Many of us look forward to summer all year long. We live surrounded by nature’s beauty– filled with summertime activities like hiking, camping, boating, and fishing. However, have you noticed dread that seems to permeate conversations this summer? A word kept popping up in conversations – smoke!

This anxiety regarding smoke and fire danger is understandable. Last summer, the Rogue Valley experienced the worst air quality in the country! And the destruction that took place in our neighboring communities of Redding and Paradise struck us very close to home.

Of course, these recent tragedies remind us how important it is to be ready to evacuate in the event of fire danger. But what about the mental and emotional toll from the chronic stress associated with worrying about these events?

As a counselor, I’ve seen the impact fear of another smoky summer has had on our mental health as individuals and as a community. I’ve given much thought about how we can approach this fire season, whether we are experiencing smoky conditions or worried we will.

Here are 10 ways to optimize your resilience during smoky summers:

**Take the necessary steps to be physically prepared for disaster.** If you’re worried that you and your family are not prepared to safely evacuate, this will drain you emotionally.

**Frontload outdoor activities in early summer.** This will give you a reservoir of enjoyable outdoor experiences to evoke if you are indoors due to smoke later in the summer.

**Be flexible about vacation dates and locations.** Can you schedule your travel vacation for late summer when there is a higher chance of smoke and high temperatures locally? Do you have friends or family out of town that you can visit if things take a turn for the worse?

**Get familiar with nearby getaways.** Learn now how to read the smoke index online for other areas in our region. Sometimes, a little fresh air can be as close as a drive to Mt. Ashland.
**Remember we’re in this together.** Being cooped up indoors can heighten our sense of isolation. Don’t neglect your community this summer. See if you can volunteer or reach out to help others in need.

**Plan indoor parties and get-togethers.** Instead of bemoaning the fact that you can’t have a barbecue on the patio, invite friends over for a wine tasting or game night. Look for indoor exercise alternatives such as SOU indoor track, Rogue Valley mall, YMCA etc.

**Learn or master a new skill.** Think about productive ways you can spend time indoors learning something that interests you. Is there an instrument you want to learn? How about a language? Could you brush up on a business skill? There are classes in our community or online.

**Tackle an indoor project.** Instead of feeling glum because you’re inside, get some tasks off your to-do list. Organize your family photos or read that book you’ve been meaning to get to all year.

**Reflect on past challenges.** When we experience difficulties, we have the opportunity to grow. Think back about challenges you’ve successfully met, and then gain strength and insight from that awareness.

**Speak positively.** Our words have power. Even if you’re tempted, don’t share in the “isn’t it awful” conversations with friends and acquaintances. Instead, share what you have been doing and enjoying despite any smoke. And having a sense of humor about it never hurts!

For even more ideas visit my website: [https://healthyoptimism.com/13-ways-to-cope-with-smoke-from-wildfires-this-season](https://healthyoptimism.com/13-ways-to-cope-with-smoke-from-wildfires-this-season)

We can’t control the fire season, but we do have control over our attitude. By implementing these suggestions you’ll find it much easier to maintain a healthy optimistic perspective, even if we do experience another difficult and smoky fire season. Look for the silver lining and take advantage of the beautiful days we do have. Enjoy your summer – whether it’s indoors or outdoors!

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Allan Weisbard has a master’s degree in social work and four decades of counseling experience. His website HealthyOptimism.com has tips, articles and strategies to increase your resilience.