



Children's
Safety
Education
Foundation

Save Lives!

A LITTLE RAY OF HOPE



**A self-help
guide for the parents
of child victims**



Embrace (Child Victims of Crime) is the only national charity that is solely focused on supporting children and young people who have been the victims of serious crime and their immediate families. Children are among the most vulnerable victims in our communities.

Embrace believes that support should be tailored to the needs of individuals and offers a range of emotional, practical and specialist services along with a flexible approach. Whatever is needed to help a child cope with what has happened, recover and move on is what we aim to deliver.

The charity's own research revealed that often young victims of crime had to wait months to access counselling services - that is if the services were available at all.

Since discovering that there was no national response that prioritised the needs of young people traumatised by crime, the charity has been working to develop a specialist counselling service that young people could access across England and Wales.

Working with Police & Crime Commissioners, Victims' Hubs, Sexual Abuse Referral Centres and safeguarding professionals, we are able to ensure that our most vulnerable victims of crime - and often the most forgotten - can readily access the level of support they need.

Practical help, cheer up support - including family theme park outings and peer group support breaks - and emotional support are also provided to hundreds of young victims and their families across the UK every year.

Find out more and how to access our services at www.embracecvoc.org.uk

Many thanks,

**ANNE CAMPBELL
CEO
EMBRACE Child Victims of Crime**

little ray of hope

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VICTIM SUPPORTLINE: 08 08 16 89 111

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little ray of hope

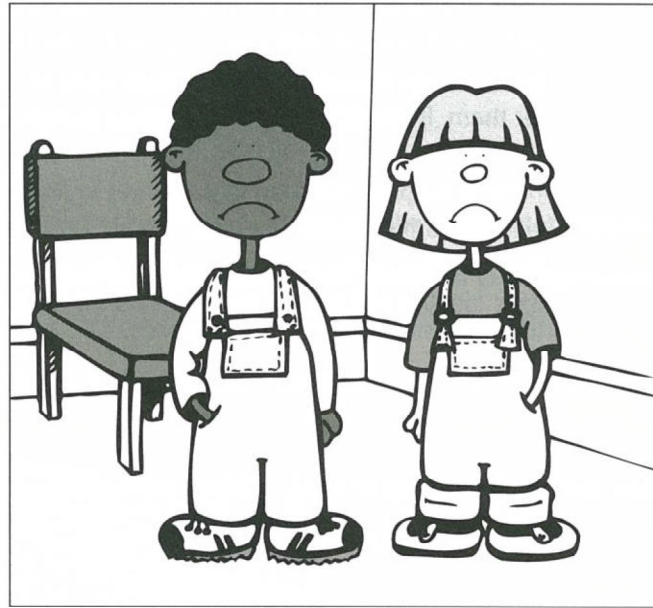
As a parent of a child victim, you will probably be feeling very confused and upset. Your child may be behaving very differently from usual, or they could be putting on a 'brave face'. This book covers a whole range of crimes which affect children, from burglary and theft to bullying, and even physical/sexual abuse. It is important to remember that each individual will act differently to each situation, so we shouldn't tell a child whose favourite toy has been stolen that something far worse could have happened because, for them, it could be the most stressful experience they've ever known.

There is no point insisting that the weeks/months following a crime will be easy for the victim and his/her family – this simply isn't true. What we can be sure of, however, is that together with publications like this one and the people around who victims and their families can talk to, help is never far away.



an insight

What is a Victim?



A victim is:

"A person who has suffered harm of any kind, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss of substance, or impairment of capacity to function within the community through acts or omissions which are in breach of the criminal laws of the country. It includes, where appropriate, the immediate family or dependents of such persons and any person who suffers harm in assisting such persons."

In simple terms, victims are:

People and their families who have suffered as a result of the law being broken.

Children as Victims

Youth is the most dangerous time of a person's life and, as a result, a great many children become victims of crime. Unfortunately, young people can rarely 'afford' to suffer the losses inflicted by crime. They are entirely dependent on adults for their existence and well-being, so when a crime is committed against them, their trust in outsiders is often shattered.

Once a child has become a crime victim, they often have to depend on adults to report the crime for them and help them through their crisis. Any adult who doesn't accept that their child is a victim is committing a kind of secondary crime against the young person, i.e. neglect.

Families, friends and neighbours should also take an interest in other people's children. The majority of people have a respectful regard for other people's privacy – however this shouldn't mean that you turn a blind eye when a crime is being committed against a child. It is very important to consider that your child will probably have very little idea of what to do when facing a crisis. The young person's views often get lost in all of the adult wrangling, and children can easily feel that the crime has been taken away from them – not in a pleasant relieving way – but in a stern overruling way.

The child victim will feel that the adults have taken control of something very personal to them. It is more than likely that the young person will not understand the law or court procedures and, as a result, they may connect going to court and being a witness with being sent to prison. Indeed, involving a child in the legal process has historically meant thrusting a young person into a world which doesn't distinguish between adults and children. Fortunately, as you will see from our chapter on Children and the Law, things are changing and the legal world is now being far more considerate towards child witnesses and victims.

Little Ray of Hope

This book looks at the ways different crimes affect children. Some crimes are directly targeted against children, i.e. the sexual, emotional and physical abuse of young people. Other crimes affect children in a roundabout way, i.e. their parents' home is burgled, they witness their parent being abused, they see someone attacked or murdered.

The crimes in this book are dealt with in two categories:

- 1. Direct Victimization** - where the child has been 'targeted' as a victim of crime
- 2. Indirect Victimization** - where the child suffers as a result of a crime committed against someone else

It should be understood from the outset that indirect victimisation is by no means less serious than direct victimisation. Indeed, it appears that whilst direct victims may be left with scars which remind others that they are a victim, many people have an awful 'out of sight, out of mind' attitude to crime which results in indirect victims not being recognised or helped.

Assisting Recovery

Family and friends play a vital role in diminishing the victim's stress level immediately after a crime has been committed.

Unfortunately, we have a primitive reaction to exclude victims, almost fearing contamination from them. For many of us, dealing with other people's emotions can be embarrassing and confusing but it is vital that we don't shut the victim out. Striking a balance between sensitivity to the victim's moods, thoughts and requests whilst avoiding the temptation to push your own feelings onto them is difficult but necessary.

Here are some general tips on assisting recovery:



DO

1. Be Patient.
2. Treat victims with respect.
3. Help victims to express their feelings.
4. Accept the importance of the victim's feelings.
5. Distract victims with holidays, pastimes, visits to friends.
6. Calm stress with rhythmic exercises – e.g. walking, swimming etc.
7. Give victims reassurance and gentle encouragement to overcome the situation.
8. When talking to your child use 'open' questions (not ones that can be usually answered yes or no).

DON'T

1. Get tired of helping.
2. Leave the victim alone in the early stages of recovery.
3. Let the victim think that they are a natural born victim.
4. Ask why the victim didn't react differently to the situation.
5. Let the victim think they are to blame in any way.
6. Pity the victim.
7. Say the victim is over-reacting.
8. Interrupt when the victim is talking.

Remember the best thing that you can do for any victim is to accept that they have been injured and are feeling upset. Your initial and long-term reaction to their plight will play a major part in how well they recover.

When the police talk to you about any crime, they should offer to put you in touch with your local victim support group. Hopefully, you will accept this offer but, if you don't think that you need their help, before you turn it down, talk to your children and ask if they would like to speak to a volunteer who has helped lots of people cope with crime. If they say yes, then accept the offer. There's no shame in using other people's expertise and it will be far better for your child in the long term.

burglary and theft

Definitions



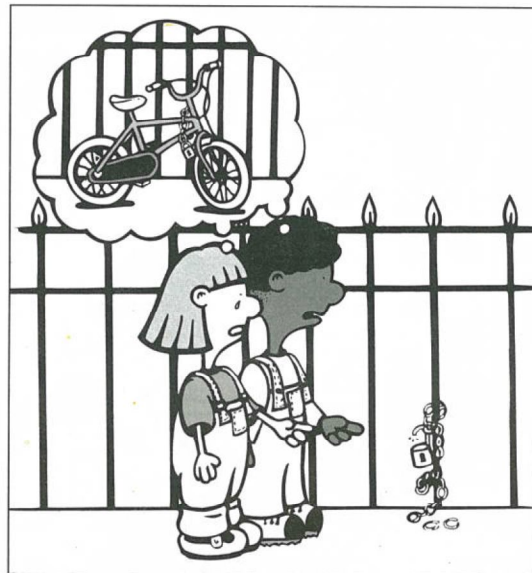
Burglary = The crime of entering a building as a trespasser to commit theft or another offence.

Children can be affected by burglaries in their own homes, the homes of close relatives, their schools, youth clubs and any other places that they regularly visit. Naturally, burglaries in a child's own home are the most disturbing, as they prove that the place which the child has always thought of as a safe haven is not immune from the ills of crime.

Theft = The dishonest taking of property belonging to another person with the intention of permanently depriving the owner of its possession.

Children can have their personal belongings stolen from them at home, in school or whilst out and about.

Detection



Burglary

There are several ways a child can discover their home/school/youth club etc has been burgled:

1. They can be the first one entering the building after the crime has taken place.
2. They can follow someone into the ransacked building.
3. They can be told about the incident after things have been cleared up.

All of the above are traumatic for the child. A parent's natural reaction would probably be to shield the young person from the reality of crime, and therefore clear everything up before the child sees the results of the burglary. We must, however, consider that in some cases, a child's imagination can paint a picture far worse than the reality of the situation; therefore if things don't look too bad in the house, it may be better for the child to see what has happened. They can perhaps even assist in the clearing up process and in making the property more secure.

Theft

When something is stolen from a child there are several ways that the parent can detect the crime:

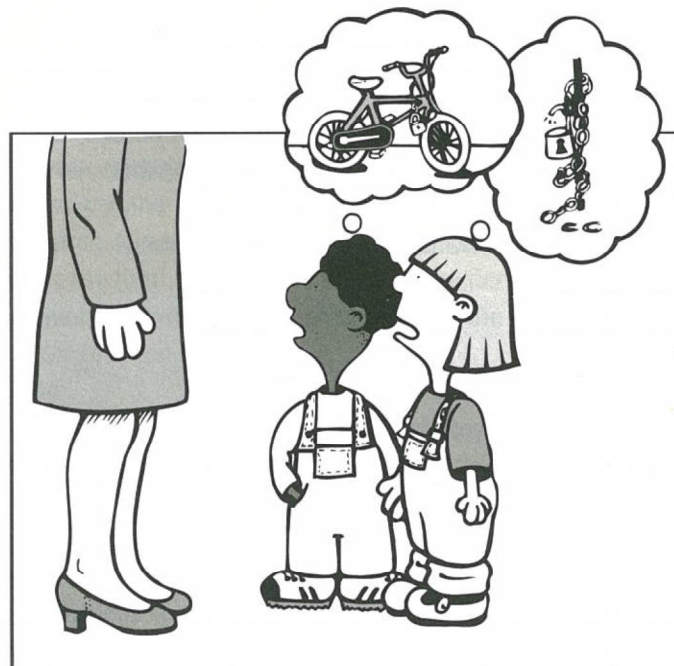
1. The child will immediately tell the parent that something belonging to them has 'disappeared'.
2. The parent will notice that something belonging to the child is missing.
3. The parent will notice that the child's behaviour has changed in some way and, following some discussion, the child will admit that they have had something stolen.

Although many children will talk openly to their parents if they have had something stolen, others will be less forthcoming. There can be a number of reasons for this reticence to talk:

1. The child feels ashamed and guilty for the theft, i.e. feels that he/she has been careless.
2. The child feels that their parent will be angry about them 'losing' their property.
3. The child is being bullied or victimised and they are frightened of the thief.

If your child has not been entirely open with you about the theft of their personal belongings, it is very important that you try to find out why. Bullying is a very real problem in schools across the country, and this could be one way of detecting that your child is in trouble before that trouble turns to danger.

Reaction



Like adults, children react in different ways to burglary and theft. Some merely see it as a temporary hiccup which may stop them from watching a favourite TV programme for example. Others feel afraid, distressed, insecure and even dirty. However, it must be remembered that the priorities of adults and children differ significantly. Compared to an adult, a child will probably have very few personal possessions, so even the theft of a small item can seem very serious.

Another thing to consider is the tendency of children to build up a preference for a particular possession. The 'safety blanket' syndrome does not have anything to do with the value or quality of the chosen item it is all about sentiment. So if your child is distraught at the loss of a cheap T-shirt or an old cushion, don't be surprised, this is quite normal.

When looking at the effect that crime has had on your child, it is important to consider their upbringing and how it has reflected on their personality. If a child has been completely shielded from crime, they may feel the effects more than if they have lived in a less protected environment.

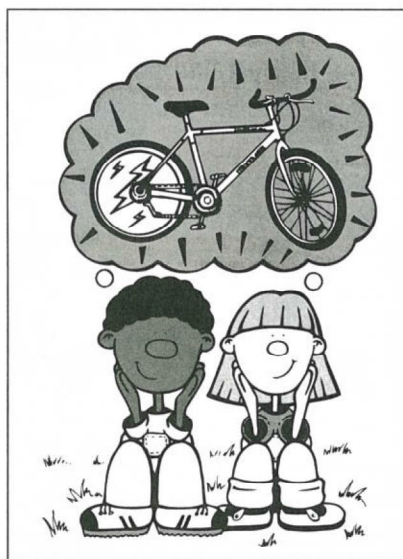
It doesn't matter what age a child is. There are no upper or lower age limits to feeling shock, fear or distress. The effects of crime have an equal impact on boys and girls alike. There may be a tendency for girls to express their feelings more openly than boys, but this does not mean that their male counterparts aren't suffering.

So how can you expect your child to react?

The following reactions are typical:

- Signs of being upset e.g. crying, bedwetting etc.
- A fear the burglar/thief will return.
- A fear of being alone in the house.
- Regression to younger behaviour.
- Disturbed sleep patterns.
- Wanting to sleep with parent(s).

What you can do: Emotional Support



1. Stay Calm!

Remember, if your child does tell you that he/she has had something stolen, it is vital that you are patient and do not shout at them. It has probably taken quite a bit of courage to confide in you in the first place, so don't turn on him/her. If you are determined that the theft should be used as an experience for your child to learn from, there will be plenty of time to discuss this when he/she is over this initial upset.

2. Calm the Child

Deal with the preliminary upset first. Your child may well be upset and traumatised with what has happened. Keep as calm as possible and place the main emphasis on comforting them.

3. Listen

One of the best things you can do for any victim of crime is to listen to them. Most victims just need others to recognise that they are a victim and that they have suffered in some way. Don't force your child to talk to you about the burglary/theft but give them the freedom and space to broach the subject when they want to.

4. Let them know you care

Children are very dependent on adults for many different things. Surprising though it may seem, one of those things is the recognition that a child can be a crime victim. In the past there has been some kind of strange notion that children are not old enough to be treated as victims. This is, of course, completely untrue and the better we teach our children to deal with crime in their younger years, the less likely it is that they will suffer traumatic after-effects as adults.

When a child does choose to talk to you about how they feel, tell them that although you can't pretend to feel like they do, you promise to help them in whatever way you can. Make it clear that you hope the child will always come to you and be able to tell you exactly how they feel, no matter how long after the event their feelings surface. Always resist the temptation to compare their situation to one that you've found yourself in e.g. "It's like the time when my office was burgled..." You may think that you are uniting yourself with the young person, but it may appear that you are pushing your problems their way.

5. Reassure and Encourage the Child

Reassurance and encouragement can be given in a couple of ways:

a. Words – Make things simple. Use words that are easy to understand. Tell the child that they are brave and strong.

b. Actions – Some children may get particular fixations after a burglary/theft e.g. they may think that the burglar is in their darkened bedroom or under their bed. If so, don't tell them that they are being silly, but show them that they are mistaken, e.g. walk into the room and look under the bed together. The child may well want their light leaving on all night or may want you to sit with them. Immediately after the event you should pander to their needs and wean them off this behaviour as they recover. If the panic suddenly sets in again after the child seems to have recovered, be prepared to step in with the reassurance and encouragement once again.

