

Dear Parents,

We hope this letter finds you well. As many of you are aware, California is currently experiencing widespread wildfires that are affecting many communities across the state. During this challenging time, we want to take a moment to offer our support and provide guidance on how to best support your children's emotional, physical, and mental well-being.

While these fires can be incredibly distressing, it's important to help children feel safe, informed, and cared for. Here are some helpful suggestions for parents as they navigate this difficult period:

1. Provide Comfort and Reassurance

Children may be frightened by the news of the fires, the smoke, or even the uncertainty of what may happen next. It's important to acknowledge their fears and let them know it's okay to feel anxious or worried. Reassure them that you are taking steps to keep them safe and explain any precautions you are taking as a family. Having a calm, reassuring presence can help children feel secure in the face of uncertainty.

2. Limit Exposure to Disturbing News

While it's important to keep up to date with necessary information, too much exposure to news coverage, especially graphic images, can overwhelm children. If possible, limit the amount of time children spend watching or hearing about the fires. Make sure that they understand the situation based on their age and maturity, but keep it as calm and simple as possible.

3. Create a Routine and Provide Stability

As wildfires can create interruptions in daily life, maintaining some level of routine for your children can provide comfort. This could include keeping regular mealtimes, homework times, or even playtimes. If your child's school is disrupted, be sure to create alternative learning activities that are both engaging and comforting.

4. Check in with Emotional Well-Being

It's essential to check in with your child frequently. Some children may not express their concerns directly, but they may show signs of stress such as changes in behavior, trouble sleeping, or physical complaints like headaches or stomachaches. Let them know it's okay to talk about their feelings, and encourage them to share any worries they might have.

5. Practice Breathing and Relaxation Techniques

Help children cope with stress by teaching them simple breathing exercises or mindfulness techniques. Taking deep breaths together, imagining a peaceful place, or counting slowly can help lower anxiety and encourage relaxation.

6. Be Honest, But Be Mindful

Answer your child's questions about the fires honestly, but keep it age-appropriate. If they are confused or scared, avoid making promises you can't keep (such as promising the fire will be over soon). Instead, reassure them that the situation is being managed by people who are trained to keep everyone as safe as possible.

7. Help Them Focus on What They Can Control

Focus on actions that children can take to feel more in control, such as helping to keep the house safe by closing windows or preparing an emergency kit with items they may need in case of evacuation. When children feel empowered, it can help ease their sense of helplessness.

8. Encourage Connection

If your child is struggling, encourage them to reach out to friends or family. Sometimes, talking with others who understand can help a child feel more supported and less isolated. Consider organizing virtual meetups or group calls to provide a sense of community.

9. Take Care of Yourself

As parents, it's crucial to care for your own well-being during stressful times. Children often take emotional cues from the adults in their lives, so by practicing self-care and managing your own stress, you are better equipped to support your children. Take time to rest, ask for help when needed, and talk with others who can offer support.

10. Keep Schools Informed

If your child is experiencing difficulty with schoolwork or emotional distress related to the fires, please don't hesitate to reach out to the school. We are here to support your family, and we can provide resources, adjustments to learning, or just a compassionate ear to listen.

Together, we can help our children navigate this challenging time with a sense of calm and security. We thank you for your strength and resilience and remind you that we are here for you and your family during this time.

If you need any assistance or would like additional resources, please don't hesitate to contact us. We are committed to supporting all our students and their families.

