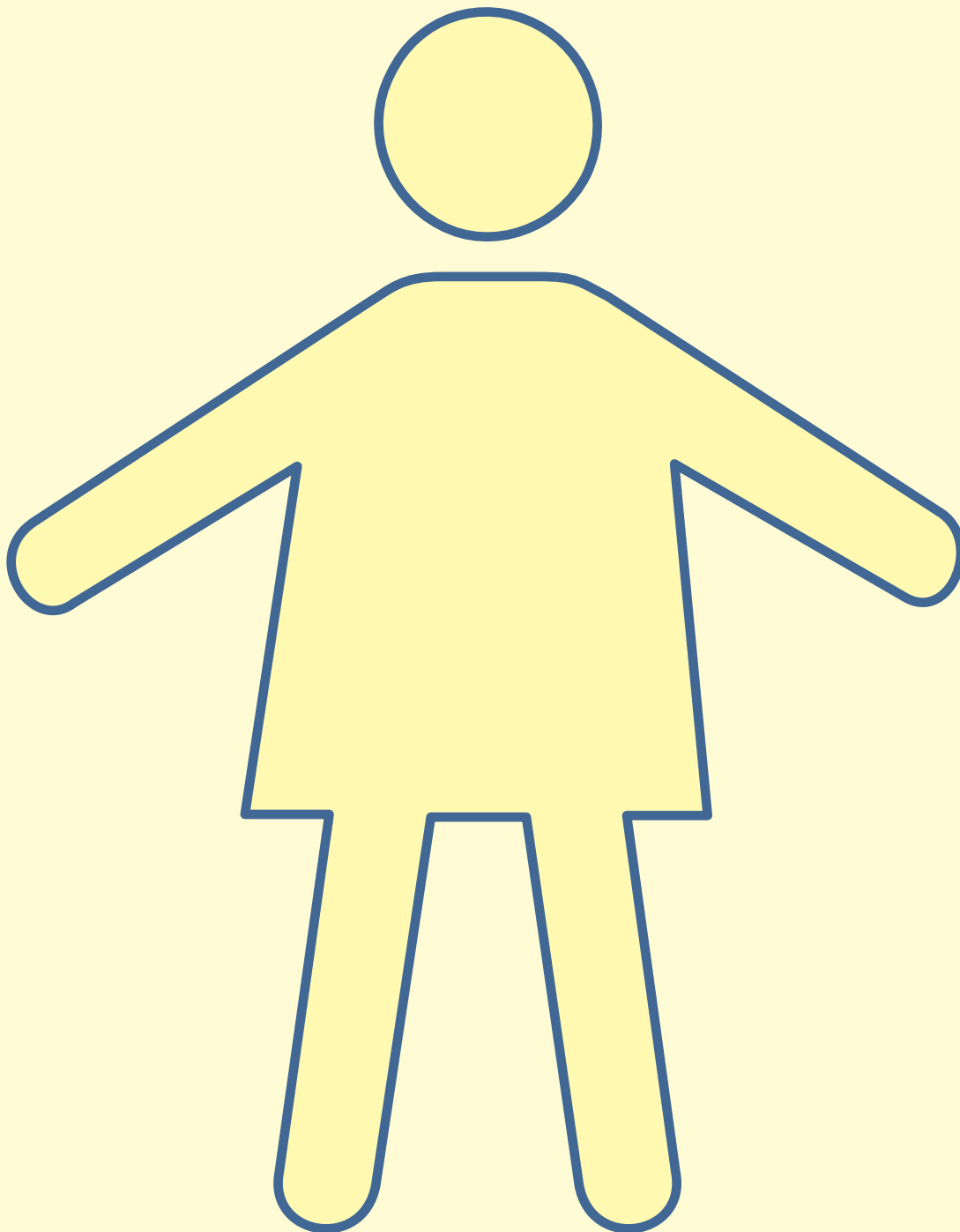
Don't hurt others

Do talk about how you feel.

step
6

Where does it hurt?

Sometimes when people are worried or afraid, it affects parts of their body. For example they might have headaches, muscle pain, heartbeat too fast, sickness in the tummy, or they find it hard to breathe. Do you have unusual pain in your body? If so, put a mark where that is.



A green circular icon containing the word "step" in a small, black, sans-serif font above a large, bold, black number "7".

step
7

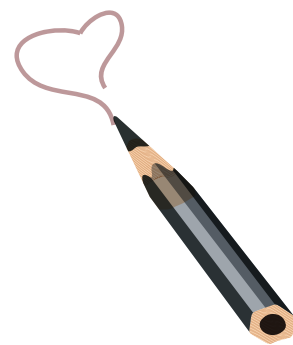
How have you been affected?

