



Healing and Hope

*An Aftercare Guide
about Beginning Again for
Survivors of Sexual Violence*

Safe Places

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INTRODUCTION

*There's more than anger,
more than sadness,
more than terror . . . there's hope.*

Edith Hornung, 46 year old survivor

*H*ealing and Hope was written for you –

with our confidence that in the days and weeks to come, you will find within yourself the strength to begin your own *passage* to healing and renewed hope . . . and a new beginning.

We realize that beginning again may seem impossible to you right now.

You may have been told that you will go through stages in response to what happened. You may have heard of the popular concept of “five stages of grief” that include denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

While there is wisdom in looking at what happened to you as a loss that must be grieved, remember that grief is a complicated, multi-dimensional, individual process that can never be generalized in five steps – or even ten steps, or twenty. Suffering a loss as a result of a violation such as sexual assault brings about emotions that are not nearly predictable enough to be described by any list of “stages.”



Perhaps a more accurate way to describe your emotional response is to consider that you have begun a journey toward healing. It is certainly not a journey you planned to take. It is a journey that lies before you as a result of a terrible trauma.

As you stand at the very beginning of such a journey, you do not know exactly which direction this journey will take you. But you **do** know that there is pathway ahead of you, and that you will be moving forward from where you are right now. You do not have to know what the end of this journey will look like. At this point you cannot see the end clearly – how far ahead it is, what obstacles are along the way, how long it will take you to reach the end, or when you will be able to see the end of the path. No person really knows that.

All we know is that the journey is a process, just as your healing is a process. The term “Stages” does not adequately describe what happens along a journey to healing. A better way to describe the journey you are on is to consider that you are traveling through *passages*. Your pathway will take you through *passages* of grief, fear, anger, contentment . . . a pathway strewn with a whole array of emotions.

Some of the *passages* may be difficult. The *passage* through fear, for instance, may be longer than the *passage* through acceptance. You may travel through some of the *passages* more than once. You may encounter some obstacles along the way, but we want you to know that you do not have to make the journey alone. We would consider it a privilege to walk with you through these hard days if you need us. We have support groups available, scheduled at various times for your convenience. A compassionate listening ear is only a phone call away. We hope you will feel comfortable calling a Safe Places crisis advocate any time at 501-801-2700, or our statewide toll free crisis line at 1-877-432-5368.

Healing and Hope is for you . . .

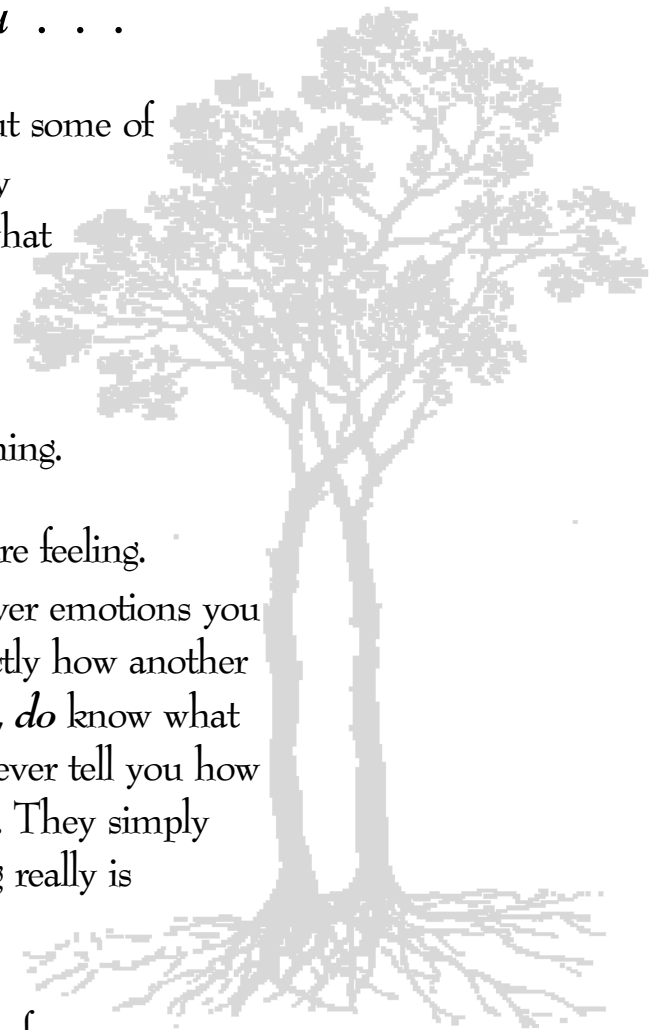
Healing and Hope was written to talk to you about some of the things you may experience after being sexually assaulted. You will have many emotions about what has happened to you. Know that some of our victim assistance professionals and volunteer advocates are also survivors who have traveled a journey similar to the journey you are now beginning.

