

# How to mentally prepare for bushfire season

Bushfire preparation needs to go beyond developing a household emergency plan. You also need to psychologically prepare. In a high-stakes emergency situation, this is what could save your life.

## Here is a four-step process to prepare:



### 1 Anticipate the stress

How do you usually react to highly stressful situations? Do you default to fight or flight? If you **understand your usual reactions, you can put safeguards in place to manage them.**



Take time to reflect on your normal stress responses and write them down. This way you can have a better sense of how you might feel in the event of a bushfire emergency.

### 2 Identify your response

In a highly stressful situation, does your heart start racing? Do you feel dizzy or sweaty? Do negative thoughts take over easily, such as 'I can't deal with this?'



Remind yourself that strong bodily sensations and frightening thoughts are normal reactions to stress, but they might not help you stay calm and clear-headed.



### 3 Manage your feelings and thoughts

We can find ways to manage any changes to our body, mind and thoughts when we're highly stressed through simple breathing strategies.



Slowing down your breathing can help calm your body's fear response. Focus on your 'out breath' and extend it for as long as is comfortable for you. It's best to breathe through your nose, if you can, then let the in breath come in of its own accord.

### 4 Engage support

During periods of high stress, it's extremely important that you feel connected to a significant other to share your concerns with and to ensure those in your inner circle are also mentally prepared.



If you feel that the stress or anxiety you or your family are experiencing is getting too much to manage, a psychologist may be able to help. Use the APS 'Find a Psychologist' service to find support near you: [psychology.org.au](https://psychology.org.au)