

- ▶ In an emergency, call the police and report the crime, even if your friend asks you not to. This may save your friend's life, or someone else's.
- ▶ If possible, encourage your friend to recall specific details of the event. Your friend may be able to provide the police with information that will lead to the criminal's arrest.

### If You Are the Parent of a Teen Crime Victim

How you and other adults respond to a teen who has experienced a crime can make a difference in how the teen copes with and recovers from the event. Remember that witnessing a violent crime can be as traumatic as experiencing it directly.

The National Center for Victims of Crime

recommends that you watch your teenager for these common reactions to a traumatic event:

- ▶ change in eating or sleeping habits,
- ▶ acting out in an aggressive or inappropriate manner,
- ▶ attention-seeking behavior,
- ▶ increased risk-taking,
- ▶ deteriorating school performance or fear of attending school,
- ▶ withdrawal from peer relationships,
- ▶ physical signs of stress such as headaches or stomachaches,
- ▶ nightmares and other sleep problems,
- ▶ difficulty concentrating, and
- ▶ feelings of anger, hopelessness, anxiety, and depression.

While it is normal for a victim to move through different stages of feelings in order to recover from a painful experience, sometimes victims get stuck in one stage for an unusually long time. If this happens, you may want to seek professional help for your teen.

### Take a Stand for Victims' Rights

- ▶ Make sure your Neighborhood Watch group looks out for victims of crime by offering practical help and accompanying victims to court.
- ▶ Celebrate National Crime Victim Rights Week in April of each year. Pass out fliers, talk to your school about marking the event, send a letter to local media asking them to feature victims' rights.
- ▶ Find out what laws your state has passed to address victims' rights. Write to your state senator or representative if you think more needs to be done.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA)**

1730 Park Road, NW  
Washington DC 20010  
800-TRY-NOVA (information and referral)  
202-232-6682 (crisis counseling)  
[www.trynova.org](http://www.trynova.org)

**National Center for Victims of Crime**

2000 M Street NW, Suite 480  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-467-8700  
[www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org)



**NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL**

1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW • 13th Floor • Washington, DC 20036  
[www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org)

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# TEENAGE VICTIMS OF CRIME



**TAKE A BITE OUT OF CRIME**



**Did you know that teens are twice as likely as any other age group to be victims of violent and property crime? Girls are more likely to be victims of sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking, while boys are more likely to be victims of assault, robbery, and homicide.**

**Given the high victimization rate for teens, chances are that you've either been a victim of a crime yourself, or you know someone who has been. Experiencing a crime can be traumatic, whether it involves a stolen wallet or a physical assault. All victims need help.**

## **If You Are a Victim of Crime**

### *You might feel*

- ▶ embarrassed or foolish that someone took advantage of you.
- ▶ guilty because you could not prevent the crime, or because your circumstances allowed it to happen.
- ▶ anger and a desire for revenge.
- ▶ fear that the perpetrator or someone else may stalk, rob, or attack you again.
- ▶ shock that something so unexpected has happened to you.
- ▶ sadness about the loss of property or feelings of safety you had before the crime.
- ▶ hopelessness that anything can be done about the crime.
- ▶ reluctance to talk about the crime, or a need to tell your story over and over.
- ▶ a sense that things will never be the same.

### *What you might do*

- ▶ Call 911 immediately to report the crime and get any needed emergency medical treatment.
- ▶ Talk to the police. Talk to your parents, or other trusted adult.
- ▶ Do not blame yourself for the crime. Tell yourself that you did not cause it to happen.
- ▶ Try to remember details of the perpetrator's appearance and the events to help the police solve the crime. Make notes as soon as you can so you don't forget.
- ▶ Accept that strong feelings of anger, fear, embarrassment, shock, and sadness are normal after experiencing a traumatic event. If these feelings last for a long time or interfere with your daily life, see a victim assistance counselor or other professional.
- ▶ Do not try to seek revenge or solve the crime, even if you know who is responsible.
- ▶ Don't be embarrassed to talk to your friends about the event and your feelings. You may

need their support for a while.

- ▶ Ask about a victim assistance program in your school or community or call the National Crime Victim Information and Referral Hotline operated by the National Organization for Victim Assistance (the toll-free number is 800-879-6682).
- ▶ Work with your parents or other trusted adult to come up with a safety plan for protecting yourself from future crime.

## **Your Legal Rights as a Victim**

Police and courts realize that victims need help. Most states have passed laws to protect victims. Here are the rights that most victims can expect:

- ▶ The right to privacy.
- ▶ The right to be treated with dignity and compassion.
- ▶ The right to protection from intimidation and further harm.
- ▶ The right to be informed about the case's progress and outcome through the criminal justice system.
- ▶ The right to receive compensation for damages.
- ▶ The right to equal treatment in court.
- ▶ The right to have property returned promptly if found by the police.

## **If a Friend Is a Victim of Crime**

- ▶ Listen sympathetically and reassure your friend that you believe him.
- ▶ Don't blame your friend even if her actions put her in harm's way.
- ▶ Because victims often blame themselves, tell your friend repeatedly that it is not his fault.
- ▶ Discourage your friend from seeking revenge.
- ▶ Encourage your friend to tell a supportive adult, such as a parent, teacher, or coach.
- ▶ If you think your friend needs help but won't tell anyone, find an adult you trust and tell what happened.