

How can sending victims to jails regularly to talk with prisoners help offenders to understand their responsibility in committing crimes?

In the example of Jenny J., she and her two children were attacked in front of a store. A teenage girl had thrown a soda can at them and Jenny J. complained. Then the girl and some friends threw Jenny to the ground. She was injured. The children had screamed in terror, but nobody came to help. Jenny finally managed to call a friend to come and get the children. She also called an ambulance.

Jenny was angry at the attackers, and she was angry because no one had helped her. This caused her to yell at her children. She went to Victim Services and asked to talk to a counselor. This helped Jenny to stop feeling upset.

An assistance program can also help victims like Jenny J. with child care while they either go to court or go to see doctors and counselors. Such programs can help victims replace lost welfare or Medicaid cards. The program may even help victims get new locks on doors!

What if there is no assistance program in your area? If there are no such programs in your area, there are other places to get help when you need it. There might be a help hotline in town. This means the victim can call a certain number and ask where to get counseling and other help. Some places have special hotlines for certain crimes. A neighborhood center may also be able to help.

What if your money or property was stolen? The police always make a list of stolen property or money. If these things are found, the police will still keep them for a while to be used as evidence. They are returned to the owner when the case is closed.

DID YOU KNOW?

A very popular singer was the victim of an attack one night at a hotel. The attacker broke into her room and raped her. He was never caught. The victim sued the motel, saying that the sliding glass doors of her room did not have a proper lock. The singer won the case. This was one of the first cases in which a victim got the right to protection.

Victims' Rights

Is there a bill of rights for victims? The Bill of Rights protects the rights of all the people in the United States. This set of rights was added to the Constitution. Yet, there is no bill of rights for victims in the Constitution.

In the last few years, victims' rights organizations have worked hard to make laws more fair for victims. Some states have victims' rights laws and some states do not. Check the laws in your state.

Some important rights of victims of crime are:

1. the right to be told what finally happens with the case
2. the right to be told a court hearing has been canceled
3. the right to be protected from threats
4. the right to be told about how to receive witness fees
5. the right to be given a safe area that is away from the suspect to wait in before the trial
6. the right to have property returned quickly. If possible, pictures should be taken of the property. Property should be returned ten days after photos are taken.
7. the right to have someone tell the victim's employer not to allow the victim to lose too much employment money while in court.

EYE OPENER

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that one in four households was victimized by crime in 1991.

All of these rights are for victims, witnesses, and families of victims. Victims have a right to know about everything available to help them balance the harm that has been done to them.

Can victims help themselves? Does a victim ever stop having bad feelings about the crime after it happens? The answer is often no. Yet, victims can feel stronger and better if they do something positive—like fighting back.

Fighting back does not mean going after the suspect yourself. This is always a mistake. You can be hurt or lose your life by doing so! You can help the police by trying to get evidence. It also helps if you act as a witness to make sure the suspect is convicted.

Victims who do these things also help other people from becoming victims of the same person who hurt you. Victims can help society as well as be helped by it after a crime has been committed.



CRITICAL THINKING

Relatives of victims sometimes feel that they want revenge, or to get even. But if this means committing more violence, then the harm caused by crime just continues. What can families of victims do to help themselves?

Understanding Chapter 14

1. How can you help a friend or relative who has been a victim?
2. Can a victim be paid back for loss or damages?
3. What is the victims' bill of rights?



Workbook

Self-Check p.30

Reality-Check p.31

1. Where were Jenny J. and her two children attacked? _____
2. Why did a girl and some friends attack Jenny? _____
3. Why was Jenny angry? _____
4. Where did Jenny go to stop feeling upset? _____
5. An assistance program can also help victims with child care while they do what? _____

6. Such programs can help victims do what? _____
7. If there are no assistance programs in you area, what might there be? _____
8. What can hotlines help victims do? _____
9. What is returned to the owner when the case is closed? _____
10. Why do the police keep for awhile stolen property? _____
11. What does the Bill of Rights protect? _____
12. What is not in the Constitution? _____
13. What should you do to find out if Missouri has a victim rights law? _____
14. You have the right to be protected from what? _____
15. Why do you have the right to a safe area? _____
16. How soon after photos are taken should property be returned? _____
17. An employer should not allow a victim to lose what? _____
18. A victim can feel positive by doing what? _____
19. How can you help the police? _____
20. Victims can help other people from becoming what? _____

Critical Thinking

(pages: 68 & 69)

1. Do you think if offenders could talk to victims it would help those in jail understand what it felt like to be victimized? Why or why not?
2. Do individuals have the right to protection? Give an example.
3. Do some people feel they have a right to victimize others or do they just do it for fun?
4. How do alot of relatives of victims feel?

5. What can the families of victims do to help themselves?

6. When a victim fights back, how can this be done in a positive way?

7. How would you help a friend that has been a victim?