

# VICTIMS OF CRIME

## OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Describe how crime affects victims
- Determine who are most often the victims of crime
- Demonstrate how they can help people they know who are crime victims

## HANDOUTS

- 1 What Do You Know About the Victims of Crime?
- 2 Who Are Victims?
- 3 If A Friend Is Hit By Crime

## SUMMARY

At the end of this lesson is a summary section. It is very important to keep track of time to allow sufficient time to complete the debrief (summary) with the students.

During this reflection time the students can discuss the information learned, clarify any concerns and analyze the skills that they have practiced. This is a critical step in the learning process and must not be neglected.

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## **PART ONE: WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF CRIME? (30 minutes)**

Remind students that there may be students (or adults) in the room who have been victims of crime or who are close to people who have been victimized. Ask students to be sensitive to them and tell students that if they want to talk about something that happened, they should not have to use real names.

Distribute “**Handout 1: What Do You Know About the Effects of Crime?**”

Read the instructions together as a group. Ask if students understand what they should do. Tell students they will not be required to share their work with anyone else, but they will be invited to share their stories. Answer any questions and tell students they have five minutes to complete this task. Write the ending time on the board.

Give a one-minute warning, but tell students they can continue working on their journals after the discussion begins, if they need a few more minutes.

Invite a volunteer to share his or her journal.

**NOTE:** It is important that each student who wants to share his or her journals gets a chance to do so.

After the first few students share their journals, ask the rest of the class to think about the crime victim’s injuries or losses. Record their losses on the Zoom whiteboard.

After two or three volunteers have shared stories, have the class look at the injuries/losses listed on the board and to try to put them into categories. (*Examples may include physical, emotional, and financial injuries. If students think of other appropriate categories, include those.*)

Write those categories on the Zoom whiteboard from left to right.

Ask students to name examples for each category. (Point out other examples if students do not name them.)

■ What are examples of physical injuries?

(*Examples could be cuts, bruises, wounds, contracting a sexually transmitted disease, etc.*)

■ What are some emotional injuries?

*(insomnia, fear, guilt, feeling alone, confusion, depression, increased risk-taking behaviors and recklessness, difficulty concentrating or decreased school performance, etc. ñ Remind students that these injuries can be serious and long-lasting)*

■ What are some financial injuries?

*(medical expenses, legal fees, loss of wages, money or property stolen, repairs required to fix property, costs of transportation, lodging, meals, and other expenses incurred through hospital and doctor visits and participation in legal proceedings, etc.)*

Invite another student to tell his or her anecdote and plot it out on the grid. (See the example below.)

<i>Physical</i>	<i>Emotional</i>	<i>Financial</i>
<i>Her arm was broken.</i>	<p><i>She is scared to come home from her job at night.</i></p> <p><i>She lost the only picture she had of her mother.</i></p>	<p><i>She lost \$30.</i></p> <p><i>How will she pay for her emergency room bill?</i></p> <p><i>She did not get paid for the day she called in sick after being in emergency room all night.</i></p>

Write the heading “Effects on the Community” on the chalkboard or flipchart paper. Ask students: How did these crimes take a toll on your community? Write their answers on the Zoom whiteboard.

*Answers might include:*

- *People can become increasingly concerned or afraid.*
- *People lose loved ones.*
- *Businesses might close or move away.*

- *People may move away to live somewhere else.*
- *If enough businesses close and/or people move away, the loss in tax revenue could hurt the quality of schools and city services.*
- *People might eventually isolate themselves from each other, destroying the spirit of the community and surrendering control to criminals.*

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## PART TWO: WHO ARE VICTIMS? (20 minutes)

### 1

- Tell teens that they already know some important information about crime's victims, and this session will help them build on what they know.
- Distribute "**Handout 2: Who Are Victims?**" which can be found at the end of this lesson plan.
- Inform teens that the goal of this activity is to dispel common myths about victims of crime. So, if most teens have the wrong answers, they are not "dumb" but share common misconceptions with many other people. Remind students you will not be grading their work. Ask students to complete the questionnaire quietly and on their own in about two minutes.
- After two minutes of having the students complete the handout, ask a volunteer to read each statement and ask students to raise their hands when you ask if the statement is true or false. Discuss each question and the students' reasons for their answers. Then announce the correct answer. If a large number of students answered a question incorrectly, ask students why they think the common perception is different than the correct answer.

