

# Assault

## What Is It?

Assault is a physical attack or a threat that causes fear of an attack. Victims of assault may be attacked by one or more people. An assault may include one or more types of harm, such as pushing, shoving, slapping, punching, or kicking. It may also include the use of weapons like knives, sticks, bottles, or bats. Common injuries from an assault include bruises, black eyes, cuts, scratches, and broken bones. Victims may even be killed during an assault. Even if the attack results in no physical injury to the victim, it still can be considered an assault.

There are many laws used to classify different kinds of assault. The classification can be based on injury, weapons used, or other circumstances of the crime. Any assault victim, though, injured or not, may experience emotional reactions to the crime.

Assault can happen to anyone. Most teen victims of assault report that they know who attacked them, and often the attacker is a family member, friend, or someone the victim knows from school or the neighborhood. If someone assaults you, it is important to tell an adult you trust and to contact the police.

## If you are a victim of assault, you might:

- Be shocked, angry, or afraid.
- Feel helpless because you could not prevent the assault.
- Have nightmares or flashbacks about the assault.
- Want to hurt the attacker(s).
- Think that you did something to cause the attack.
- Feel embarrassed about telling your family and friends.
- Feel any or all of the above, whether you were physically injured or not.

## You're Not Alone

- Assault is the most common violent crime in the United States.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2005, more than 1.2 million teens were victims of assault.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2005, slightly more males than females were victims of simple assault.<sup>3</sup>

## Get Help

Being assaulted is not your fault. It is important to remember that assault is a crime, and as an assault victim, you do not have to deal with this alone. There are people in your community who can help you.

To find someone who can help you, call the National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255) or a crisis hotline in your area. You might also talk to a trusted family member, a friend's parent, an adult neighbor or friend, an older sibling or cousin, or other person you trust.

- Consider calling the police.
- Some adults, such as teachers, counselors, and social workers, are required to talk to another authority about abuse of children and teens. You always have the right to ask whom your information will be shared with before you tell someone what happened.

## Help Yourself

- If you sense that you may not be safe, try to get to a safer place or to safer people.
- Try to stay in areas where there are other people around.
- If you are attacked and need medical treatment, call 911 and let your parent or another adult know as soon as possible.
- If you are attacked and you do not know the attacker, try to remember what the person looked like. It will be useful when you call the police.

## Help Someone Else

If you see or know someone who has been assaulted, you can:

- Call the police.
- Get a parent, teacher, or other adult to come help.
- Talk to the person who was assaulted. Tell them you want to help them, and encourage them to talk to a supportive adult.

## If You Want to Read More...

- about assault, or
- about assaults related to your race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability (hate crimes)

...see our GET HELP series at [www.ncvc.org/gethelp](http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp).

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1 Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2005: Statistical Tables*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006), Table 3.

2 Ibid, Table 1.

3 Ibid., Table 3.

# Bullying and Harassment

## What Is It?

Bullying is when one person hurts or threatens someone in their peer group. Anyone can be a bully, and bullying can be carried out in different ways. Physical bullying may include shoving, pushing, and hitting. Words and non-verbal behavior can also be used to hurt someone by spreading rumors, taking part in gossip, or threatening someone with looks, notes, or pictures. Bullies may choose to pick on peers who are smaller or younger than they are, or who are from a different race or culture, or they may pick on someone who is different in some other way.

Bullying might happen once or over and over again. If bullying includes physical or sexual harm or damage to property, makes you feel intimidated or afraid to go to school, or disrupts the regular school day in a threatening way, it is probably also assault or harassment. These behaviors are against school rules and many are also against the law. If a bully attacks you or steals something from you, you can report the incident to the police. You can also report school-related bullying to your school, and you should expect the school to take action to confront the behaviors, discipline the bully, and ensure your safety at school, traveling to and from school, and at school activities. Check with an adult in your school to find out more about your rights.

## If You Are a Victim of Bullying, You Might:

- Feel angry, sad, lonely, or depressed.
- Feel like you have no friends.
- Find that you are getting into fights.
- Want to hurt someone else or yourself.
- Feel like taking steps to defend yourself.
- Feel helpless to stop the bullying.
- Feel hopeless that anything can be done.
- Be afraid to go to school, or feel anxious all the time.
- Feel bad about yourself.

## You're Not Alone

- Almost 30 percent of teens in the United States (or over 5.7 million) are estimated to be involved in bullying as either a bully, a target of bullying, or both.<sup>1</sup>
- 5.4 percent of high school students (about 864,000 teens) report staying home at least one day a month because they fear for their safety.<sup>2</sup>

## Get Help

Being bullied is not your fault, and it is wrong. No matter what you say, how you look, or what you believe, nothing gives anyone else the right to make fun of or hurt you.

- Tell your parents and talk with them about how they can help you be safe.
- Tell a teacher, counselor, or your school's principal. They can take action to stop the bullying.
- Most schools are required to have a policy on bullying. If you feel that nobody in your school is helping you, find out what the policy is, and talk with the principal about how the policy applies to your case.
- If there is no policy in your school, talk with friends, a teacher, or the principal about creating one.

## Help Yourself

You have a right to be safe. There is no one right way to respond to a bully. It is not your fault if a bully continues to pick on you. Do the best you can to cope with bullying while it is happening and get support from adults to help you stay safe and support you emotionally.

## Help Someone Else

If you see bullying happening in your school, you can help put a stop to it.

- Refuse to join in teasing someone.
- Get a teacher, parent, or another adult to come help. You won't be snitching; you'll be taking a stand against bullying.
- Talk to the person being bullied. Tell the person you want to help him or her, and encourage him or her to talk to a supportive adult. Offer to go with the person.
- Report the bullying to an adult you trust.

## If You Want to Read More...

- about crimes that happen in schools, or
- about people being targeted because of their race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability (hate crimes),

...see our GET HELP series at [www.ncvc.org/gethelp](http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp).

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1 T.R. Nansel et al., "Bullying Behaviors among U.S. Youth: Prevalence and Association with Psychosocial Adjustment," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 285, no.16 (2001): 2094-2100.

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Surveillance Summaries," *MMWR* 53, no. Ss-2 (2004).

*"Someone touched me in a way  
that made me feel bad."*

# Child Sexual Abuse

## What Is It?

Child sexual abuse refers to any sexual contact with a child or teen. It includes many different acts. Some of these are touching the vagina, penis, or anus of a child; having a child touch the abuser's vagina, penis, or anus; putting an object, penis, or finger into the vagina or anus of a child; and showing a child pictures or movies of other people undressed or having sex. There are also other forms of child sexual abuse.