6. Inspire self-confidence in the child

As a victim, your child's self-confidence has probably taken quite a battering, particularly if the burglary/theft is the first-ever crime the child has experienced. If your child has had an item stolen from their person, the thief has probably invaded your child's personal space and may even have physically attacked your child. If your child has suffered a great loss of self confidence or is feeling nervous all the time, it is vital that you help to build up their confidence again and give them their own space. As a parent you are probably in the best position to build up this self-confidence again, so make a special effort to tell them you love them. Praise the child for the good things they do/say and give their paintings etc. pride of place in the home. Try to encourage their independence so that they get back to their pre-crime state as soon as possible.

7. Soothe

Your child may show signs of anger and frustration at having had their possessions stolen. So long as this is not directed as aggression against a specific person there is no need to worry. Acknowledge the child's anger then use comforting words to soothe him/her.

Practical Support



1. Realistic Recovery

If the crime has been reported to the police you will probably have some idea of the likelihood of getting your child's property back. Although the truth may hurt your child, it is important that you are honest with them. Coming to terms with having lost something for good is painful in the short term but better than having your hopes dashed long term.

2. The Outside World

Ask your child if they would like you to inform their school-teacher of what has happened. Explain to them that they may start thinking about the burglary/theft at school and, so long as their teacher knows, they will have someone to talk to if they ever feel down.

3. Leave a light on at night

Practicalities like this can make the child feel more secure and sleep easier. If a child is well rested they are less likely to dwell on the burglary/theft.

4. Visit the Doctor

If your child is showing recurrent signs of stress or upset, such as bedwetting, take them to the doctor and talk to him about the incident and its effects.

5. Personal Alarm

If your child is still feeling unsafe well into your reassurance programme, offer to buy them a personal alarm. It may seem a little excessive to you, but if it stops the child from worrying, it's well worth it.

6. Replace Stolen Items

Materialistic though it may sound, research has proved that child victims recover more quickly if stolen items are replaced as soon as possible. Naturally, this is not always possible, particularly if some things are not insured. However, if you are insured, you should try to get the claim sorted out as soon as possible, bringing some semblance of order back to the household as soon as you can.

7. Future Plans

In some cases, the theft of your child's possessions can leave them worrying that they might be open to theft in the future. Help them to make a plan of how to keep their possessions as safe as possible. This may include saving up for bicycle locks, fixing new bolts to sheds, making sure that toys are always put away after use.

8. Bicycle Theft

The theft of a child's bicycle is usually very traumatic. The bicycle will probably be the most valuable item that the child has ever owned. It can also be their major means of mobility. Obviously the replacement of a cycle will depend very much on the economic circumstances of your family but, if possible, it might be useful in the short term to borrow or share.

9. Clearing Up

Once the police have checked the scene of the crime, let your child choose whether or not to help you with the clearing up. Naturally, you must ensure that there are no dangers lying around e.g. sharp knives, broken crockery or glass, but, once you have done this, ask them if they would like to help. For some children, the clearing up process may be too painful, but others may feel that they are helping with the healing process i.e. putting things back the way they were.

10. Prevent Your Child from Adopting a Siege Mentality

Some adults and children think that the answer to burglary/theft is walling themselves up in their own homes. This is certainly not true! If your child does become fretful about going out and develops an unhealthy obsession with locking and bolting doors, talk to them and explain that you can't let the bad person who has broken into your home rule your life. Say that you all have to show a united front so that the thief/burglar will not think that they have won.

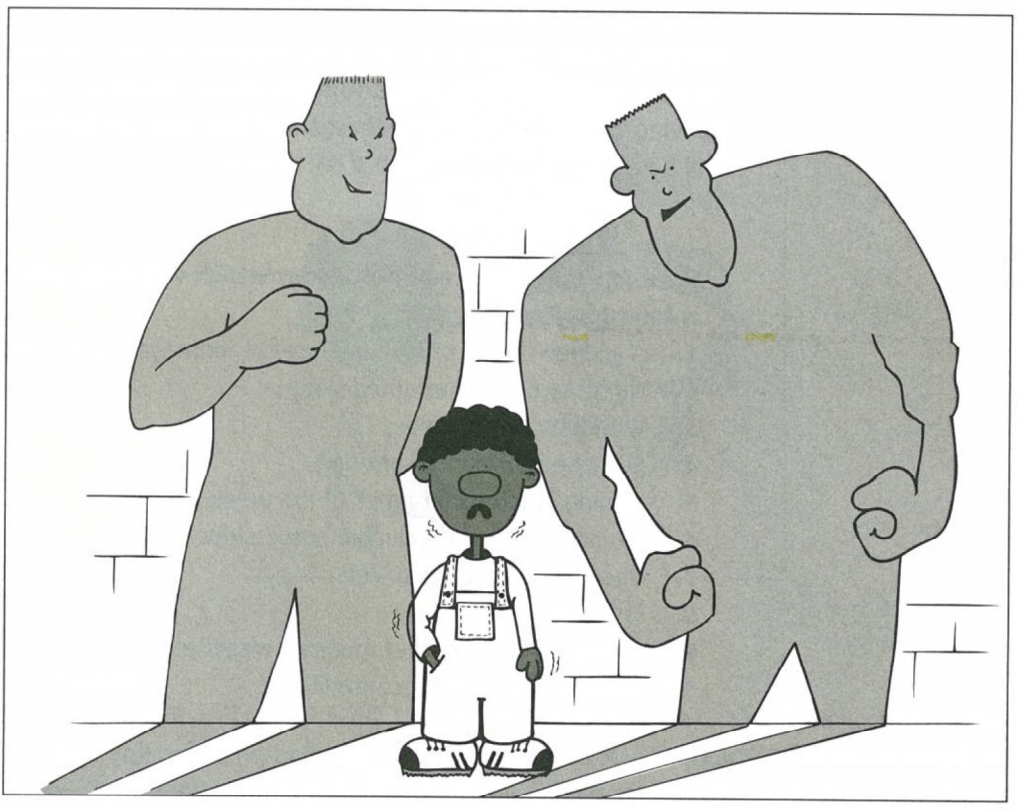
Checklist

All in all:

1. Stay Calm.
2. Listen to your child.
3. Let them know you care.
4. Reassure and encourage your child.
5. Build up your child's self confidence.
6. Ask for professional help if your child asks for/requires it.

bullying and racial abuse

Definitions



Bullying = Hurting, persecuting or intimidating someone who you perceive to be weaker than yourself.

Bullying is an umbrella term for a variety of behaviour which can range from excluding a child from a playground game to verbally insulting the child, stealing his/her possessions or physically assaulting them.

Racial abuse = Any incident with a racial motive. Like bullying, it can encompass personal attacks, written or verbal threats, offensive graffiti or damage to property.

Racism is evil, nonsensical and completely unacceptable. Its constant flow of menacing remarks, vandalism and offensive behaviour often proves more traumatic than one short, sharp physical blow.

Detection

Bullying/racial abuse

Bullying/racial abuse is a terrifying experience, so it is hardly surprising that many victims try to handle the situation alone without asking for help. Victims of bullying/racial abuse often feel ashamed that they are being picked on. Frequently they will have been threatened not to tell anyone.

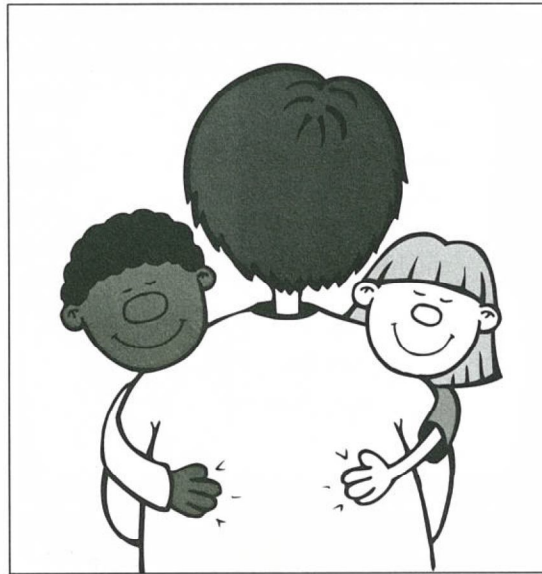
Here are some types of behaviour which will help you to detect if your child is being bullied/abused:

1. A sudden dislike of certain places or journeys e.g. the walk to school.
2. Nightmares or interrupted sleep.
3. Withdraw and anxiety.
4. School performance suffering.
5. Feeling ill at certain times of the week.
6. Losing money and valuable possessions.
7. Unexplained bruises or cuts.
8. Crying in secret.
9. Asking for extra pocket money, sweets etc.
10. Attempts to ignore race traditions.

Naturally, this type of behaviour can be brought on by a whole range of worries, so it is important that, having identified the existence of the problem, you investigate it further.



Reaction



1. Parents

Parents will more than likely find it very difficult to stay calm if they discover that their child is being bullied/harassed. The most obvious reaction for some would be to storm round to the house of the bully and do some bullying of their own! This is certainly not a good idea! Always think of your child and how your actions will make them feel. It is their feelings that really matter, so take control of your own anger and frustration before you even discuss the problem with your child.

Remember that bullying is a very serious and widespread problem. Recent research showed that 1 in 4 pupils at a primary school and 1 in 10 pupils at a secondary school had been bullied more than once in one term.

Racial abuse encompasses so many different problems that reactions are difficult to judge. As a parent, you will know whether your child is strong enough to face the problem in the immediate future. Whether or not they can, they will probably go through a phase of feeling unsure and unhappy with themselves. It is vital that you are there to help and support them at this time.

Unfortunately, some communities see racial harassment as a necessary evil that minorities have to put up with. **THIS IS CERTAINLY NOT TRUE.** The effects of racial harassment can be absolutely terrifying. Prejudice is something that gets out of hand very easily. Make it clear to your child that racial harassment will not be tolerated.

2. The Victim

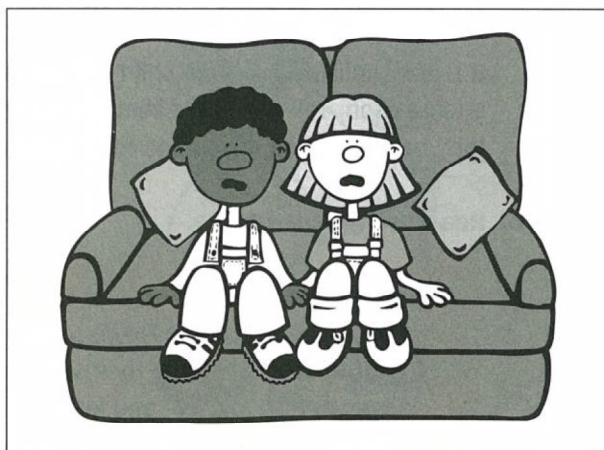
The main result of bullying/racial abuse is fear.

Everyone copes with fear in different ways. Younger children express feelings in actions not words, so the child's behaviour may well change completely. Some children may become quiet and withdrawn, others unsettled and difficult. One thing that most children will experience, however, is some form of guilt. Bullies are usually very insecure individuals. They feel the need to prove their strength through emphasising someone else's weaknesses. Bullies often make out that their bullying is the victim's fault. This is a downright lie! Do everything you can to ensure your child knows that they have nothing to blame themselves for.

Give your child time and space to express his/her emotions. Your handling of the immediate situation will play a vital role in dictating how well your son/daughter recovers.



What you can do: Emotional Support



1. Stay Calm

You may feel extremely angry and aggressive when you discover that your child has been, or is being bullied/abused. **IF SO, STOP! TAKE TIME OUT TO CALM DOWN.** Explain to your child, in simple terms, that you are only feeling angry because you care for him/her, not because they have done anything wrong.

2. Calm the Victim

The young person may well be very distressed about what has happened to him/her. Take time to soothe their upset away. They will be in a much better position to talk to you about what has happened when they are calm.

3. Find somewhere quiet to talk

Bullying and racial abuse are complex and emotive topics, not things that can be discussed effectively with the TV blaring away in the background. It is important that you give the topic your full attention, so go somewhere that you won't be interrupted.

NB. It is vital that your child is allowed to talk to you in surroundings that do not intimidate him/her. Do not turn your conversation into an interrogation!

4. Listen

One of the best things you can do for any victim of crime is to listen to them. Most victims just need others to recognise that they are a victim and that they have suffered in some way. Give your child the freedom and space to broach the subject whenever they want to.

Always remember that your child has plucked up a great deal of courage to confide in you. The way you handle their confidence will play a vital role in their recovery. Don't do anything rash. You can't expect to act effectively until you know the whole story.

5. Take what is said seriously

Unfortunately, in the past, adults have tended to think that bullying/racial abuse was a necessary evil in the growing up process. However, thanks to recent media and press attention, we are now all familiar with the severity of the problem. Some cases of bullying/abuse which aren't resolved can lead to a child attempting suicide.

It is very unlikely that your child will accuse someone of being a bully/racist without good reason. Tell your child that you believe them implicitly, that you are very glad they have confided in you and that together you can sort things out.

6. Reassure the victim**Tell your child:**

Bullies/racists are insecure people.

Not to be afraid to be themselves.

Everyone should live and let live.

Bullying/racism is often a sign of jealousy.

BULLYING/RACISM IS NEVER THE VICTIM'S FAULT.

As a parent you will obviously know how best to comfort your child. In cases of racism, explain to your child that their race is something to be proud of. Tell them some of the many good things about their heritage. Build up their confidence in their race again, and try to actively involve them in their ethnic community.

7. Build up the victim's self-confidence

Praise your child, telling them how very important they are to you. If the bully has been focusing his/her attentions on a specific physical aspect of the child, stress how that feature makes them special. Say that all successful people have something different about them.

8. Explain to your child how serious bullying/racial abuse is

If your children are brought up with the idea that such behaviour should not be tolerated, they can play a very important part in stamping the problem out.

9. Don't Pry

The fact that your child has confided in you doesn't mean that you have the right to press them for more information than they are willing to give. Talking about the experience could be as painful for the child as going through it all again. It is more than likely that the whole story will only come to light over a period of time. Be patient!

10. Ask how you can help

Explain that you are there to help and support the child, and ask them what they would like you to do. Allay their fears in any way that they can suggest.

Practical Support



1. Physical Injuries

If your child has been attacked/beaten by a bully, deal with the physical injuries first but don't forget that the emotional ones will probably last longer! Depending on the severity of the attack, your child might have to go to the doctor or to hospital.

2. Teach your child how to deal with bullies/racists

The following ten points can be used as advice to build up your child's self-confidence for any future encounters with bullies.

Tell your child:

- a. Say no and mean no – look the aggressor in the eye.
- b. Be a broken record – if you don't want to do something keep saying so.
- c. Don't rise to the bait – stay cool and collected.
- d. Talk positively to yourself – think of all your good points.
- e. Change the subject – talk about something else.
- f. Ignore those who are taunting you – they are not worth your attention.
- g. Avoid the situation – choose your friends carefully.
- h. Stay in a safe group – there really is safety in numbers.
- i. Walk away – leave temptation behind.
- j. Remember that you have the free choice to be yourself – assert this.

Other ways of dealing with bullying include: laughing at or ignoring hurtful comments, telling the aggressors that bullying isn't funny, telling the aggressors to go away.

3. Personal Safety

Your child may be left feeling quite vulnerable after they have been bullied/abused. If so, spend some time talking to them about personal safety. For further help and advice on this topic turn to pages 29 and 30.

4. Self-Assertiveness

If your child is of secondary school age and their self-confidence has plummeted as a result of bullying, you may want to talk to them about attending a self-assertiveness class. Ask your local colleges for more details.

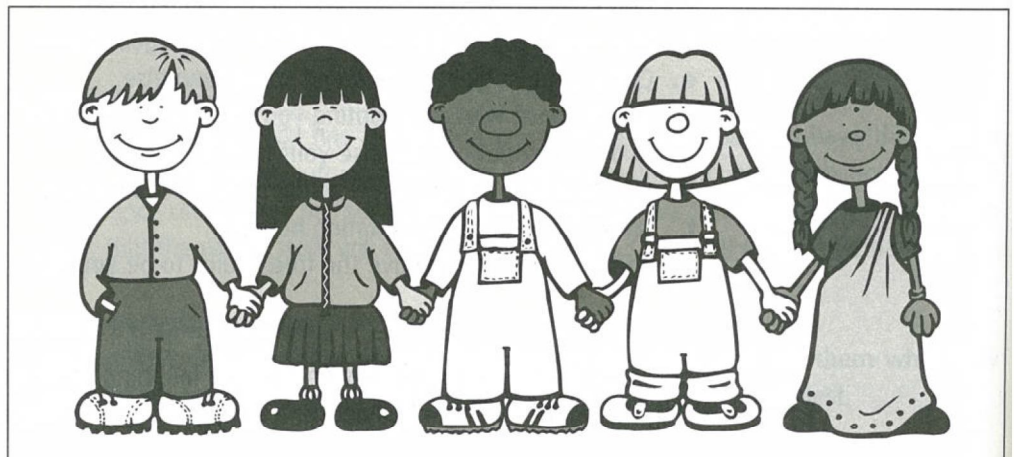
5. Talk to your community leaders about racism

No matter how much the 'officials' try to help you and your family, you will certainly benefit from the wisdom of your local community leaders as well. They will probably have come across similar incidents before and will be able to give you valuable help and advice.

