

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. Life can be very, very good.

This brochure presents a brief overview of some of the reactions that people may experience after they have been through a violent crime. While there are some reactions that are common for people to experience, it is important to remember that:

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- ❖ Every person is unique.
  - ❖ Every crime is unique.
  - ❖ Every person reacts to crime in a unique way.
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*If you have survived crime, there is help and there is hope.*



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.

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# Surviving Crime

There is Help  
There is Hope



## THE IMPACT OF CRIME

People who have been harmed by violent crime - or have had a loved one harmed - can experience a wide range of reactions after the crime. These reactions are unique based on each person's previous life experiences, his/her amount of personal and social support, and the assistance services available.

There are some common reactions that occur as a person tries to consciously and subconsciously make sense out of what happened. These reactions can feel overwhelming and confusing. With safety, assistance, and support, the reactions can subside and the person can feel better.

### Immediate & Short-term Reactions

The brain's primary purpose is to keep a person alive. One of the main ways it does this is by making sure that a person is not in danger. When a violent crime occurs and a person is in danger, the brain's chemicals change to help that person get out of the dangerous situation. This change throws off the way a brain usually processes information. It can take time, assistance, and support for a person to regain a sense of control.

When the crime occurs, people may experience:

- ❖ Shock, surprise, and terror
- ❖ Denial or belief that "this can't really be happening to me"
- ❖ Rapid heart rate, anxiety, digestive problems
- ❖ The desire to fight, run away, or go along with the situation in order to stay alive
- ❖ One sense (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell) becomes heightened and the others are dulled

In the first few weeks after the crime, people may experience:

- ❖ Trouble sleeping, eating, and concentrating
- ❖ Confusion
- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Sorrow
- ❖ Feeling guilty
- ❖ Numbness or feeling "in a fog"
- ❖ Feeling "on edge;" being very aware of all surroundings
- ❖ Preoccupation with the crime; experiencing flashbacks
- ❖ Feeling unsafe; wondering when the next attack will occur
- ❖ Fear that people won't believe what happened or will blame you
- ❖ Feeling like you aren't in control

When people experience ongoing abuse (such as child abuse, domestic violence, or stalking), these reactions can be even more overwhelming.

### Long-term Reactions

Some people still experience strong reactions to the crime a few weeks or months after it occurred. These reactions may develop into:

- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- ❖ Anxiety disorders
- ❖ Sleep disorders
- ❖ Eating disorders - loss of appetite, anorexia, bulimia, or excessive eating
- ❖ Questioning religious, political, and/or social beliefs
- ❖ Withdrawing from social activities that once brought pleasure
- ❖ Thoughts of suicide
- ❖ Attempts to numb these feelings by using alcohol or drugs

## HELP IS AVAILABLE

These reactions are very difficult to experience, but there is hope! These reactions will not last forever, especially if you get help from a trained professional who can help you be safe and work through these difficult reactions.

**You are not alone. The crime was not your fault. Help is available.**

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