

Are You a Victim?

A victim of crime is a person who has suffered physical or emotional injury, or financial loss because of a crime. Victims of crime may have:

- been injured in a violent attack
- experienced a sexual assault, or
- been the subject of a robbery.

Crime often affects more than just the direct victim, with witnesses to a crime and family members of a person injured or killed also affected.

The effects of crime can produce many different feelings for you, your family, friends and your community.

How you may feel

You may initially feel numb and not believe that this has happened to you. This is a common reaction. You may then begin to experience physical symptoms and a mix of feelings, some of which will come and go. These symptoms and feelings may include:

- emptiness or numbness
- fear or anxiety
- nightmares or insomnia
- exhaustion
- sadness or depression
- guilt, shame or a feeling of dirtiness
- anger or irritability
- grief and loss
- feelings of loss of privacy and control
- panic and confusion
- helplessness or a feeling of being deserted
- physical symptoms of illness

It is important for you to know that these reactions are natural and a part of the process of dealing with a traumatic event. In many cases they are temporary and, with support from family and friends, these feelings will go away in time. In some cases, however, they may create longer term issues affecting your ongoing health, relationships and lifestyle. It is important to look after yourself and to seek help and support from others. This may be from friends and family or it may be from a victim support service.

Coping with these feelings

Everyone reacts and deals with their feelings in their own way. The following are tips that may help you:

- talk about how you feel with someone you trust
- structure your life as much as possible
- defer major life decisions
- accept that you may have good days and bad days
- eat regularly and nutritiously
- make sure you get physical exercise
- limit the use of alcohol and drugs
- keep a journal of how you feel each day (this can also help you later if you write a Victim Impact Statement)
- be kind and gentle with yourself