

Bushfire Response Program

Building skills for resilience in disaster recovery



With delivery partners



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Be You Bushfire Response Program

Resources related to this webinar

Be You resources

- Be You Factsheet: How to provide support after a natural disaster - <https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/grief-trauma-and-critical-incidents/how-to-provide-support-after-a-natural-disaster>
- Be You Bushfire Response Program
<https://beyou.edu.au/bushfire-response-program>
- Bushfire response resource pack
<https://beyou.edu.au/bushfire-response-program/resource-pack>
- Be You Professional Learning: Responding Together
<https://beyou.edu.au/learn/responding-together>
- Educator Wellbeing After a Natural Disaster
<https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/grief-trauma-and-critical-incidents/educator-wellbeing-after-a-natural-disaster>
- Be You Wellbeing Tools for You (Educators)
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides/wellbeing-tools-for-you>
- Be You Wellbeing Plan for Educators
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides/wellbeing-tools-for-you>

Emerging Minds resources

- Emerging Minds in partnership with Be You developed an e-learning course for educators to understand their role in supporting recovery from trauma.
 - Early learning educators: <https://emergingminds.com.au/online-course/supporting-children-in-early-learning-following-a-disaster-or-community-trauma>
 - Primary school teachers:
<https://learning.emergingminds.com.au/course/supporting-primary-students-following-a-disaster-or-community-trauma>
 - Secondary school teachers:
<https://learning.emergingminds.com.au/course/supporting-secondary-students-following-a-disaster-or-community-trauma>
- Emerging Minds Community Trauma Toolkit:
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/toolkits/community-trauma-toolkit/educators>

- How educators can support children in the longer-term
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/how-educators-can-support-children-in-the-longer-term-following-a-disaster-or-community-trauma/>

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) resources

- Disaster Resilience Education for Young People Handbook
<https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-disaster-resilience-education/>
- Resilient Australia Awards –Early Learning Services and Schools
<https://schools.aidr.org.au/disaster-resilience-education/resilient-australia-school-award/>
- Disaster Resilience Education
<https://schools.aidr.org.au/>
- Disaster Recovery Education Opportunities in Australian Curriculum
<https://schools.aidr.org.au/disaster-resilience-education/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-resources/>
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspective Resources
<https://schools.aidr.org.au/disaster-resilience-education/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-resources/>
- Flood Recovery Resources
<https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/flood-recovery-resources/>
- Disaster Resilient Australia-New Zealand School Education Network (DRANZSEN)
<https://schools.aidr.org.au/disaster-resilience-education/disaster-resilient-australia-new-zealand-school-education-network/>

Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health (QCPIMH) resources

- The Birdies Tree Early Learning Program
<https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery/>

Australian Psychological Society

- Disasters: Bushfires, Cyclones, Floods, preparing for and Recovering from Natural Disasters.
<https://psychology.org.au/for-the-public/psychology-topics/disasters>
- Psychological First Aid: A guide to supporting people affected by disaster
<https://psychology.org.au/for-the-public/psychology-topics/disasters/recovering-from-disasters/psychological-first-aid-supporting-people-disaster>

Included below are reflective questions referred to during the webinar along with links to additional information and resources, and references.

1. Can you please outline the continuation of support (not just immediately following events) required of a learning community?

The Disaster Management Cycle identifies key areas where action can be taken, and support provided. These areas are preparedness, response, recovery & resilience. As an educator you can offer targeted support that will support children and young people based on their individual needs and the needs of the broader learning community to prepare for the high-risk weather season, in response to a natural disaster and as part of supporting recovery & resilience. Some examples include;

Preparedness

- Support children to develop coping strategies
- Everyday preparedness
- Support children's decision making and sense of choice and agency
- Support social and emotional learning and development as part of daily approaches, curriculum and pedagogy and whole-setting approaches.