Checklist

All in all:

1. Stay Calm.
2. Calm the victim and deal with any physical injuries.
3. Find somewhere quiet to talk.
4. Listen and be patient.
5. Take what is said seriously.
6. Reassure the victim.
7. Explain what a serious problem bullying/racial abuse is.
8. Build up the victim's self confidence.
9. Prepare a 'dealing with abuse' plan for your child.
10. Speak to local community leaders.



violent attack

Definition

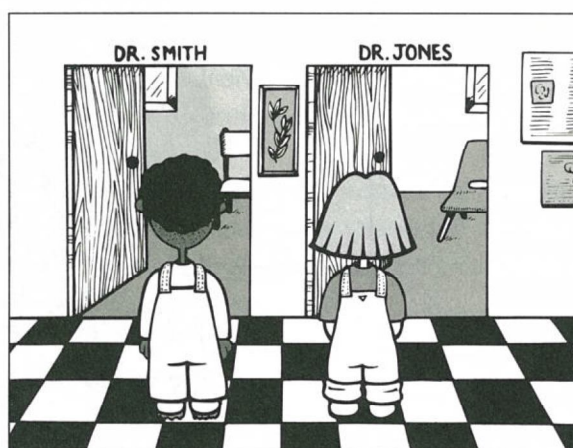
Violence = The exercise or instance of physical force, usually causing or intending to cause injury, destruction etc.

Attack = To launch a physical assault with or without weapons.

There are many different circumstances which lead to a person being physically attacked. In this instance we will assume that the attack has been carried out on an innocent victim who has simply found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Detection

Most violent physical attacks will have left some scars or bruises on the victim. If these are on visible parts of the body, then it is likely that you will have noticed them and have asked your child how they were injured. Treat the injuries first before taking time to talk to your child about the attack. In severe cases your child may have been taken directly to hospital after the attack. In this case you will have been informed of the incident by the medical staff at the hospital.



Sometimes, in cases of bullying etc., your child will try to cover up any scars, bruises etc. they have received from violent attacks. If your child is being secretive about something and starts wearing long-sleeved tops, high-neck jumpers etc., take time to talk to them about it. Don't push them too hard for information - but let them know that no-one has the right to hurt them.

Sadly, children are sometimes attacked at school by other pupils. If this happens to your son/daughter you will probably be informed by your child's teacher or head teacher.

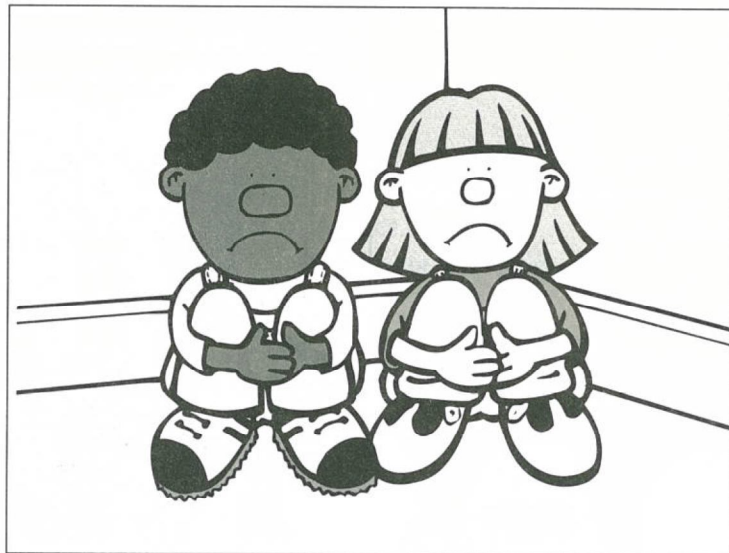
In all of the above cases, it is very important that you try to stay as calm as possible. Naturally, you will feel very upset at what has happened to your child but, research has shown that stressed parents can add to the stress level experienced by the young victim. A composed parent is a far greater help to a child victim than someone who is distraught. No matter how you are feeling inside, try to put on a brave face.

Reaction

Physical violence affects a person in two ways:

1. Physical Injuries

Young people will tend to know very little about illness and injuries. If they see blood, they will tend to believe the worse. Although injuries of any kind should be dealt with immediately, it is important to remember that bony parts of the body tend to bleed profusely whilst tissue around the eyes, nose and lips tends to bleed, bruise and swell. As a result, many injuries which look severe may not be as horrific as they seem. If wounds continue to bleed freely after they have been cleaned or dressed, you must seek medical help immediately.



We all have different tolerance levels to pain. Some can grit their teeth and bear it, others get very upset and distressed. Naturally, the degree of distress experienced by your child will depend very much on the injuries sustained.

Shock is a very common reaction to pain and physical violence. This can manifest itself in a number of diverse ways from the child becoming silent, withdrawn and isolated to their seeming strangely buoyant, full of energy and excited. It is very important to keep a watchful eye on any child displaying such behaviour. Although it is quite normal, extended displays of such behaviour may be a sign that your young person needs more help.

2. Emotional Effects

Physical attacks are sure to have a considerable effect on the emotional state of any child. Obviously, the more disturbing the circumstances, the more devastating the impact of the attack but it is very important to note that the child's reaction will depend very much on his/her outlook on life. If the child has been entirely shielded from crime, they are more likely to react badly to the attack whereas a child who has known/seen the existence of crime in his/her own neighbourhood will probably be more composed.

Most victims of violent attack will need to talk things through with someone. They may experience bouts of disbelief, intense anger, isolation, sleeplessness and depression. In the immediate future, some young people may be unable to cope with ordinary tasks. Longer term they may be less trusting of people or have constant fears that they will bump into their attacker. If their behaviour becomes obsessive and shows no sign of letting up after a reasonable period of time, they may benefit from counselling.

Although reactions depend on individual personalities, there are two categories of young people that can react particularly badly to violent attacks.

a. Teenage girls – with so much media pressure on women to look good these days, teenage girls can become particularly stressed at the idea of being scarred for life. Attacks can have a serious effect on anyone's confidence, but the loss of a teenage girl's confidence can be longer lasting.

b. Boys of any age – Unfortunately, we tend to instill in boys the need to hide their feelings. As a result, they put a brave face on things and, instead of letting their feelings out, they let their emotions well up inside. Such behaviour can cause problems in later life.

What you can do: Emotional Support

1. Stay Calm

As a parent, your immediate reaction will be to protect your child and fight against anything which harms them. Naturally, you will be devastated at the thought that your child has been hurt in some way but it is very important indeed that you try to hide your feelings. If you remain calm and collected, you will be better able to help them. If your child has been seriously injured in an attack, you may well need to talk to your own doctor about coping with stress. Remember you need to be strong for your child's sake so get all of the help and advice that you can.

2. Calm the Victim

Your child may be hysterical in the immediate aftermath of the attack. Take time out to calm them down and soothe their upset away.

3. Listen and be patient

Victims want to be given the assurance that they are allowed to feel and act the way they want to. They want a validation of their experience and assurance that they are not 'being soft'.

Making sense of crime is a necessary part of the victim's re-establishing trust in society and restoring a sense of self confidence and control – this can only take place if the victim has someone to talk to.

It is vital you realise that the listening process doesn't have a time limit. A victim might feel the need to discuss the crime weeks, months or even years after the event. So long as they know that you will be there, they will feel more secure.

4. Don't Pry

Your child is under incredible pressure at the moment – don't increase the burden by forcing them to talk to you if they don't want to. Give your child time and space to talk when they want to. If you need to find out certain details, use gentle coaxing NOT interrogation tactics.

5. Be Honest

If your child has been seriously injured or scarred, it is vital that you are as honest with them as possible. The doctor will tell you how they are doing, then you should talk to them. Naturally, you may not want to tell your child everything at once but never lie to them. Take a compassionate view when talking to them about their injuries.

6. Reassure the Victim

Your child will probably be at a very low ebb. Their self confidence will have been battered and there may be a tendency to despair for the future – particularly if the child will be scarred/injured long term. Talk to them simply but sensibly. Tell them how special they are, how much they are loved, how many friends they have. Don't avoid talking about the future. Give them faith in themselves by discussing any plans you have for your family. Stress the part that your child will play in these plans. Talk about holidays, hobbies, good times past and future. This way you will build solid foundations for future recovery.

It is often useful for a child victim to rehearse how they will tell their story to friends when they return to school. They might also need the help of a special friend or teacher on their first day back in the classroom.

7. Ask how you can help

One of the major mistakes that we all make when comforting someone is to assume we know how they feel and what their needs are. This can be very dangerous as it leads us to ignore the real situation and concentrate on our 'imaginary' one. Only by asking the victim themselves can we truly learn how to help them.

Physical Support



1. Deal with physical Injuries

Whether it's a cut finger or something altogether more serious, it is very important that you sort out the physical injuries first. This 'making things better' process will help to obliterate the visual reminders of the attack and give the victim time to calm down a little. At this stage, the victim will probably need lots of support to deal with the immediate pain of the attack. Don't complicate the physical recovery process by dwelling too much on the trauma of the attack.

2. Nurture

Physical injuries don't just go away, but thankfully most heal in time. As the weeks pass by after the attack the victim may be left feeling physically and emotionally sore. This stage of healing is best treated with lots of tender, loving care. The attitude that 'nothing is too much trouble' will go a long way to helping the victim in these tender stages. The most valuable resources that you have are time, patience and love - give the victim plenty of all of these.

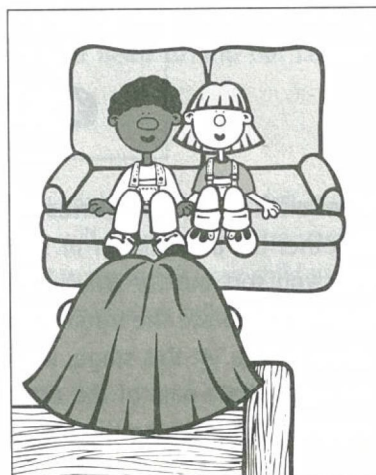
3. Personal Safety

Victims of violent attack tend to lose trust in people and, in severe cases, become too frightened to go out. One of the ways of combating this may be to teach them about personal safety and to encourage them to put the lessons they have learnt into practice. Young adults who are old enough to go out alone may feel very insecure at first. You may well have to accompany them on journeys in the early stages of their recovery but it is important that you encourage them to assert their independence again. This could be a long process so it is vital that you are patient with the victim.

Here are some personal safety tips for your child:

Out and About

1. Always tell someone where you are going and when you will be back.
2. Always stay with a group of people - don't walk anywhere alone.
3. Always walk on main, well-lit paths.
4. NEVER take lifts from anyone without the permission of your parents.
5. Make sure that you know how to make an emergency phone call.
6. Carry a phone card with you in case you have to make an emergency phone call.
7. If you are attacked shout and scream as loudly as possible.
8. If you think you are in danger always try to make your way to a place with lots of people about.
9. Don't go out in the dark.
10. Don't carry a lot of money and/or valuables.
11. Carry a personal safety alarm.



Travelling on buses and trains

1. Sit near the driver.
2. Don't tell anyone else where you will be getting off.

Alone in the home

1. Try not to let anyone in the house if you are alone.
2. Don't tell any telephone callers that you are on your own.
3. Don't give your name when answering the phone.
4. Ask for and check the identity of any officials who call at your house.

For further information, contact your local crime prevention officer.

6. Counselling

Depending on the age of your child, they might benefit from counselling of some kind. At a very early age, your child has experienced something far more traumatic than anything that most adults will ever know. Counselling can take on many forms from having an independent outsider to listen to your child to self assertiveness and other guidance classes. Remember that there is no stigma attached to counselling. You have to do whatever you can for the good of your child.

Checklist

All in all:

1. Deal with the physical injuries.
2. Listen and be patient.
3. Don't pry.
4. Be honest.
5. Reassure the victim.
6. Ask how you can help.
7. Nurture the victim.
8. Teach your child about personal safety.
9. Consider counselling

domestic violence

Definition



Domestic violence is when someone threatens or harms you in your home. This crime includes physical assault, mental cruelty and sexual abuse. It can result in anything from an uneasy atmosphere in the home to murder.

Domestic violence may be targeted at the child themselves, but it is more likely to be targeted at the child's mother. In this instance, we will focus on the effect that domestic violence has on a child witness.

Detection

1. The Child

As a parent you will probably do everything in your power to prevent your child from finding out that you are a victim of domestic violence. Unfortunately, no matter how well you protect your child from the reality of the situation, it is more than likely that they will know what is happening.

Even if your child hasn't been kept awake by endless slanging matches or fights during the night, they will be aware that you are feeling tense. This tension will automatically transfer to the young person and make them unhappy.

2. The Parent

If you are suffering as a victim of domestic violence and trying to protect your child, you will probably be very watchful as to how your child is behaving/reacting. Unfortunately, you won't always be able to tell whether your child has found out about the domestic violence or not by their behaviour. When a child discovers that a member of their family (particularly their mother) is suffering in some way, they often take on a great deal of responsibility and try to protect the victim. Just as you have hidden your true feelings from them, they will try to conceal their upset from you. So even if your child seems to be acting normally, the realisation that their mother is vulnerable to attack is probably still having a serious psychological effect on them.

Reaction



Officials estimate that children in around 700,000 households suffer indirectly from domestic violence each year. These homes become settings of fear and terror as the domestic scene is based on dominance and exploitation.

Few things can be more disturbing for a child than their home being sullied by violence. Home for most children is a safe haven, a place to be at ease and be themselves. When home becomes an unhappy place, a child's world turns upside down.

Children who witness domestic violence frequently react as severely as those who experience it directly. Acute immediate distress and adverse long term effects go hand in hand. Many child witnesses suffer from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This can manifest itself in many ways though the long term effects of PTSD include: a diminished sense of security and self esteem, stress in familial and peer relationships and disturbances in sexuality. Research also proves that children with backgrounds of family violence have a significantly higher incidence of behavioural problems than other children. They also tend to grow up believing that violence is a natural and acceptable reaction, therefore they are more likely to be violent adults.

Sometimes, a battered wife will decide to leave her husband and take the children away from the domestic violence. This may well be the very best course of action for everyone but it is important to consider how the move will affect the children. Besides the trauma of the violence itself, there will be the upheaval of leaving their father, home and everything familiar to them. The move may entail a new school and new friends. In such a situation, it is important for the mother to give an air of confidence to her children, to focus on the future and appear confident that she can build a new life for her family.

Besides the pressure of dealing with the situation itself, children who witness domestic violence are often put in an even more stressful position due to specific circumstances:

1. A child takes on responsibility for what is happening to the victim in their family and either tries to protect them physically or offers emotional support. No matter how strong your child is, there is no way that they can really cope with this extra pressure.
2. Quite often, a child is the only real witness to what has happened so, when the situation does come out into the open, he/she has to take on the responsibility of relaying the story to outsiders – i.e. police, social workers and even jurors. This puts an incredible strain on the child.

Relatively few cases of domestic violence degenerate into murder but, those that do, will certainly have very severe long-term effects on young people. A recent study detailed the trauma experienced by children who have seen one parent murdered by another. It states that such children have to cope with the trauma of violence, the grief of losing both parents simultaneously, the dislocation and insecurity of their future life, the stigma and secrecy of the crime and massive conflicts of loyalty. These children lose one parent in an act of horrific violence and then have to come to terms with the fact that their other parent is a murderer.

No matter how severe the case of domestic violence may be, most child witnesses will experience some feelings of guilt. Those who have been too frightened to intervene in the violence will feel guilty that they haven't tried to stop it, those that have intervened will feel guilty that they couldn't stop it from happening. In considering child witnesses of domestic violence, it is also important to remember that the children themselves might well have been occasional victims of the violence. This will only add to their suffering.

