

What is robbery with violence?

Robbery with violence can be a frightening experience that may have long lasting effects on the victim. This fact sheet outlines some common reactions and issues that victims of such a crime may experience. For the purpose of this fact sheet this type of robbery includes:

- Handbag snatch
- Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) hold-up
- Demands for wallet/purse by offender with or without a weapon
- Threats of violence as well as physical violence
- Robberies that happen in public areas such as the street – not at home or armed hold-up at work

It is likely that you did not know the offender. You may have been confronted by the offender while you were walking down the street, going to the bank or coming home from shopping. The offender may have threatened you with violence or physically assaulted you and may or may not have had a weapon.

Regardless of whether you were physically injured or not, you may experience reactions which are confusing and/or frightening. You may feel that you are “going crazy” and that family and friends do not understand what you are going through. These reactions are normal and generally decrease over time. If you are still experiencing intrusive reactions one month after the event, then consider talking with a qualified counsellor skilled in dealing with trauma reactions.

Some of your reactions may include:

- Feeling unsafe and vulnerable when out in public or even at home
- Hyper-vigilance – being very watchful and wary when you are out
- Experiencing panic attacks
- Having flashbacks of part of the event – these may be triggered by a noise behind you, the colour of a car or the clothing someone is wearing
- Physical problems from injuries
- Headaches or stomach aches as a result of the stress
- Change in beliefs e.g. feeling that you cannot trust people
- Feeling angry or frustrated
- Constantly thinking about the crime
- Experiencing mood swings
- Experiencing a loss of confidence in yourself
- Becoming tearful very easily
- Difficulties with sleep including problems falling asleep, broken sleep and confusing or difficult dreams
- You may change the way you do certain things e.g. change banks, walk to the shops by a different route etc.

This fact sheet has been developed to provide general information to victims of crime. It is not intended as a replacement for medical, therapeutic or legal advice. If you have particular concerns please contact your general practitioner, counsellor or Victim Support Service.

Being violently robbed can be costly, inconvenient and time consuming. You may need to get the locks on your house changed. You may need to cancel and replace credit cards, Medicare and pension cards, or buy a new purse/wallet.

You may need to follow up information with the police and have questions about the court process if an offender is caught. If an offender has not been located then you may wish to have further information about the investigation or Victims of Crime Compensation. Police Victim Contact Officers or Victim Support Service are able to assist in these areas (see booklet on Victims of Crime Compensation).

Getting Better

- It is often a good idea to try to maintain your normal routines (work, caring for children, study etc.) and to try and eat properly and get enough sleep.
- Some physical exercise is important as it can be a great stress release.
- Dealing with anger can be assisted by the use of physical activity, focused meditation or relaxation techniques.
- Having the support of family and friends can be very important. Talk to those around you that you trust.
- If your reactions persist, you may wish to speak with a counsellor.
- Remember it is important that you take the time to look after yourself

Where to Find Help

- Victim Support Service has professional counsellors who help people deal with the after-effects of trauma.
- Your local doctor is often a good place for advice and referral.
- The Community Health Centre in your area is also a good source of counselling and support.
- Police Local Service Areas in the metropolitan area and some regional areas have specialist Victim Contact Officers who can assist with police related enquiries.

Further Information

If you would like more information, please contact Victim Support Service on (08) 8231 5626 or view our website at www.victimsa.org