- Sexual abuse can happen to boys or girls of any race, ethnicity, or economic background.
- Sexual abuse is not a child's fault. The only person responsible for this kind of behavior is the abuser.

People who sexually abuse children usually know the victims before making sexual contact. Abusers can be anyone, even someone the victim used to look up to, like, or trust, such as a neighbor, babysitter, friend, or member of the family or household.

Most of the time, because abusers are often older, bigger, or more powerful than the victims, children are afraid of what will happen if they don't cooperate with the abuse or if they tell someone. Sometimes abusers will threaten or hurt victims in other ways to make them do what they want.

The age of children protected by child sexual abuse laws is different from state to state. In most states, sexual contact between an adult (18 years or older) and someone under 16 years old is child sexual abuse and is against the law, even if the abuser believes the young person agreed to the sexual activity. Children and young teens are protected from any sexual contact by adults and older teens because, when there is such a difference in power, sexual contact is harmful.

## If You Are a Victim of Child Sexual Abuse, You Might:

- Feel angry, sad, lonely, or depressed.
- Feel like you have no friends.

- Feel guilty, even though the abuse is not your fault.
- Want to hurt someone else or yourself.
- Feel like taking steps to defend yourself.
- Feel helpless to stop the abuser.
- Feel hopeless about whether anything can be done.
- Feel anxious all the time.
- Feel bad about yourself or your body.

## You're Not Alone

- Research suggests that child sexual abuse is common and highly underreported.
- Child sexual abuse has been reported up to 80,000 times a year.<sup>1</sup>
- Approximately 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 7 boys are sexually abused during childhood.<sup>2</sup>

## Get Help

Being sexually abused is not your fault. Nothing about what you say, the way you look, or your behavior gives anyone the right to use or hurt you. You have a right to ask for help.

- If you are sexually abused, you may need medical care. Try to get to a safer place and call 911. Tell a trusted parent or adult as soon as possible.
- Abuse is not a secret you have to keep. Keep telling until you get the help you need to feel safe.
- Tell a teacher, counselor, or principal at school if there is no one you can trust at home.
- Contact the police, a sexual assault or rape crisis counseling center, or child protective services for help. If you need help finding someone to call, contact the National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255).
- Some adults, such as teachers, counselors, and social workers, are required to talk to another authority about abuse of children and teens. You always have the right to ask whom your information will be shared with before you tell someone what happened.

## Help Yourself

You have the right to emotional support and counseling to heal from child sexual abuse.

## Help Someone Else

Child sexual abuse is a serious crime. If you know a child or teen who is being sexually abused, you can help put a stop to it.

- If a friend tells you that he or she was sexually abused, listen patiently and respectfully. Avoid being judgmental and believe what your friend tells you.
- Ask a teacher, parent, or another adult to help. You won't be snitching; you'll be taking a stand against abuse.

- Tell your friend that you want to help, and encourage him or her to talk to a supportive adult. Offer to go with your friend.
- Report the abuser to an adult you trust.
- Learn more about child sexual abuse and the healing process for victims.

### If You Want to Read More ...

- about adult survivors of child sexual abuse,
- about sexual assault,
- about male rape, or
- about incest,

...see our GET HELP series at [www.ncvc.org/gethelp](http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp).

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- 1 American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, "Facts for Families: Child Sexual Abuse," no. 9 (2004), <http://www.aacap.org/page.ww?name=Child+Sexual+Abuse&section=Facts+for+Families> (accessed July 14, 2008).
  - 2 John Briere and Diana M. Eliot, "Prevalence and Psychological Sequelae of Self-Reported Childhood Physical and Sexual Abuse in a General Population Sample of Men and Women," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 27, no. 10 (2003): 1205-1222.

*"The person I'm going out with  
scares me sometimes."*

# Dating Violence

## What Is It?

Dating violence is controlling, abusive, and aggressive behavior in a romantic relationship. It can happen in straight or gay relationships. It can include verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, or a combination.

## Controlling behavior may include:

- Not letting you hang out with your friends
- Calling or paging you frequently to find out where you are, whom you're with, and what you're doing
- Telling you what to wear
- Having to be with you all the time

## Verbal and emotional abuse may include:

- Calling you names
- Jealousy
- Belittling you (cutting you down)
- Threatening to hurt you, someone in your family, or himself or herself if you don't do what he or she wants

## Physical abuse may include:

- Shoving
- Punching
- Slapping
- Pinching
- Hitting
- Kicking
- Hair pulling
- Strangling



**Sexual abuse may include:**

- Unwanted touching and kissing
- Forcing you to have sex
- Not letting you use birth control
- Forcing you to do other sexual things
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Anyone can be a victim of dating violence. Both boys and girls are victims, but boys and girls abuse their partners in different ways. Girls are more likely to yell, threaten to hurt themselves, pinch, slap, scratch, or kick. Boys injure girls more and are more likely to punch their partner and force them to participate in unwanted sexual activity. Some teen victims experience physical violence only occasionally; others, more often.

**If You Are a Victim of Dating Violence, You Might...**

- Think it's your fault.
- Feel angry, sad, lonely, depressed, or confused.
- Feel helpless to stop the abuse.
- Feel threatened or humiliated.
- Feel anxious.
- Not know what might happen next.
- Feel like you can't talk to family and friends.
- Be afraid of getting hurt more seriously.
- Feel protective of your boyfriend or girlfriend.
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**You're Not Alone**

- One in five teens in a serious relationship reports having been hit, slapped, or pushed by a partner.<sup>1</sup>
- 50 to 80 percent of teens have reported knowing others who were involved in violent relationships.<sup>2</sup>
- Teens identifying as gay, lesbian, and bisexual are as likely to experience violence in same-sex dating relationships as youths involved in opposite sex dating.<sup>3</sup>
- Many studies indicate that, as a dating relationship becomes more serious, the potential for and nature of violent behavior escalates.<sup>4</sup>
- Young women, ages 16 to 24 years, experience the highest rates of relationship violence.<sup>5</sup>

**Get Help**

Being a victim of dating violence is not your fault. Nothing you say, wear, or do gives anyone the right to hurt you.