Response

- Keep the child in mind
- Support children with processing feelings and information
- Support trauma-informed approaches in one on one, group and across your setting
- Be guided by the principles of psychological first aid

Recovery & resilience

- Support trauma-informed approaches in one on one, group and across your setting
- Build and maintain connections & relationships
- Offer Disaster Resilience Education (DRE) programs and material in your early learning service or school

Recommended Resources:

- Emerging Minds Community Trauma Toolkit - <https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/toolkits/community-trauma-toolkit/educators>
- Factsheet: How to provide support after a natural disaster - <https://beyou.edu.au/factsheets/grief-trauma-and-critical-incidents/how-to-provide-support-after-a-natural-disaster>
- Be You Bushfire Response Program resource pack - <https://beyou.edu.au/bushfire-response-program/resource-pack>
- Professional Learning: Responding Together - <https://beyou.edu.au/learn/responding-together>
- Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health: The Birdies Tree Early Learning Program - <https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery/>

Preparedness

- Webinar: Preparing learning communities for the bushfire season - <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/sessions-and-events/preparing-learning-communities-for-the-bushfire-season>
- How prepared is your learning community for a bushfire or natural disaster <https://beyou.edu.au/stories/implementation-support/how-prepared-is-your-learning-community-for-a-bushfire-or-natural-disaster>
- Australian Psychological Society: Preparing for natural disasters <https://psychology.org.au/for-the-public/psychology-topics/disasters/preparing-for-disasters>

Response

- Webinar: Understanding trauma response following a bushfire - <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/sessions-and-events/understanding-trauma-responses-following-a-bushfire>
- How to Notice, Inquire and Provide support during the natural disaster season <https://beyou.edu.au/stories/implementation-support/how-to-notice-inquire-and-provide-support-during-the-national-disaster-season>
- Be You Professional Learning: Responding Together <https://beyou.edu.au/learn/responding-together>

Recovery

- Webinar: A roadmap to recovery following a bushfire - <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/sessions-and-events/a-roadmap-to-recovery-following-a-bushfire>

- Webinar: Understanding Transitions in the context of disaster recovery & resilience
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/sessions-and-events/understanding-transitions-in-the-context-of-disaster-recovery-and-resilience>
- Australian Institute of Disaster Recovery: Community Recovery Handbook
<https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-community-recovery/>
- Australian Psychological Society: Recovering from disasters
<https://psychology.org.au/for-the-public/psychology-topics/disasters>

2. Questions about trauma informed approaches in disaster recovery and resilience

Trauma informed practice involves ensuring that the child or young person is at the centre of the approach. This means considering the context for each individual child and observing their behaviours and responding accurately to help promote a sense of safety and attachment. When we are curious about a child or young person's experience, we are able to step further outside of their behaviours to consider ways that we can promote connection.

It is not necessary to know all (or any) of the details of traumatic events that children, young people or families have experienced in order to engage in a trauma informed approach. Instead, try and focus on creating a safe and inviting environment for the children and young people in your care.

- Acknowledge the context for the children and young people in your early learning service or school and tailor your approach
- Place the child or young person at the centre of all approaches
- Some children and young people may require more support (for example with changes and transitions, etc.)
- Promoting attachment, connections and relationships and rebuilding trust and safety are at the core of trauma informed approaches. As an educator there is so much you will already be doing to support positive relationships and safety. Look for other opportunities to support relationships and safety, particularly following a traumatic event.
- Look after your own wellbeing, so that you are able to attend to the children and young people in your care.
- Get support from colleagues.
- Trauma informed approaches can support individual children and young people and also be planned as part of a whole of setting approach and supported in everyday policy and practice.

Recommended Resources:

- Be You Factsheets: Grief, trauma, and critical incidents.
<https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/grief-trauma-and-critical-incidents>
- Be You Webinar: Trauma informed practice in your learning community
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/sessions-and-events/trauma-informed-practice-in-your-learning-community>
- Be You fact sheet: How trauma affects children and young people
<https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/grief-trauma-and-critical-incidents/how-trauma-affects-children-and-young-people>
- Emerging Minds: A Curious, trauma informed approach
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/in-focus-trauma-informed-care/>
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/trauma-responses-in-children-aged-5-12-years/>
- <https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/trauma-response-adolescence/>