Although we have concentrated on domestic violence inflicted by a family member, it is important to remember that all of the above also relates to incidents where children have witnessed attacks carried out by those outside their family circle.

What you can do: Emotional Support



1. Stay Calm and Calm the Child

It is important that you try to compose yourself and comfort the child before talking to them about the situation. You are probably under a great deal of pressure yourself, but it is important that you try to stay calm and collected in front of your child so that they will feel safe.

2. Provide a safe 'holding' environment

A child who has witnessed a violent attack on his/her mother will have suffered a crisis of trust. The mother who has always supported them has been rendered powerless, the father who should have cared for them may have attacked them and their home is no longer a safe haven.

The priority in any such case must be to find an environment in which the child feels safe. This may require an entirely new location or it may even suffice to create a new loving atmosphere in an existing location. The aim is to find an initial stability on which to base future recovery.

3. Listen

It is more than likely that you will do this anyway because you will probably find it very hard to imagine how your child is feeling. There is no point telling you what to expect from your child as each case will be different. Simply allow them to talk freely. Don't blame or judge anyone as it is quite likely that the child may still 'love' the attacker but dislike their behaviour – particularly if it is his/her father or another close relative or friend.

4. Be a constant companion

There's no point setting yourself up as the shoulder to cry on if you don't intend to carry the job through to the end. For the victim, you may well be the only stable feature of their life. You have to be there whenever they need you. Remember that victims can be very tetchy so think carefully before you speak. They will be very much aware that they are being a burden so don't even joke about being at their beck and call. Even a throw away comment can seem like rejection at this sensitive stage.

5. Ask how you can help

Only by asking the victim themselves can we truly learn how to help them. No matter how silly or trivial their requests may seem, the efficiency of your response will be a breath of fresh air to the victim and boost their confidence immensely.

6. Don't Pry

Domestic violence is a very sensitive subject. A child witness may remember the incident visually if that is how they first experienced it. Every time they talk about the crime, they may well see it all happening again. This isn't something that they will want to happen so they may well try to shut it all out. By all means use gentle coaxing to get your child to talk, but don't put any extra pressure on them. Give them time.

7. Comfort and praise

Let the child know how much you care, tell them how special they are. Talk openly to them about their positive points and discuss their future and how things are going to get better. Tell them what a support they were during the bad times, but assure them that you can cope. The most valuable resources you have are time, patience and love – give them plenty of all of these.

8. Don't be overprotective

Despite all of the care and attention that the victim will require from you, it is important that you take care not to stifle them. Always remember the reason you are devoting so much time to them – i.e. so that THEY will grow strong. Never stop the victim from doing things for themselves. Encourage them and help them to regain their confidence and independence.

Practical Support

1. Deal with any physical injuries

Whether you or your child has been involved in the violence, it is vital that you tend to any physical injuries at once. This 'making things better' process will help to obliterate the visual reminders of the attack and give the child victim time to calm down a little.

Young people will tend to know very little about illness and injuries. If they see blood they will tend to believe the worst. Although injuries of any kind should be dealt with immediately, it is important to remember that bony parts of the body bleed profusely whilst tissue around the eyes, nose and lips bleed, bruise and swell. As a result, many injuries which look severe may not be as horrific as they seem. If wounds continue to bleed after cleaning and dressing, seek medical help immediately.

2. Consider Counselling – (Ask Victim Support & Witness Service for details)

It is incredibly difficult to be a tower of strength for your children if you have no-one to talk to yourself. With the recent complications in your family, you might be feeling somewhat isolated from your relatives, if so, consider counselling. An outsider who is specifically trained to help victims could be an ideal independent support. They could also be useful to people who do have their families to rely on. Women's refuges and Women's Aid also provide specialist support to the victims of domestic violence.



Your children might also benefit from counselling. They might not want to admit to you that they feel anxious/sad as they want to be 'strong' for you. A counsellor will be another 'friend' to them, someone they don't feel they have to be brave with.

3. The Outside World

Ask your child if they would like you to inform their school teacher what has happened. Explain to them that they may start thinking about the bad times at school and so long as their teacher knows, they will have someone to talk to if they ever feel down.

4. Self-assertiveness

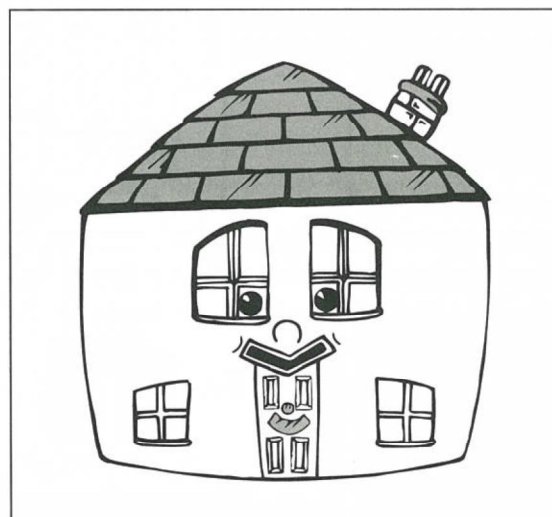
If you and your children have been subjected to domestic violence, you will probably all be feeling pretty negative about yourselves. The recovery process is very much built on a positive attitude. Consider self-assertiveness classes for yourself and your children. Ask local colleges for more details.

5. Feeling Secure

Spend time building up a secure environment for your child to live in. Give them stability, build up their trust. Organise things for your family to do together. Give your child a family life once again.

All in all:

1. Deal with physical injuries.
2. Stay calm.
3. Provide a safe environment.
4. Listen.
5. Comfort and praise.
6. Report the incident.
7. Consider counselling.



child abuse

Definition



There are four types of child abuse which can involve all classes, races, genders and ages of person.

Sexual abuse =

This involves being forced or pressured into participating in sexual activity. Sexual abuse might involve intimate touching or even intercourse but it can also include being forced to watch sexual activity or videos of a sexual nature, or to pose for photographs in sexual ways.

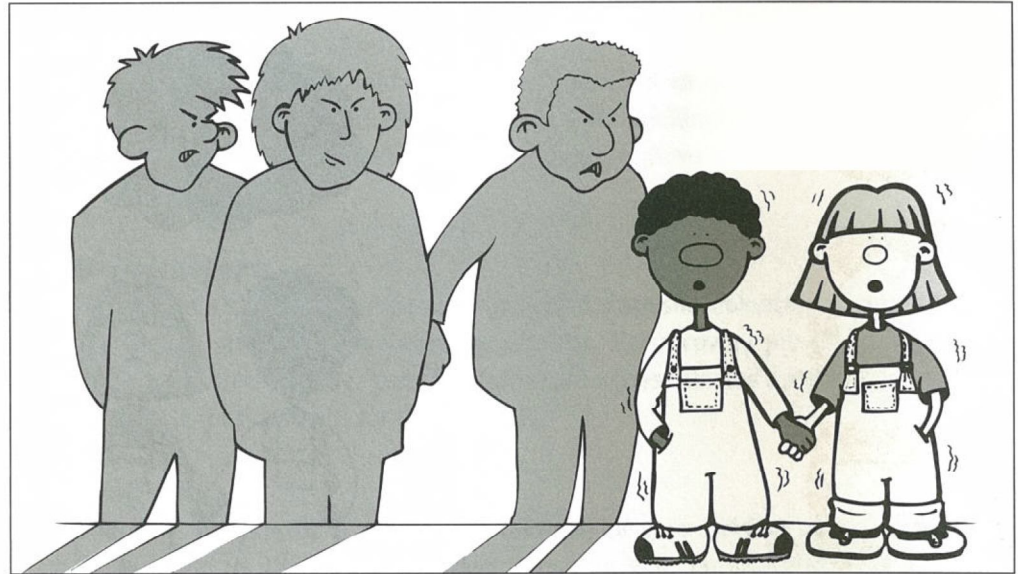
Physical Abuse =

This involves a child being purposely injured by another. The injuries can range from bruises to broken limbs, cigarette burns to bites and can even result in death.

Emotional Abuse and Neglect =

These are the most difficult types of abuse to define as they can encompass many 'wrongs'. Emotional abuse and neglect range from never telling a child that you love them to locking them in their room, making them sleep on the floor or continually shouting and screaming at them. In simple terms emotional abuse/neglect is the clear failure of a child's family to fulfil their required role.

Detection



Most times a child will discuss abuse with someone they know and trust. If your child chooses to talk to someone other than you, don't be upset, they are probably trying to spare your feelings and protect you from upset.

All of the following advice will help you to 'detect' abuse.
NB: This advice relates to cases where you genuinely have no idea what is happening to your child.

If you do suspect that someone is abusing a child in some way **ACT NOW**. You will probably not want to accept that the abuse is taking place, particularly if the abuser is a member of your own family. As a responsible adult, you cannot let the abuse continue. Remember that the safety and well-being of your child is the most important thing in the world. You have nothing to be ashamed of, the people who you talk to will want to help, not punish you. They will accept how strong you are being and will do everything they can for you. Be brave for the child's sake, get help and stop the abuse now!

1. Sexual Abuse

If a child has been sexually abused, it is very unlikely that they will talk openly about it, therefore, you will have to detect the problem yourself.

Sexual abuse doesn't often leave any physical scars or bruises. The best way to detect sexual abuse is through behavioural changes. As we have said before, each individual reacts differently to each situation so it would be impossible to give you a blueprint of how your child will behave. Always be wary if your child suddenly starts acting differently from the 'norm'. Some common reactions are detailed later in this section.

2. Physical Abuse

This should be the easiest form of abuse to detect as it will leave noticeable marks and injuries. If these are on visible parts of the body then it is likely that you will have noticed them and have asked your child how they were injured. Treat the injuries first before taking time to talk about the abuse with your child.

Sometimes, in cases of physical abuse, your child will try to cover up any scars, bruises etc. they have received from violent attacks. If your child is being secretive about something and starts wearing long sleeved tops, high neck jumpers etc., take time to talk to them about it. Don't push them too hard for information but let them know that no-one has the right to hurt them.

3. Emotional Abuse and Neglect

These are usually detected by an outsider. The most likely way of diagnosing them is through listening to the child talking about what has happened to them. They are more likely to admit to this kind of abuse than any other as they probably won't know that it is wrong - i.e. a child who has been brought up bereft of love will probably think that every child is treated like that so they won't think that they are getting their family 'in trouble' by admitting it.

You may also detect emotional abuse and neglect through the behaviour of the child. Emotionally abused children may act quite 'strangely' and those who have been abused over a period of time may well be quite disturbed. Low self esteem, poor behaviour, lack of belief in oneself and depression are all signs of neglect.



Reaction

Few crimes affect victims as severely as child abuse. The specific effect depends on how long the abuse went on, the exact nature of the abuse, the relationship between the abuser and the abused and the character of the victim.

Each person reacts differently to each situation so it is impossible to define the exact behaviour of every child. Here are some of the reactions that many abuse victims experience:

Initial reactions

Shock, guilt, severe signs of distress, fear of not being believed, feelings of powerlessness, fear of moral censure, fear that they, the victim, will be accused of encouraging the abuse, feeling dirty, ashamed and contaminated, lapsing into silence, becoming withdrawn, having panic attacks, clinging to a parent/carer, acting violently towards others, wetting the bed.

After effects

Anger, flashbacks, fear of attack, sleeping problems, relationship problems, impaired development process, eating disorders, shame, phobias, hopelessness, confusion (abuser maybe someone the victim loves), nightmares, aggressive behaviour, prone to outbursts, self-destructive behaviour e.g. drug or alcohol abuse, self harming, pain, distress and lack of self esteem. Tendency for abuse-related incidents or objects to set off panic attacks (sweating, chest pains, difficulty breathing, high blood pressure, numbness, fainting, dizziness.)

As adults

Depression, self-destructive behaviour e.g. drug or alcohol abuse, anxiety, feeling of isolation, an impaired capacity to enjoy life, low self esteem, tendency to revictimisation, difficult in trusting others.

Specific reactions to sexual abuse

Concerns about pregnancy and AIDS, the undermining of sexual confidence, diminishing sexual enjoyment, no trust in others, fear that abuse will have ruined chances of future relationships, mechanical sexual behaviour, promiscuity.

A victim who is sexually abused once often suffers acute anxiety, agitation and guilt. A victim sexually abused repeatedly can experience neurotic disorders, anxiety, fear, inability to sleep or concentrate and appetite disturbance. Some young people will, of course, show none of the above and may hide the truth for years before the incident surfaces – triggered off by a seemingly unrelated event.

Males who are raped/sexually abused often see the crime as a challenge to their sexuality. They fear that others will believe that they are homosexual.

How you can help: Emotional Support



1. Stay Calm

The news that a child has been abused is always shattering, particularly for the parent of the child. You will probably be feeling extremely confused about the matter – this confusion may manifest itself in a whole series of emotions from anger and frustration to tears and terror.

It is important to stay as calm and collected as possible. Try not to overwhelm the child with your own feelings. Victims need all of the support that you can give them. You will probably feel that you want to deny what is happening, but it is important to remember that the situation will not go away, it will simply get worse.

2. Calm the Child

Your child may well be quite hysterical at the thought of their abuse coming out into the open. Take time out to comfort and calm them. Reassure the child that they were right to confide in you and acted very bravely.

3. Listen

It takes courage and determination to talk to an adult about being abused. These are qualities that come with age so you mustn't expect a child to give you all the details as quickly and efficiently as you would like. Give the child plenty of time, let them talk at their own pace and don't interrupt them.

It is important that you are available to listen to the victim at any time – night or day. It is also important to remember that the discussion may bring back bad memories so you will probably have to comfort the child.

4. Believe the Child

Children don't usually accuse people of abuse without good cause. Sexual abuse allegations are rarely fabricated as most children don't know much about sex unless they have some 'experience'.

The allegation of abuse will, no doubt, be a bombshell to you but try to be strong. The child has chosen you as a person to confide in – it has taken a lot of confidence on their part – don't shatter their trust.

5. Don't Pry

The child will tell you their story in their own time. Don't try to push the young person into telling you everything at once or giving you details that they aren't happy to share with you. There's nothing wrong with gently persuading a child to give you a better idea of what has happened but always remember that the child's confidence in others has probably been shattered – you can help to build it up again but you won't do this if you are pressuring the child.

6. Comfort, Praise and Reassure the Child

Child abuse, particularly that within the family, is very much a taboo subject. The shame of it all prevents people from discussing it as they would other crimes e.g. burglary. Imagine how you would feel accusing someone you knew of abusing you – then think how much more difficult it is for a child.

As the person that the child has confided their story in, you are responsible for coping with their emotional needs during the initial stages of their disclosure. The child might cry, scream and shout – on the other hand he or she might seem quite detached – as if it had all happened to someone else. Whatever their reaction, make sure that you support them. Tell them how brave they are, how they have done the right thing and how they should, in no way, feel responsible for what has happened.

**Remember – child abuse victims often suffer regressions.
Be ready to deal with these whenever they occur.**

7. Tell them that you will do all that you can to stop the abuse

The child has disclosed the abuse to you so that you can stop it. They probably don't want to get the abuser into trouble – they might well still love him/her.

Tell the child that you will try to protect them and stop the abuse immediately. Explain that their trusting in you has meant that you can now help them. Don't make promises to keep the incident secret, explain that what the child has told you needs to be sorted out with the help of other people.

**NB: ONLY USE REASSURANCES IF YOU CAN CARRY THEM OUT.
IF NOT FIND SOMEBODY WHO CAN!**

8. Discuss the Options

If the abuse is going to be stopped for good, it is vital that the incident is reported. You can talk to the social services or to police. Once you know all of the options, discuss them with the child. The local Child Protection Unit often make informal visits to children to discuss available options. The child will not be pressured into making a complaint.

Make sure that the child knows that the officials are their friend NOT their enemy. The abuser may well have told the victim that the police or other 'officials' are out to get him/her.

9. Ask how you can help

We can't begin to imagine how the abused child feels so we shouldn't assume that we know how to help. Each child will have their own requirements and thoughts on how you can help to make them feel better – listen to them carefully.



Practical Support

1. GET HELP as soon as is humanly possible

The sooner a matter is reported the better - both for the sake of the child and the investigation. It is very rare for sexual abuse to be a one off incident so it would be foolish to think that you can handle the situation alone.

