

Providing Support for Victims of Crime

This is the final column for Victim Support Service. I would like to thank readers for their interest and support.

Over the past five months we have written on issues such as court support, the cost of crime upon the community, and victim's reactions to crime.

Crime rarely limits its impact to one person and an area which many people are concerned about is how family and friends can assist their loved ones who have been victims of crime. Help and support can be needed at the time of the crime, during court, and often for some time afterwards.

Family and friends are sometimes uncertain of how to support a victim of crime. There are several ways in which they can offer support and the most important is to believe the victim. If someone knows they're believed they may feel more secure about confiding in those who believe them. Another way family and friends can offer support is by listening, when or if the victim chooses to talk about the experience and impact. Being able to talk through fears and concerns can be beneficial in reducing the stress which victims often feel. Many victims of crime lose that sense of safety once a crime has occurred and family and friends may assist them in feeling safe again. Some victims are anxious about going out or being at home alone. It is comforting for many to have someone with them, but if that isn't always possible, then phone calls can also reassure the victim that they are not alone. Every victim reacts differently to a crime and victims need reassurance that their family and friends realise their reactions are normal under the circumstances. To have someone say 'It's OK to feel like this' validates the very real impact of the crime.

If the victim feels that they need counselling it may be reassuring for them that family or friends support this decision and are willing to attend an appointment if requested. Many victims prefer to attend an appointment alone, but knowing that they can talk about the counselling session with their family or friends afterwards can also be a way of supporting them.

Victim Support Service is able to provide assistance for victims and their families.

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