How have the bush fires affected you? Have you lost possessions or a pet? Do you have friends that you do not know what has happened to them? Do you know someone who has died? Have the bush fires made you feel anxious, afraid or angry? Has the smoke affected you? On this page you can either write or draw a picture to describe these things.



Write a Letter

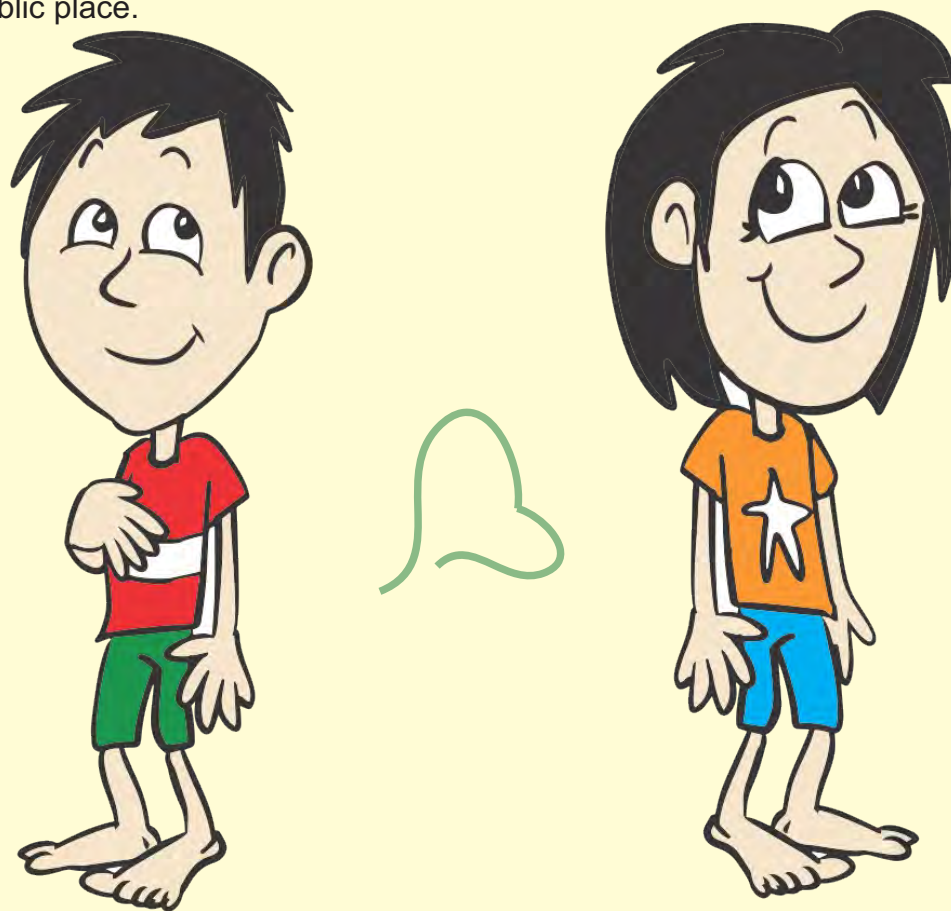
What would you want to say to someone you either know, or have heard about, who died or was hurt in the bush fires. Or to someone who has lost their home in the fires? Perhaps you would like to say 'thank you' to one of the firefighters who died - or maybe say it to their family. You could do it as a letter or a poem, or a drawing.

A large, irregularly shaped white area with a thick black border, intended for writing a letter, poem, or drawing. The shape is roughly rectangular with rounded corners and a slightly wavy bottom edge.