Supporting children and young people with a refugee background

- Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma
<https://qpastt.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/220302-Responding-to-People-in-Distress.pdf>
- Foundation House Schools Support Program
<https://sifr.foundationhouse.org.au/>
- Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Resources
<https://schools.aidr.org.au/disaster-resilience-education/culturally-and-linguistically-diverse-resources/>

3. Questions about talking to children and young people about natural disasters and traumatic events

Natural disasters have an impact on individuals and communities, as these events – and circumstances which may follow – are often traumatic. Children and young people are especially vulnerable to the emotional impacts and rely on adults around them to provide support, information, and protection. Sometimes educators can be apprehensive about talking to children and young people about natural disasters or other traumatic events. However, supporting children and young people to explore these topics, can help them to process their feelings and to identify ways that they or others can help.

Recommended Resources:

- Emerging Minds: Talking to children about natural disasters, traumatic events, or worries about the future
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/talking-to-children-about-natural-disasters-traumatic-events-or-worries-about-the-future/>
- Be You: How to provide support after a natural disaster
<https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/grief-trauma-and-critical-incidents/how-to-provide-support-after-a-natural-disaster>
- Be You Professional Learning: Early Support
<https://beyou.edu.au/learn/early-support>
- headspace: Support a young person after a natural disaster
<https://headspace.org.au/explore-topics/supporting-a-young-person/natural-disasters/>
- Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health: The Birdies Tree Early Learning Program
<https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery/>
- Australian Psychological Society: Looking after children affected by floods
<https://psychology.org.au/for-the-public/psychology-topics/disasters/floods/recovering-from-floods/looking-after-children-affected-by-floods>
- Australian Psychological Society: Preparing children for bushfires
<https://psychology.org.au/for-the-public/psychology-topics/disasters/bushfires/preparing-for-bushfires/preparing-children-for-the-threat-of-bushfires>
- Beyond Blue: Talking to kids about scary stuff in the news
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_URnXXK4Aq
- UNICEF: How to talk to children about conflict and war
<https://www.unicef.org/parenting/how-talk-your-children-about-conflict-and-war>

4. Questions about building resilience in children and young people

Supporting children and young people to develop resilience increases the likelihood that children and young people can maintain their wellbeing during and after an event, should they experience a disaster. With the right support, overcoming challenges and adversity can help us grow as a person, and can be useful for giving us the knowledge and skills to be better prepared for the next time something else challenges us.

Building resilience in children and young people requires explicit teaching of social and emotional skills. A good place to start is to teach children and young people the meaning of resilience in simple terms, give everyday examples and explain to children and young people that resilience can be built and can change over time.

Strong connections between children, young people and educators can help support their mental health and learning and is vitally important for building resilience in children and young people. Spend time getting to know the children & young people in your setting, be interested in their hobbies and families and learn about their strengths.

Strategies to build social and emotional skills in children and young people may include:

- Encouraging cooperation and social connection in learning spaces by working in pairs and groups
- Help children and young people to find common ground with others during circle time or during classroom discussions.
- Support children and young people to connect. Free play is an excellent way for younger children to connect with other children who have similar interests to them. Older children may enjoy working together on a passion project or community event.

Children and young people learn social and emotional skills most effectively when they're reinforced at home.

- Share key strategies in a newsletter
- Set homework tasks to practice a certain skill at home
- Encourage parents and carers to share good news stories about when children and young people have demonstrated certain skills.

Conflict is a normal part of the learning community and children and young people need to learn how to successfully manage conflict.

- Support children and young people to express how they feel, develop understanding and empathy for another person's perspective and work towards a solution that is agreeable for both parties.
- Empathy can also be taught through role play and stories. Help children to value diversity by talking positively about differences and encouraging mutual respect.

Classroom strategies to build resilience:

- Create a sense of community and belonging
 - Can children and young people see themselves in the space?

