

IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF A 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 and customers who have been through a robbery, or an attempted robbery, may 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 that 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 in 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 the 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. And you can get help from the United States Attorney's Office, Victim/Witness Assistance Program. Our office will also refer you to Victim Services if the robbery is prosecuted by the District Attorney's Office.

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 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 will be delayed.
 - Helping with household tasks.
 - Assuming responsibility for tasks the victim ordinarily performs.

RESTITUTION

You may request restitution after a plea or guilty verdict, by completing a victim impact statement. Restitution may be ordered by a Judge for out of pocket expenses or losses related to the crime such as lost income. You may be reimbursed for lost income and necessary child care, transportation in the investigation or prosecution or attendance at proceedings related to the offense, by including such costs in your victim impact statement. It is important to keep a record of costs after the crime.

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. The Victim/Witness Assistance Program of the U.S. Attorney's Office will keep you informed of the progress of your case and will help you through the criminal justice system. You may also request to speak at sentencing of a convicted defendant about the impact of a crime. If you have any questions, contact the Victim Witness Assistance Program.

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 reasonably protected from the accused.
- The right to reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of any public court proceeding, or any parole proceeding, involving the crime or of any release or escape of the accused.
- The right not to be excluded from any such public court proceeding, unless the court, after receiving clear and convincing evidence, determines that testimony by the victim would be materially altered if the victim heard other testimony at that proceeding.
- The right to be reasonably heard at any public proceeding in the district court involving release, plea, sentencing, or any parole proceeding.
- The reasonable right to confer with the attorney for the Government in the case.
- The right to full and timely restitution as provided in law.
- The right to proceedings free from unreasonable delay.
- The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim's dignity and privacy.

The U.S. Attorney's Office will make their best efforts to ensure victims are accorded the rights described. Victims can seek the advice of an attorney with respect to these rights.

CRIME VICTIM COMPENSATION

You or your family may be eligible for reimbursement of your expenses if you have been a victim of a crime or if you have been injured while serving as a "Good Samaritan" or trying to prevent a crime. Reimbursement may be made for medical/counseling expenses and lost wages.

For information regarding eligibility call the California Victim Compensation Program at 1-800-777-9229, or the U.S. Attorney's Office Victim/Witness Assistance Program.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A CRIME VICTIM

WHEN BANK EMPLOYEES BECOME VICTIMS OF A ROBBERY

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



**Victim/Witness Assistance Program
United States Attorney's Office
Western District of North Carolina**

**Asheville: 828-271-4661
Charlotte: 704-344-6222
Toll Free: (844) 625-9886**