

32 Encouragement

Dear Friends,

I hope this message finds you and your family safe. I have been struggling to write this message because I wanted some magical answers about how to make this all okay. I can't make it all okay, but I can say, I'm with you and the whole PCS staff and family are with you.

Caveat: Please know that some of this might sound trite given your current situation. I recognize fully that we are not all in the same boat. Some of you feel like you are drowning in the ocean and not in a boat at all. You may be homeless and sleeping in a shelter parking lot, a campground, or on a friend's couch. You may have lost everything to the fire. This situation is serious and terrifying and devastating. I cannot truly know what you are going through. My words come from my sincerest wish to be helpful while recognizing that you may be in extreme survival mode and have needs that preclude anything in the realm of "meditate and put on a happy face." So, as ever, take what is helpful to you and leave the rest. I'm here and I want to help. Please let me know what YOU need and how I can help.

PCS staff launched into action last week calling all the families from Indian Falls, Greenville, Taylorsville, Canyon Dam, Chester, and the surrounding areas. We are actively compiling resources and building support systems. If you haven't already, please let us know where you are and what your needs are so we can help. Our deepest sympathy to all of you who have lost your beloved homes, all of you who are displaced, and everyone who's world has been turned upside down by this fire.

I found this website helpful with information about trauma.

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/problems-disorders/coping-after-a-traumatic-event>

Remember that this will all take time to evolve, and people do get through trauma and heal. We will be reaching out and getting specific trauma support so we can all cope with this as best as possible.

Take what delights you and leave the rest.

1. **Your Feelings are Normal.** We are experiencing very real trauma and it is normal to have intense and confusing feelings. You may still be in shock. You may feel anxious, sad, frustrated, angry, irritable, unmotivated, hopeless, and helpless. Simply living in a cloud of smoke can do it, but add on to that devastating losses, evacuations, jarring emergency alerts, constant fear and hyper vigilance, navigating the resource centers, and managing the social dynamics of wherever you landed and you have a perfectly chaotic and stressful existence. Please be kind and loving toward yourself and others. Seek emotional support. If you have friends and family who are *not* currently affected by this tragedy but are only a phone call away, reach out to them to tell your story and get their support. I am also available to hear your story and give you encouragement and love. We will have additional therapeutic support through the school in the weeks and months to come. We will let you know when more resources become available. If you are having a psychological emergency, please call Behavioral Health (530) 283-6307 or 911.

2. **Keep a Clear Head.** In stressful times you may be drawn to activities that cause you to “check-out” and could make your brain foggy. Please be very cautious about engaging in anything that would distract you and create a dangerous situation should you be called upon to act quickly to stay safe. This fire is unlike anything that most of us have experienced and our situation can change very suddenly as we saw with Indian Falls, Greenville, Canyon Dam and other areas. Please stay present and safe.
3. **Your Physical Health and Body.** How I treat my body directly effects my moods. When I eat junk food, don’t exercise, and don’t get enough rest, I feel lethargic, irritable, and depressed. I know it can be very challenging to maintain healthy habits in times of stress, and yet these healthy self-care behaviors are some of our strongest weapons against painful anxiety and depression. Where at all possible, do the things that you know for YOU make you feel the best. Take a shower, eat some veggies and fruits, move your body, snuggle your loved ones and pets, get some quiet time to journal or sit and breathe, and rest. AND be very gentle with yourself in the moments when all you have the capacity to do is sit and stare into space with a bag of Cheetos. What are the simple self-care practices that make you feel better? Can you sweetly give yourself some of these gifts? Can you get a sense of normalcy?
4. **Gratitude.** We hear this over and over in our lives and most especially in times of loss and struggle; appreciate what we have. Grab your loved ones and hold them close. Tell someone how special they are to you. Make a gratitude list. Thank a first responder. Look around you right now and find something for which you are thankful.
I have been feeling profoundly grateful for our community and how we band together in love to help one another. People want to help and they are going above and beyond to do so. I know all of you have been superheroes throughout this in a million large and small ways. You have been surrounded by superheroes, too. Some moments you are the one receiving help and the next moment you are the one giving help. We aren’t alone.
5. **Gentle. Gentle. Gentle.** Please be gentle with yourself and others. Speak to yourself as if you are your very own most beloved best friend. You are so precious and worth it.

Truly, reach out to me or any PCS staff you trust and let us know where you are, how you are, and how we can help. We will be updating you on the supports we have in place and what we know about in the community.

Warmly,
Becky