

Victim Tools

Helping Victims of Crime

Just for Friends

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

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 is feeling and provide some ways for you to help.

Being the victim of any crime, from a stolen wallet to rape, can leave a person feeling stripped of personal power. Your friend may be terrified and have feelings of helplessness, which are perfectly normal responses. Your friend needs time and support to work through her/his feelings.

The Impact of Crime

Victims of Crime frequently experience a range of emotions, including:

- Denial, disbelief
- Shock
- Anger, frustration
- Fear
- Self-blame
- Dirty or unclean
- Embarrassment
- Feelings of helplessness
- Feelings of being alone

These emotions often result in victims being immobilized by confusion and uncertainty at a time when they need to make decisions. In addition, many victims feel a loss of control over things that have kept them safe and secure in the past.

Some Changes You Might See

- 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.
- Believe your friend's experience without question.
- Take your friend seriously.
- Respect your friend's fear.
- Accept your friend's strong feelings.
- Listen without making judgments or giving advice.
- Encourage.
- Stay with your friend for as long as he/she needs you.
- Ask your friend to talk about how he/she reacted to the event.
- Give your friend time to heal. Don't expect him/her to "snap out of it" quickly.
- Help find other people who can help—other friends, teachers, coaches, family, church, help agencies, etc.
- Let your friend make his/her own decisions.
- 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.
- Try to stay calm. Remember that your friend will be aware of your reactions.
- Take care of yourself.

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 those people?
- I'm sorry this happened.
- I believe you.
- I'll support your decision.

Things Not to Say

- This wouldn't have happened if you hadn't/had _____.
- I told you not to _____.
- 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.

Good Things to Do

- If your friend lives alone, offer to stay the night or see that there are groceries.
- Get information about how to help from campus agencies such as campus security, student services, residence life, university ministries, or local agencies such as a rape crisis center.
- Reach out and hold hands.
- Send flowers or a small gift.
- Send a card.
- Offer to contact friends and family, but **never** do so without first talking with the survivor.
- Learn about issues such as post traumatic stress disorder so that you may better understand what your friend may be experiencing.
- Pray for your friend.

Mandated Reporting

If you choose to talk to someone else about your friend, you should know that some adults are legally required to report certain crimes, such as neglect or abuse, to someone else, like the police or child protective services. Some examples of mandated reporters are teachers, counselors, law enforcement agencies, doctors, coaches, and activity leaders. If you want help deciding who to talk to, contact Belmont University's Crime Victims Assistance Program (CVAP) at 615/415-5743.

Take Care of Yourself

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 are experiencing secondary victimization, seek help for yourself through a friend, family member, teacher, or counselor.

If you are having difficulty finding help, contact Belmont University's Crime Victims Assistance Program (CVAP) at 615/415-5743.

Victim Witness Services

Any Belmont University student or employee who has been the victim of or a witness to a crime, either on or off campus, may request services from the Crime Victims Assistance Program, which are provided free of charge.

**Belmont University
Crime Victims
Assistance Program**

1900 Belmont Blvd.

Nashville, TN 37212

Phone:

615/415-5743

Online:

crimeprevention@mail.belmont.edu

Website:

<http://www.belmont.edu/ocs>