- Is children's work displayed?
- Can children negotiate parts of the learning space?
- Can children contribute to class rules, values, or expectations?
- Embed social and emotional learning
- Encourage self-regulation
 - Help children to identify warning signs such as a racing heart, heavy breathing.
 - Check in with children, how are they feeling today?
 - Teach a range of coping strategies that children can use when they are feeling distressed such as movement breaks, deep breaths, or a safe space in the classroom.
- Promote independence
 - Give children the space to try something new, allow things to not work and for children to sit in the discomfort of something not working out, but they guide them to overcome the challenges and reach eventual success.
- Support children to identify who they could call on for help when experiencing adversity and share this with family members who may also be in need of support.
- Support children to identify their strength and how these can be used in a challenging time.
- Build a peer-to-peer support network (e.g., cross age tutoring programmes, transition buddies, playground mentors).

Recommended Resources:

- Be You Professional Learning: Learning Resilience
<https://beyou.edu.au/learn/learning-resilience>
- Be You Factsheet: Social and Emotional Learning
<https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/social-and-emotional-learning>
- Resilience and Mental Health
<https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/social-and-emotional-learning/resilience-and-mental-health>
- Building Resilience in Children
<https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/social-and-emotional-learning/building-resilience-in-children>
- Building Resilience in Children aged 0-12: A practice guide for professionals
<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/who-does-it-affect/children/building-resilience-in-children-aged-0-12>
- Professional Learning - Learning Resilience
<https://beyou.edu.au/learn/learning-resilience>

5. Questions about supporting educator wellbeing as part of disaster resilience

Our mental health can fluctuate over time in response to different stressors and experiences which may be internal or from external events or situations. Stress can have significant long term psychological and physical impacts. It is important to consider direct and indirect stress, also known as secondary traumatic stress.

Educators may experience secondary traumatic stress if they are caring for others who have experienced trauma, have their own experience of direct or indirect trauma or disaster, and/or have pre-existing stressors. This can lead to being physically and emotionally worn out, compassion fatigue and burn out. Take time to consider how your stress presents and signs to look out for. Share these with important people in your life so they know when to help you draw on your supports. You may also like to share indicators that you are stressed with your colleagues. This will contribute to an open, understanding, and supportive work environment. Be aware of your Employee Assistance Program and access sessions to support your own mental health.

Recommended Resources:

- Educator Wellbeing After a Natural Disaster
<https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/grief-trauma-and-critical-incidents/educator-wellbeing-after-a-natural-disaster>
- Educator Wellbeing Tools
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/educator-wellbeing/tools>
- Staff Wellbeing
<https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/wellbeing/staff-wellbeing>
- Be You Wellbeing Tools for You (Educators)
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides/wellbeing-tools-for-you>
- Be You Wellbeing Plan for Educators
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides/wellbeing-tools-for-you>

6. Questions about returning to education settings after a disaster

Children or young people who have been impacted by a natural disaster have had their sense of safety threatened and may experience separation anxiety particularly from their family. In addition to an individual's experience of trauma there may be factors like mental health conditions, or mental health concerns or learning difficulties. As an educator you may need to consider the larger context for the child or young person.

Ensuring your learning community feels safe is a priority and that starts with building great relationships with the child or young person and their family. Great relationships start with active listening, giving them the time to talk through their concerns, being culturally safe, asking open questions and trying to understand. Stay connected with the family, work together and be flexible with the child or young person. Negotiate strategies that will help children and young people feel of safe will be different for each individual.

Ways to build great relationships with children and young people include:

- Demonstrating caring, respectful, and responsible behaviours
- Greeting students by their name with a smile.
- Model inclusive behaviour and language and be considerate of cultural differences.
- Be firm and fair, have high expectations of positive behaviour but be mindful that sometimes the individual circumstances of a child or young person must be considered, and individual strategies negotiated.
- Model coping skills, particularly in higher-stress situations, such as deep breaths, speaking calmly, or calling for assistance.
- Show children that sometimes you find things difficult. If you're facing a difficult task, you might like to say, "I'm feeling really frustrated right now, but I've got the confidence, I can work it out. Or maybe I could ask someone to help."