step
8

Tips for Keeping Healthy

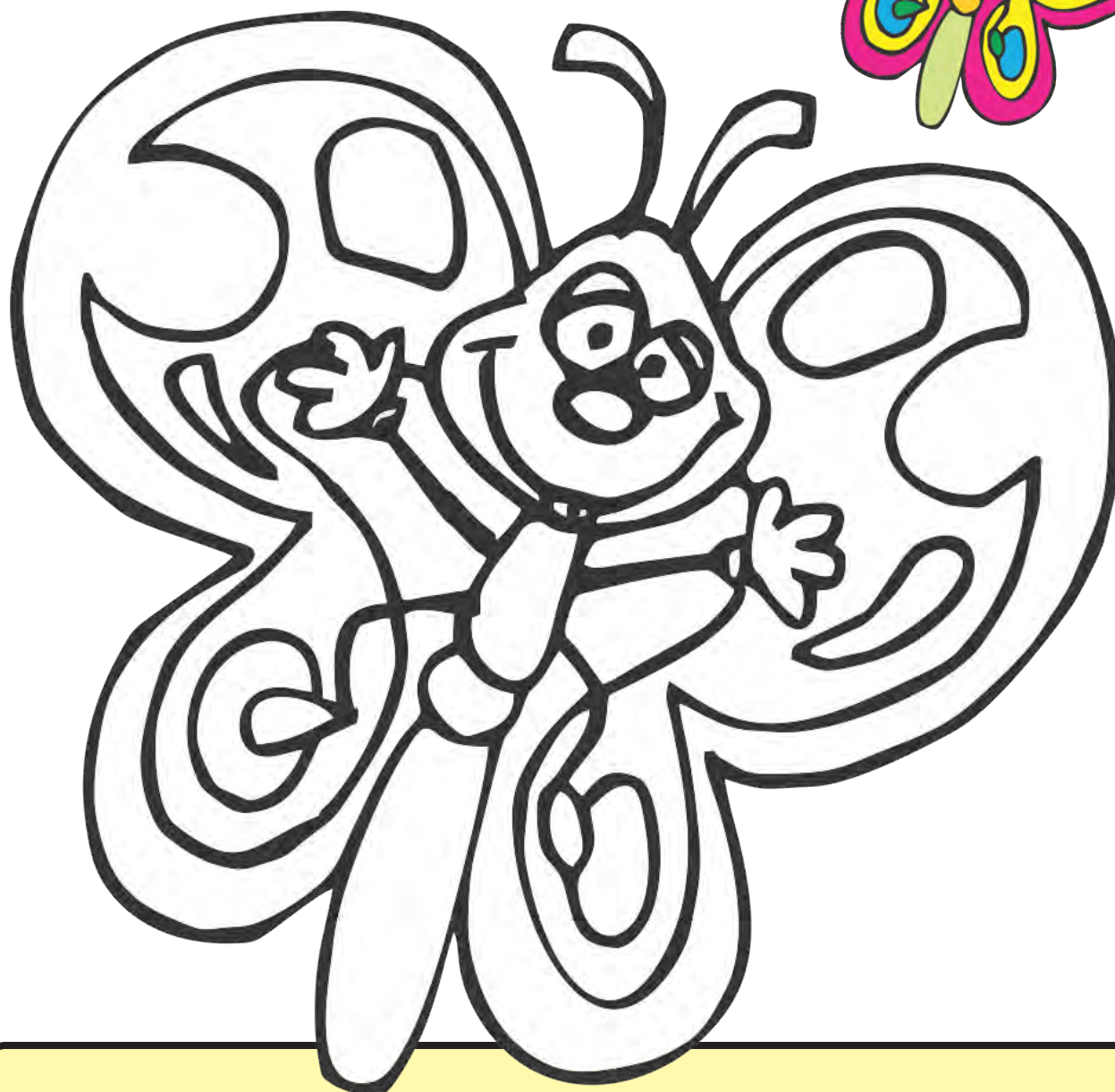
If you have had to move from your home, or are not living with your family, then you need to take special care to keep safe and well, especially if you are staying in a public place.



- #1. Drink plenty of water - but only the water that you know is safe to drink.
- #2. Wash your hands every time you use the toilet, and before you eat.
- #3. Eat clean food that is provided by your parents or caregivers.
- #4. Do not play in a dirty place such as where there is rubbish or in puddles.
- #5. If possible, shower every day.
- #6. If you get a graze or a cut, ask someone to clean it and put a plaster over it.
- #7. Never go away by yourself or on your own with someone you do not know - no matter who they say they are. Talk to your caregiver first!
- #8. Stay close to your family when it starts to get dark.
- #9. Get medical help when you need it. If you have a stomach ache, diarrhoea, or don't feel well in any way, talk to your parent or caregiver.
- #10. Get plenty of sleep.



Learn from the Butterfly



The way a caterpillar can turn into a butterfly gives us an important lesson about not giving up hope for the future.

It does not matter how things look for you right now, or for your community, or for Australia, you must never give up hope. A caterpillar might look small and insignificant today but that is not its future.

So keep looking up. There are many challenges ahead. But Australians are strong people. They will not give up. They will be stronger and better when all this is over.



Ways to Help

Can you think of ways you can help others who have been affected by the bush fires?

1

2

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To Parents and Caregivers

Most children can cope well in a crisis but some cannot. Parents should use basic common sense when talking to their children and follow simple guidelines. There are also good ideas on the internet.

If your child has completed the exercises in this book, look for issues that are not resolved. For example, if there are indications they do not see hope for the future, or there are unresolved feelings of anxiety or anger, then talk to a professional. Your GP is usually the best starting point.

