



Supporting a family member or friend who is a victim of crime

As a family member or friend of a victim of crime you may feel very distressed and confused, shocked or upset by hearing what has happened to someone you know and love. During this time you may wish to provide assistance, but perhaps are unsure how best to support the person you care for.

Common feelings and reactions a victim of crime may experience

- anxiety, stress and fear
- emotional & physical withdrawal or depression
- anger & frustration
- feelings of being out of control and disempowered
- vulnerability and feeling unsafe
- a loss of interest and feeling disconnected from the world
- sleeping problems, including nightmares, vivid dreams and flashbacks
- changes in eating habits
- difficulty talking about the crime and how they feel
- difficulty concentrating or forgetting appointments.

These reactions are normal, and may continue for days, weeks or even months.

Common feelings and reactions you may experience supporting a victim of crime

- uncertainty as to what to do next or how to help the victim
- uncertainty as to whether the victim will ever recover
- a feeling of helplessness and powerlessness
- anger or wanting to seek revenge on behalf of the victim
- confusion and worry

- self-blame
- struggle in getting the balance between support and "over-protective" right.

What you can do to assist the victim

- Believe the victim's story and reassure the victim that it is not their fault.
- Be patient and allow the victim to recover in their own time and at their own pace.
- Offer assistance and reassurance that you are there to support them.
- Understand that outbursts of emotion, anger and frustration are normal and try not to take these personally.
- Understand that not wanting to talk about the crime is also normal and this may come with time and ongoing support. However, it is important not to avoid and pretend that the crime did not happen.
- Do not force the victim to do something they feel uncomfortable doing, such as expecting them to talk when they are not ready.
- Try not to over simplify the crime and the effect this has had on the victim.
- If you are unsure how to help, simply ask the victim what they need.
- Encourage the victim to seek support or counselling.
- If you notice the victim is not improving over time encourage them to speak to their GP.

What you can do for yourself

- Try not to blame yourself.
- Take care of yourself by exercising, taking time out and eating healthy foods.
- Seek counselling or support if you feel you are unable to cope or be of further assistance to the victim.

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There are generally two types of victims of crime

Primary victim

A primary victim is a person who:

- has sustained an injury as a direct result of an act of violence; or
- is injured while trying to prevent someone from committing an act of violence.

Secondary victim

A secondary victim of crime is a person who:

- has sustained an injury as a direct result of witnessing the act of violence that resulted in the death or injury of a primary victim; or
- is a parent or guardian who sustained injury as a direct result of becoming aware of the act of violence of which their child (under 18 years at the time of the act of violence) was a primary victim.

If you are a secondary victim of crime you may be eligible to receive counselling through the Approved Counselling Scheme. Please contact the Victims Support Line.

The Victims Support Line

The Victims of Crime Bureau provides a 24-hour telephone support, information and referral service. You can phone the service and talk to a trained support worker.

Phone (Metropolitan area only) (02) 8688 5400
Freecall 1800 633 063
TTY (9am-5pm) (02) 8688 5575
National Relay Service 133 677
Website www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

Other places of support

Local Community Services Association

Phone (02) 9660 2044
Freecall 1800 646 545
Provides information about your closest neighbourhood/ community centre in your area of residence, where you may be able to seek counselling, referrals and support groups.

Lifeline

Phone 13 11 14