Reporting an incident of child abuse is probably one of the most stressful things you will ever do. You are bound to be feeling reticent about involving someone else in your affairs, particularly if the abuser is a member of your family. Always remember that the child has put all their trust in you and is counting on you to help him/her. You have a duty to pay back their trust by reporting the incident. If you ignore what has happened, you are, in many ways, an accessory to the crime.

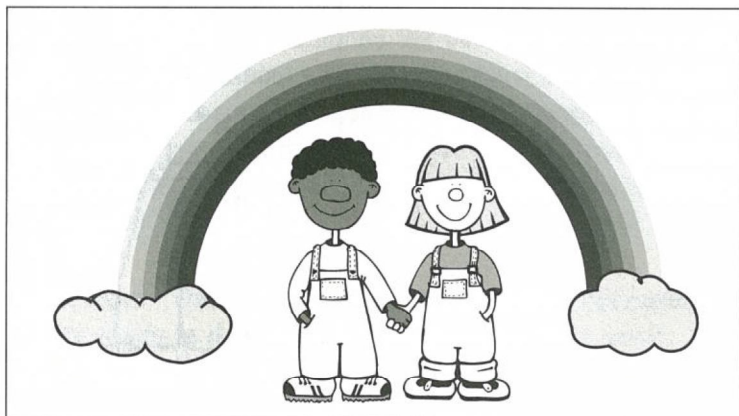
To report or discuss the abuse with someone, you can either contact your local social services department or the police. No matter what has happened, these people will want to help you. Don't ever think that a child will be taken away from you because of what someone else has done, as The Children's Act confirmed in 1989, children always stay with their family unless they are at serious risk of harm. Details of the legal/reporting process can be found on pages 60 - 71.

2. Be There

Only leave the victim alone if they specifically request it. They may need time to think things through but you must be prepared to be a constant and consistent companion day and night. The child may need you at any time.

3. Deal with Physical Injuries

Tending to injuries is a very important part of the 'making things better' process. It will help to obliterate the visual reminders of the incident and give the victim time to calm down. By dealing with the physical injuries well you will give the young person confidence that you can deal with the emotional side of things equally efficiently.



4. Ensure that the child doesn't come into contact with the abuser

You are duty bound to get the victim away from the abuser as soon as possible. This may simply mean ensuring that the child avoids a specific area or building or it could mean that you have to take the child to a different address. Remember that this has to be done immediately and the trauma of taking the child somewhere safe until you can seek help will be less harrowing than letting them 'bump' into the abuser.

5. Pander to the Victims Needs

Whether it's leaving a light on all night, holding their hand or letting them watch their favourite cartoons when they can't sleep – whatever attention or indulgence the victim requires immediately, let them have it – within reason!

You are the victim's friend. You are their escape route. Be kind to them.

6. Counselling – (Ask Victim Support for details)

Depending on how your child reacts, they could benefit from counselling. Ask your child if they want some help – a counsellor could help to build up their self-confidence again as well as being an independent listener.

NB: Don't expect the recovery process to hurry along, child abuse has the longest reaching effects of any crime against children. Be patient.

7. The Outside World

Ask your child if they would like you to inform their school teacher what has happened. Explain to them that they may start thinking about the bad times at school and, so long as their teacher knows, they will have someone to talk to if they ever feel down.

It may be useful for the child to rehearse what they will tell their friends if they are asked what has happened to them. The child may also need the extra attention and companionship of a special friend/teacher.

8. Feeling Secure

Spend time building up a secure environment for your child. Give them stability and build up their trust again. What has happened may have caused a serious rift in your family. Try to make the family home as normal as possible as soon as possible.

9. Be fair

In many cases, the abuse might have singled the child out as a favourite. Similarly, when things fall apart, the child will be blamed by brothers and sisters as the one responsible for the deprivations endured by the family as a result of the abuser being sent away.

Although it is important to take special care of an abused child, it is also important that you don't make too big a fuss of them in comparison to their brothers and sisters. The child has gone through enough without suffering the jealousy of siblings. Try to spread treats equally and don't make your child stand out too much by being over-protective.

Checklist

All in all:

1. Stay calm.
2. Listen.
3. Believe your child.
4. Don't pry.
5. Comfort, praise and reassure the victim.
6. Report the incident.
7. Be there.
8. Deal with physical injuries.
9. Ensure the victim doesn't come into contact with the abuser.
10. Pander to the victim's needs.
11. Consider counselling.
12. Deal with the outside world.
13. Make the child feel secure.



vandalism

Definition

Vandalism is the willful or malicious destruction or damage to work of art or other property.



Detection

Many types of vandalism affect children: the destruction of property around their home, their school or their youth club as well as the damaging of their own personal property.

There are several ways a child can discover that something has been vandalised:

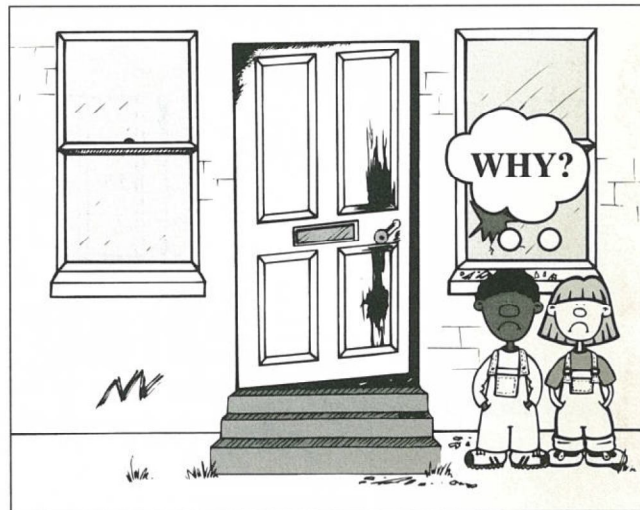
1. They can witness the vandalism.
2. They can discover the effects of the vandalism.
3. They can be told about the vandalism.

Each of the above will have a different effect on a child i.e. a young person who witnesses vandalism will remember the incident more vividly than a child who hears about it.

In most cases you will be well aware that the vandalism has taken place as it will have affected you too. In cases where the child's personal property has been vandalised, however, he/she may feel in some way responsible for what has happened and try to hide the vandalism from his/her parents.

If your child has suddenly become secretive or you have noticed that some of their possessions have gone missing or seem to have been damaged, talk to them about the problem. Don't push them into telling you everything at once, but tell them that no-one has the right to damage another's property and that together you will try to stop the vandalism.

Reaction



The vandalism of a child or a family's property can be very traumatic for everyone involved. Naturally, the severity of the reaction depends very much on the items vandalised, the personality and age of the victim and the importance of the vandalised property to the victim.

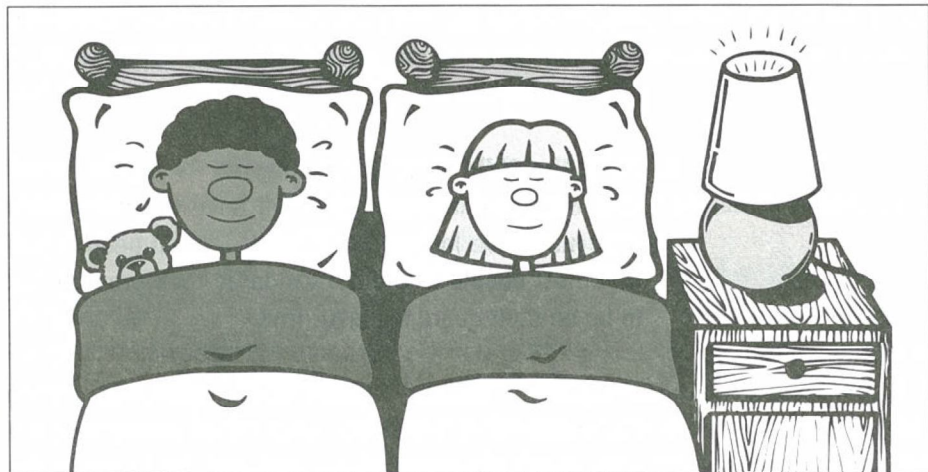
Remember that there are no upper or lower age limits to feel shock, fear or distress. The effects of crime have equal effects on boys and girls alike. There may be a tendency for girls to express their feelings more openly but this does not mean that their male counterparts aren't suffering.

There are many different ways that the stress caused by vandalism can manifest itself: from crying and bedwetting to sleeplessness, fear of sleeping alone or an unwillingness to leave the house or possessions unattended. Many times, the shock caused by a crime can make a child revert to younger behaviour. This should not last for too long but it does require the parent/carer to be patient and understanding.

It is more than likely that, on losing a favourite item or experiencing the destruction of property, the child will become quite clingy both to their family and to their remaining belongings. The destruction of one piece of property makes others seem even more precious. Your child probably needs the security of familiar items and people around them – be patient with him/her.

Like adults in the same position, children whose property has been vandalised may well feel angry and frustrated. Unfortunately the vandals will not have stuck around long enough to bare the brunt of this anger so you may well find that your child is bad tempered with family and friends. If so, take time to talk to them about their feelings.

What you can do: Emotional Support



1. Calm and Comfort the Victim

The initial shock of finding out that your property has been vandalised can result in quite severe reactions. Before you can discuss the subject reasonably, you need to comfort the child and calm them down. Put the crime in a context that the child will know – i.e. we've got each other and, in time, we will realise that we can live without the vandalised property.

2. Listen

Your child will probably want to tell you how the vandalism has made them feel. This discussion process will help the child to come to terms with the crime as it will give them the opportunity to air their feelings rather than having to keep them bottled up. If your child is trying to hide their feelings, use gentle persuasion to get them to talk but don't pressure them!

3. Reason

The innocence of children leads them to ask all kinds of common sense questions. It is likely that your child will want to know why the person has vandalised your property and what exactly they got out of it. If we are honest, we probably don't know the answers to these questions but we should try to answer the best we can.

Victims often need to find a reason for a crime in order to come to terms with it. No matter how young your child, try to acknowledge this. Tell them that some people have a very bad side to their personality that makes them want to destroy things that belong to someone else. They do this either because they wish that they owned what other people own or because they get some kind of evil pleasure from upsetting other people.

4. Be Patient and Understanding

Your child may well take a long time to recover from the incident. Vandalism is one of the most difficult crimes to come to terms with as it is one of the most senseless. Your child may well react immediately to the incident but, in some cases, reactions can surface some time after the event. Remember that you need to be patient and supportive to the child no matter when they react. This may well be a child's first experience of crime. If they learn to handle it well now, they will be able to cope better in the future.

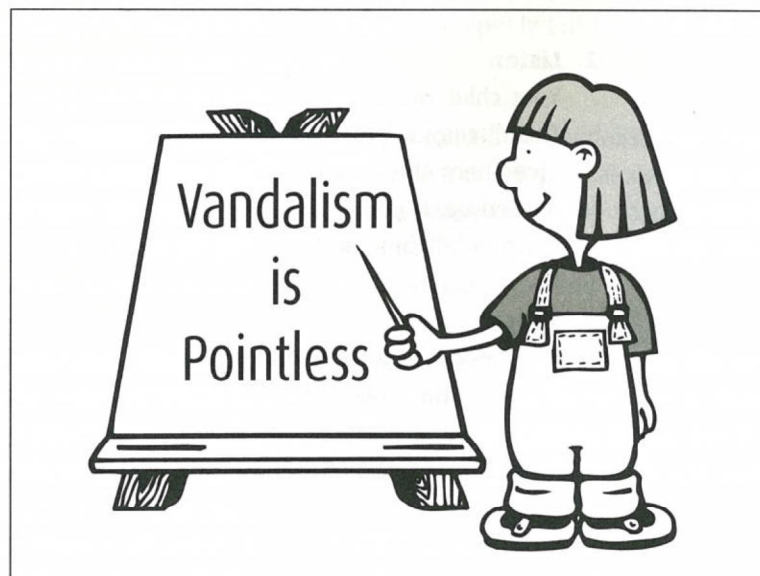
5. Build the Child's Confidence Again

Your child's confidence may well have taken a battering as a result of the crime, they may have lost a great deal of faith in people. Make sure that they understand that most people would not vandalise their property but tell them that they do need to be on their guard against crime.

To build your child's self confidence again, tell them how special they are to you, how much they are loved, how many friends they have. Talk about the future for your family, the nice things you are planning, how your family will work together to put the crime behind you.

6. Ask how you can help

Each child will have different feelings and views on how you can help to put things back to normal. Try to do whatever they ask or reason with them to find an alternative acceptable to you both.



Physical Support

1. The Outside World

Ask your child if they would like you to inform their school teacher what has happened. Explain to them that they may start thinking about the crime at school and, so long as their teacher knows, they will have someone to talk to if they ever feel down.

2. Leave a light on at night

Practicalities like this can make the child feel more secure and sleep easier. If a child is well rested they are less likely to dwell on the vandalism.

3. Clearing Up

Let your child choose whether to help you with the clearing up. Naturally, you must ensure that there are no dangerous objects lying around, then ask them if they would like to help. For some children the clearing up process may be too painful but others may feel that they are helping with the healing process – i.e. putting things back the way they were.

4. Replacing Vandalised Items

Research has proved that child victims recover more quickly if items are replaced as soon as possible. Naturally this is not always possible, particularly if some things are not insured. However, if you are insured, you should try to get the claim sorted out immediately, bringing some semblance of order back to life.

5. Lessons to be learnt

If you talk to your child about how serious a crime vandalism is, they will almost certainly not get involved in vandalism themselves and they may well talk other young people out of it as well.

Checklist

All in all:

1. Comfort the victim.
2. Listen to them and reason with them.
3. Be patient and understanding.
4. Build up the victim's confidence.
5. Ask how you can help.
6. Let them help clear up.
7. Replace items as soon as possible.

As we have mentioned many times in this book already, each person reacts differently to each situation. This chapter looks into the main categories of reaction experienced by crime victims.

Immediate Reactions



These can include feelings of powerlessness, fright, intense shock, anger, guilt, frustration, anxiety, a loss of confidence, disbelief, isolation, insecurity, vulnerability, weakness, distrust, dizziness, depression. Victims also tend to suffer from sleeplessness, panic attacks and an inability to perform ordinary tasks.

Crime tends to put a victim's sense of self worth on the line, it batters a person's confidence and leaves them feeling frightened, helpless and isolated. The more trust a person has in others, the more severe the sense of betrayal. Children are in a position where they have to trust others for their very existence and, as a result, crimes against young people have shattering effects on their ability to maintain this trust.

In cases where the crime has not been 'successful', the resulting stress can be greater than ever. This stems from the fact that the victim tends to dwell on what might have been – i.e. the worst possible ending to the story.

There are five main types of behaviour that victims display:

1. Avoidance Behaviour

Victims reacting in this way want to brush the incident from their mind. They sleep a lot, avoid discussing or even recalling the incident and keep themselves busy with other things.

In severe cases, avoidance behaviour turns into self-delusion and the victim goes so far as to try to pretend that nothing has happened to them. This can be very dangerous indeed and victims displaying such behaviour should seek help.

2. Nervous Behaviour

Victims suffering from this tend to do everything in excess. They show heightened reactions and experience frequent emotional outbursts. Severe emotion (e.g. crying, screaming, laughing) is demonstrated when the victim is alone and when he/she is in the company of others.

Further traits of this type of behaviour include snapping at others, changing their daily routine and eating/drinking more than usual.

3. Cognitive Behaviour

This is the complete opposite of avoidance behaviour. The cognitive victim looks at the situation over and over again in different ways. They tend to think about little else other than the crime, they find a reason behind what has happened to them, talk to others and find out about their experiences.



Other traits connected with cognitive behaviour include concentrating on one's own feelings and finding any good things that came out of the experience.

4. Positive Behaviour

Victims who behave positively make the most of their situation by looking how they can use the situation to improve themselves. They allow themselves to show their feelings, talk about what has happened and accept that they are a victim and that their feelings and emotions are quite normal.

Positive people do things for themselves and have the attitude that the crime isn't going to ruin their lives. They also help other victims in similar situations.

5. Self Destructive Behaviour

This is the most negative of the behaviours. The victim blames themselves for the crime and refuses any help. All offers of support are also dismissed out of hand, the victim is irritable, shouts at others, can eat very little or excessive amounts and may self-harm.