- If you think you are in an abusive relationship, get help immediately. Don't keep your concerns to yourself.
- Talk to someone you trust like a parent, teacher, school principal, counselor, or nurse.
- If you choose to tell, you should know that some adults are mandated reporters. This means they are legally required to report neglect or abuse to someone else, such as the police or child protective services. You can ask people if they are mandated reporters and then decide what you want to do. Some examples of mandated reporters are teachers, counselors, doctors, social workers, and in some cases, coaches or activity leaders. If you want help deciding whom to talk to, call the National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255) or an anonymous crisis line in your area. You might also want to talk to a trusted family member, a friend's parent, an adult neighbor or friend, an older sibling or cousin, or other experienced person who you trust.

## Help Yourself

Think about ways you can be safer. This means thinking about what to do, where to go for help, and who to call ahead of time.

- Where can you go for help?
- Who can you call?
- Who will help you?
- How will you escape a violent situation?

### Here are other precautions you can take:

- Let friends or family know when you are afraid or need help.
- When you go out, say where you are going and when you'll be back.
- In an emergency, call 911 or your local police department.
- Memorize important phone numbers, such as the people to contact or places to go in an emergency.
- Keep spare change, calling cards, or a cell phone handy for immediate access to communication.
- Go out in a group or with other couples.
- Have money available for transportation if you need to take a taxi, bus, or subway to escape.

## Help Someone Else

If you know someone who might be in an abusive relationship, you can help.

- Tell the person that you are worried.
- Be a good listener.
- Offer your friendship and support.
- Ask how you can help.

- Encourage your friend to seek help.
- Educate yourself about dating violence and healthy relationships.
- Avoid any confrontations with the abuser. This could be dangerous for you and your friend.

### If You Want to Read More...

...about dating violence, visit our Dating Violence Resource Center at [www.ncvc.org/dvrc](http://www.ncvc.org/dvrc).

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- 1 Liz Claiborne Inc., "Study on Teen Dating Abuse," (Teenage Research Unlimited, 2005), <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com> (accessed March 1, 2007).
  - 2 Ibid.
  - 3 L.L. Kupper et al., "Prevalence of Partner Violence in Same-Sex Romantic and Sexual Relationships in a National Sample of Adolescents," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 35 (2004): 124-131.
  - 4 *Teen Dating Violence Resource Manual*, (Denver: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 1997), 17.
  - 5 C. M. Rennison and S. Welchans, "BJS Special Report: Intimate Partner Violence," (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000).

# Getting Help

## If You Have Been Hurt

If you have been hurt—physically, emotionally, sexually, or financially—by another person or group of people, you may be a victim of crime. Talking about what happened may feel risky, but many young victims of crime find that *not* talking about what happened and coping with it alone is much worse.

## You’re Not Alone

- Seven out of 10 young people between the ages of 2 and 17 become crime victims.<sup>1</sup>
- Youth become victims of crime more often than adults.
- Youth are hurt by all types of crime: assault, homicide, bullying, robbery, hate crimes, rape, stalking, and more.
- There is help for youth victims of crime.

## If You Have Been a Victim of Crime, You Might:

- Feel afraid, anxious, angry, or sad.
- Fear being hurt again.
- Think that you have to handle the situation by yourself.
- Feel ashamed or even blame yourself for becoming a victim of a crime.
- Worry about your privacy or have questions about confidentiality.
- Not know where to turn for help.

## If You Talk with Someone, You:

- Can learn that it is not your fault that someone hurt you.
- Can get support to be safe.
- Start the process of feeling better.
- Have a better chance of healing and getting your life back more quickly.
- Don’t have to carry the burden by yourself.
- May find out that other people have been through similar things.
- May feel more hopeful about your life.

## Getting Help

Trusting someone after you've been hurt can be hard to do. Getting help is about taking care of yourself. When you experience a crime, you need and deserve support. Here are some places you can turn:

- **911.** If someone harms you, if you feel threatened or unsafe, or if you witness someone harming another, you may need immediate help from the police. Your safety is the most important concern. You do **not** need permission to call 911.
- **Supportive Adult.** You may want to talk to a trusted adult, such as a parent or family member, a friend's parent, an adult neighbor, or another experienced person you trust.
- **Helpline.** If you have trouble finding help, call a crisis line in your community, or contact the National Crime Victim Helpline at **1-800-FYI-CALL** (1-800-394-2255) or **gethelp@ncvc.org**. We will listen, support you, and direct you to resources.
- **Advocates.** You can contact a specially trained victim advocate to find out about safety planning, your legal rights, and other important issues. Victim advocates also provide support and counseling to help you heal. If you contact the National Crime Victim Helpline (**1-800-FYI-CALL** or 1-800-394-2255) we can guide you and help you find victim advocates in your area.

## Keep Telling

Sometimes the people you turn to may say things that aren't helpful. They might get upset, blame you, or be angry. If you talk to someone who is not helpful, find someone else you can tell, and keep telling until you get what you need.

## Reporting Abuse

Some adults are required by law to report some types of child abuse to child protection services—agencies that investigate abuse and find ways to protect youth. When you are deciding who to tell, you can ask people if they're required to report abuse. You can ask them to explain what that means and what would happen if you told them you were a victim of a crime. Then you can decide what you want to do.

## If You Want to Read More...

...about crimes against youth and other Teen Tools in this series, visit [www.ncvc.org/youth](http://www.ncvc.org/youth) or see our GetHelp series at [www.ncvc.org/gethelp](http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp).

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1 David Finkelhor, *Childhood Victimization: Violence, Crime, and Abuse in the Lives of Young People*, (New York: Oxford, 2008), 3, 35.

*The National Center for Victims of Crime is dedicated to forging a national commitment to help victims of crime rebuild their lives. The Youth Initiative of the National Center for Victims of Crime builds the nation's capacity to support youth victims while working to advance their rights and ensuring youth leadership on issues that affect youth.*

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*"Why am I being bullied because of my skin color, religion, sexual orientation?"*

# Hate Crimes

## What Is It?

A hate crime is the victimization of an individual based on that individual's race, religion, national origin, ethnic identification, gender, or sexual orientation. Hate crimes may include acts such as:

- Physical assaults
- Assaults with weapons
- Harassment
- Vandalism
- Robbery
- Rape
- Verbal harassment
- Attacks on homes or places of worship

Hate crimes can occur anywhere: at schools, work, home, or any public place. Those who commit these acts come from all social/economic backgrounds and represent different age groups.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, these acts of violence are common in American society and part of the daily experience of many members of minority groups.<sup>2</sup>

## If You Are a Victim of a Hate Crime, You Might:

- Feel angry.
- Feel a deep sense of personal hurt and betrayal.
- Have feelings of powerlessness, isolation, sadness, and suspicion.
- Fear for your own safety and for your family's safety.
- Notice changes in your lifestyle such as where you walk and your reactions to strangers.

