



INFORMATION FOR

VICTIMS *of* CRIME & TRAUMA

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

VICTIM SERVICES BRANCH

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VICTIM SERVICES BRANCH
Hamilton Police Service

www.hamiltonpolice.on.ca

COMMON REACTIONS TO BEING A VICTIM OF CRIME OR TRAUMA

Helping you - Help yourself

The Victim Services Branch of the Hamilton Police Service is dedicated to helping victims of crime and trauma and individuals who have survived tragic circumstances. The Victim Services Branch provides crisis intervention, support and referrals to community resources.

Who we Serve

The Hamilton Police Service understands that whether you have been physically hurt, threatened, survived a tragedy, suffered a traumatic loss or witnessed a traumatic event, you may be a victim and we may be able to assist you.

Dealing with Trauma

Events such as a sexual assault, abuse, the death of a loved one, a natural disaster, etc., can cause trauma. These types of situations can result in unpleasant feelings and emotions - both during and after such events.

Responses to a stressful situation vary greatly from person to person and not all people will experience the same reaction at the same level of intensity, nor for the same length of time. However, it is important to recognize that whatever the reaction is, it is often a normal human response to a stressful situation.



What to Expect

Most people who have had their lives disrupted by crime or tragic circumstance experience normal physical and emotional reactions.

Some of the things you may experience include:

Physical

- Difficulty falling asleep or waking often during the night
- Change in appetite
- Backaches or stomach aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue

Behavioural

- Crying
- Need to be alone/or surrounded by others
- Emotional outburst
- Pacing

Thinking

- Difficulty concentrating
- Replaying the event over and over in your mind
- Nightmares
- Blaming yourself or others who are not responsible

Emotional

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Guilt
- Panic
- Sadness/withdrawal
- Fear
- Irritability



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COPING

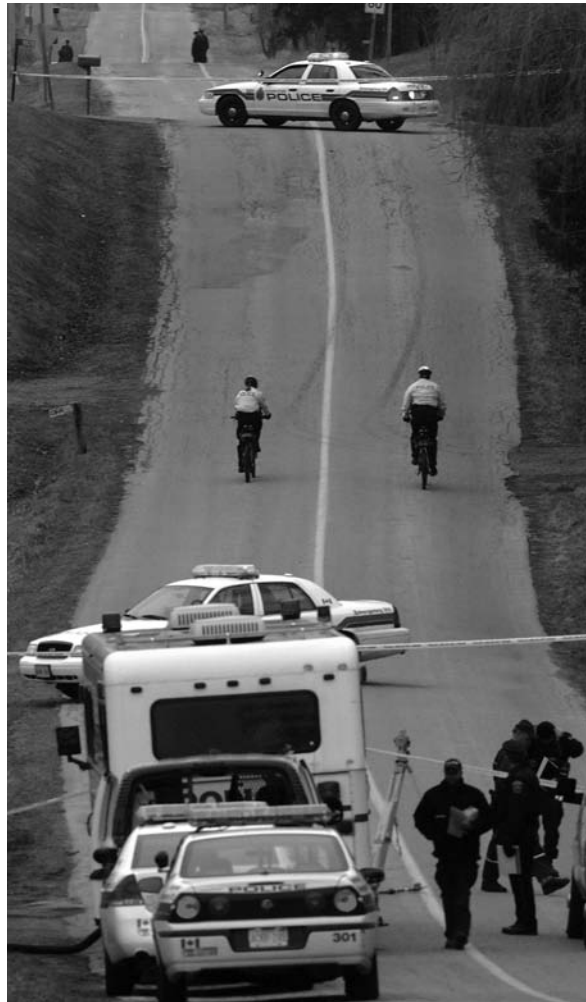
It is important to remember that a traumatic event falls outside of normal everyday life. You may need some new strategies to cope with an unusual experience.

Helpful things to do may include:

- Talk to someone you trust
- Give yourself permission to reach out for professional help (e.g. family doctor, Employment Assistance Program [EAP].)
- Spend time with supportive family and friends
- Avoid over use of alcohol, drugs, caffeine, nicotine
- Acknowledge your response to the situation and give yourself permission to have difficult moments after the fact
- Try to stay positive and avoid self-defeating thoughts (e.g. I can't manage....", "nothing matters....", etc.) and use thought-stopping (e.g. say: "stop" to yourself when you find yourself thinking negative thoughts)
- Resist making life changing decisions following a serious incident
- Give yourself time to mend
- Write out or journal your experiences, thoughts and feelings - this may be especially useful through sleepless nights
- Try to maintain your regular routine
- Try to eat properly and exercise
- Be aware that traumatic events can sometimes bring back memories of past sad or traumatic events

COPING (Continued)

- Practice deep breathing - inhale slowly to a count of 3, hold your breath to a count of 3, and exhale to a count of 3 and repeat until you are breathing more easily
- Don't try to fight dreams or flashbacks. They are normal and will become less intense and painful over time. If they do not appear to be decreasing over time, you may need to seek assistance as there are exercises that may help manage these



A WORD ABOUT CHILDREN

Children who have been involved in a traumatic incident need the attention and close physical contact of their parents or caregivers:

- Reassure them of their physical safety
- Take opportunities to listen and talk to the child
- Talk about your own reactions with the child, in an age appropriate way
- Invite conversation so children feel encouraged to share their concerns and reactions too
- Allow them to set their own pace
- Try to keep routines as normal as possible
- Encourage them to play and draw - a good way to cope with stress and anxious feelings
- Practice relaxation techniques with them
- Seek professional help if you need assistance or have concerns about your child's reaction and/or response. Often, parents can receive helpful coaching by a professional to effectively support their child



VICTIM SERVICES BRANCH

Established in 1992, Victim Services is a Branch of the Hamilton Police Service. It is the only 24-hour crisis intervention service for victims of crime and trauma serving the residents of the City of Hamilton.

We respond to the immediate needs of people who have been victimized by crime and/or trauma such as homicides, suicides, sudden death, assaults, sexual assaults, traffic and fire fatalities, robberies and harassment.

If you need someone to talk to, please call our 24hr line at 905.546.4904. We are here to assist you with emotional support, information and community resources.