#### 1. **Most Americans will never be victimized by crime.**

*False. Studies show that sooner or later almost everyone will be touched by crime. In 2004, U.S. residents aged 12 and older experienced about 24 million crimes. (Source: Catalano, Shannon, "Criminal Victimization, 2004", United States. U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics. September, 2005, NCJ 210674)*

#### 2. **Women are more likely to be victimized than men.**

*False. Except for rape and sexual assault, men are much more likely than women to be victims*

*of crime. In 2004, 25 of every 1000 males over the age of 12 were victims of violent crimes. For women, the number was 18 of every 1000. (Source: Catalano, p. 7)*

**3. Violent crimes are less common than property crimes.**

*True. The Federal Bureau of Investigations publishes a “crime clock” every year that shows that relative frequency of certain types of offenses. According to their 2004 report, a property crime occurred every 23.1 seconds and a violent crime occurred every 3.1 minutes. (Source: “Crime in the United States, 2004”, Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigations.)*

*To find updates on these statistics, go to the F.B.I.’s Web site: [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov) and type in crime clock in the search box.*

**4. Rich people are more likely to be victims of property crime than poor people.**

*False. In general, the higher the annual household income, the less likely one is to experience a property crime. People aged 12 and older from homes where the income was less than \$7500 were victimized much less. The rates were 208 of 1000 people from households earning less than \$7500 compared to 176/1000 in household where the income was \$75,000 or more.*

*By the way, richer people are also less likely to be victims of violent crimes. People aged 12 and older from homes where the income was less than \$7500 per year were more than twice as likely to be victims of violent crime than people from households earning more than \$75,000 per year. (44/1000 versus 17/1000).*

*(Source: Catalano, p. 4)*

**5. People under the age of 15 are more likely to be victims of violent crime than people who are older than 15.**

*True. In general, the younger the person, the higher the rate of violent victimization. Beginning with the age group of 20 -- 24, the rates of victimization declines significantly for each age group studied. For example, for every 1000 people in a particular age group:*

Age	# of victims of violent crime and personal theft per 1,000 people in that age group
12 - 15	50.7
16 - 19	49.4
20 - 24	43.2
25 - 34	25.0
35 - 49	18.2
50 - 64	10.6

65 or older	2.0
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(Catalano, p. 4.)

**6. If a person looks vulnerable, it adds to the risk of victimization.**

*True.* People who appear drunk, physically disabled, feeble, depressed, or mentally incompetent are more likely than the general population to be victimized.

**7. Most violent crimes are committed by strangers.**

*False.* In 2004, 64% of violent crimes against females were committed by the victim's friend, acquaintance, relative, or a person intimate with the victim. (This is true for 67% of rapes and sexual assaults, 54% of robberies, 61% of aggravated assaults, and 66% of simple assault committed against women.)

Male victims of violent crime were equally likely to be victimized by a stranger (50%) and a nonstranger (48%). (Source: Catalano, p. 9)

**8. The crime rate is decreasing.**

*True.* Criminal victimization has been on a downward trend for the last decade. In fact, between 1993 and 2004, the violent crime rate has gone down by 57% and the property crime rate has gone down by 50%. In 2004, the rate of decline stabilized, but violent crimes and property crimes were at their lowest level since 1973. (Source: Catalano, p1)

Ask teens:

- Why are young people victims of crime more frequently than any other age group?
- What kinds of things can be done to reduce the number of teens who are victims of crime?
- What might account for why male teenagers are more frequently crime victims?

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## PART THREE: RECOVERING FROM VICTIMIZATION (10 minutes)

1. Inform students that it is very common for victims to go through stages of recovery and that those stages vary depending on the age of the victim. For adults, such stages usually include:

- shock/denial
- anger/rage
- feeling powerless
- guilt
- depression
- acceptance

2. Explain to students that younger victims may go through some of the same stages, but could also respond to being a victim by experiencing:

- clinging more closely to adults
- crying/irritability
- withdrawal/isolation
- panic
- changes in eating and sleeping habits
- shortened attention span
- reckless play
- denial of the event
- decrease in school performance
- unaccustomed listlessness or hyperactivity

3. Tell students that it is very important for victims of crime to take steps to recover from the experience. This does not mean they should simply forget about it or bury their emotions --- that can lead to serious consequences later. Ask students to brainstorm a list of things people can do to help recover from their experience as a victim: Invite a student to come to the chalkboard to record the answers the class generates. Answers should include:

- Talk about what happened
- Seek counseling

- Get a medical exam if they are injured or are suffering physically after the crime
  
- Join a support group
- Learn and practice strategies to protect themselves such as how to avoid risky situations, staying alert, trusting instincts, etc.
  
- Contact a victim assistance group or hotline

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## PART FOUR: IF A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE IS HIT BY CRIME (20 minutes)

### 1

Ask students: "What can you do?"