## You're Not Alone

- In 2005, 7,163 hate crime incidents were reported to law enforcement. Approximately 62 percent of bias-motivated offenses were committed against persons, and 37 percent were offenses against property.<sup>3</sup>

- Of reported crimes, 55 percent of hate crime incidents were motivated by race, 17 percent by religion, 14 percent by sexual orientation, 13 percent by ethnicity, and 0.7 percent by disability.<sup>4</sup>
- According to one study, 1,985 incidents of anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) violence were reported to victim service providers in 13 locations in 2005, almost twice the number reported to the police in the entire United States.<sup>5</sup>
- The Anti-Defamation League reported more than 1,700 anti-Semitic incidents in 2005.<sup>6</sup>
- Acts of harassment (threats and assaults against individuals or institutions) accounted for approximately one-third (617) of anti-Semitic incidents in 2005, and acts of vandalism (property damage, cemetery desecration, or anti-Semitic graffiti) accounted for approximately two-thirds (1140).<sup>7</sup>

## Get Help

It is important to remember that hate crimes are against the law, and as a crime victim, you do not have to cope with this alone. There are people in your community who want to help you.

- If you want advice about whom to talk to, call the National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-FYI-CALL) or a crisis hotline in your area. You might also want to talk to a trusted family member, a friend's parent, an adult neighbor or friend, an older sibling or cousin, or other experienced person you trust.
- Consider calling the police.

## Help Yourself

- If you sense that something is about to happen, try to get to a safe place.
- Try to stay in areas where other people are around.
- If you are attacked and need medical treatment, call 911, and let your parent or another adult know as soon as possible.
- If you are attacked and you do not know the attacker(s), try to remember what the person looked like. It will be useful when you call the police.

## Help Someone Else

If you see or know someone who has been a victim of a hate crime, you can:

- Call the police.
- Get a parent, teacher, or other adult to come help.
- Talk to the person who was the victim, let the person know you want to help him or her, and encourage the victim to talk to a supportive adult.

## If You Want to Read More...

...about hate crimes, see our GET HELP series at [www.ncvc.org/gethelp](http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp).

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- 1 Lance Bradley and Kevin Berrill, "Safety and Fitness Exchange," (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 1986).
  - 2 National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence, "The Ethnoviolence Project Pilot Study," *Institute Report* no. 1 (Baltimore, MD: 1986).
  - 3 Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States, 2005*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006).
  - 4 Ibid.
  - 5 Clarence Patton, "Anti-Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Violence in 2005: A Report of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs," (New York: National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2006).
  - 6 Anti-Defamation League, "Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents," (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 2005).
  - 7 Ibid.



# Robbery and Property Crime

## What Is It?

Robbery is when someone takes something you own from you by force or by threatening you. Because of the use or threat of force, robbery is considered a violent crime (even if you are not physically hurt in the act).

Theft is when someone takes something you own away from you without you knowing it, like stealing something from your locker or picking your pocket. Theft is called a "property crime." If someone breaks, damages, or vandalizes something of yours, that is also a property crime.

## If You Are a Victim of Robbery or Property Crime, You Might:

- Feel shocked, confused, angry, sad, powerless, or embarrassed.
- Be very upset, even if what was taken wasn't worth a lot of money.
- Feel hopeless about whether anything can be done to get your property back.
- Be afraid to go back to (or near) the place where the crime happened.
- Feel suspicious of everyone around you.

## You're Not Alone

One study found that for every 1,000 teens, 166 had reported a property crime, compared to 118 adults.<sup>1</sup> More than half of property crime doesn't get reported at all.<sup>2</sup>

## Get Help

Being robbed or having your property stolen or damaged is not your fault. Nothing you say or do gives anyone else the right to take or destroy your stuff.

- Tell a trusted adult or report the crime to the police. The person might be punished and you might get your stuff back. These things are not guaranteed, but if you don't tell anyone, you may never recover what was stolen or hold the offender accountable.
- If you are experiencing any of the reactions listed previously, a victim assistance professional or counselor might be able to help you. If you don't know who to call,

call the National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255), and we will give you the names and phone numbers of people in your community who can help.

## Help Yourself

- Do not carry lots of money or expensive things with you.
- Try to stay in areas where other students and teachers are around.
- Keep your locker locked. Double-check the lock before you walk away.
- Don't keep money or valuables in your locker, especially overnight or over the weekend.
- If you have a bike, get a solid U-shaped lock, and lock it in an area with other bikes. If one of the tires is removable, secure it to the U-lock with a chain or extension lock. If the seat is removable, you might want to take it off and keep it in your backpack or bag.
- Be aware of what you are carrying, and hold your purse or backpack close to your body.
- Be aware of your surroundings, especially if you are walking down the street by yourself. If you see someone suspicious, cross the street or go into a store.
- Do not try to get revenge. This could very well make things worse, and you might end up in trouble.

## Help Someone Else

Share this information with your friends.

### If someone takes or destroys something that belongs to your friend:

- Encourage your friend to report it to school authorities or the police.
- Let your friend know that it is normal to feel upset, angry, or sad. Tell him or her that help is available if he or she wants it (1-800-FYI-CALL).
- Do not try to help your friend get revenge—this can get you both in trouble and make a bad situation worse.
- Listen to your friend and be supportive.

## If You Want to Read More...

...about robbery or property crime, see our GET HELP series at [www.ncvc.org/gethelp](http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp).

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- 1 D. Finkelhor and R. Ormrod, "Juvenile Victims of Property Crimes [Abstract]," Proceedings of the American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, (San Francisco: 2000).
  - 2 Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2005: Statistical Tables*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006), Table 93a.

# Sexual Assault

## What Is It?

For sexual activity to be all right, it must be consensual, which means that both people want it to happen. Sexual assault is when any person forces you to participate in a sexual act when you don't want to. This can include touching or penetrating the vagina, mouth, or anus of the victim (often called rape); touching the penis of the victim; or forcing the victim to touch the attacker's vagina, penis, or anus. Touching can mean with a hand, finger, mouth, penis, or just about anything else, including objects.

