



Center for
Climate, Health
and Equity



Mental health impacts and resilience to wildfires and other disasters

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(UC Center for Climate, Health & Equity, Directors Sheri Weiser, MD, Arianne Tehrani, PhD)

Climate extremes **AMPLIFY** the Mental Health (MH) burden



Only ~10
MH workers per
100K population



1 billion
living with MH
disorders worldwide



\$1 trillion
annual cost of MH
disorders



< 2%
of govt. budgets
spent on MH!

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Mental & Physical Health impacts of wildfire smoke

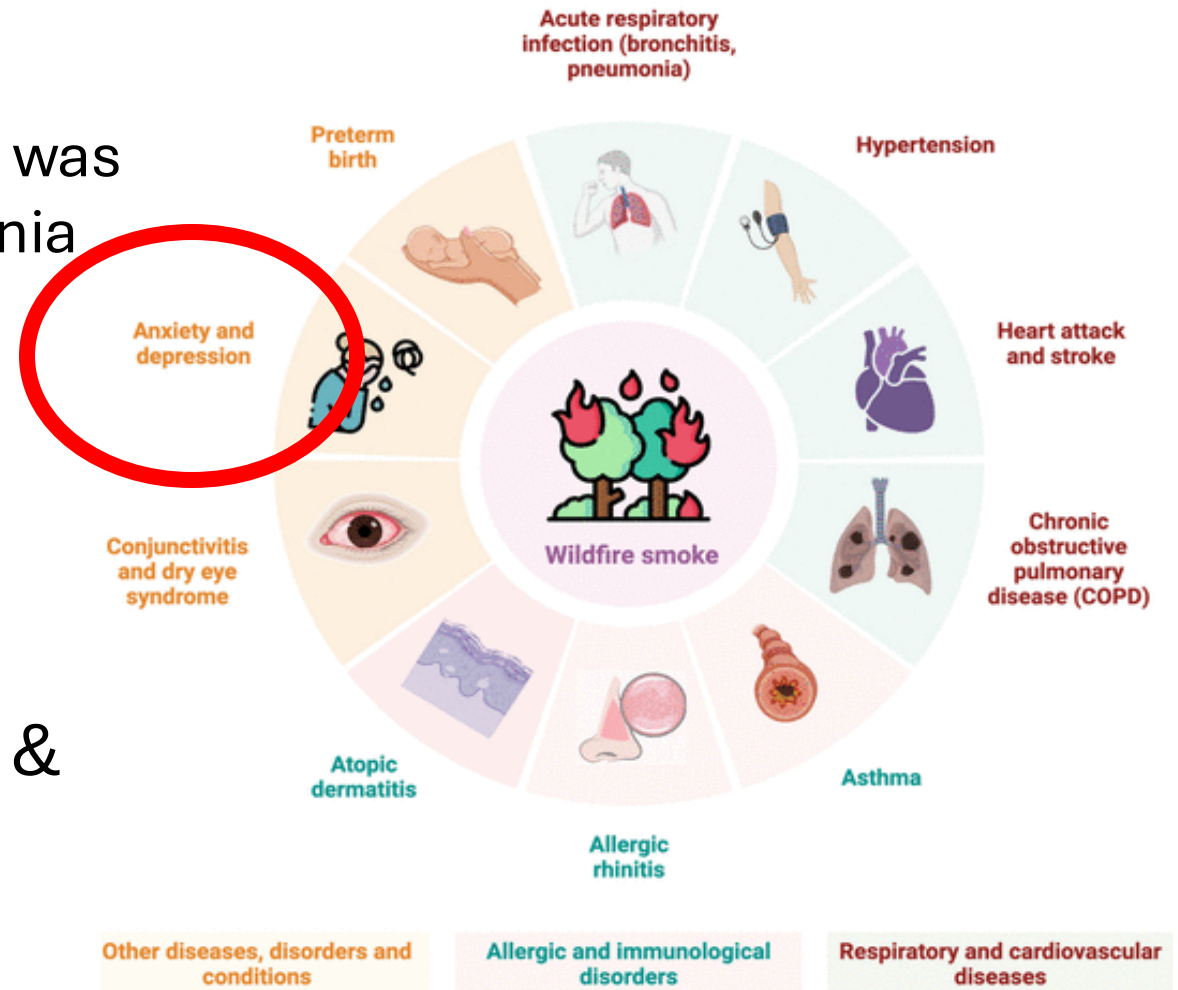
From 2008 to 2018, wildfire smoke pollution was responsible for over 50,000 deaths in California
(Connolly et al, Science Advances, 2024)

Recent LA wildfires:

