



It may take time

Family and friends of victims are often the best source of support. You are in a good position to help.

It is important that you don't expect too much of them, as this may hinder their recovery and add to the pressure they are already feeling.

Your friend or family member will need to heal in their own way and in their own time.

You are important too

You may also have your own reactions. It may be important that you find someone to talk to as well.

In addition to supporting victims of crime, the Victim Support and Child Witness Service is also available to family and friends. Call 1800 818 988 or contact your nearest office for help. A list of Victim Support and Child Witness Service offices is printed on the back of this brochure.

Where you can find the Victim Support and Child Witness Service

PERTH

**Victim Support and
Child Witness Service**
Level 2, District Court Building
500 Hay Street
PERTH WA 6000
Phone 9425 2850
Fax 9425 4428
Freecall 1800 818 988
Email vss@justice.wa.gov.au

COUNTRY

Albany
Albany Courthouse
184 Stirling Terrace
ALBANY WA 6330
Phone 9845 5222

Broome
Office 2, 9 Napier Street
BROOME WA 6725
Phone 9192 6575

Bunbury
Ground Floor, Bunbury Courthouse
65 Wittenoom Street
BUNBURY WA 6230
Phone 9781 4294

Carnarvon
2 Rushton Street
CARNARVON WA 6701
Phone 9941 4070

Derby
Derby Courthouse
Loch Street
DERBY WA 6728
Phone 9191 2274

Esperance
Esperance Courthouse
100 Dempster Street
ESPERANCE WA 6450
Phone 9071 6318

Victims of Crime
Website www.victimsofcrime.wa.gov.au

Department of the Attorney General
Phone 13 67 57
Website www.dotag.wa.gov.au

PEEL DISTRICT

Rockingham Justice Complex
15-17 Whitfield Street
ROCKINGHAM WA 6168
Phone 9527 7699

Geraldton
Geraldton Courthouse
Marine Terrace
GERALDTON WA 6530
Phone 9964 4816

Kalgoorlie
Goldfields Centrecare
7 Dugan Street
KALGOORLIE WA 6430
Phone 9091 1833

Karratha
Karratha Courthouse
Balmoral Road
KARRATHA WA 6714
Phone 9143 1877

Kununurra
28 Banksia Street
KUNUNURRA WA 6743
Phone 9166 5000

Northam
Northam Courthouse
118 Wellington Street
NORTHAM WA 6401
Phone 9622 7017

Port Hedland
South Hedland Justice Complex
Hawke Place
SOUTH HEDLAND WA 6722
Phone 9172 9307

How Can I Help?

When a family member or
friend is a victim of crime

It is often difficult for family and friends to understand the impact a criminal act can have on a victim. At this time, it is important that victims are supported by people they know and trust.

The Victim Support Service has a selection of brochures for victims, including:

- Preparing a Victim Impact Statement
- Special Witness Status
- Court Support
- Victim Support Service
- Family Violence Service
- Child Witness Service
- How Can I Help - When a family member or friend is a victim of crime

How can I help?

Even if they have not been physically injured or directly threatened during a criminal act, some people will react severely to what others think is a relatively minor event.

Victims are often overwhelmed by strong emotions and reactions, leaving them feeling vulnerable and out of control. Their anger and fear may be misdirected at loved ones and friends at times, but gentle understanding on your part can be most useful.

What are the common reactions?

People's reactions are different. We all have individual and unique ways of managing the unexpected. People who experience trauma do recover but it may take them some time. Normal reactions to traumatic situations include:

- feeling numb
- feeling helpless and having no control over one's life
- experiencing disturbed sleep and nightmares
- nervousness, or feelings of anxiety or panic
- poor concentration
- physical symptoms like nausea and headaches
- detachment and withdrawal from people or activities
- increased irritability
- reduced sex drive
- angry outbursts
- loss of confidence
- impaired decision making and judgement.

How long will the reactions last?

Some people will manage their reactions within a couple of days, while others may take weeks or months before they regain control of their lives.

Keep a look-out for any strong reactions. If any of the reactions listed above last for longer than four days, encourage the victim to contact the nearest Victim Support and Child Witness Service office for assistance.

What can I do?

As a support person, you can discuss your concerns about a family member or friend with a Victim Support Service counsellor.

Some useful tips to provide support to a friend or family member who has been a victim of crime are:

- Recognise that people's reactions will vary.
- Let them talk about their experience of the event and their feelings and fears. They may need to do this over and over again.
- Listen sympathetically, even if you think they are over-reacting. You do not need to offer solutions, just listen.
- Be aware that telling stories about your own or someone else's experience can make the victim feel that their situation is trivial or that they are not managing adequately.
- Providing practical support is invaluable. For example, help with shopping or preparing meals.
- Encourage them to establish normal routines at a pace they can manage and to participate in activities with others.
- Regaining control of their lives is important. Be careful not to become too protective. Help them to act on decisions they have made.
- Be prepared for some uncharacteristic behaviour. This is due to stress and is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.
- Be patient with them if simple decision making and tolerance seem to be affected.
- Don't be too harsh as they may be sensitive to criticism.
- Try not to take their emotional reactions personally, even though they may be difficult on you.