

PROBLEMS OF SURVIVORS

1. Seeming indifference of the community, especially the police to the plight of survivors.
2. Isolation, helplessness in a world that is seen as hostile and uncaring and that frequently blames the victim.
3. Feelings of guilt for not having protected the victim.
4. Growing public sympathy for the perpetrators of crime of passion (Jean Harris, etc.).
5. Disparities in the judicial system (frequently, punishments for property crimes are as great as, or greater than, for the crime of taking a human life).
6. Sensational and inaccurate media coverage.
7. Financial burden of hiring private investigators, etc., when they feel that law enforcement officers are not doing an adequate job or when there are too many unanswered questions.
8. Anger over a plea bargain arrangement.
9. Outrage about the leniency of the murderer's sentence.
10. Frustration at not being allowed inside the courtroom at the time of trial.
11. The memory of a mutilated body at the morgue.
12. Lack of information as to what is going on.
13. Unanswered questions---about the crime, the criminal justice system (why is the killer on bail, walking the streets, after he has confessed to the crime; why was the confession thrown out; why do they keep postponing the trial and not letting us know etc.)
14. Financial burden of medical and funeral expenses and perhaps for professional counseling for surviving family members.
15. The feeling that the murderer, if he's found, gets all the help; that as survivors of a murdered loved one, you don't have any rights.
16. The seemingly endless grief.
17. Loss of ability to function on the job, as well as at home or in school.
18. The strain this puts on marriages and family relationships, frequently resulting in divorce.
19. Getting back the personal effects of a murder victim, even those which are not essential to a trial, or after the trial.
20. The disparity between what is spent for murderers and what is spent for victims' families.

TWELVE WAYS TO RE-TRAUMATIZE VICTIMS OF CRIME

- ♦ Be sure to talk at length about the offender's childhood victimization. That's a sure way to make victims feel better.
- ♦ Keep wondering and asking the victim "when will you get over it/" because, after all, "time heals all wounds."
- ♦ Blame the victim and second-guess his/her judgment. After all, it couldn't be just the offender's fault, could it?
- ♦ When the defendant in the Armani suit with the high-paid lawyer insists that he can't afford to pay restitution, agree. After all, the victim probably has insurance.
- ♦ Encourage the victim to make an impact statement in court, as long as it's less than three minutes and absolutely NO emotion is displayed.
- ♦ Don't worry about notifying the victim about the offender's status. She'll know he's out when she runs into him down the supermarket.
- ♦ Don't address victims' concerns about safety and security, and help them with safety planning. After all, isn't that what the police are for?
- ♦ Tell victims if they sit through the trial, it will be traumatic and probably more than they can handle.
- ♦ Make ALL the decisions for the victim. It's probably too much to ask that they make choices and decisions when they are so traumatized.
- ♦ Emphasize the importance of *forgiveness*. After all, isn't that the first step to recovery and healing?
- ♦ Don't worry about holding the offender accountable. The pain of being arrested and jailed and put through the justice process was enough to set him straight!
- ♦ Don't follow up with the victim to make *sure all their needs are met* because, after all, "time heals all wounds."

Source: Anne K. Seymour, Jay Howell, David Beatty and Trudy Gregorie.