They cannot begin to know the exact pain you are feeling. Your pain — your grief, anger, fear, loss — whatever emotions you feel are very personal. No person ever knows exactly how another person is feeling. Many of our advocates, however, *do* know what *they* felt in a similar circumstance. They would never tell you how to feel or how to move forward from your assault. They simply offer themselves to you as “witnesses” that healing really is possible and that hope can be a reality. They are survivors who have been able to find that, after the trauma of sexual violence, there really is more than anger or sadness or terror . . . there’s healing and hope.

We hope that the information you read in this booklet will encourage your recovery and healing, and remind you that there is light after darkness. The healing journey can seem long, but healing takes time, and courage.

We honor your courage to heal, and we want you to know that we are here for you in whatever ways you feel we might be helpful. We hope that what you read in these pages will be empowering to you and to your friends and family members, to all the people who are important to you. Your life has been re-arranged by this violent act, but it has not been destroyed.

You can begin again. There *is* healing for you . . . and hope.





YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

You may be asking why this has happened to you. You are certainly not alone in your questioning. Persons who have experienced sexual violence often ask themselves many difficult questions . . .

Why did this happen to me?

What did I do to deserve this?

Could this have been my fault?"

Remember that the assault was **not** your fault.

Why did someone assault you?

There is no answer to that question that can ease the hurt you are feeling right now. Discovering “why” is not always helpful to survivors of violence. What *is* helpful to ease the hurt is remembering that you are not alone and that there are persons who want to help you get through your pain.

Sexual violence of any type is always a deeply painful violation. Survivors often have severe stress reactions similar to those of people who have survived other life-threatening events such as war or natural disaster. Other individuals have experienced a pain similar to your pain. Sexual assault can be a violent crime against **any** person: males and females, adults, teenagers, young children, infants, elderly persons, heterosexuals, homosexuals, persons of every race. According to some statistics, one out of three women and one out of six men will be sexually assaulted in their lifetimes. Perpetrators of sexual crimes do not discriminate in choosing their victims. Sexual violence is not a sex crime; it is a crime of violence, power, and control.



AN EMOTIONAL ROLLER COASTER

I can't believe this happened to me . . .

You are likely experiencing a broad range of emotions, emotions that change from one day to the next – even from one minute to the next. In the hours and days immediately following the assault, you may feel shock and denial. These are common reactions. It's hard to believe the assault really happened, and often difficult to understand why.

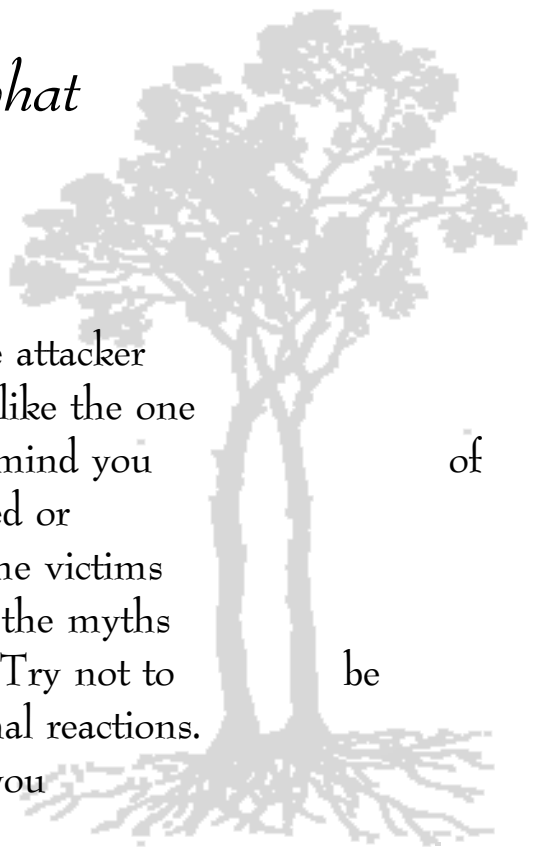
You may feel very strong and disturbing emotions, like crying, shaking, fainting, or expressions of anger. All of these emotions are common for many individuals who have experienced sexual assault. These emotions may feel troubling to you, but try to remember to let yourself feel what you feel. Give yourself some time and, by all means, be patient with your recovery and healing.

