

Being harmed by another person - or when a loved one is harmed - changes things. It can change the way a person sees him/herself, the person who caused the harm, and the rest of the world. The effects of a crime should not be minimized. But there is hope for the future.

This brochure presents some ways you can help a loved one who has been victimized by a violent crime. As you help your loved one, it is important to remember that:

- 
- ❖ The crime was not your loved one's fault.
  - ❖ Your loved one may experience intense reactions.
  - ❖ You are not expected to "fix" the situation or provide therapy.
  - ❖ You may struggle with your own reactions to your loved one's victimization.
- 

*If someone you love has survived crime, there is help and there is hope.*



*Information in this brochure was adapted from the National Center for Victims of Crime's "Breaking Silence. Building Trust." and Justice Solutions' "Some 'Do's' and 'Don'ts' of Communicating with Victims."*

Partnership for Safety and Justice is a statewide advocacy organization dedicated to making Oregon's approach to public safety more effective and just. We are unique: in addition to working with traditional system stakeholders, we work with people most impacted by the justice system (survivors of crime, people convicted of crime, and the families of each), giving us a holistic perspective on needed system change.

We advocate for public safety policies that promote: safety; accountability; crime prevention; healing; rehabilitation; and justice.

## Partnership for Safety and Justice

825 NE 20<sup>th</sup> Ave #250  
Portland, OR 97232  
Phone: 503.335.8449  
Fax: 503.232.1922

[www.safetyandjustice.org](http://www.safetyandjustice.org)

# Helping a Loved One Who Survived Crime

Know Before You Need to Know



## THE IMPACT OF CRIME

People who have been harmed by violent crime usually experience a wide range of reactions that can seem overwhelming and confusing.

It is not your responsibility to understand the intricacies of the impact of crime or provide counseling - there are trained professionals who can do that. But there are some things that you can do and say that will be helpful.

## GOOD THINGS TO DO

**Believe.** Believe what your loved one tells you.

**Listen.** Focus on what your loved one tells you, not what you think or feel.

**Remain nonjudgmental.** Don't make your loved one feel guilty or blame him or her for the violence.

**Talk somewhere private.** Respect that your loved one may not want other people to know.

**Reassure.** Your loved one may feel like he or she is "going crazy." Let your loved one know that his or her brain is trying to make sense out of what happened. This can get better with help.

## HELPFUL THINGS TO SAY

Sometimes people don't know what to say to a loved one who was harmed by crime. It can be very helpful to tell your loved one:

- ❖ I'm sorry this happened to you.
- ❖ I believe you.
- ❖ You are not alone.
- ❖ You're not going crazy.
- ❖ It's not your fault.
- ❖ There is hope.
- ❖ I've heard about confidential programs that help people who have experienced crimes like this. Would you like me to help you find a program, so you'll have the number available if you ever want to call?

## DON'T SAY...

Sometimes people say things that are meant to be supportive, but they don't come across that way. Professionals who work with crime victims have found that the following statements are **not** helpful and should **not** be said:

- ❖ I understand.
- ❖ You're lucky that...
- ❖ Get over it.
- ❖ Try to be strong for...
- ❖ Calm down and try to relax.
- ❖ You should have... (Or I would have...)
- ❖ It was God's will.

## FINDING HELP

Throughout Oregon, there are trained professionals who can help people process the crime and rebuild their lives.

- ❖ Community-based victim assistance programs provide counseling, shelter, and support. Some provide services whether or not the person decides to report the crime.
- ❖ System-based victim assistance programs provide information, notification, and support to victims who have reported the crime and are going through the justice system.

It's possible that you will experience overwhelming and confusing reactions as you find out what happened to your loved one. Victim assistance programs can also help you process these reactions and figure out how to best help your loved one.

To find resources near you, visit the Online Directory of Crime Victim Services: <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/findvictimservices/> or call the National Victim Helpline: 1-800-FYI-CALL.