It doesn't always take physical force to sexually assault a victim. Attackers can use threats or intimidation to make a victim feel afraid or unable to refuse them. It is also sexual assault if the victim is drunk, drugged, unconscious, or too young (ages of consent differ from state to state) or mentally disabled to be legally able to agree to sexual contact.

Most victims are assaulted by someone they know: a friend, date, acquaintance, or boyfriend or girlfriend. Dating or being sexually involved with someone does not give that person the right to force you to have sexual contact you don't want. Even if you have had sex before, you have the right to say "NO" at any time. You are also allowed to change your mind at any time. Being sexually assaulted is never your fault.

Most perpetrators of sexual assault are male, whether the victim is female or male. Victims can be males or females of any age, race, social class, appearance, or sexual orientation. The majority of sexual assault victims are women and girls, but many men and boys are sexually assaulted, too.

Sometimes people will use manipulation to get someone to give into sex. They might say things such as "If you really loved me, you'd do it" or "I'm going to tell everyone we did it anyway, so you might as well." This kind of behavior can be hurtful, although it often doesn't meet the legal definition of sexual assault, and is a sign of a controlling or emotionally abusive partner. The same is true of a partner who won't (or won't let you) use birth control

when you want to. People who experience this kind of behavior can have similar reactions to people who have been sexually assaulted. If this is happening to you, consider seeking help.

### If You Are a Victim of Sexual Assault, You Might:

- Feel afraid, ashamed, angry, sad, lonely, betrayed, or depressed.
- Feel guilty and confused if you knew or had a relationship with the attacker, even though the assault was not your fault.
- Feel like you have no friends or that your friends won't believe you.
- Want to hurt someone else or yourself.
- Feel like taking steps to defend yourself.
- Feel helpless to stop the assault.
- Feel hopeless about whether anything can be done.
- Be afraid to go anywhere that the attacker might be.
- Feel anxious all the time.
- Feel bad about yourself or your body.

### You're Not Alone

- Sexual assault is a widespread and underreported crime.
- In 2005, law enforcement received 69,370 reports of rapes.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2005, more than 170,000 women and 15,000 men were victims of attempted or completed rapes.<sup>2</sup>
- More teens are raped by people they know than they are by strangers.<sup>3</sup>

### Get Help

Being a victim of sexual assault is not your fault. Nothing in what you say, the way you look, where you are, or who you are with gives anyone else the right to hurt you. It does not matter if you are dating or have ever been intimate with the person who sexually assaulted you; it does not give that person the right to force you to participate in sexual acts if you don't want to, even if you have had sexual activity of any sort with them in the past. It's still wrong.

- Seek immediate medical attention, preferably at an emergency room. Medical personnel are trained to perform a "rape kit" exam, where they are able to gather evidence while examining the victim to help police and prosecutors find and charge the perpetrator. If you might ever want to report the assault, it is important that you do not shower, change clothes, or clean up in any way before going to the hospital, in order not to disturb any evidence medical staff might be able to collect for the police. Sometimes this process can be easier if you have a trusted friend, adult, or victim advocate with you.

- Even if you don't want to report the assault to police right now, it is still important to have a medical exam to make sure you are all right. Sometimes people change their minds and want to report to the police later. Also, in addition to treating injuries, medical personnel can test for pregnancy and whether or not you may have been drugged. They can also give you drugs to reduce your chances of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or getting pregnant.
- Tell a trusted friend or adult. See if someone can go with you to get medical treatment.
- Call a local victim service provider, such as a rape crisis center. You may be able to find a number to call in your local phone book. If you cannot find one, call the National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255) or the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE. If you want to report the assault, call the police.
- If you choose to tell, you should know that some adults are mandated reporters. This means they are legally required to report neglect or abuse to someone else, such as the police or child protective services. You can ask people if they are mandated reporters and then decide what you want to do. Some examples of mandated reporters are teachers, counselors, doctors, social workers, and in some cases, coaches or activity leaders.
- If you want help deciding whom to talk to, call our National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL, or an anonymous crisis line in your area. You might also want to talk to a trusted family member, a friend's parent, an adult neighbor or friend, an older sibling or cousin, or another experienced person who you trust.

## Help Yourself

- Try to avoid being alone, especially with your attacker, and be alert to your surroundings.
- Think about getting help making a safety plan to avoid or escape a dangerous situation, especially if you know your attacker.
- Make sure you have a safe place to stay.
- Think about talking to a rape crisis center or other victim assistance counselor about what happened to you, so they can help you find a safe place to stay, give you counseling, and help you understand your options, such as what medical staff will do during a "rape kit" exam or what might happen while going through the criminal justice system.

## Help Someone Else

If you know someone who has been the victim of sexual assault, you can help.

- If your friend tells you that she or he has been assaulted, remember that it is not your friend's fault. Help him or her get to a safe place. Listen patiently and without judgment. Offer your support and encouragement in getting help.

- Talk to your friend and try to get him or her to also talk to an adult and get medical attention. Offer to go with the person. If your friend is badly injured, call 911. Encourage your friend to have a rape kit exam whether or not he or she intends to report the crime to police. Your friend can always make the decision about whether or not to report the crime later.
- Report the assault to an adult you trust.

### If You Want to Read More...

- about male rape, or
- about child sexual abuse,

...see our GET HELP series at [www.ncvc.org/gethelp](http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp).

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- 1 Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States, 2005*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006).
  - 2 Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2005: Statistical Tables*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006), Table 2.
  - 3 Ibid., Table 29.

# Stalking

## What Is It?

Stalking is a pattern of behavior that makes you feel afraid, nervous, harassed, or in danger. It is when someone repeatedly contacts you, follows you, sends you things, talks to you when you don't want them to, or threatens you. Stalking behaviors can include:

- Knowing your schedule.
- Showing up at places you go.
- Sending mail, e-mail, and pictures.
- Calling or texting repeatedly.
- Contacting you or posting about you on social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, etc).
- Writing letters.
- Damaging your property.
- Creating a Web site about you.
- Sending gifts.
- Stealing things that belong to you.
- Any other actions to contact, harass, track, or frighten you.

You can be stalked by someone you know casually, a stranger, or a past or current friend, boyfriend or girlfriend. Getting notes and gifts at your home, in your locker, or other places might seem sweet and harmless to other people, but if you don't want the gifts, phone calls, messages, letters, or e-mails, it doesn't feel sweet or harmless. It can be scary and frustrating.

