

## Information for Crime Victims and Witnesses

Have you been the victim of or witness to a crime?

A crime victim is anyone who suffers as a result of ruthless design by another person. A pickpocket, mugger, con artist or rapist can make you a victim. So can the person who breaks into your car. Each victimizes in a different way. The suffering that the victim experiences is generally the result of physical and/or psychological loss. People who witness crimes can also experience difficulties because their sense of safety and security is also affected.

What are common reactions of crime victims?

If you have been a victim of or witness to a crime, there are certain responses that are common. You may re-experience the event in memories, or in dreams or nightmares. You may feel detached from others, and withdraw from activities in which you previously participated-especially those activities related to the crime. Other responses include sleep disturbances, guilt or blaming yourself for the crime, memory and concentration problems. Sometimes the crime victim experiences him/herself as weak, helpless, frightened and out of control. You are not alone in these feelings. They are experienced in some form by all crime victims.

What steps can you take to help recover from this experience?

**REPORTING** the crime can be an important first step in taking control again of your own life. Contact your local police precinct. (Precinct phones are listed in NYC government listings blue pages section of your phone directory.) If the crime took place on campus, notify the Office of Safety and Security in 0202 Ingersoll Hall, (951-5512). The NYPD Sexual Victims Liaison Unit is (212) 267-7273.

**SELF HELP GROUPS** are a good place to start and provide a good support system. Hearing others recount their experiences will not only validate your own feelings (which may be confused), but will give you a help in resolving some of these conflicting feelings. The City of New York Victim Services Agency (Safe Horizon) has offices at these locations: 2 Lafayette St., 3rd Fl., New York, NY 10007, 212-577-7700; 189 Montague Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Fl., Brooklyn, NY 11201, 718-834-6688; 2530 Grand Concourse, 7th Fl., Bronx, NY 10458; Another organization, Victims Assistance Services, is located at 2269 Saw Mill River Road, Building 3, Elmsford, NY 10523, 800-726-4041 (Rape Crisis Hotline) or 914- 345-3113 (office line available only to Westchester clients).

**READING** may be a helpful way for you to get information. Especially recommended are: *Invisible Wounds: Crime Victims Speak* by Shelley Neiderbach (Haworth Press) and *The Crime Victim's Book* by Morton Bard (Brunner Mazel). Both are available in the counseling center library.

**COUNSELING** can help a person to recognize that the responses they have are normal and can assist the person to begin to take charge of their life again. Counseling provides support and teaches how to cope with fears, guilt, and all the emotions that go along with being a crime victim.

If you or someone you care about has been the victim of a crime and have been experiencing any of the above responses or if you would like more information, come in and speak with a professional counselor in 0203 James Hall. All services are free and confidential.