Know also that you may feel no emotion at all. This is a reaction called shock. Shock may leave you feeling completely numb. A person in shock may seem calm and composed, even cold and detached. Some individuals even say, *"It feels like this did not happen to me at all. Like all of it happened to someone else."* Shock can actually last for days or weeks, and it may feel more like a *passage* than a reaction.

A traumatic event like a sexual assault can result in a variety of emotional responses. Sometimes your emotions are so conflicted that you may find yourself crying in one moment and actually laughing in the next. Your laughter does not mean you are not hurting; it can be a result of the body's reaction to the trauma.

*My emotions are distressing.
I am terrified of my reactions to what
happened.*

During this time of immediate crisis, a very common emotion is fear — fear that the attacker could return, fear of being alone, fear of places like the one where the assault occurred or of people who remind you of the assailant. You may also feel angry, depressed or confused. You may feel guilty or ashamed. Some victims even report feeling “dirty” because they believe the myths that blame victims for being sexually violated. Try not to be overly alarmed if you experience these emotional reactions. There are persons here at Safe Places to help you work through them.



You may also experience physical reactions that are related to your emotional trauma. These physical reactions may not be related to any *physical* injury you experienced. These physical reactions occur because your emotions are injured. Examples of these physical responses include soreness or pain that is actually caused by experiencing strong emotions rather than by a physical injury.

Other examples are:

- Nausea that can result from intense grief
- Eating difficulties that may result from emotional exhaustion, worry or anger
- Sleep disturbances or nightmares, usually a result of extreme fearfulness
- Heart racing and shortness of breath caused by anxiety and panic
- Loud and unexpected noises may startle you more than usual
- Extreme fear of being touched

Some survivors do not want to be touched after an assault; others want increased physical affection. These are some of the physical reactions that do not actually result from *bodily* injury; they result from *emotional* injury.



WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME PHYSICALLY?

If you were treated at a hospital following your assault, you were probably given a lot of information that seems confusing now. Feel free to call the hospital emergency room with any questions you have. You may also contact a Safe Places advocate at 501-801-2700.

You may be concerned about physical problems caused by the sexual assault. The hospital probably gave you antibiotics to help protect you against infection and to help prevent some sexually transmitted diseases. If you are female, you may also have been given medication to help prevent pregnancy. While this medication may cause cramping and menstrual irregularity, you must take every pill as directed. This medication may also cause mild nausea, but it is important to take all of the medication. Call the hospital if you are experiencing persistent physical problems.

In six weeks, you should have another blood test (called a VDRL). Even though the hospital tested for sexually transmitted diseases at the time of your assault, syphilis may not test positive for several weeks. This disease is easily cured if detected early. Your doctor or local health department can run this test.

Every six months, for two years after your assault, you must be tested for AIDS/HIV. You may contact your local health department for information.

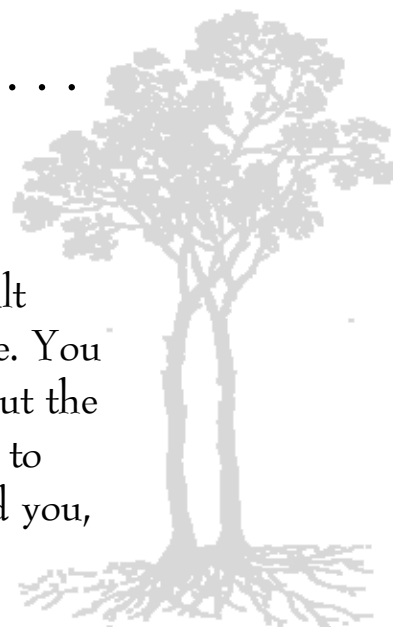
You may be afraid of the physical problems you will experience after your assault. Sexually transmitted disease is certainly a concern that you need to monitor. For females, another concern is an irregular menstrual cycle. Your

periods may be irregular for a few months. Your entire body may seem “out of balance.” Your body may feel sore, feverish or sluggish. Give yourself plenty of sleep and rest. Try to eat nutritious foods and drink plenty of water. Learn to relax and take frequent breaks from your routine. Warm baths may help alleviate the soreness and calm you down.

Male survivors of sexual assault may also experience soreness, and find that they feel sluggish, lethargic, fatigued. Physical check-ups are very important. Try to learn to relax and get some physical exercise doing something you enjoy. Seek out a trusted friend or family member to spend time with. Try to do things, at work and in your leisure time, that help restore balance to your life. Try to strengthen your close relationships so that you will feel more connected to the kind of support you need. Be good to yourself. Your body has been violated, and it will take some time to heal. Be sure to take care of your health and schedule a physical exam within six to eight months.