Sometimes people stalk their boyfriends or girlfriends while they're dating. They check up on them, text or call them all the time and expect instant responses, follow them, and generally keep track of them even when they haven't made plans to be together. These stalking behaviors can be part of an abusive relationship. If this is happening to you or someone you know, there are people you can talk to about it.

Stalking is a crime and can be dangerous. The legal definition of stalking and possible punishment for it is different in every state. Contact a victim advocate or your local police to learn about stalking laws and your rights in your state.

## If You Are Being Stalked, You Might:

- Feel helpless, anxious, fearful, angry or depressed.
- Feel like you can never get away from the person who is stalking you.
- Think the person is always watching you.
- Feel frustrated that the person won't leave you alone.
- Have difficulty sleeping or concentrating.
- Have nightmares.
- Lose or gain weight.
- Not know what might happen next.

## You're Not Alone

- 3.4 million people over the age of 18 are stalked each year in the United States.<sup>1</sup>
- 12 percent of stalking victims report being stalked before the age of 18.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 in 4 stalking victims are stalked by someone they know.<sup>3</sup>
- 17 percent of teens say their partner has made them afraid not to respond to their communication.<sup>4</sup>
- 1 in 4 teens have been called names, harassed or put down by a partner via technology.<sup>5</sup>
- A survey of university undergraduates revealed that 20 percent had been stalked or harassed by a former dating partner; 8 percent had initiated stalking or harassment; and 1 percent had been both the target and the initiator.<sup>6</sup>

## Get Help

If you are stalked, it is not your fault. People who use controlling, harassing, or threatening actions are responsible for their own behavior. If you believe that someone may be stalking you, you can:

- Contact the police.
- Tell a parent, friend, school principal, or another adult you can trust.

## Help Yourself

- Think about ways you can be safer. This means thinking about what to do, where to go for help, and who to call ahead of time.
- Where can you go for help?
- Who can you call?
- Who will help you?
- How will you escape a violent situation?

## Here are other things you can do:

- Let friends or family members know when you are afraid or need help.
- Find out about your legal rights to protection from stalking.



- When you go out, tell someone where you are going and when you'll be back.
- In an emergency, call 911 or your local police department.
- Keep a cell phone handy.
- Save notes, letters, or other items that are sent to you and keep a record of all other contact from the person who is stalking you. This includes text messages, emails, or voicemails. Take photographs of the texts and print out any emails you receive in case they are deleted. These items will be very useful to the police.
- If you choose to tell someone, you should know that some adults are mandated reporters. This means they are legally required to report neglect or abuse to someone else, such as the police or child protective services. You can ask people if they are mandated reporters and then decide what you want to do. Some examples of mandated reporters are teachers, counselors, doctors, social workers, and in some cases, coaches or activity leaders.
- If you want help deciding whom to talk to, call an anonymous crisis line or victim advocate in your area. You might also want to talk to a trusted family member, a friend's parent, an adult neighbor or friend, an older sibling or cousin, or another experienced person who you trust.

## Help Someone Else

If you know someone who is being stalked, you can:

- Encourage your friend to seek help.
- Be a good listener.
- Offer your support.
- Ask how you can help.
- Educate yourself about stalking. Avoid any confrontations because this could be dangerous for you and your friend.

## If You Want to Read More...

- about stalking, protective orders, a stalking safety plan, or a stalking log, visit [www.ncvc.org/src](http://www.ncvc.org/src).
- about dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and teen dating violence, see our GET HELP series at [www.ncvc.org/gethelp](http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp).

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- 1 Katrina Baum et al., "Stalking Victimization in the United States," (Washington, DC: BJS, 2009).
  - 2 Tjaden and Thonnes, "Stalking in America: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey," (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).
  - 3 Baum, "Stalking Victimization in the United States."
  - 4 Teen Research Unlimited, "Liz Claiborne Inc. Topline Findings: Teen Relationship Abuse Survey (Conducted March 2006)," (Northbrook, IL: Teen Research Unlimited, 2006), 6.
  - 5 Ibid.
  - 6 Jeffrey J. Haugaard and Lisa G. Seri, "Stalking and Other Forms of Intrusive Contact after the Dissolution of Adolescent Dating or Romantic Relationships," *Violence and Victims* 18 (2004): 3.

# Crime, Teens, and Trauma

## What Is It?

We say something is traumatic when it is shocking, upsetting, disturbing, painful, or harmful. Being a victim of crime is often a traumatic event and can have an effect on people for a long time.

## If You Have Been a Victim of Crime, You Might:

- Feel angry, sad, lonely, or depressed.
- Have trouble sleeping.
- Feel like no one understands.
- Think it's your fault.
- Feel sick to your stomach or not want to eat.
- Feel like you have no friends.
- Find that you are always getting into fights.
- Want to hurt someone else or yourself.
- Feel like taking steps to defend yourself.
- Feel hopeless about whether anything can be done.
- Feel bad about yourself.
- Be afraid to go out.
- Feel anxious all the time.

Being a victim of crime when you're a teenager can really affect how you develop and mature as an adult. What follows are some of the normal phases teens go through, and how they can be affected by victimization. If you are dealing with some of the issues described below, you should know that you don't have to feel this way forever. It is important to remember that, with help, you can begin to feel better. Call the National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255) for help.

## Body Focus

You have probably been taught about the changes your body goes through during the period called puberty, or adolescence. Although awkward and uncomfortable, these changes

are healthy and normal. Teens who are victimized (especially sexually) during puberty may feel unclean or devalued. You might think there is something strange about your body. You may think that the changes in your shape or size caused or encouraged the abuse and that you have no control over what happens to you. You might think that the only way to get attention is by using your body to attract it. You may feel that your body is worthless or “only good for one thing.”

### **Peer Involvement**

Younger children are closely connected to their families and caretakers. Adults fulfill their needs for guidance, help, comfort, companionship, food, shelter, and safety. As you get older, however, your need for your parents decreases, and your emotional dependence on your friends increases. Most teens test limits set by their parents, look for social and emotional support from friends, and become more concerned about the acceptance of friends than family.

Teens who have been victimized, though, often feel different from their friends. You may feel that no one else understands what you are going through. You might feel separated and isolated from your friends. You might feel like your friends are judging you or blowing you off, or harassing you. You may want to withdraw from your friends, or find a new group of friends where you feel more accepted.

