



If someone close to you has been the victim of violence, you might be wondering how you can help. Some people have a natural ability to set their own feelings aside and be unconditionally supportive. Others, however, experience a range of their own emotions which can get in the way of being supportive at this traumatic time. You can be supportive by identifying and acknowledging your own feelings about the crime, respecting the victim's decisions and providing support and suggestions for help.

Acknowledge Your Feelings

You may be inclined to deny that the violence happened, or even be angry with and blame the victim. After all, if you accept that your loved one is a victim, then you have to accept that the same violence could happen to you. It's very scary and makes you feel unable to protect yourself, much less those you love. In some ways it's easier to pretend that the violence never happened, or to lash out at or blame the victim.

If you find yourself experiencing these emotions, it can help to speak with someone at your community mental health crisis center. Being able to identify and deal with your own emotions about the situation can help you be the supportive person on which your loved one needs to rely.

The Victim Decides

If not incapacitated, an adult victim of violence must make many decisions quickly. These include cooperating with the authorities, hiring an attorney or choosing medical care.

Sometimes, it's very difficult for others to understand the victim's decisions, especially when we're sure we would do it another way. Allow an adult victim to make as many decisions as he or she feels capable. Being a victim temporarily diminishes one's feelings of self-esteem and control over one's own life. The desire to make decisions for oneself is a step to recovery.

Unconditional Support

By acknowledging to yourself your own negative feelings about the violence, and actively listening to the victim and respecting his or her decisions, you'll be able to provide unconditional support. You or others might want to suggest that the victim take advantage of professional counseling and victims' assistance groups in your area. Together, all can help the victim regain self-esteem and control and resume a healthy life.

WHEN VIOLENCE TOUCHES LOVED ONES



Common Stresses and Solutions

*Victims' assistance groups
can help a victim of
violence regain self-
esteem and control.*