Special attention should be given to children who have previously experienced trauma such as can happen during marriage break up, serious accidents, family loss, abuse, domestic violence. They are particularly susceptible to anxiety. Here are some pointers.

1. Children need to be able to talk and ask questions about what happened.

Children easily pick up how their parents feel about certain things. Do not ignore their questions just because the event may have happened in another city or another country. When children see it on television, it may feel to them like it is happening close to where they are.

If your children ask you a question, then answer it as best you can. It is better to say you do not know the answer than to avoid the issue altogether. When they see you avoid certain subjects, they may feel that you are worried or fearful and so they will be too.

Children need to be able to ask questions and talk about what worries them, even if there are no immediate solutions to the problem. Also, if you say to your child, "I don't know" that is 100 times better than if the child feels they cannot talk about it or ask the question.

2. Reassure your children they are safe.

Children need to be reassured that they (and you as their caregivers) are safe. You do this by taking the time to talk about what happened and listening to their thoughts and feelings. Give them reasons why they are safe. For example, you could say something like:

- You have a family emergency kit and a well thought out plan in case of fire.
- Your house is well built and away from the affected area.
- You will look after them.

3. Listen to your children carefully.

More than anything, children need to know you are listening to them.

Children have more insight than we sometimes realise. Questions and fears may arise several days, weeks, or even months later, especially after watching news items on television. For example, they may still be thinking about:

- What happened to the people who were inside a building/car/etc. but could not get out?
- The people they saw interviewed who lost their homes or loved ones, especially those who still did not know if their loved ones were safe.
- The issues of faith, God, and not knowing why this happened.
- Will there be another fire, and where will it be?
- What about the animals that died in the fire?

4. Give the children strategies to cope

Discuss with your children what you would do as a family in case of an emergency.

- Have a family fire drill. Let them know what to do when they hear the smoke alarm.
- Ensure them that you have smoke alarms and that the batteries are charged.
- Have a family emergency kit, which will include candles, first aid, and emergency food in case of the electricity being cut. Best kept in a bucket with a lid, as the bucket would also be handy.
- Have a family plan in case you are cut off from each other in an emergency.
- Have a charged up power bank in case the electricity gets cut off.
- Children learn their parents phone numbers.

5. Keep doing regular things

Children find security in doing regular and planned events. To cancel an outing or to pull children out of school when a crisis like this occurs may be helpful to parents but can hurt a child's sense of security – especially for younger children.

6. For those directly affected - create some happy memories

This may seem strange, but if you can do something fun with your child in the midst of the devastation, it can give them something good to think back on. Let them know they are still allowed to enjoy themselves. Go to a movie or restaurant, etc.

7. Build resilience in your children by helping them help others

Do a family project to help the victims. It could be as simple as giving money or sending a gift. Do it as a family. Helping others in time of crisis will help build their resilience – even if they are victims themselves.

8. Look for symptoms of anxiety

Often children appear to perform very well at the time of a crisis, but can, later on, experience some symptoms. These include anxiety, fear, panic, anger, difficulty sleeping, waking throughout the night, nightmares or daydreaming.

You can see these symptoms by:

- Change in appetite.
- Reliving images of traumatic events or dwelling on the event.
- A child may become easily angered or upset or may withdraw or become reluctant to talk.
- Headaches, stomach aches, nightmares, indigestion are typical by-products of this type of stress.

Any of these symptoms may indicate emotional stress, and the first response is to give hugs and reassurance. However, if they continue for more than a few weeks, seek professional help. Start by talking to your GP.

9. Control the television

Tune in for updates and stay informed, but do not let television reports of the tragedy dominate the atmosphere of your home. Instead, allow your children to watch their favourite programs or movies.

10. For families of faith, you should take note of the following.

a. Pray with your children

Praying will provide an answer both for the victims and for your children. Children will feel empowered when they know they can pray.

b. Questions on Faith: If God is good, then why do things happen to good kids?

Children may be wondering about why 'God' allows things like this to happen to innocent people, especially when he loves us. It may be 'easier' to explain 'people hurting people' because we can say that these people are 'bad'. However, it is challenging to explain away natural disasters because they may be seen as something that only God has the power to stop.

The most important thing to do if the children are concerned is to have the talk. Be ready to say that you do not know why. Some things are just too difficult to understand.

Talk about what they can do to help and explain that this is God's way. You might want to say something like this: Natural disasters are not God's way of hurting people. These things happen for many reasons but it is not God wanting to hurt people. God's way is for us to do all we can to protect ourselves, and the ones we love, and to help others in need. We see many examples of this in the people who are supporting the victims right now.



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the 2019/2020 bush fires.



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