### **Critical Thinking Skills**

One of the most important life skills you begin to learn as a teen is critical thinking. Critical thinking is the ability to think about what is happening in a situation and to anticipate several different ways it could turn out. If during your teen years you become a victim of crime, you may start to think that bad things will continue to happen. You may start believing that you will always feel lonely, hurt, or confused and that you can't do anything to change it. You might feel hopeless and helpless, or even think about hurting yourself or dying. But if you can begin to think critically, you can start to figure out several different possible outcomes to your situation and ways to get beyond the bad times.

### **Abstract Thinking**

During normal development, adolescents begin learning to think abstractly. They also analyze the relationships between cause and effect, learn to predict outcomes, and identify and explore values. If you are victimized during the development of these skills, you might begin to mistrust your own values and judgment and wonder if something you did “caused” the victimization. You may believe that you are responsible for what happened or that you are bad or should expect nothing better than this kind of treatment. You may feel that your personal

choices and desires are meaningless and may begin to expect to be hurt and used by other people.

## Risk-Taking

Part of growing up is learning to evaluate risks. It's looking at choices you make, figuring out what might happen, and deciding if it's worth doing. A risk might be making a friend of a different ethnic background, trying out for a sport, exploring career and educational opportunities, or deciding who to date. Victimized teens sometimes have a hard time thinking about these choices and don't see when things are dangerous or have a long-term impact. You might have used drugs or alcohol, had unprotected sex, driven after drinking, gotten into fights, or started stealing. You might not recognize, appreciate, or care about the long-term consequences of your choices.

## You're Not Alone

More than 1.5 million teens become victims of violent crime each year. Teens are:

- 14 percent of the general population;<sup>1</sup>
- 28 percent of victims of violent crime; and<sup>2</sup>
- twice as likely as adults to become victims of crime.<sup>3</sup>

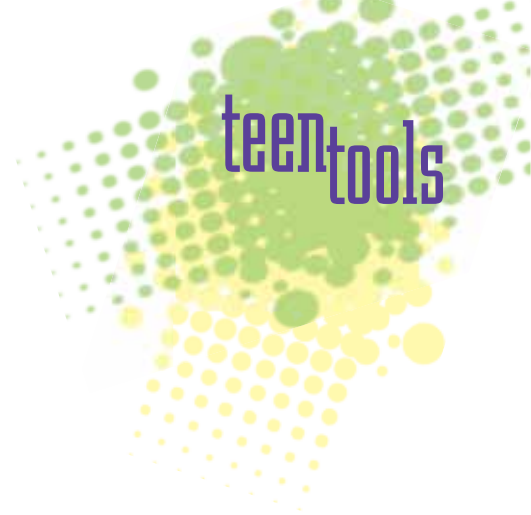
## Get Help

Having bad things happen to you is not your fault. Nothing about what you say, the way you look, or what you believe gives anyone the right to hurt you.

- Tell your parents, and talk with them about ways that they can help you be safe.
- Tell a teacher, counselor, or trusted adult to see how they can help you. Talk with friends. You might find you're not the only one who has had these kinds of experiences.
- If you are having difficulty finding help, call the National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255) for free, confidential assistance, information, and referrals to local resources. You can also e-mail us at [gethelp@ncvc.org](mailto:gethelp@ncvc.org).

## Where can teen victims find help?

- Parents
- Teachers
- School counselors
- School resource officers
- Coaches
- Clergy
- Youth program staff
- Victim service providers



- Rape crisis centers
- Community mental health agencies
- Social workers
- Police
- Friends
- Neighbors
- Relatives

## About Confidentiality

If you choose to tell someone, you should know that some adults are mandated reporters. This means they are legally required to report neglect or abuse to someone else, such as the police or child protective services. You can ask people if they are mandated reporters and then decide what you want to do. Some examples of mandated reporters are teachers, counselors, doctors, social workers, and in some cases, even coaches or activity leaders.

## Help Yourself

The most important thing is your safety. Seek out persons or resources in your community that can help you reduce your risk of being victimized again. Find healthy things that help you express how you feel: write in a journal, talk to friends, paint or draw, or exercise. It doesn't matter very much what it is, as long as it doesn't hurt you or anyone else, and it makes you feel better.

## Help Someone Else

Sometimes it's hard to know what to do or say if a friend has been the victim of a crime. He or she might not know how to talk about it either. Let your friend know that you care. Stay calm, and don't judge their choices or behavior. Believe your friend, and just listen. Sometimes letting them vent and not needing to have answers for everything can help a lot.

Sometimes the family and friends of victims also feel the impact of the crime and experience emotional and physical reactions. This is called secondary victimization. If this is happening to you, help is available for you, too.

## If You Want to Read More...

...about specific crimes, see our GET HELP series at [www.ncvc.org/gethelp](http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp).

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- 1 Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2005: Statistical Tables," (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006), Table 3.
  - 2 Ibid.
  - 3 Ibid.

# Just for Friends

## If Your Friend Is a Victim of Crime

Sometimes it's hard to know what to do or say if a friend has been a victim of crime. Understand that your friend is probably dealing with many different emotions and might not know how to talk about it either.

Reading this is a great start to helping your friend. This might not answer all your questions, but it should help you understand how your friend might be feeling and good things to say and do, as well as things to avoid. For more information about helping your friend, contact the National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255) or [gethelp@ncvc.org](mailto:gethelp@ncvc.org) or talk to a trusted adult.

People react to the trauma caused by crime in many ways. You might see your friend doing or saying things you're not used to. If your friend is changing in ways that worry you, talk to a trusted adult or call our National Crime Victim Helpline about how to handle it.

### Some changes you might see are:

- New eating or sleeping habits
- Being angry all the time
- Taking lots of risks
- Doing badly in school
- Skipping school
- Feeling hopeless and helpless
- Having lots of headaches or stomachaches
- Having a hard time concentrating
- Mood swings
- Clinginess
- Nervousness
- Depression
- Using drugs or alcohol

**Things that can help:**

- Let your friend know you care.
- Try to stay calm. Remember that your friend will be aware of your reactions.
- Don't judge your friend.
- Just listen—let your friend vent and don't try to have answers for everything.
- Tell your friend that you are sorry that it happened.
- Ask your friend to talk about how he or she reacted to the crime.
- Understand that your friend might have mood swings.
- Give your friend time to heal. Don't expect your friend to "snap out of it" quickly.
- Help find other people who can help—other friends, teachers, coaches, and family members who can support your friend.
- Don't confront the person who hurt your friend. Though you might want to fix the situation or get back at them, this could make things worse, for you and your friend.

