

Useful skills for disaster recovery

Problem solving

Following disasters like the Adelaide Hills bushfires, people experience some common and often distressing reactions. These can include strong feelings of grief or anger, difficulty sleeping, or unhelpful behaviours like drinking more alcohol or arguing with people more than usual. But working on some basic coping skills can help a lot. For many survivors, these skills will be enough to enhance recovery and help tackle stressful issues. One very useful skills is problem solving.

Problem Solving

Following the bushfires, people are struggling with a variety of problems, from how to clean up their house block to worrying about arguments with their partner, or struggling to supervise children adequately in a new or altered environment.

FOUR STEPS TO PROBLEM SOLVING

1. Identify the problem

First, try to identify what the problem really is. Is this your problem, or does it belong with someone else? Is this a problem you can do something about? If not, put it aside and choose one that you can do something about. And if you're feeling overloaded with all sorts of not-finished tasks, give yourself permission to let some problems wait till later.

2. Assessing the problem

If the problem is big, break it into manageable parts. For example, if you're needing to clean up your block, perhaps you can break it down into house site, shedding, and the rest of your property. Then decide what you're aiming for, like 'We need the site to be safe', or 'What I can salvage?', or 'I want a break from this mess'.

3. Brainstorming solutions

Next, think up as many ways of achieving your goals as you can e.g., temporary fencing to keep children out of the rubble, organising a working bee, accessing a government-funded service, or going away for a short break. Try writing your ideas down, and come up with lots – a range of ideas can help at this stage!

4. Adopting a solution

The final step is to sort through the options together with those close to you, or perhaps with a case manager, and choose several that best meet your goals. Then think what you need to do to give them a go.

Good luck – and remember that help is available from counsellors and others at the recovery centres.