In extreme cases, the victim turns to self destructive behaviour – drugs, alcohol, even suicide. **These people need immediate help.**

Whichever of the above categories your child fits into, it is likely that they will experience some of the following emotions:

Anger

Most victims feel angry at one time or another. Unfortunately, the criminal doesn't usually stick around long enough to bear the brunt of the victim's frustration so who does? - family, friends and people who support the victim!

No matter how calm or laid back the victim usually acts, it is more than likely that they will take their frustrations out on you at one time or another. Naturally, this feels very unfair, but as a major supporter of the victim, you can't afford to take offence.

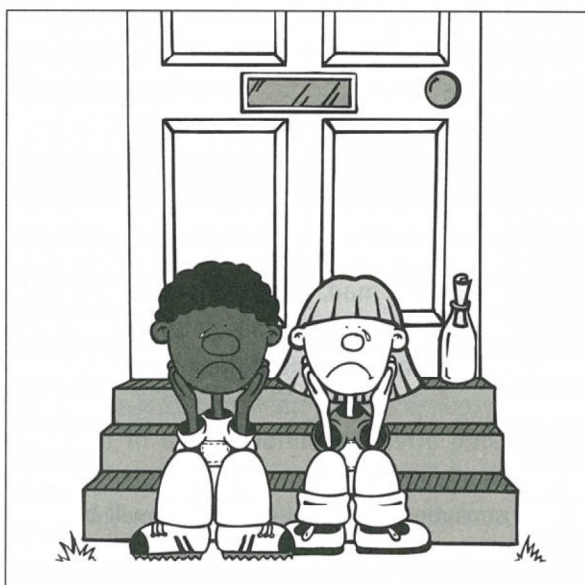
Give the victim time and space to allow them to calm down. Remember that the anger is better out in the open than bottled up inside where it will tend to fester and surface in a much stronger form years later.

Depression

Victims suffering from anxiety are usually depressed to some degree as well. This develops slowly and over a period of time. It can be the last emotion to come to the attention of family and friends as it tends to wear the victim down slowly but surely.

Depression dampens reactions, reduces functioning capacity and saps energy. It can result in a disturbed sleep pattern, a poor appetite and low self-esteem. Depression also narrows the victim's outlook on life and makes them dread their daily activities.

In order to help someone recover from depression, it is important to give them constant support, encouragement and understanding. Recovery is very much dependant on the response of family and friends.



Fear

When a crime is committed against a person, they suddenly come to realise exactly how vulnerable they are. As a result, the victim becomes nervous and frightened of a whole range of situations that they would never have thought twice about before. The victim fears future recurrences of the crime, they fear for their safety and the safety of their family, they fear meeting the offender and, in some cases, they fear leaving their homes.

No matter how severe a victim's fear may be, time will be a great healer but the support of friends and relatives is absolutely vital. Although most fears can be overcome in time, very severe cases might call for a semi/complete reorganisation of the victim's life. No matter how difficult or stressful this will be for the rest of the family, you should all try to support the victim as much as possible.

Guilt

No matter how strange it seems, many victims feel guilty about what has happened to them. Some think that they brought it all on themselves, others feel guilty that someone else was hurt/killed instead of them but many just feel an over-riding sense that they have done something to single themselves out as a victim.

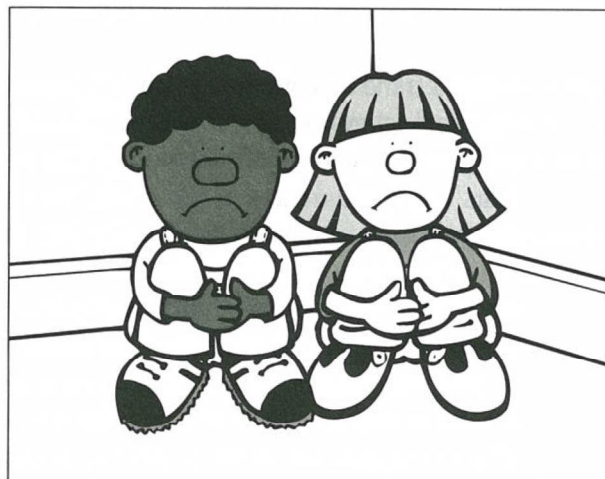
Many victims are in some way comforted by the thought that they were responsible for inviting the crime - random crimes could happen to them again where as invited crime would teach them a lesson so it couldn't happen again in the future.

You may not be able to fully understand why your child feels guilty, but talk to them about it, and stress that it is not their fault. It may take some time for your child to accept and believe this, so be patient!

Mental Health Problems

Crime often builds up a victim's sense of alienation and their resentment of others. The victim may develop extreme suspicions which may even lead them to believe that they are going mad. Suspicions of people, places, noises, voices, bright lights, open or confined spaces are all quite normal. Many victims only feel safe in the familiar and secure environment of their own homes.

Long after the initial trauma of the incident seems to have died down, there is a tendency for victims to experience panic attacks which are triggered off by particular sensations or situations. These will be objects or feelings that the victim connects with the crime, they can range from the smell of a certain aftershave to a particular street, house or car.



Physical Problems

Victims often suffer from mysterious pains, aches and sensations brought on by the effects of the emotions on bodily organs and systems. Frequently, the victim's immune system fails and he/she picks up all kinds of minor ailments – i.e. colds, stomach bugs etc.

Sometime victims become violently ill with the shock of the crime. Symptoms can include temperature inconsistencies (shock can make the temperature drop violently and suddenly), pallor, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, incontinence, tight chest pains, breathing difficulties, fainting and bed wetting. These physical ailments can be accompanied by uncontrollable sobbing, screaming, convulsive weeping and moaning.

The stomach and the gastrointestinal tract are often most susceptible to stress related disorders. As a result, eating can cause pain and sickness so victims often lose their appetite. In other cases, victims can develop dependencies for particular foods; sweet things for example are often required for a quick 'fix' of energy.

Physical disorders can flare immediately after the incident and last from a few hours to a few weeks. Delayed physical reactions are more alarming.

In some cases, emotional stress can aggravate conditions such as asthma and eczema and bring on occurrences of stress linked disorders such as epilepsy, migraine and psoriasis.

Some victims will also suffer from hyperventilation or rapid irregular breathing. Dizziness, fainting, choking, numbness, tingling in the limbs, chest pain and an inability to concentrate can also be associated with this.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

PTSD is experienced by war veterans, hostages, survivors of natural disasters and crime victims. The disorder can manifest itself in many ways, though the long term effects of PTSD include: a diminished sense of security and self-esteem, stress in familial and peer relationships and disturbances in sexuality.

Shock

The body can react in two ways to shock:

1. Shutting Off

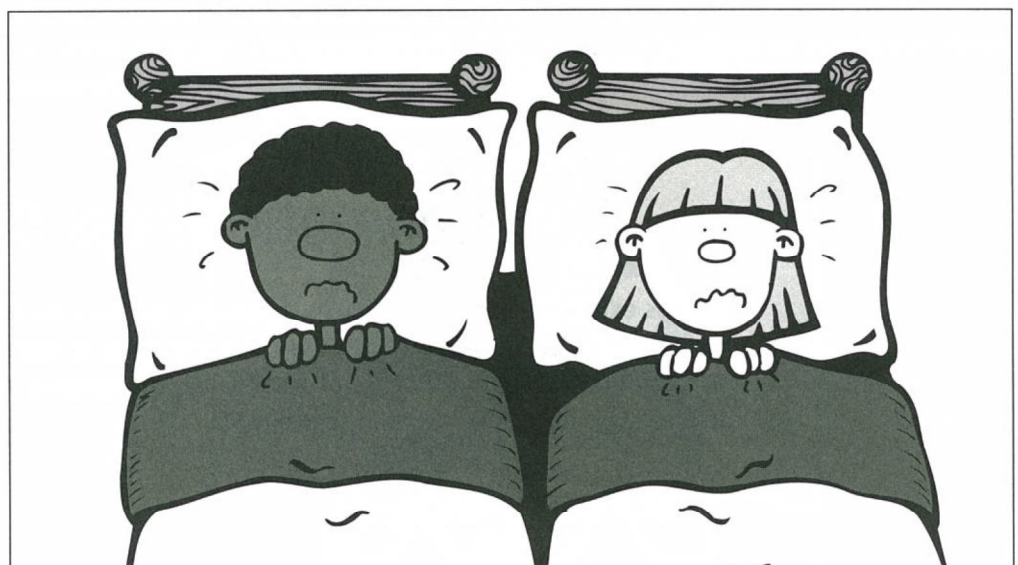
When the body experiences stress, it releases endorphins (morphine-like chemicals) into the blood stream. These have a numbing effect on the body but, when their effect wears off, the reaction can be quite intense.

During the numbing stage of the process, the victim displays a detached calm, stares into space, adopts a tense pose, has no energy, appears to be in a dream world, is mute, loses their recollection of the event, is physically uncoordinated, mentally confused, forgetful, disorientated and tends to stumble and drop things.

To an outsider, this type of behaviour may seem quite odd. The victim merely needs your support and reassurance. Listen to them, let them talk, tell them that what they are experiencing is, in fact, a distressful period of the recovery process. If their state doesn't improve in time, take them to see a doctor.

Forgetfulness at this stage can be particularly distressing as it can sometimes prevent clear statements from being given. Unfortunately, however, the victim is very much at the mercy of his/her emotions.

'Shutting off' behaviour can seem slow, compliant, childish or submissive to outsiders but to the victim themselves it can be very frightening. Take time to comfort and reassure them.



2. Livening Up

When faced with an experience involving excitement of some kind, the body releases adrenaline. This hormone increases the blood flow to the heart and muscles and prepares the body for 'fight or flight'. As a result, the victim can appear euphoric, excited or on an extreme high. This doesn't mean that they are coping amazingly well with the situation, it just means that they are in shock.

Adrenaline is responsible for inducing panic attacks. Symptoms include sweating, a dry mouth, palpitations and heavy limbs. The greater the fear, the more adrenaline is produced.

Sleep Problems

As anyone who has ever lain awake at night will know, night time is one of the best times for letting problems play on one's mind and blowing them out of all proportion.

Victims don't only have trouble falling asleep in the first place, they may well suffer from nightmares, broken sleep patterns and a tendency to feel wide awake in the middle of the night. Child victims may develop a fear of the dark and an unwillingness to sleep alone. Many victims wake up panicking about what has happened.

On occasions, victims will dream about what has happened over and over again. In many cases, the dreams will have different and better outcomes to the actual crime – this is a sign that the recovery process is underway.

It is vital that you support your child day and night. Don't turn your back on them just because you are tired.

Special Circumstances: Coping With Death

If your child has witnessed a crime which has resulted in someone's death or a near death experience, it is important to remember that this may be the first time that they have ever had any dealings with death. Besides coming to terms with the loss of the person in question, the child may be facing their own mortality too.

All in all

A crime can take a very long time to come to terms with. However your child is reacting, be supportive, be strong and be patient. If you are worried at all about your child's ability to cope with their situation, you can speak to your doctor or your local Victim Support & Witness Service.

reporting a crime and going to court

Child victims are very much dependant on adults – particularly when it comes to reporting their predicament. Not only do they depend on us to take their victimisation seriously, they also have to rely on us to define the act as criminal and to take any further subsequent action.

This chapter deals with the process of reporting a crime, what happens in court and how to apply for compensation.

Informing the Police



To report a crime to the police, contact your local police station or, in an emergency, dial 999.

The police should respond to all complaints quickly and efficiently. They will interview the witness/victim, take a statement and advise you how the case should proceed. This initial meeting between the police and the victim is very important as, following this, the police will decide whether or not to compile an official crime report. Crime reports turn a complaint into a crime requiring investigation. They also affect a victim's eligibility for referral to Victim Support & Witness Service and compensation from the court or Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

It is very important that the police take your child's complaint seriously, as the way that the police react at this early stage may affect your child's judgement of them in the future.

Interviews



Interviews can be stressful and tiring for children. The exact nature of the crime and its circumstances will dictate the length of interview required. Cases of theft often involve interviews lasting between 5 and 30 minutes, those concerning physical assault and sexual abuse can last between 20 minutes and a few hours.

Always remember that your child is allowed to take things at their own pace. They can have a rest whenever they want, they can ask for a drink, go to the toilet and take their time talking and/or writing their statement. They also have the right to take a copy of their statement away with them.

It is important that your child understands why they are being interviewed. Many children think that the constant repetition of the same question in an interview is a sly attempt to catch them out, others think that it is some kind of exam like the ones they sit in school. Be sure your child knows that they simply need to tell the truth and that questions are asked over again not as a test but simply to clarify the story.

In cases involving physical or sexual abuse, the victim might need to be examined by a doctor. Usually two female doctors carry out this examination. If the victim is under 16, it is up to the parent to give consent for the examination though the child does have to agree. In some cases, child assessment orders can be gained. This means that an examination has to be carried out. Child abuse victims are likely to take part in a video interview conducted by the police and social services at the same time. This prevents the need for unnecessary repetition of interviewing at a later stage.

If, for any reason, your child decides to withdraw their allegation, it is vital that you inform the police immediately and ensure that they sign a formal withdrawal form.

The Crown Prosecution Service

After the police have investigated a crime and charged a suspect, the case goes to the Crown Prosecution Service who decide whether to prosecute or not. This decision depends on whether or not there is a 'realistic prospect of conviction'. It is important to point out to your child that, if the CPS decide not to prosecute their case, it isn't because they don't believe the child, they simply don't have enough evidence to prove it. With the exception of child abuse, it is unlikely that the CPS will prosecute cases over 3 years old.

Why Go To Court?

Having lived through the trauma of the crime itself, it is likely that you will be wondering if you should put your child through the stress of a court case too. However, it may be helpful to consider the following:

1. The court's primary concern is children's welfare.
2. Courts help witnesses by validating stories, relaying the guilt of the criminal and, in abuse cases, breaking the cycle of abuse.
3. Your child's case will only end up in court if the prosecutor believes that there is enough evidence to prove that the crime has taken place.

Courts

Types of court:

Magistrate Courts – These deal with criminal proceedings, are overseen by magistrates/a district judge and have various family and youth divisions specialising in specific cases.

Crown Courts – Criminal cases can be referred from the Magistrates Court to the Crown Court which is overseen by a judge.

County Courts – Civil proceedings relating to cases of limited values are heard here before a judge.

High Courts – Cases regarding large amounts of money or referrals from the County Court are heard here in front of a judge.

Your child is likely to be involved in a case heard in a criminal proceedings court – i.e. the Magistrates or Crown Court. Some trials take place wholly in a magistrates court – these can involve just the prosecuting and defence counsels and the judge or they can be a full trial. Other cases go to magistrates court for committal to see if there is enough evidence available for the trial to go to crown court. If the case is being committed at the magistrate’s court, the defendant doesn’t have to plea one way or the other.

Court cases involving children tend to be put through the system as quickly as possible to avoid any unnecessary suffering by the victim. Despite this, it must be remembered that the legal system is quite slow and cumbersome so it can take between three months and a year for a case to come to crown court. Besides the various preliminary hearings and adjournments, court cases can also be rescheduled due to illness and insufficient court time.

