

Impact of Personal Victimization

Unlike victims of accidents and disease, victims of crime are often faced with the realization that their suffering is the product of another person's intentionally singling them out for harm. From this disquieting realization, victims may come to distrust others and to view their world as more hostile and less safe. While most people are able to disregard possible threats by believing it could never happen to them, victims of crime come to the grim realization that they were not safe within their own environment. They expand on what could have happened. Disillusionment, anger, and the feeling that their "equilibrium" has been disturbed is very common. During the first or impact stage, there may even be more feelings of vulnerability, instability and anxiety. These are all normal responses to what has occurred.

The "re-visitation" of the trauma often comes as a surprise to the victim who thinks he or she can "deal" with the incident. They move on with their life when, in reality, everything has changed. Suddenly, they are reliving the experience again.

Many people wonder why they are not "letting go". One reason may be that in many situations the victim experienced a LOSS OF CONTROL. That leaves a feeling of helplessness. It is important to try to rebuild trust in the community and redevelop a sense of safety and security.

Overall victimization may be affected by the victim's *total life experience*, including their own personality characteristics, the availability of social support, the extent of injury and other stressors in their life.

Here are some response tips:

Talk about it

Talking about your experiences with someone you trust. It is healthy to reach out to others.

Drink water

Why? Water decreases the adrenalin levels in your body.

Recognize that *whatever* you did is right.

You are here to talk about it. Most things are easily replaceable. You are not!

Sight, smell, and sounds often trigger memories of ugly events. It is important for you to grab control of the memory when it triggers, so that you are controlling it not it controlling you!

Write down your feelings as a result of the crime. Include your most immediate problems and a game plan to attempt to handle the issues as they arise.

Know that with time a state of balance both internally and in relationship to the environment will again be achieved.