

Speak Out Loud:

Stories of Strength from the Southern Downs

EPISODE: PREPARATION, HEALING AND HOPE

GUEST: Sue Frances

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SUMMARY OF EPISODE

Sue Frances is a long term resident of the Granite Belt in the Southern Downs Region. She lives on the edge of Stanthorpe on 5 acres of beautiful bushland with rugged patches of exposed granite that makes this landscape so unique. Sue has generously shared her experiences of the 2019 bushfire with us. I'm sure you will find this conversation both informative as well as inspirational.

Listen to the podcast conversation to hear Sue explain:

- her deep connection to the land and wildlife
- the period of time leading up to the bushfires that burnt through the region in 2019 and again in early 2020
- how several years of low rainfall increased the fire hazard
- the unexplained urge to step up her preparation for the possibility of a bushfire in 2019
- the value of participating in neighbourhood fire education meetings
- the practical preparations she undertook to reduce the fire risk on her property
- the importance of having a fire plan and enacting it
- what it was like to return home and see her house intact after the fire
- the powerful mindset flip that was a turning point in her recovery journey
- what has been most helpful throughout her recovery journey and what hasn't been helpful
- her thoughts about the possibility of future bushfires
- the importance of a sense of purpose and being able to see the bigger picture

TOP 3 TAKEAWAYS / TIPS

The Top 3 Takeaways that I gained from my conversation with Sue that can support you on your recovery journey are:

1. Be diligent about preparing and planning for bushfire safety including educating yourself about what you can do to minimise risk on your property, to minimise risk of fires in our changing climate, and to keep you and your household safe in the event of a fire. This starts a long time before the fire season.
2. Nature can be a space of healing for us, but nature also needs us to take a turn at helping it to heal after disasters. Look at the situation differently – look at the minutia instead of only at the expanded view. Notice the smaller things that need your help. Observe the changes day to day.
3. Work towards something that gives you a sense of hope and purpose. You may not see the outcome in your own lifetime but it's important to hold onto your ideals and connect with people who validate them.

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BONUS TAKEAWAY!

This one is good to remember if you find yourself in the position of supporting someone who has been through a really tough experience. When people are hurting or experiencing distress, it can be tempting to minimise their situation in a well-meaning effort to reduce their distress and help them move quickly on to a brighter future. It's important that after disasters or any sort of a crisis that we acknowledge the pain and distress that the other person is feeling even if we don't understand why they feel that way. We all experience things differently internally and acknowledging the other person's experience can go a long way towards supporting them on their recovery journey.

RESOURCES MENTIONED IN THE PODCAST

The Granite Belt Sustainable Action Network (GBSAN)

<https://www.gbsan.org.au/>

Emergency Services – Fire, Ambulance, Police

P: 000 (Triple Zero)

Crisis Support - “Lifeline”

24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention services

P: 13 11 14

Local hospitals

Find your closest hospital on the Darling Downs here:

<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/darlingdowns>

General Practitioner (GP)

My GP is _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

QUEENSLAND

Current bushfires and warnings

<https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/Current-Incidents>

Current Bushfire Incidents

<https://www.getready.qld.gov.au/alerts-and-warnings/current-bushfire-incidents>

Queensland Rural Fire Service

<https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/about-us/frontline-services/rural-fire-service>

Make your Bushfire Survival Plan

<https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/bushfires>

Prepare for bushfire season

<https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/prepare/bushfire/prepare-for-bushfire-season>

Know your risk

<https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/prepare/bushfire/know-your-risks>

Tune in to Warnings

<https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/prepare/bushfire/tune-in-to-warnings>

NSW

NSW Rural Fire Service – Fires Near Me (web version)

<https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/fires-near-me>

Apps

Fires Near Me NSW (Apple and Android)

Kathryn Walton

Kathryn Walton Consulting and Outdoors is my Therapy

<https://www.kathrynwalton.com.au/>

Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN

<https://www.ddwmpnh.com.au/>

Use the clickable map to find mental health services in the region

The information shared in the podcast and handouts is intended for general support only.

To the best of our knowledge, this information was correct at the time of publishing.

Please consult with your doctor or health provider for support based on your individual needs.

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