Being Called to Court

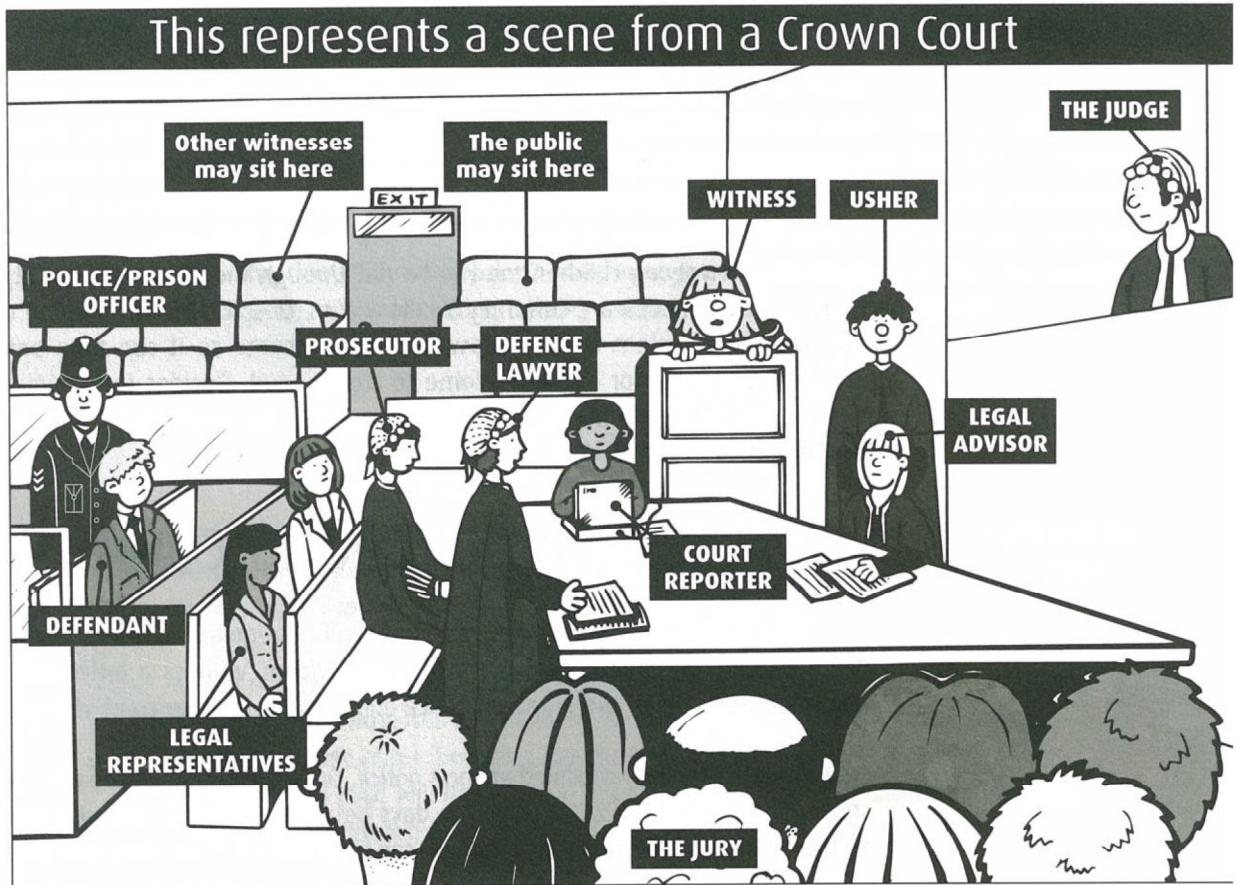
The police inform a victim/witness that they will be required to attend court on a certain day and time. Within the package sent to the victim/witness a letter will be attached informing them about the Witness Service and an offer of a pre-court visit will be made.

Crown court cases are scheduled at short notice. Once the case is placed on a ‘warned list’ it should be heard within 2-3 weeks. Ten days before the week of the trial, the case should be placed on a ‘fixed list’ and the witness can be given a definite date and time to appear.

However, it must be noted that cases can be postponed or brought forward at very short notice and, in certain situations, victims may only be given a matter of hours notice.

Who’s Who In Court

1. The court will be headed by a **magistrate or judge** – the judge may be wearing a gown and wig but, in some cases, he/she will have discarded these in order to produce a less formal atmosphere.
2. **Defence Lawyer** – Tells the court what the accused says has happened.
3. **Prosecutor** – Says how the accused is alleged to have broken the law.
4. **Witnesses** – Give evidence as to what they saw/heard.
5. **Jury (Crown Court)** – These 12 people decide if the accused has broken the law.
6. **Police/Prison Officers** – Ensure that the accused acts properly and stays away from the victim.
7. **Legal Advisor** – Takes care of the documents needed in court.
8. **Court Reporter** – Types everything that is said in court for the record.
9. **Usher** – Tells witnesses when they need to give evidence and shows them to their seats.
10. **The Public** – People who are interested in the trial and want to know how it proceeds.



Once in court, the crime is believed to have been committed against the state not the victim. The prosecution counsel is representing the state as the injured party.

What to expect

All courts should have phones, toilets, a Witness Service area and facilities to provide refreshments. All Crown and Youth Courts have special rooms staffed by the Witness Service for child witnesses to wait in, and these will probably have books, toys and sometimes videos to keep the child occupied before they give evidence. These rooms are far away from the public area of the court and are not for use by the defendant or defence witnesses. Witness Service volunteers will be present throughout the trial day to assist and support you.

It is important to explain to your child that they may well have a long wait before they can give evidence.

Trial or No Trial?



At the start of the court case, the accused will be asked whether he/she committed the offence that he/she is charged with. If the accused pleads guilty, the trial will be cancelled. If he/she pleads not guilty, the trial will go ahead.

The defendant can change their plea at any time during the proceedings and many tend to put in a guilty plea at the last minute. Although this means that your child doesn't have to go through the trauma of giving evidence, they will probably have already experienced a great deal of pressure in the time leading up to the trial. In this case, concentrate on telling your child that you are happy it is all over, don't show them how frustrated you feel.

Changing Situations

In some cases, the accused may be charged with more than one offence. In such an instance, the crimes with the most evidence will be tried and the others may either be taken into consideration or dropped.

In cases such as this, plea-bargaining often comes in to play. This is when the accused agrees to plead guilty to a lesser charge rather than go to crown court on a more serious one. Although this tends to be the best option for everyone involved, the victim can feel cheated if the crime that they suffered ends up being dropped.

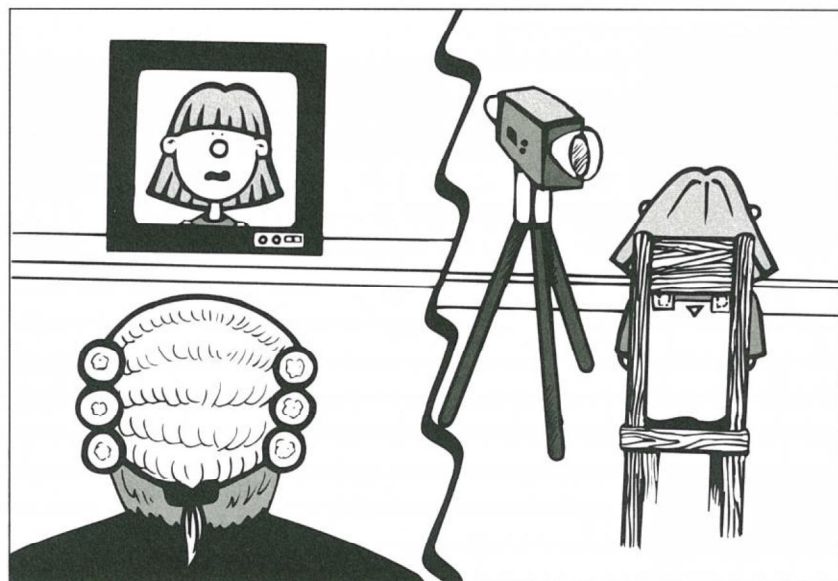
Giving Evidence

Being a witness and giving evidence in a trial can be a very stressful and daunting experience, particularly for a child. Fortunately, these days, most legal professionals realise how difficult things are for child witnesses and do everything in their power to make the situation as comfortable as possible for them. Victim Support & Witness Service aims to give support, information and practical assistance to young witnesses and members of their family to alleviate any concerns or fears they may have. For example, a Witness Service volunteer can arrange for child witnesses to visit the empty courtroom before the trial, pointing out where people will be sitting on the day and talking in more detail about what will happen. The volunteer can also show child witnesses the video link facilities which will be used if video evidence has been given. This helps them to stay calm when they arrive in court on the day of the trial.

Prosecution counsels tend not to call children as witnesses but, increasingly in cases where children are called, prosecutors introduce themselves to the child before the trial begins.

The caring attitude towards child witnesses should be obvious as soon as they walk through the door of the court building. Waiting rooms staffed by the Witness Service are provided for child witnesses to prevent them coming into contact with the defendant.

It is quite permissible for a child witness to refresh their memory about their statement by reading a copy, hearing or seeing it again. The child witness must not, however, discuss the case with any other witness as this may lead to allegations of collusion from the defence.



Advice to Witnesses

Witnesses who are thirteen or under are not required to take an oath/affirm. Witnesses who are aged fourteen to seventeen are required to take an oath/affirm before answering questions in court. This is a way of making a child promise that they will tell the truth. The main criteria for a child being called as a witness is that they understand the concept of truth.

Talk to your child about giving evidence. They will benefit from the following advice:

1. Always tell the truth.
2. Listen carefully to questions.
3. Answer as clearly as possible.
4. Speak in a loud, clear voice.
5. Think before answering questions.
6. If you have made a mistake, tell the judge.
7. Don't be shy.
8. Feel free to tell the court any important secrets about the case.
9. Use your own words.
10. Don't let any of the lawyers make you say something you don't mean to.
11. Remember that you can use any of the following phrases when answering questions:
 - Can you repeat the question?**
 - Can you ask the question a bit at a time?**
 - I'm sorry I don't understand the question.**
 - I haven't finished answering yet.**
 - I'm sorry but I don't know.**
 - I'm sorry but I can't remember.**
12. Don't be thrown by leading questions, any interruptions or the severe tone of the defence council.
13. If you need a rest/drink etc. simply ask the person sitting with you.
14. Don't be frightened.

In order to make courts more accessible to child witnesses, several options are available:

1. Video Evidence

As a result of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, it is now possible for the main body of a child's evidence to be provided by means of a video recording of an early interview with the child. The video must be shown to the magistrate/judge before the trial. The judge then decides if the video is suitable for courtroom use. A video will only be used as evidence as long as the child is available to give evidence in person on the day of the trial.

2. Live Video Links

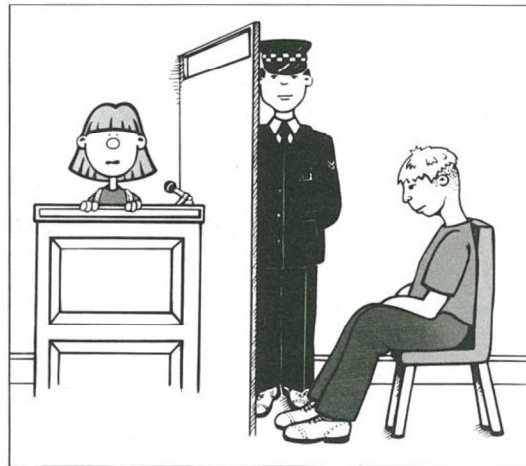
A child can also give evidence via a live video link with the courtroom. The child will sit in a room where there is a TV and several cameras.

The image of the child will be relayed via TV sets to the courtroom. The child will be able to answer questions just as he/she would if they were sitting in the courtroom. It is important to inform the child, however, that there may be some time lapse in communication as a result of the technology and the need for the courtroom officials to make notes.

NB: In Crown Court, child witnesses under 14 are allowed to have a 'support person' with them in the video link room. This age limit increases to 17 in sexual abuse cases.

3. Screens

If a child witness is appearing in court, it is sometimes possible for the young person to be screened off from the defendant. This doesn't wipe out the stress of appearing in court but it does mean that the victim doesn't have to confront the accused.



What Next

After all of the witnesses have given their evidence, the magistrates/judge and jury move to another room to consider their verdict. Once they have made a decision, they return to tell the court if they have found the accused guilty or not guilty.

Sentencing is not necessarily carried out immediately after conviction. This often takes place at the final hearing. Unfortunately, in such cases, the victim and their family may not be informed of the outcome immediately. It can be very difficult for victims, the families or the police to get details of the hearing at this stage.

Compensation

1. Criminal Injuries Compensation

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority is a Government funded department that began in 1964 to pay compensation for physical or mental suffering and bereavement (fatal claims) as a result of crimes directly attributed to crimes of violence. You cannot claim just for damage to property.

There are certain requirements that need to be met in order to make a claim.

The crime must have been reported to the police. It is not dependent upon a conviction of the perpetrator, however the applicant must be seen to have co-operated fully with the police and not withdraw a complaint.

The injury must have been sustained in England, Scotland or Wales.

The Injuries must be severe enough to meet the minimum tariff of £1000 and require medical treatment. (The effects lasting 6 weeks or more, requiring 2 visits or more for medical attention).

The application must be made within 2 years of the offence (subject to some exceptions).

Recent criminal convictions of the applicant may lead to an award being reduced or refused.

Loss of earnings during the first 28 weeks cannot be claimed.

Claims on behalf of persons under the age of 18 have to be made by a parent or guardian. Full original copies (not photocopies) of Birth certificates and marriage certificates (if the child's name differs from the parent) will need to be submitted with the application.

The applicant can submit claims directly to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. However if you need assistance solicitor can assist with your claim but may charge for their service. Alternatively Victim Support schemes offer information on eligibility to apply for compensation and can assist with the completion of forms and act as your representative. This service is free and confidential.

For further information contact the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board on 0141 331 2726 or go to www.cica.gov.uk

Court Compensation Orders

This is where the criminal pays direct to the victim. Awards of this type are usually around £50. Compensation orders can stand alone as a punishment or be an additional reprimand. They don't disqualify the victim from CICA compensation.

The Prosecution counsel decide whether to apply for a compensation order or not and they also set the sum required. The victim doesn't have to be in court for a compensation order to be made.

Reparation orders

This is when an offender can demonstrate their repentance by performing some service for the victim i.e. repairing vandalised property etc. Reparation Orders might be requested by the courts alongside compensation orders.

Child Abuse Cases

Child abuse cases involve two major bodies: Social Services and the Police (the NSPCC also play a marginal role). The police have a responsibility to deal with the criminal aspects of an abuse case whilst social services have a statutory responsibility to investigate allegations of child abuse and reports of children considered to be 'at risk'. They are also responsible for monitoring those on the Child Protection Register. If the Police or Social Services receive a referral that a child may be being abused, they have a duty to investigate.

If the police and social services feel that a child may be at risk, an investigation is carried out and then an initial assessment is made by an investigation team.

If there are concerns about the protection of a child, a Child Protection Conference may be called to see how the risk to the child can be reduced and what help and support families might need to do this.

Child Protection Conferences can involve as many of the following people as necessary – the child's social worker, their team leader, a senior clinical medical officer, a police surgeon, a paediatrician, an NSPCC Officer, the child's GP, a health visitor/school nurse, a police officer, a senior educational welfare officer and the child's teacher.

Child Protection Conferences can be attended by the child themselves so long as they are old enough to understand what is happening. Officials at the conference will want to know what the child would like to happen. This can come directly from the child or from their social worker who will have discussed the situation with them at length.

It is also usual for the child's parent(s) to be at a case conference, but they can be ordered to stay away, if the child is not happy about them being there or if their presence could cause legal difficulties.

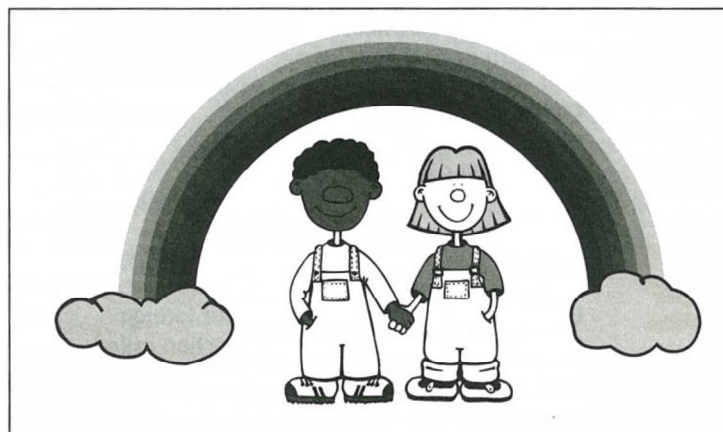
The Child Protection Conference decides whether a child is at risk and can recommend that legal action be initiated.

Despite popular belief, children are hardly ever taken away from their homes even in cases of child abuse. Research has proved that taking children away from their families does more harm than good, so this only ever happens if the child is in serious danger.

Child Abuse: What action can be taken?

1. An Emergency Protection Order can be obtained – to move the child into a safer environment.
2. An arrest can be made to protect a child or other vulnerable person (Section 25 of PACE 1984).
3. An injunction in the civil courts can be sought – e.g. to keep the abuser away from the victim.
4. A Residence Order can be obtained – the court decides who the child lives with.
5. A Contact Order can be obtained – the court decides when the other parent sees the child.
6. A Prohibited Steps Order can be obtained – e.g. to stop a child being taken out of the country.
7. A Specific Issue Order can be obtained – e.g. if parents can't decide which school a child should go to.

