



Book explores recovery from catastrophic loss

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Evacuated during the Woolsey fire in 2018, author and psychologist Dr. Noelle Nelson grabbed her dogs, laptop, mother's jewelry and drove off, expecting to return as she had three times before to a smoky but intact home.

Not this time. Her Malibu home burned to the ground. She had nothing but the clothes on her back and the things she took with her.

The Camarillo resident's experience is similar to many others who experience catastrophic loss each year. It prompted her to write "Phoenix Rising: Surviving Catastrophic Loss: Fires, Floods, Hurricanes and Tornadoes."

The book explores the trauma of losing all one's possessions in a disaster, the photos and memorabilia of a lifetime, and how to survive the immediate aftermath and find the strength to start a new chapter in life.

"The biggest take-away from my experience is that though I had nothing, as in 'no thing,' in reality I had everything," Nelson said. "Namely, I discovered how wonderful people are and how miracles abound as long as you stay connected not just to your family, but to your community, to your friends, and allow in the kindness of total strangers. That was what really blew me away. The astonishing generosity and compassion of perfect strangers. It's what helped me through that first year and then some."

Her book looks at what to expect emotionally, physically and mentally during the early days and months after a catastrophe, where and how to ask for help in the midst of the shock and grief, and how, despite a life-changing event, it's possible to rise from the ashes stronger and better than before.

"My hope is that sharing my story and what I experienced will help others get through similar horrific events," she said.

The book is available in paperback, audio and on Kindle.