**Good things to say:**

- Nothing you did (or didn't do) makes you deserve this.
- I'm glad you told me.
- How can I/we help you feel safer?
- I'm proud of you.
- This happens to other people. Would it help to talk to someone who counsels victims of crime?
- I'm sorry this happened.
- I believe you.
- I'll support your decisions.

**Things not to say:**

- This wouldn't have happened if you hadn't \_\_\_\_\_.
- I told you not to: go to that party, date that person, hang out with those people.
- Just forget it ever happened.
- Get over it.
- This is private. Don't tell anyone what happened.
- Try not to think about it.
- I want to kill the person who hurt you.

**About Confidentiality**

If you choose to talk to someone else about your friend, you should know that some adults are mandated reporters. This means they are legally required to report neglect or abuse to someone else, like the police or child protective services. Some examples of mandated reporters are teachers, counselors, doctors, social workers, coaches, and activity leaders. If you want help de-

Deciding whom to talk to, call the confidential National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255).

### **This Might Affect You, Too**

Sometimes the family and friends of victims also feel the impact of the crime and experience emotional and physical reactions. This is called secondary victimization. If you have experienced crime or other traumatic events in the past, your friend's experience might bring up memories and feelings of that time. Talk to a counselor, teacher, victim services provider, or other trusted adult to see what kind of help is available for you.

If you are having difficulty finding help, call the National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255) for free, confidential assistance, information, and referrals to local resources. You can also e-mail us at [gethelp@ncvc.org](mailto:gethelp@ncvc.org).

The National Center Web site contains informational bulletins on different types of crime and the laws in each state. For information on different crimes, see our GET HELP series at [www.ncvc.org/gethelp](http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp). For more information about the laws in your state, visit [www.victimlaw.info](http://www.victimlaw.info).



# Just for Parents

## If Your Teen Is a Victim of Crime

Teens and young adults are very vulnerable to crime and, unfortunately, become victims of crime more than any other age group. They experience all the same crimes that adults do—from robbery, sexual assault, and car theft to relationship violence, assaults, and stalking. How you—and other adults—respond can make a big difference in how your child copes with and recovers from the event.

Trauma and victimization affect people in different ways, but there are some specific behaviors to look for with your teen. Some common reactions to experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event include:

- Change in eating or sleeping habits
- Acting out: aggressive or inappropriate behavior
- Attention-seeking behavior
- Increased risk taking
- Deteriorating school performance
- Fear of attending school
- Poor peer relations, withdrawal
- Physical signs of stress: headache, stomachache
- Nightmares
- Anger
- Hopelessness
- Helplessness
- Loss of control or powerlessness
- Concentration difficulties
- Clinginess
- Mood swings
- Depression
- Anxiety

Rapid behavior changes can also be indicators of victimization and trauma, for example: a child who was always deeply concerned about looks and appearance, who stops being interested in how people view her; a strong student who no longer is interested in achievement; or a child who now expresses fear about doing something, such as taking the bus, attending school, or going somewhere frequented in the past.

Although keeping a child's victimization quiet or trying to forget about it can be an instinctive response, a victim has little chance of healing from the experience if they want to talk about it with someone but can't. Forcing a person to suppress feelings and memories can damage a person's emotional, psychological, and even physical health.

### Things that can help:

- Remain calm in front of your teen.
- Remember that your teen will be aware of and affected by your reactions.
- Focus on what your teen needs.
- Avoid being judgmental. Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone makes bad decisions. This NEVER means it's all right for one person to harm another.
- Just listen—let your child vent and don't try to have answers for everything.
- Validate that the crime was horrible and that you are sorry it happened.
- Ask your child to talk about how he or she reacted to the event.
- Accept that your teen may be acting differently, but set appropriate limits. For instance, your teen may be expressing a lot of anger, but it is still inappropriate for him or her to throw things, break things, or be violent.
- Give your teen time to process what happened.
- Help your teen mobilize his or her own resources—friends, teachers, coaches, siblings, and other family members who can be supportive.

### Good things to say:

- Nothing you did (or didn't do) makes you deserve this.
- I'm glad you told me.
- How can I/we help you feel safer?
- I love you.
- I'm proud of you.
- This happens to other people. Would it help to talk with some of them?
- I'm sorry this happened.
- I believe you.
- I'll support your decisions.

**Things not to say:**

- This wouldn't have happened if you hadn't \_\_\_\_\_.
- I told you not to: go to that party, date that person, hang out with those people.
- Just forget it ever happened.
- Get over it.
- This is private. Don't tell anyone what happened.
- Try not to think about it.
- This is all my fault.
- I want to kill the person who hurt you.

**Exploring Options**

Explore options for addressing the situation with your child. Options for addressing safety and holding perpetrators accountable for the crime include:

- Contacting victim service providers for emotional support, safety planning, and more information about other resources and legal rights.
- Reporting to police and beginning the criminal justice process.
- Reporting to school authorities.
- Accessing mental health and medical services.
- Considering civil justice options (filing a civil suit against the perpetrator or other responsible parties).

Explore what will happen with each choice and make decisions together. Also prepare for every step of the process. Victim service providers can give you information about what to expect at different points, such as when making a police report or during court hearings. Understand that children, especially teens, may be extremely concerned about how peers and classmates will respond.

**Family and Friends**

Sometimes the family and friends of victims also feel the impact of the crime, and experience emotional and physical reactions. This is called secondary victimization. If you or any other members of your family have experienced crime or other traumatic events in the past, the victimization of a child may trigger memories and feelings of that time. Explore support options for you and your teen, individually and together. Local victim service providers, mental health programs, or religious organizations can often work with the victim, family, and friends to help you through this time.

If you are having difficulty finding services for you or your child, call the National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255) for assistance, information, and referrals to local resources. You can also e-mail us at [gethelp@ncvc.org](mailto:gethelp@ncvc.org).

The National Center for Victims of Crime Web site contains informational bulletins on different types of crime and the laws in each state. For information on different crimes and their effects, see our GET HELP series at [www.ncvc.org/gethelp](http://www.ncvc.org/gethelp). For more information about the laws in your state, visit [www.victimlaw.info](http://www.victimlaw.info).