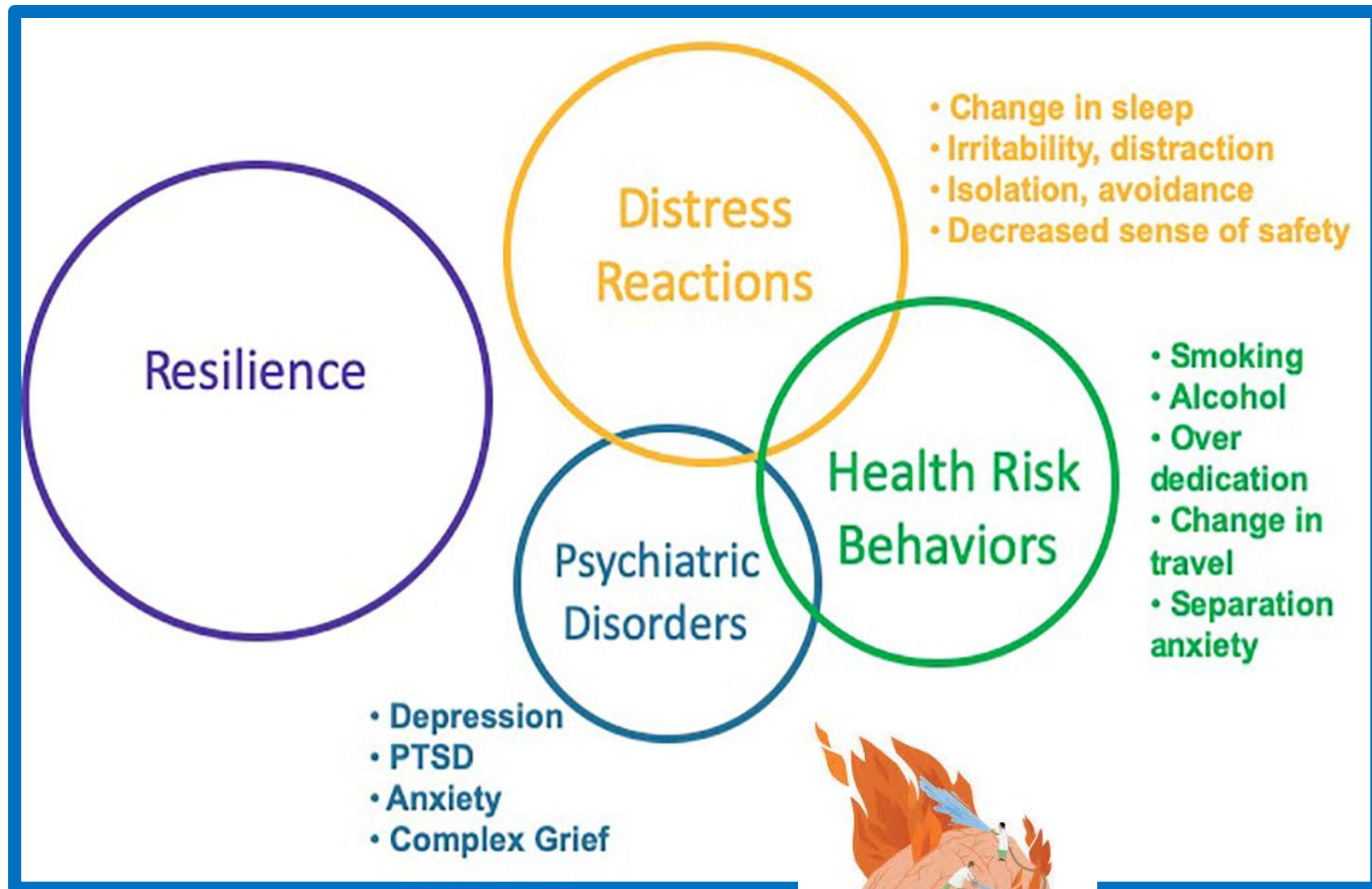
Eight fold increase in ER visits

Five fold increase in calls to Suicide & Crisis Mental Health help lines

Mental Health issues continue

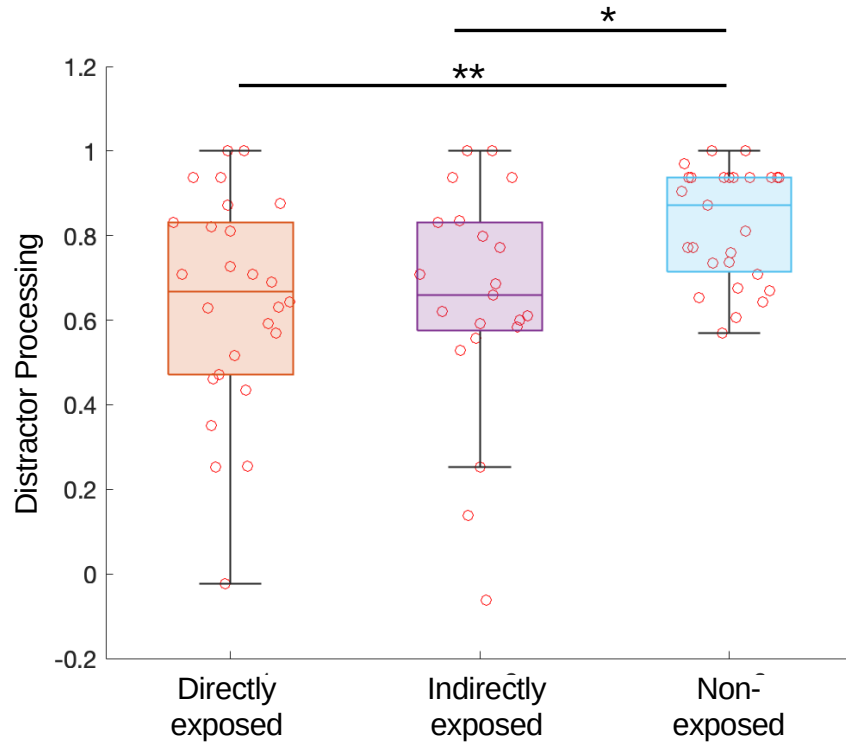


Psychological and Behavioral Responses to Acute Disasters



(Morgenstein & Ursano 2020)

“Fire Brain”: Impact on cognition and brain function (Camp Fire, California’s deadliest wildfire)



~35% prevalence of Climate Trauma
= PTSD, Depression, Anxiety



Psychological First Aid (for acute crises)

The Core Four for emotion regulation

1	Calming, safety and comfort
2	Emotional support
3	Active Listening, mindfulness Helping Avoid triggers, limit news (no more than 10 min of SM, 2x a day).
4	Practical Support

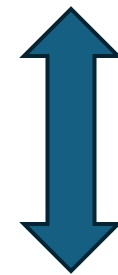


Youth are at elevated risk for climate related mental health disorders



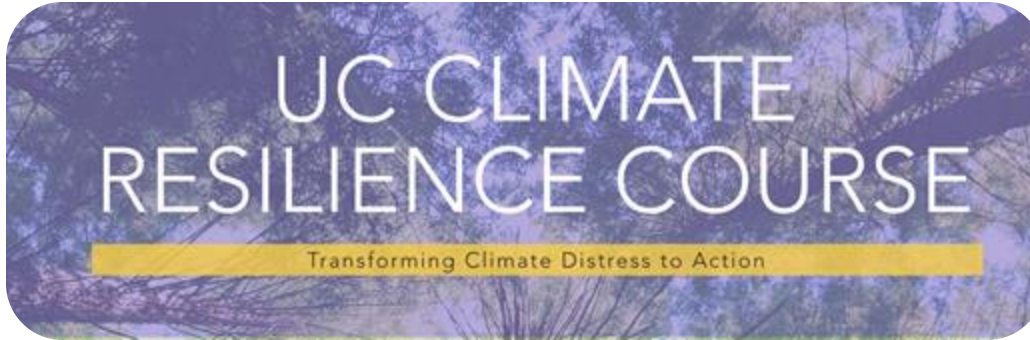
27% of young adults experience high anxiety, 3 times more than older adults (CDC, 2024)

Globally, 59% of young adults very/extremely worried about climate change. (*Hickman et al, Lancet, 2021*)



Climate Disasters are ACES
(Adverse Childhood Experiences)

Addressing Climate Anxiety in Youth & Building Community Resilience



Preprints with THE LANCET

Outcomes of a Novel Experiential Psychosocial Climate Resilience Course for Young Adults

15 Pages • Posted: 7 Nov 2024

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[More...](#)

<https://www.climate resilience.online/>

Resilience Coordinating Networks can engage residents to build population-level resilience

- 1) Build robust **social support networks** → mutual aid networks
- 2) Become "**trauma and resilience-informed**" (understand effects of toxic stresses and traumas, and practices for emotion regulation)
- 3) Establish culturally-appropriate **healing opportunities** and wellness practices such as healthy diet
- 4) Engage residents in building **safe, healthy, zero emission and climate resilient physical** (e.g. housing, transportation, open space), and **economic** (local low-emission businesses)

Resources:

**UC's Center for Climate & Health:
Wildfire webinars & Climate Resilience Class**

WWW.ClimateResilience.Online

**Resilience Network examples
(Dr. Bob Doppelt):**

<https://itrcoalition.org/policy-work/>