

## **IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF BANK ROBBERY**

You've all seen a pebble drop into a pool of water and noticed the ripples which are produced by the impact of that pebble. A similar ripple occurs from person to person when a crime occurs.

As an employee, you have been exposed to a crime in your work setting. Even if you were not directly confronted during the incident, you may experience reactions from your exposure to the robbery or attempted robbery.

How people react to these events varies from person to person and is affected by individual factors such as how you usually handle stressful situations and what kind of support you have both inside and outside of work.

Your reaction may be immediate or may be delayed. You may experience symptoms that are physical, emotional, or cognitive (involving your thinking ability).

### **IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THAT THESE ARE NORMAL FEELINGS, BEHAVIORS AND REACTIONS TO AN ABNORMAL EVENT.**

*Employees who have been through a robbery or an attempted robbery report having a variety of experiences.*

### **FEAR**

They are afraid of leaving the bank, being in public, or being re-victimized. They are afraid the robber will find them or will come back.

### **HYPER-ALERTNESS**

They find that they startle easily: they "jump" when suddenly approached by customers or when they hear loud sounds.

### **GUILT**

They feel that they could have done something differently; they wonder if they could have prevented the incident, or if they didn't do something they should have.

### **ANGER**

They are enraged that their life has been disrupted and that they no longer feel safe or in control.

### **ISOLATION**

They feel that they are the only ones who are having reactions to the event; they feel isolated from family and friends, and they feel no one can understand what they have been through.

### **COMMON EMOTIONAL & PHYSICAL RESPONSES**

- ◆ Irritability, which may be directed at family and friends.
- ◆ Loss of motivation - feeling blue or depressed.
- ◆ Apathy and indifference
- ◆ Chronic fatigue and flashbacks

### **COPING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF CRIME VICTIMIZATION**

Awareness and understanding are crucial in beginning to deal effectively with this event in your life. You can begin by being aware that you MAY react in some of the ways we have discussed. Remember that your reactions are normal.

1. You may find you react to sights, sounds, smells, and textures that were present at the time of the crime and which remind you of the incident.
2. Sometimes being exposed to a traumatic event may trigger memories of past events in your life. Perhaps you have been victimized before, or have lost someone close to you. You may once again find yourself experiencing feelings related to these earlier events.
3. Feelings of vulnerability and helplessness are frequent after victimization. One of the first things to pay attention to is your need to feel safe again. Take any precaution which will make you feel safer. Some examples might include:
  - ◆ Having someone drive you to work and pick you up at the end of the day.
  - ◆ Following procedures that will protect you from as much risk as possible at work or at home.
  - ◆ Making your daily schedule as predictable and routine as possible for awhile to return some control and stability to your life.

### **EVERYONE REACTS DIFFERENTLY TO TRAGIC EVENTS, SO BE PREPARED FOR A VARIETY OF REACTIONS AT A VARIETY OF TIMES.**

**Support from all sources is especially important at this time to help the victim function normally after the incident. Typically, the levels of support include:**

#### **1. Your work group**

Often, the people you work with have gone through the trauma with you and know how you feel. Talk to each other about your feelings and support each other. Also, share the following with your co-workers:

- ◆ Don't startle, surprise, or pretend to aim a real or imaginary gun at the victim.
- ◆ Don't feel rejected when victims want time alone.
- ◆ Healing takes an enormous amount of psychic energy. Be prepared for mood swings which include anger, depression, and feeling that "nothing good ever happens to me."

#### **2. Your community**

You may find this support in friends, professional counselors, the clergy, or other significant people in your life.

#### **3. Your family**

They will need to know what has happened and what to expect. They will react to your experience, but may not have the information needed to deal with it as you do. Please remember that children are very perceptive. Do not underestimate their ability to understand and deal with life's trauma. Let your child know that you are all right.

## SOME IDEAS FOR CO-WORKERS AND FAMILY

- ◆ Allow the victim to talk about the event even long after you are tired of hearing about it.
- ◆ Don't minimize the fear or seriousness of the event as a way of "helping." This may lead the victim to feel that you don't understand the event or sympathize with fears that normally occur after such a traumatic event.
- ◆ Don't ask "why" questions. They put the blame on the victim.
- ◆ Even though you may want to "make it all better," understand that there is a healing process that victims must work through.
- ◆ Temporary sexual dysfunction is not an unusual reaction for victims.
- ◆ A desire for extra security precautions is normal. Examples may be locking house and car doors, using night lights, leaving radios and televisions on.
- ◆ Now is the time to be more considerate of "little things" such as:
  - Calling home if you expect to be delayed.
  - Helping with household tasks
  - Assuming responsibility for tasks the victim ordinarily performs.

## THE MEDIA

Although a spokesperson may have been designated to speak for your institution, you may also be contacted by the media. You have the right to decline comment.

## PREPARING TO TESTIFY

If the robber is apprehended, you may need to attend a line-up and you may be needed as a witness to testify in court. Someone from the United States Attorney's Office will keep you informed of the progress of your case and will help you through the criminal justice system. If you have any questions during this process, contact your respective Victim Assistance staff in your area. For Chattanooga and Greeneville call Amy Russell at (423)385-1341 and for Knoxville call Paige Chiaro at (865)225-1616.

## SUMMARY

It is important to allow yourself time to heal at your own pace. It is important that you actively seek support from your family, friends, co-workers, and possibly professional counseling and victim support groups.

## RIGHTS OF CRIME VICTIMS

As the victim of a crime you have the following rights:

- ◆ The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim's dignity and privacy.
- ◆ The right to be reasonably protected from the accused offender.
- ◆ The right to be notified of court proceedings and the right to information about the conviction, sentencing, imprisonment, and release of the offender.
- ◆ The right to be present and heard at all public court proceedings related to the offense, unless the court determines that testimony by the victim would be materially affected if the victim heard other testimony at trial.
- ◆ The right to confer with the attorney for the Government in the case.
- ◆ The right to restitution.
- ◆ The right to proceedings free from unreasonable delay.

## CRIME VICTIM COMPENSATION

Tennessee Criminal Injury Compensation is a program which provides financial help in cases where bodily injury or death results from criminal acts committed against innocent victims.

For Information regarding eligibility:

*Tennessee Criminal Injury Compensation Fund*  
in Nashville, TN

Phone: (615)741-2734

E-Mail: [criminal.injuries@tn.gov](mailto:criminal.injuries@tn.gov)

Website:

<https://treasury.tn.gov/Services/Claims-and-Risk-Management/Criminal-Injuries-Compensation>

## WHEN BANK EMPLOYEES BECOME A VICTIM OF A ROBBERY

**Information, Referral, and Support for Victims, their Families and Witnesses of Crime**



United States Attorney's Office  
Eastern District of TN

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