Survivor to Survivor:
Strategies to Heal and Deal

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About United Policyholders

• 501(c)3 non profit organization. Tax ID # 94-3162024
• A voice and an information resource for consumers in all 50 states.
• A 25+ year track-record and subject matter expertise in insurance and disaster recovery
• Not for profit…not for sale.
• Funded by donations and grants.
• A volunteer corps with personal and/or professional expertise in disaster recovery and insurance.
My home after the 1991 Oakland Fire
One week after the fire
Easter Egg Hunt, 1992
BE KIND TO YOURSELF

• It’s been a
  (add your own descriptor here)
  of a few months!

  – Be as gentle/forgiving/kind to yourself as you can possibly be
For those of you navigating solo…

• Know that although you travel your path alone, there are people all around who are willing to help.

• Greet each day with gratitude: for life, for sunshine, for rain, for family, for friends.

• Find good support:
  – Church/synagogue/other community/other singles
  – A financial advisor, a lawyer, therapist
  – Even your insurance support group!

• Take care of your body
  – Eat healthy food; keep your digestive track in working order
  – Bathe and shampoo frequently – water is a powerful healer
  – Get a massage every once in a while – the power of touch is formidable!
For those in relationships...

- People process loss/trauma in different ways.
- Don’t let the fire destroy your relationships, in addition to your home.
- Responses to stress may change your normal role - I became calm and my husband became frenzied.
Don’t Forget Your Children
“Whatever is on the outside can be taken away at any time. Only what is inside you is safe…”

- Give lots of hugs – you’ll get them back in spades – and greet everyone with a smile: “Be kind, for everyone you meet is carrying a burden. Everybody grieves.”

- Listen to soothing music.

- Lose yourself now and then in a good book; do not get caught up in the news.

- Remember that you are not alone, even though it feels that way frequently.
Connecting With Other Fire Survivors Can Be Helpful

• It can be hard for non-fire survivors to fully grasp the difficulty of navigating a catastrophic property loss or how you’re feeling

• Non-survivor family and friends may offer help - but don’t know how
This is Now Your “New Normal”

• Your loss and the recovery is now a major part of your life.

• Goal is to incorporate this into your life and your family’s legacy.

• Make a “new normal” for you and your family.
Strategies to Survive

• Learn to ask for help – ouch! You will have a chance to pay it forward

• Connect with others in the same situation - your insurance support group can provide all kinds of support

• Allow yourself to have a pitty party once in a while – its ok – but keep moving forward

• Find humor in the daily stuff
Strategies to survive

- Journaling
- Exercising
- Gratitude
- Helping Others
- Meditation
- Counseling
- Art
Past & Future Garden Quilt
Art from Salvaged Copper

Art by James Servais
Seek professional help...

- This is NOT the time to “tough it out” if you’re suffering from depression or anxiety-related symptoms
- Don’t shy away from seeking professional help…it can make all the difference
- Individual therapy and/or couple’s counseling
- You may need it now – or a year after the fire – keep the resource on the table
How Trauma Can Affect Your Window of Tolerance

**HYPERAROUSAL**
This is when you feel extremely anxious, angry, or even out of control. Unfamiliar or threatening feelings can overwhelm you, and you might want to fight or run away.

**DYSREGULATION**
This is when you begin to feel agitated. You may feel anxious, revved up, or angry. You don’t feel out of control, but you also don’t feel comfortable.

**DYSREGULATION**
This is when you begin to feel you’re shutting down. You may feel a little spacey, lose track of time, or start to feel sluggish. You don’t feel out of control, but you also don’t feel comfortable.

**HYPOAROUSAL**
This is when you feel extremely zoned out and numb, both emotionally and physically. Time can go missing. It might feel like you’re completely frozen. It’s not something you choose—your body takes over.

**WINDOW OF TOLERANCE**
This is where things feel just right, where you are best able to cope with the punches life throws at you. You’re calm but not tired. You’re alert but not anxious.

Stress and Trauma Can Shrink Your Window of Tolerance.
This means that it may be harder to stay calm and focused. When you’re outside your window of tolerance, you may be more easily thrown off balance.

Your Work with Your Practitioner Can Help to Enlarge Your Window of Tolerance.
They can help you stay calm, focused, and alert even when something happens that would usually throw you off balance.
Celebrate along the way!!!

• This is a LONG process

• Make new memories

• Celebrating your victories along the way will give you the emotional strength to keep on going.
2 Years Stronger Together

NEIGHBORHOOD COOKOUT!

A Collaboration of:
Coffey Strong, Larkfield Resilience Fund,
Mark West, & Wikiup Communities

Sunday, October 6th
12pm-5pm
Luther Burbank Center For The Arts
50 Mark West Springs Road, Santa Rosa

LIVE MUSIC    FREE FOOD
FUN KID ACTIVITIES
Bring Your Picnic Blanket!!

Please RSVP at: https://2strongertogether.eventbrite.com
or call Jenny at: 707-322-5112
Fire families have celebrated with groundbreaking parties...
Fire families have celebrated with framing or “stud” parties...
Peace be with this house and with all who live here.

Nahid

"Bill"

Kisner

9/21/2008
A woman's place is in the bathtub.
May you have walls for the wind,
And a roof for the rain, and drinks
beside the fire, laughter to cheer you
And those you love near you, and all
that your heart may desire.

Celtic Blessing
Andi O’Conor (CO Fire Survivor) – TED Talk
Robyn Walery – (2007 Fire Survivor) Observations from a Teenage Wildfire Survivor
Working with your Contractor
Coping with Underinsurance
Reforming Homeowners Insurance
For More Information:

Visit UP’s website and search for more claim tips, articles and helpful info

www.uphelp.org

Take the Roadmap to Recovery Survey

www.uphelp.org/survey