



FORGED FROM FIRE

THE MAKING OF THE BLACKSMITHS' TREE

SCREENING GUIDE

ABOUT THE FILM

Andrew Garton's film, *Forged from Fire: The Making of the Blacksmiths' Tree*, documents an inspiring story of recovery that grew as a response to the Black Saturday fires which devastated townships northeast of Melbourne in February 2009. The Blacksmiths' Tree began with designer and metal artist, Amanda Gibson, who gathered a local and international team of blacksmiths and volunteers to create a nine-metre steel and copper gum tree as a memorial to those people who were touched by the fires. *Forged from Fire* follows the tree's journey from inception to installation, capturing stories of resilience, connectedness and hope along the way.



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The Black Saturday fires were the worst in Australia's recorded history and profoundly affected the people of Victoria, especially those people living in small, rural communities northeast of Melbourne. Although *Forged from Fire* is a story of hope and renewal, it is underpinned by an event that caused immeasurable harm, loss and trauma for many affected by the fires. This guide is designed to provide a resource that supports the sensitive screening of *Forged from Fire* and facilitates conversations and connections between viewers. Whether you are a school, university, community group, or other organisation, this guide will assist you in planning your event to ensure you provide a safe space for people to view the film, share their stories, connect with others, and find support.

In this brochure, you will find:

- Things to consider when planning your event/screening
- Mental Health First Aid tips for responding to someone in distress
- Resources, including support contacts and information about how this guide was made

Accompanying this brochure is a digital collection of resources, which includes:

- A brief explanation of the framework used to inform this guide
- Tips and considerations to support your event/screening
- Information about the signs of post-traumatic stress, and post-traumatic growth
- Suggested activities to support your screening, including example running sheets
- Resources, including sample grounding exercises and support contacts

As a facilitator, this resource is designed to guide you by providing suggestions, tips and recommendations; however, it is not intended to be prescriptive. We hope this guide enables you to carefully consider your audience and to tailor your screening to respond to their specific needs.

PLANNING YOUR SCREENING

Who will be attending your event/screening?

Thinking about your audience will be important when planning your event and will inform where you hold the screening, what resources you might provide, and what specific needs your audience might have.

Here are some questions to consider:

- What will the age range of your viewers be?
- Will your audience include people or communities who may have been affected by fires?
- Is anyone in your audience likely to have additional needs, such as special access requirements or time limitations?
- Is your audience likely to include people who have experienced recent trauma, and is a screening appropriate at this time?

Once you have an idea of your audience, you can begin to plan what resources you might need. For example, do you need to provide age-appropriate calming resources for children (e.g., colouring books) or plan for family groups to sit near one another (i.e., social connectedness).



Where are you planning to hold your event/screening?

To some extent, location will be dictated by your audience: how many people, their specific needs, etc. In addition, however, you might also consider the following:

- How will the venue be set up? Sensory stimulation (e.g., lights, music, crowds) can sometimes become overwhelming. Think of ways to provide a relatively calm, orderly and predictable environment (e.g., soft lighting and music, not overcrowded), which will be more likely to support viewers to regulate their emotions.
- What will be the location of your event/screening? If your event/screening is taking place in a rural area where most of the audience is likely to know one another, there may be different cultural expectations, social supports and ways of connecting than if it were being held in a metropolitan area where the audience is less likely to know one another.
- Do you have capacity to provide a separate area should people require a quiet space to calm down, connect with others, or utilise resources (e.g. mindful colouring books, onsite mental health first aid officers, etc.).

How will your event/screening be structured?

The film itself runs for approximately 60 minutes. Planning for other activities and having a plan for the overall structure of your event will help promote a sense of safety and facilitate a positive and manageable experience for your viewers. Some things to consider prior to your event/screening include:

- Developing a plan and running sheet, including expected timeframes for the overall event/screening and any activities is important.
- Clearly communicating the event/screening schedule to your viewers. You might like to tell people what they can expect at the beginning of the event/screening or you could create a printed program that is distributed to viewers on arrival.

