

## **Why Do I Feel This Way? For Those Impacted by the California Fires**

**Disasters can make us all feel vulnerable, whether we are impacted directly or indirectly. Events such as wildfires can seem to have no rhyme or reason as to how they start and the damage they can inflict upon people's property and their lives.**

### **Why is this event so stressful?**

- **Loss.** The loss associated with this fire may take years to fully assess. Life as we knew it, especially for those who live in the fire zone, may never be the same. People's homes and entire communities may have been destroyed, and life-as-usual may be disrupted for an indefinite period of time. We may experience the loss directly or indirectly.
- **Lack of control.** Part of what makes all disasters so unnerving is they reveal our limitations as human beings. Despite our best human efforts, natural disasters can and do escape our ability to control them and the damage they can do. Innocent people can get hurt, property is destroyed, beautiful areas are ruined, and we can feel helpless.
- **Abrupt change of reality.** A previously safe and enjoyable area is now unsafe.
- **Fear of additional destruction.** We don't know what will happen next, so we are in a state of alert.
- **Uncertainty.** We don't know when this fire will be contained, or if others loom on the horizon; and if we are relocated, we don't know when we can return, and what may be facing us when we do. If we are assisting others, the indefinite nature of this event can also be stressful.
- **Trauma associated with seeing so much destruction so close at hand.** Seeing the tremendous destructive power of fire and the possibility of being in harm's way can be very disturbing.
- **Feelings that there should have been some way to prevent such a disaster from happening.**
- **Media coverage.** When we view and review the damage repeatedly, we can all be impacted by the disaster.
- **Emotional overload.** We might be feeling like we can't catch our breath between disasters.