I just want to pretend this never happened . . .

Of course you do. If you could simply deny that you have been sexually assaulted, you could go on with life as usual. Many survivors deny any effects from a sexual assault and try to assure everyone around them that things are fine. You may think that everyone in your life is tired of hearing about the assault, or you may want to shut out the pain and get back to “normal.” You may want so much to put the assault behind you, that you may try to change something about your life—your job, your residence, your relationships, your entire lifestyle. Your *denial* of what happened to you may be brief, or it may last for many years. Remember that survivors who continue to deny what happened sometimes turn to harmful things like drugs, alcohol, overeating or overworking to enable them to numb their feelings and go on with life as it was before the assault. But remember also that *denial* is a *passage* on your healing journey





I CAN NEVER TELL.

You do not have to tell anyone, but your silence may give this trauma power over your life for years . . . even for the rest of your life. Telling, or not telling, is a choice that you have the right to make for yourself. This assault is *your* story. It is your personal experience, and you can share it with whomever you choose. You will probably find that talking about what happened with a compassionate listener will be healing for you.

The people who care about you are certainly experiencing their own pain because of what has happened. They may wish they could have protected you in some way or kept you safe. They may experience guilt. The intensity of their feelings may make them unsure of what to say or how to react to you. They may withdraw from you and not say anything at all. This is their problem to work through, not yours. They may benefit from counseling or from attending one of our Safe Places support groups for family and friends of survivors.

You may want to talk about the assault soon afterwards; you may also *not* want to talk about what happened to you. Some sexual assault survivors wait until much later to talk about the assault, and others never feel comfortable talking about it.

Remember that it is very important for you to find a way to talk about what happened with someone you trust. Holding it in will be harmful to you, and your emotions may emerge days, weeks, even years later. Buried emotions will not stay buried inside you without causing problems for you in the future.

I was assaulted weeks ago . . .

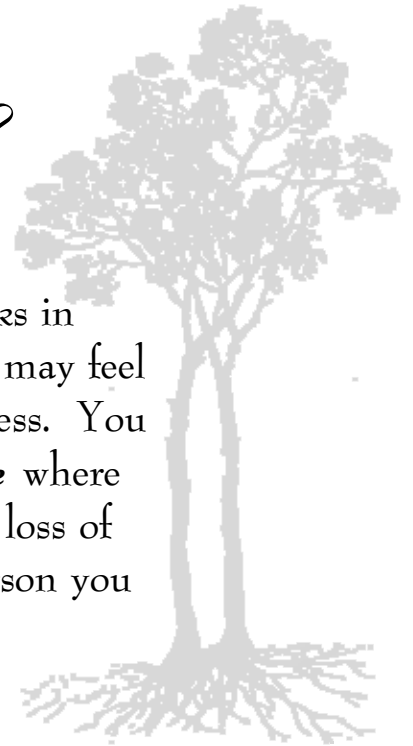
Why am I feeling so devastated now?

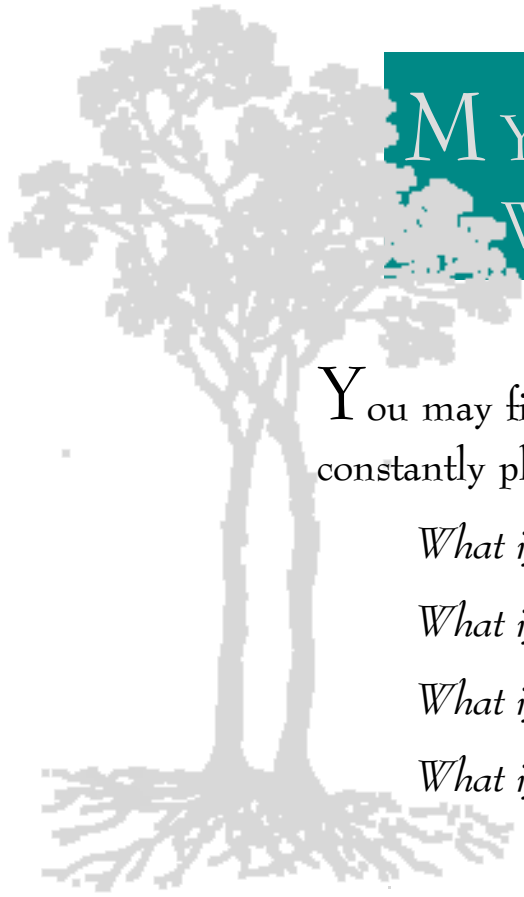
Some survivors identify a *passage* they call *suffering*.