NB: COURT ORDERS USUALLY LAST UNTIL 16 YEARS OF AGE BUT FAMILIES CAN GO TO COURT TO CHANGE THEM.



useful address and telephone numbers

There are many organisations and groups that can help you and your child come to terms with the trauma of being a victim of crime. Here are some names and addresses that you might find useful. These groups should be able to provide you with written and/or verbal advice on dealing with your specific situation.

CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE - GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Association of Chief Police Officers

ACPO helps chief officers provide leadership excellence within the police service, assists in setting the policing agenda, and acts as the corporate voice of the service.

Tel: 020 7227 3434

www.acpo.police.uk

The Court Service

Government agency responsible for running the court system (except magistrates' courts) in England & Wales.

Tel: 020 7210 2266

www.courtservice.gov.uk

Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority

Government agency responsible for criminal injuries compensation in England, Wales and Scotland.

Tel: 020 7842 6800

www.cica.gov.uk

DBS

Government agency set up to help employers in the public, private and voluntary sectors identify candidates who may be unsuitable for certain work, especially work involving contact with children or other vulnerable members of society.

Tel: 0870 90 90 811 (Information Line)

0870 90 90 344 (Minicom)

www.crbdirect.org.uk

Crown Prosecution Service

Government agency responsible for prosecuting criminal cases.

Tel: 020 7796 8500 (central enquiry point)

www.cps.gov.uk

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Government agency responsible for foreign affairs. Their website contains a section called 'If it all goes wrong', which includes information for victims of crime abroad.

Tel: 020 7008 1500

www.fco.gov.uk

Good2BSecure

Home Office crime reduction website for students.

www.good2bsecure.gov.uk

Law Centres Federation

(Legal Advice) Acts as a co-ordinating body and the voice for law centres.

Tel: 020 3637 1330

www.lawcentres.org.uk

National Probation Service

Government agency responsible for protecting the public, reducing re-offending, punishment of offenders in the community, making offenders aware of the effects of their crimes, and rehabilitating offenders.

Tel: 020 7217 0659

www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk

Police Complaints Commission

Statutory agency responsible for the investigation of complaints against the police.

Tel: 08453 002 002

www.ipcc.gov.uk

Police

Contact your local Police Station or in the case of an emergency dial 999.

Prison Service Victim Helpline

For victims of crime or people related to a victim who are worried about a prisoner's release or have received unwanted contact from a prisoner.

Tel: 0845 7585 112

(9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday)

Youth Justice Board

Government agency responsible for overseeing the operation of youth offending teams and the youth justice system as a whole.

Tel: 020 7271 3033

**CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE -
CHARITIES AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANISATIONS**

The Bar Council

Governing body of the barristers' branch of the legal profession in England and Wales.

Tel: 020 7242 0082

www.barcouncil.org.uk

Community Justice Portal

An information sharing and networking facility for people working in community justice.

www.cjp.org.uk

Crime Concern Trust

Charity working to prevent crime and create safer communities.

Tel: 01206 868 359

www.crimeconcern.org.uk

Crimeinfo website

Information about crime, what causes it and how it is dealt with, including factsheets, a quiz and an exercise in acting as a judge.

www.crimeinfo.org.uk

Crimestoppers

Provides an anonymous freephone number for callers who have information about a crime in the UK.

Tel: 0800 555 111

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

The Free Representation Unit

Charity that aims to provide legal services for the underprivileged

Tel: 020 7611 9555

www.thefru.org.uk

Law Society of England and Wales

Governing body of the solicitors' branch of the legal profession in England and Wales.

Tel: 020 7242 1222

www.lawsociety.org.uk

National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO)

Charity working to promote the care and resettlement of offenders in the community.

Tel: 020 7582 6500

www.nacro.org.uk

Restorative Justice Consortium

Brings together a wide range of organisations with an interest in restorative justice.

Tel: 020 7960 4633

www.restorativejustice.org.uk

CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

Anti-Bullying Campaign

Charity working to help parents of children bullied at school.

Tel: 020 7553 3080

www.bullying.co.uk

ChildLine

Charity providing a telephone counselling service for children and young people in danger and distress.

Tel: 0800 1111 (24 hour free helpline)

www.childline.org.uk

Kidscape

Charity working to promote children's safety and prevent child abuse and bullying.

Tel: 020 7730 3300

www.kidscape.org.uk

NSPCC

Charity working to prevent child abuse and neglect. (24-hour child protection helpline)

Tel: 0808 800 5000

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.there4me.com

Reunite (National Council for Abducted Children)

Charity working to reunite abducted children with their custodial parent.

Tel: 0116 2556 234 (advice line)

www.reunite.org

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**Refuge**

A charity which provides temporary and/or emergency accommodation for women and children escaping from domestic violence.

Tel: 0808 2000 247

www.refuge.org

Womens' Aid Federation

Charity providing support and temporary refuge for people threatened by violence or abuse.

Tel: 0808 2000 247 (helpline)

www.womensaid.org.uk

HOMICIDE**Child Death Helpline**

A charity which supports people bereaved by the loss of a child. (Every evening

7pm-10pm and Mon-Fri mornings 10am-1pm)

Tel: 0800 282986

www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

The Compassionate Friends

Support for bereaved parents and their families by people who have been similarly bereaved.

Tel: 0345 123 2304 (helpline)

www.tcf.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care

Charity providing a support service to anyone who has been bereaved.

Tel: 0870 167 1677 (helpline)

Young people (12 to 18 year olds) should ring

Freephone: 0808 808 1677

www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Support after Murder and Manslaughter (SAMB)

Charity providing support to families

bereaved by murder or manslaughter.

Tel: 020 7735 3838

www.samm.org.uk

HOMOPHOBIC CRIME**Switchboard LGBY**

Providing an information, support and referral service for lesbians, gay men, bisexual & trans people.

Tel: 0300 330 0630 (helpline)

www.switchboard.lgbt

ROAD INCIDENTS**Campaign Against Drinking and Driving**

A charity which supports and assists the victims and families of victims who have suffered death or injury by drunken drivers.

Tel: 0845 123 5541

www.cadd.org.uk/index.htm

Roadpeace

A charity which provides information and practical help about legal procedures, longer-term support and advocacy for road victims.

Tel: 0845 4500 355

www.roadpeace.org

NHS National Sexual Health Helpline

Helpline providing confidential information, advice and support concerning HIV and AIDS.
Tel: 0800 567 123

National Association for People Abused in Childhood

A charity which provides a national information line and postal service for people requiring advice and information about overcome the continuing impact of childhood abuse.

Tel: 0808 801 0331
www.napac.org.uk

Survivors UK

Supports and provides resources for men who have experienced any form of sexual violence.
Tel: 0845 1221201
www.survivorsuk.org.uk

Terence Higgins Trust

Charity offering help and advice for people affected by HIV/AIDS.
Helpline tel: 0808 802 1221
www.tht.org.uk

STALKING**British Telecom**

BT offers advice on how to deal with malicious calls.
Tel: 0800 666700 (for recorded advice).
Tel: 0800 661441 to report nuisance calls and for personal advice
www.bt.com

Network for Surviving Stalking

A charity providing support to people affected by stalking.
www.nss.org.uk

INTERNATIONAL**International Victimology Website**

An international resource for people interested in improving justice for victims of crime and abuse of power
www.victimology.nl

National Organization for Victim Assistance

US non-profit organisation for victims of crime
www.try-nova.org

SAMM Abroad

A part of Support After Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM), the charity providing support to families bereaved by murder or manslaughter.
Tel: 0845 123 2384
www.murdered-abroad.org.uk

United Nations standards - victims

Part of the United Nations Crime and Information Network website
www.uncjin.org/Standards/standards.html

World Society of Victimology

An international research organisation
www.world-society-victimology.de

OTHER USEFUL ORGANISATIONS**Age UK**

Charity promoting the well-being of older people and positive attitudes towards ageing.
Tel: 0800 169 2081 (helpline)
www.ageuk.org.uk

Alcohol Concern

Charity providing information on alcohol misuse.
Tel 020 7928 7377
www.alcoholconcern.org.uk

Barnardos

Charity that works with vulnerable children and young people in the UK.
Tel: 020 8550 8822
www.barnardos.org.uk

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

A professional body which can put you in touch with a registered or accredited counsellor or therapist. You can use their website to help find a therapist.
www.bacp.co.uk

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service

Tel: 08457 30 40 30
www.bpas.org

Changing Faces

Charity working with people who have been disfigured, not necessarily as a result of crime.
Tel: 0300 012 0275
www.changingfaces.org.uk

Children's Legal Centre

Charity concerned with law and policy affecting children and young people.
Tel: 01206 873820
www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Embrace CVOC

Charity that aims to help children whose lives have been affected by crime.
Tel: 0845 609 9960
www.embracecvoc.org.uk

Citizens Advice

Charity providing free and confidential advice through local bureaux.
Tel: 020 7833 2181. You can use their website to find your local advice bureau or for online advice and information.
www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Disabled Living Foundation

Charity offering information and advice for disabled people.
Tel: 0300 999 0004 (helpline)
www.dlf.org.uk

Disability Alliance

Charity providing training and advice on the welfare rights of disabled people.
Tel: 0300 999 0004 (helpline)
www.disabilityalliance.org

Disability Law Service

Charity providing free, confidential legal advice and representation for people with disabilities.
Tel: 020 7791 9800

Drinkline

National alcohol helpline Tel: 0800 917 8282

Mencap

Charity providing advice, support and information to people with a learning disability.
Tel: 0808 808 1111
www.mencap.org.uk

Mind

Charity providing services to help people with mental health problems.
Tel: 0300 123 3393
(national helpline)
www.mind.org.uk

Rights of women

A charity which informs women of their rights, including on issues relating to domestic and sexual violence and discrimination.
020 7251 6577 (Tues, Wed and Thurs 2-4pm and 7-9pm. Also open Fri 12-2pm)
www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

The Samaritans

Charity providing 24-hour support for people feeling depressed, isolated, or in despair.
Tel: 116 123 (UK) 116 123 (Republic of Ireland)
www.samaritans.org.uk

Shelter

Charity providing advice and assistance to people in housing need.
Tel: 0808 800 4444 (helpline)
www.shelter.org.uk

Social Services

(Contact your local Council)

Suzy Lamplugh Trust

A charity dedicated to improving personal safety.
Tel: 020 7091 0014
www.suzylamplugh.org

Victim Support National Office

Charity that provides free and confidential support to people affected by crime
Tel: 020 7735 9166

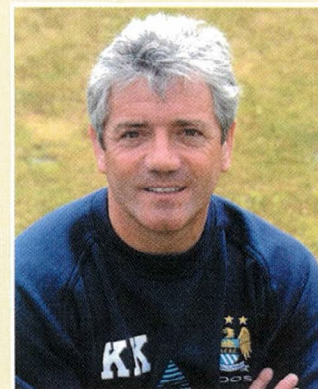
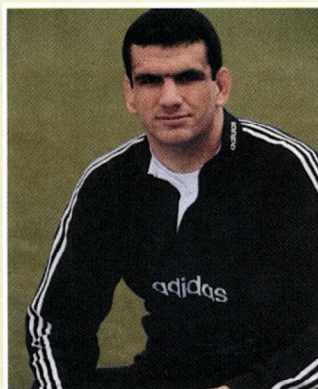
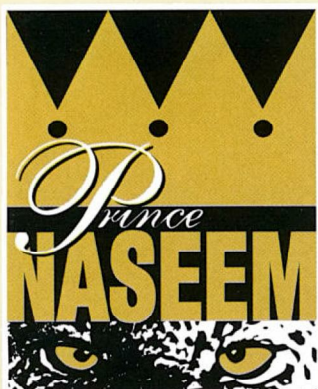
Supportline: 08 08 16 89 111

www.victimsupport.com

We know our publications work, but why take our word for it?...

The Children's Safety Education Foundation specialise in promoting and distributing the most informative and innovative resources available. Endorsed by the emergency services, parents, teachers, a host of professional bodies and, most importantly, the children themselves, our publications cater for young people aged 5-14.

Thanks to the generous support of the business community, our resources are distributed to children attending schools throughout the UK. In most cases, they are distributed by the Fire, Police and Ambulance services who visit schools to give talks on safety and leave our publications behind for follow-up classroom use.



'I despise all bullying whether it's because of someone's skin colour, the way they speak, dress or even look. Bullying is the lowest of the low, making another person feel worthless.

Throughout our lives we experience various forms of bullying but as adults, we are more experienced and confident and can therefore be more dismissive. As a child it is not so easy to rise above such issues.

I would never tell a kid to stand and fight, not only because the only place for fighting is in the ring but because, I honestly believe that the best way to win with a bully is to walk away. When you walk away, you show your contempt - and you win. That's the hardest and bravest thing to do, it takes real strength.

Use the negativity to make you stronger, don't let things get you down, just work at things to be the best you can. During my professional career, I've got into the ring with the crowd against me shouting abusive remarks but I feed off this negativity to give me strength, as it just makes me want to win more.

Since I launched an anti-bullying campaign almost two years ago, I've met and received letters from some remarkable kids, parents and teachers. Each had their own stories and experiences of bullying.

In March 1999, I met 9 year old Elliott Stephens and was appalled to hear how due to bullying he not only tried to scrub himself white but attempted suicide. Luckily Elliott decided to talk to his mother. However, it is frightening when you consider how many children do resort to suicide because they feel they have no options. As parents all we can do is give our children love and understanding, providing an environment where they can feel they can talk openly about issues that concern them. Once we have successfully created this we have taken one major step in the right direction...'

Prince Naseem Hamed MBE

Every time I lead a team of players out onto a rugby field, whether it's Leicester, England or the British Lions, I feel a huge sense of pride.

To be chosen to captain a side is an incredible honour - and the feeling is only bettered when you lead them to victory. Thankfully, that experience hasn't been a rare one for me, not least with my club, Leicester, which has won successive English Premiership victories in the last three seasons.

Despite being a seasoned skipper, I can't afford to take my role for granted. I have to look after myself, making sure I stay healthy, fit and safe, to keep my place in and at the front of the side.

With rugby being such a physical sport, it's often out of my hands once you are on the field of play. I know only too well, most recently suffering a fracture to my left hand in England's game against Australia. You just have to make sure you are in the best shape possible to try to withstand the physical intensity of the game.

But being a captain also means that I have to look out for the rest of the team. You can have the best players in the world, but their potential will only be fulfilled if they work together - helping each other, inspiring each other and encouraging each other.

In all aspects of life, we have to look after ourselves and others. At home or school, at work or play. And only if you take care of yourself can you really take care of others.

It can be tough, but with the right help and support you can get there in the end. Children, more than anyone else, need to have strong leaders to show them the way. The Children's Safety Education Foundation does just that - helping children to be happy, healthy and safe - and that is why I am happy to echo their messages.

The rewards make it all worthwhile. Believe me.

Martin Johnson

"I feel it is very important that children are warned of the dangers of fire and the devastating effects that it can have on children, parents, relatives and friends. I was very lucky that it is only my arm that bears any scars from an accident I had as a very small child, when I pulled over a pot of boiling soup. It could have been so much worse.

These fire safety guides are designed to educate children between the ages of 5 and 11 about all aspects of fire and its consequences. The inclusion of these guides as part of the schools curriculum will assist in the reduction of fire related accidents involving young children and increase the level of awareness generally."

Amanda Redman

As you no doubt know, Manchester City Football Club have a staff of fit, young footballers whose ages cover a wide range.

These boys are ordinary youngsters like yourselves and their talents lie in their ability to play football, just as each and every one of you has a talent to offer. But that talent can be damaged by the abuse of alcohol and drugs.

Nothing saddens me more than to hear of the pointless, unnecessary damage young men and women cause themselves - I cannot think of anything worse than having no control of your own life and destiny. Drugs and excessive alcohol take away the gift you have been blessed with, please do not 'throw' that away.

Life, health and good living are so very important - you are all special people who have a wonderful future ahead of you.

Kevin Keegan

☎ 0161 428 1760 ☎ 0844 846 0782
 📧 info@csef.net 🌐 www.csef.net

Suite 1, 3rd Floor, Metropolitan House
 Station Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, SK8 7AZ

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For more information go to

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