

# REENTRY

## FALL 2021



**NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP**  
Risk Management Committee - Mental Health Subcommittee



## Is the fire season ever really over?

Hopefully it's at least slowing down enough for you to re-enter your personal life. Watch out though, because reentry can be bumpy!

We spend a lot of time and energy preparing for fire season. But how do we prepare for reentry back home? Transitioning from a busy, mission-focused environment to less structured down time can be like having the rug pulled out from under you. While your body may be ready for a nap, your hyper-vigilant mind may be unable to adapt so quickly. Getting back to life at home can be stressful in its own way.

Your family and friends may not be mentally prepared for your return from the field either. The initial reunion can be fun and exciting, but disruption sometimes follows. Their routines have been working in your absence and it's going to take time to readjust.



## Here are some tips to prepare yourself, your family, and your friends for a smooth reentry:

Tips for You	Tips for Family and Friends
Have a good AAR/debrief/close-out before you leave work. Provide yourself closure on this fire season.	Realize that your firefighter is probably exhausted and will need to catch up on some rest.
Establish a buddy check system with a co-worker so you have someone to call if needed. Remain connected to your fire network.	You're probably exhausted too. Are there ways you can both rest?
Plan to reintegrate slowly once home. Ease back into routines instead of trying to take over.	There may be a lot to do and a lot of people who want to catch up with your firefighter. Resist doing too much at once.
Avoid making important permanent changes right away.	
Expect things to be a little different than you remember.	Spend some time briefing your firefighter on what's changed. They're used to briefings!

Tips to prepare yourself, your family, and your friends, continued.

Tips for You	Tips for Family and Friends
There's probably a to-do list waiting for you, but it doesn't have to be done all at once.	Go through the to-do list in your briefing and set a reasonable pace for completion.
Be prepared for a handoff from your spouse on kid shuttles, chores, grocery shopping, etc. They need a break too!	Take some well-deserved time for yourself! Vanishing for two weeks may not work so well, but set some realistic breaks.
Kids will adjust at their own pace, and that's OK. Make sure they know there is no pressure.	
Once rested and comfortable, talk about your individual experiences with each other. The fire life can be hard on everyone, and it helps to understand how it affects both sides.	
Spend plenty of time with loved ones, but also make time for yourself.	
Make a list of fun things you want to do this winter.	
Set physical and mental health fitness goals as well.	

## If it's not going well:

No one is invulnerable to stress, fatigue, and trauma – there is no shame in admitting it!

- Everyone handles things differently. There is no right way to recover, but there are some unhealthy ways to avoid, like bingeing on food, drink, drugs, etc. Some healthy ways, like exercise, can keep you happy and healthy in the winter.
  - ◇ The Center for Firefighter Behavioral Health has an alcohol use and misuse app worth checking out:  
<http://www.pocketpeer.org/>
- Recognize the warning signs of chronic stress and seek help. The longer you ignore it, the greater the chance of PTSD.
  - ◇ Take a look at these resources to help with stress and trauma:  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/disaster-types/wildfires>  
<https://www.mindful.org/how-to-recognize-and-overcome-trauma/>
- Are you or someone close to you considering suicide? Ask them (or yourself) and if so, seek help!
  - ◇ See the Useful Websites section of our homepage:  
<https://www.nwcg.gov/committees/mental-health-subcommittee>



## Did you know that resources are available for the entire family?

Most Employee Assistance Programs also cover family members and there are also resources like:

Everyone Goes Home Fall Podcasts:  
<https://www.everyonegoeshome.com/2016/08/03/initiative-13/>