For some viewers, the event/screening may be emotionally and physically tiring. Keeping activities relatively short, avoiding running activities consecutively, and scheduling breaks can be useful and should be considered within the context of your audience (e.g., young children, older adults).

Will your event/screening include a discussion or activities?

Thinking carefully about what activities and facilitators will be involved in the screening is important. If the screening is taking place in a fire-affected area, there is an increased likelihood that viewers will be emotionally impacted and may become distressed. If you are planning activities to accompany your screening, you may wish to consider the following factors:

- Utilising a trauma-informed approach to discussion/activities associated with the screening. This may reduce the likelihood of re-traumatisation and encourage a more positive experience of the event (see digital resource “Tips, Considerations and Information” for more information regarding trauma-informed approach).
- Sometimes communities already have local mental health professionals and community members who are skilled in responding to trauma and distress; sometimes outside support is required. When planning your event/screening consider existing resources and whether or not you require additional support, for example facilitators who are specialised in responding to trauma.
- If you are holding your screening in a specific setting, consider what resources are appropriate and what you already have available. For example, if you are in a school, you may have access to Student Support Services Officers who can assist with facilitation.
- Providing a ‘safe space’ for discussion and activities where viewers can participate in a way that validates their experience and minimises the likelihood of distress (see digital resource “Tips, Considerations and Information” for more information regarding creating a ‘safe space’).





Are you prepared?

Careful preparation will help your event/screening run smoothly and enable you to respond sensitively and appropriately to most eventualities. Ways in which you might do this include:

- Ensuring facilitators are prepared to address the audience/participants' responses to the screening in an informed way may require engaging workers who are trained in responding to trauma.
- Remaining alert to indicators of distress (see digital resource "Post-Traumatic Stress and Growth" for a list of signs and symptoms). Prior to screening, a well-formulated and articulated plan should be developed for staff to support viewers who are showing signs of distress (see below).
- Gathering resources prior to the event that can support viewers during the event/screening and also after the screening (e.g., calming activities, access to information about external support services).

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE BECOMES DISTRESSED

Mental Health First Aid provides a guide to responding to someone in distress and includes the following:

- Approach, Assess and Assist – Find a suitable time and space where you are likely to feel comfortable to approach the distressed person; assess their level of distress, which will inform the assistance you offer (e.g., a cup of tea, grounding exercise, engaging external support).
- Listen Non-judgementally – Use verbal and non-verbal listening skills that convey empathy and understanding, and validate the person's experience (e.g., providing space for the person to talk without interrupting, reflecting the person's words, nodding your head, attending to the person without becoming distracted or distressed yourself).
- Give Support and Information – Offering emotional support, reassurance and information can be very helpful to the distressed person.
- Encourage the Person to Seek Appropriate Professional Help – People who are experiencing difficulties with their mental health may benefit from a variety of supports (e.g., counselling, support for family members) but may not be aware of what is available to them. Be aware of resources in your community and be prepared to offer these to distressed attendees.
- Encourage Other Supports – Encourage the distressed person to use self-help strategies (e.g., grounding) and to seek support from family, friends and others.

When engaging with someone who is distressed, it is helpful to remain mindful of your pace and tone of voice. Try to slow things down, use a calm tone and closed questions (e.g., Who is available to support you? How do I contact them?).

If you, as a facilitator, feel distressed, remember to seek support for yourself to cope with your emotions.



THE FRAMEWORK

This resource utilises a framework that includes the principles of safety, calming, self and collective efficacy, connectedness, and hope. These principles are empirically supported to guide and inform effective intervention for survivors of mass trauma (e.g. natural disasters such as bushfire) and were used by the Victorian Government, Department of Health to inform community recovery in the wake of the Black Saturday fires. The principles are explained in more detail in the digital resource “The Framework” provided with this brochure.

RESOURCES

Emergency Services: 000

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

Better Health Channel: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/trauma

Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health: www.phoenixaustralia.org/recovery

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For more information about Forged from Fire, and this screening guide, visit **forgedfromfirefilm.com**



Secession/Films ⇌



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