

Product 9--Booklet:

Coping after a Violent Crime (70 pages)

Coping after a Violent Crime:

A Guide for Healing and Understanding the Criminal Justice Process

This resource is intended for crime victims and their loved ones as well as for professionals who provide services to crime victims. It was developed to provide general information about violent crime, victimization, the criminal justice system, reporting issues, medical and safety concerns as well as information about healing and recovering in the aftermath of a crime or a devastating loss due to a crime.

This booklet is meant to provide a solid foundation of information to fill some gaps for crime victims at a time when information is needed, but hard to find or difficult to remember. This booklet can serve as a quick-reference guide to come back to weeks or months later in the process as a helpful resource and a guide to the criminal justice system. It is not intended to be a substitute for medical, psychological or legal advice, but to offer general information about criminal victimization. Professional consultation should be sought for specific medical, psychological or legal advice.

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Trying to understand what happened and why

One of the first questions that most victims of crime ask themselves is “Why? Why did this happen to me or to my loved one?” This is a very normal question to ask because most crimes occur suddenly, randomly and unexpectedly. You were living your life, doing what you routinely do and then--out of the blue--this terrible event happened.

For no apparent or understandable reason, someone has hurt you and your family. Perhaps the offender was someone you knew and trusted or maybe the offender was unknown to you before this happened. Maybe the crime was pre-meditated (planned in advance) and you were the specific target of this person, or perhaps you happened to be where the crime occurred and you

were hurt because of the situation. Some people refer to this as ‘being at the wrong place at the wrong time.’ In fact, you had every right to be where you were and to be doing what you were doing before the crime occurred. YOU were not at the wrong place at the wrong time--the offender was wrong to commit this crime against you. Regardless of the circumstances, you did not do anything to cause this crime, nor did you deserve for it to happen to you.

But it did happen. It happened to you. Your life was interrupted without any warning. You have gone from your usual routine (probably fairly stable and predictable) to a crisis. You might feel as if your life has been turned upside down. It is normal to feel this way. Many feelings and reactions will come and go. Sometimes it can seem like an emotional roller coaster. You can and will get through this trauma--even though there may be days when it seems like you will never find your way.

For some victims, the question “Why me?” becomes a barrier in healing and moving on with their life. So, even though it is normal to ask this question, it is important to realize that you may never learn the answer, but you still need to find a way to go on with your life.

It does not make sense and it is not fair. That makes it all the more difficult to understand why this terrible event happened to you and why so many others have been hurt in similar ways. You may never get the answer to your question because there may not be an answer as to why this happened. However, not knowing does not mean that you cannot move forward. You can and you should move on with your life when the time is right for you.

Here are a few other important points to keep in mind as you are trying to understand more about what happened and why it happened to you.

Important points about crime and recovery

What happened is not your fault. You did not deserve for this to happen to you or your family. It should not have happened.

Every day, many people become victims of violent crimes. You are not alone in your suffering and there are many people available to support you through this difficult time.

All of these offenses are serious crimes, punishable by law. It is up to you if you want to report the crime, but the sooner you report it, the better the chance of prosecution.

The person who hurt you may never be caught or convicted but it should not stop you from going on with your life.

Your life has been affected and changed by what happened but you will find ways to cope.

You may never have the answer as to why this happened to you. Sometimes, there are no answers that are sufficient to explain why a crime happened or why you or your family were hurt in this way.

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