Recommended Resources:

- Be You Supporting Children and Young People who have experienced trauma
<https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/grief-trauma-and-critical-incidents/supporting-children-and-young-people-who-have-experienced-trauma>
- Be You Understanding Transitions
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/sessions-and-events/understanding-transitions-in-the-context-of-disaster-recovery-and-resilience>
- Emerging Minds Podcast: Supporting children through school transitions during Covid-19
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/podcast/supporting-children-through-school-transitions-during-covid-19/>
- Supporting transitions for a child or young person with a disability or developmental delay
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/disability-inclusion-guide/supporting-transitions>
- Be You Transitions in education settings
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/news/transitions-in-education-settings>

- Be You covid-19 and early learning services
<https://beyou.edu.au/stories/be-you-news/covid-19-supporting-early-learning-communities>
- Be You covid-19 and schools
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/news/covid-19-supporting-schools>

7. Questions about supporting children, young people, and educators in specialist education settings.

Children and young people need to know they are supported and safe before, during and after a natural disaster or traumatic event. Educators in specialist education settings will be experts at placing the children at the centre of all learning and teaching and planning for individual needs and differences. Social stories are an example that some specialist education settings have used to support children and young people to prepare for and respond to natural disasters. Educators can use the guiding principles outlined in the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience Education for young people handbook, to guide and adapt approaches in a specialist education setting:

- Place the learner at the centre
- Reflect the local context
- Be inclusive
- Establish and strengthen partnerships
- Engage and challenge learners
- Focus on action
- Build capacity

Recommended Resources:

- Be You: Universal Design for Learning
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/disability-inclusion-guide/universal-design-for-learning>
- Be You: Supporting Transitions
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/disability-inclusion-guide/supporting-transitions>
- Centre for Disease Control and Prevention: Safety and Children with Disabilities, Disaster and Trauma
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandsafety/trauma.html>
- Braille Emergency Evacuation Pack
<https://www.braillehouse.org.au/product/emergency-evacuation-information-pack/>
- Campaspe Shire Council – Emergency management planning – Helpful resources for people with disabilities
<https://www.campaspe.vic.gov.au/Our-services/Emergency-management/Emergency-management-planning>
- Disaster Resilient Australia-New Zealand School Education Network (DRANZSEN)
<https://schools.aidr.org.au/disaster-resilience-education/disaster-resilient-australia-new-zealand-school-education-network/>

8. Questions about the impact of natural disasters on babies and young children and how to support disaster recovery.

When supporting infants and young children as part of disaster recovery, focus on caring and responsive relationships, tuning in to the baby's (or toddler's) cues. In the response and early recovery phases, focus on re-establishing predictable routines, and communicating with and supporting parents. You can ask parents about any changes they are noticing and any concerns about regressions for previously acquired developmental milestones.

Things to be aware of in short and long-term recovery:

- Heightened anxieties re: reminders of the event (e.g., flood / severe storm – rain, water rising in gutters; bushfire – smell of smoke, high fire danger days; media coverage; anniversaries).
- Providing young children time and space to share their thoughts and feelings, but also be respectful of when they would prefer to not talk about the event.
- Observe and document what you are noticing about the babies or children's behaviours.
- Follow up when you are noticing changes in babies or children's behaviours. If these changes persist or are causing the child significant distress or regression in development, seek additional support.
- Follow the children's lead – what are they interested in, what do they need.
- Focus on preparedness – explore ways that your learning community can prepare for future events relevant to your community.
- Children process their experiences through play. You may observe children re-creating the disaster event through their play. This is normal, but keep in mind that the play should help the child process their experience.

Recommended resources

- Be You
BETLS Observation Tool (Behaviour, Emotions, Thoughts, Learning and Social relationships)
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/betls-observation-tool>
- Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health: Recovering Together after a natural disaster; Supporting Families with babies and young children
<https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/PDF/qcpimh/QCPIMH-recovering-together-after-disaster-booklet-babies.pdf>
- Recovering Together after a natural disaster; Supporting pregnancy and early parenthood
<https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/PDF/qcpimh/QCPIMH-recovering-after-natural-disaster-booklet-pregnancy.pdf>
- Emerging Minds: Trauma responses in children aged 0 – 24 months
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/trauma-responses-in-children-aged-0-24-months/>

- Emerging Minds: Trauma responses in children aged 2 – 4 years
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/trauma-responses-in-children-aged-2-4-years/>
- Be You: Play for wellbeing
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/sessions-and-events/play-for-wellbeing>