- *Tell teens that, whatever the reasons for violence, there is something --- in fact many things --- they can do about it.*
- *One thing they can do is to learn how to help a friend who is a victim of crime.*

### 2

First, try not to make the situation worse for your friend. Some important information:

- *Tell students that not only do victims suffer from the original crime, they often go through something called "secondary injuries." Ask them to guess what these are. (Take two or three comments.)*

*Secondary injuries are those that happen to the victim as a result of the crime and the victim's involvement with the justice system --- what family, friends, and the community (faith community, hospital, police, or criminal justice system) might do or say to the victim after the crime: Most secondary injuries are unintentional, but can still be traumatic. For example,*

- *Someone might say "Wow, that was really dumb --- to be walking down that alley at 2:00 in the morning." The victim has already had that thought a million times since the incident.*
- *Someone might say, "It is God's will."*
- *The police might not let an elderly lady have her TV back until after the trial (because it is evidence), even though it is a great source of companionship for her.*
- *Family members, the police, or legal professionals may ask the victim questions that cause him or her to relive the trauma.*

**3**

Ask students: What should we do when someone we know has been victimized?

- One of the best things you can do is just listen in a non-judgmental way to what the victim says.
- There are three things to say that will help victims:
  - I'm sorry it happened.*
  - It wasn't your fault.*
  - How can I help?*
- If your friend has not notified the police, encourage him or her to report the crime. If possible, offer to accompany your friend.

**4**

- Put students into pairs. Ask the pairs of students to sit together.
- Distribute "**Handout 3: If A Friend Is Hit By Crime**", which can be found at the end of this lesson plan.
- Invite a student to read the directions aloud to the rest of the class. Ask students if they understand the assignment. Clarify any questions.
- Ask a volunteer to read Scenario A aloud.
- Refer students to the bulleted questions listed on the handout under the heading "Before each role play." Ask the class to suggest answers for each of the questions.

**NOTE:** Possible answers are in parentheses below. You can also use this information after the role-play to discuss it.

- What do you think Tanya's feelings are?

*Tanya is probably confused and upset, as well as physically ill and weak. She is probably blaming and second-guessing herself. Tanya feels vulnerable and angry, does not trust people very easily, and will need understanding friends who are willing to listen when she needs to talk about what she experienced. She will also need help to feel physically and emotionally strong again.*

- What kind of problems could she have in the future?

*Tanya's future problems could include continued fear and a feeling of vulnerability. She might also become angry about what happened to her, and she might transfer that into anger against the world and people in general or to people who look like or cause her to remember the offender. She could*

*become cynical and mistrustful about the world.*

- What could you do to help her with her practical and emotional problems?

*Tanya's friends could provide understanding and companionship, encourage her to get counseling if she needed it to cope with her feelings, and provide other practical support. For example, they could help her make up her schoolwork by bringing her assignments and tutoring her if necessary.*

- Who else might be hurt or troubled because of the crime against Tanya?

*Tanya's family is probably frightened by and angry about the crime. They might need counseling to deal with their feelings and to better help Tanya. Her friends will be upset because she is. Classmates who walk the same route to school might be worried about being mugged. Friends who are helping Tanya cope may also have difficulties.*

After the class has discussed the preparation questions above, instruct students to pick roles and role play Scenario A with their partner.

**NOTE:** After the demonstration of Scenario A, gauge how much time is left, making sure that there is at least eight minutes left for the summary and debriefing. Ideally, there would be time for the partners to role play at least one more scenario, giving each person the chance to play the role of a friend at least once.

- Direct the students to work with their partners to role play as many scenarios as time will allow. Then tell students how much time they have for each scenario and write the ending time on the board.

When time is up, congratulate students on their work.

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## **PART FIVE: WRAP UP (10 minutes)**

Ask students:

- What did you learn in class today?
- What surprised you the most about what you learned?
- How will you respond the next time you learn a friend has been victimized?
- One of the ideas behind youth courts is that jurors and/or youth judges will try to repair the harm done to victims by the offender who is before the court. How will today's lesson affect the types of recommendations you might make if you are asked to sit on a youth court jury?
- Do victims have an option of participating in the proceedings of your youth court? If so, in what ways or at what stages do victims participate? Do victims make statements to the court? Do victims make recommendations about what they think the sanction should be? How does the participation of victims in youth courts influence the decisions made by youth judges or jurors?
- If victims do not participate in your youth court, should they? Explain your answer.
- If you are playing the part of a prosecuting attorney in your youth court, what questions could you ask the offender to find out if he or she accepts responsibility for the harm caused to the victim, to the community and to himself or herself?
- What questions could you ask the offender to find out if he or she is willing to repair that harm?
- If you are playing the part of a juror or judge in your youth court, what would you want to know about the victim and the harm to the victim before you made your sentencing recommendation?
- How would you convince other teens to do things to reduce their risk of becoming a victim?