In the midst of this *passage* the reality of the assault sinks in and makes its home in the very deepest part of you. You may feel depressed or aimless. You may have a deep sense of sadness. You may feel grief or loss. You have now reached the *passage* where you will mourn a loss of your life as it used to be, even a loss of your *self*, because you feel you will never be the same person you were before the assault.

Remember that all of these places on your journey are *passages*. You do not have to stay in this place called *suffering*. This is a *passage* you can get through. Remember also that any life event changes us. No, you will *not* be the same person you were before the assault; you will grow and change. When you choose the journey and follow the pathway toward healing and hope, in the end you will find that you are stronger, more empowered, and more courageous than you have ever been.

In this *passage* called *suffering*, you may feel as though your sense of security and control over your life has been destroyed. You may experience fear, nightmares, changes in sleeping and eating, sexual problems, physical aches and pains, difficulty concentrating. You may lose interest in all of your usual activities. Anger, guilt, shame are common. You may have disturbing memories of the assault or experience “flashbacks,” and actually believe that the assault is happening again. Your moods may swing from one end of your emotional spectrum to the other. It is not unusual for survivors to misdirect anger towards loved ones or towards themselves. This *passage* can be very painful; please don't travel it alone, and remember that you *will* get through it.





MY MIND IS FILLED WITH QUESTIONS.

You may find that your mind is filled with questioning, constantly plagued with “what ifs.”

What if I am terrified all the time?

What if I can't sleep?

What if I never feel normal again?

What if I can't work?

What if I have nightmares?

What if I can't control my memories of what happened?

What if I can't talk to anyone about what happened?

What if I have flashbacks?

What if people think I'm crazy?

What if I am afraid of having sex again?

What if I just can't stop crying?

What if I am afraid to leave my house at all?

What if I can never walk out of my house alone at night?

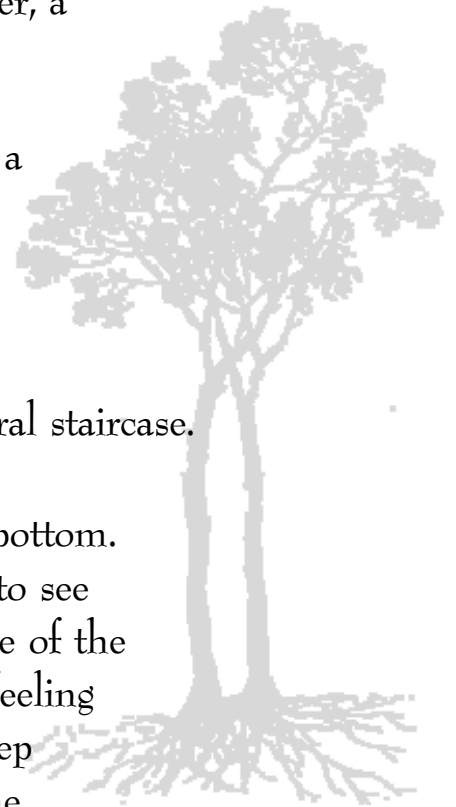
You may ask all of these questions . . . or none of these questions. You may experience feelings you have never felt before. Don't be afraid of your feelings. You have survived a violation of your whole being. Give yourself permission to feel what you feel. Do not ignore your feelings or stuff them down into a hidden corner of your self. The only way to get past this pain is to go directly through it. So *feel* your feelings, and then let them go.

If you are overwhelmed, find someone who can help . . . your friends or family members, a Safe Places staff person or volunteer, a professional counselor, a minister.

You can get beyond your pain and make this assault a part of your past. You can move on from where you are right now. Do not expect yourself to forget what happened to you, but you *will* get past your pain.

Getting beyond this pain is much like going up a spiral staircase. The farther you climb up the stairs, the farther away you get from the intensity of the pain you left at the bottom. But at any time, if you look over the staircase railing to see what you left behind, you will be able to see the source of the pain. You will remember it, and even feel it. But the feeling will not hurt as much as it did at the bottom. Each step you are able to climb moves you farther away from the intensity of the pain.

Climbing stairs can be exhausting. So can the healing work you will do in the days to come. Remember that the staff of Safe Places will help you if you need us, and that our services are free and confidential.





WHAT ABOUT MY LEGAL CONCERNS AND SAFETY?

After your assault, you or someone else may have called the police. Perhaps the hospital called the police after you arrived there for treatment. The police are responsible for investigating a reported incident and gathering evidence to present to the prosecuting attorney. A police officer or detective will need to ask you the details of what happened.

If you report the assault to the police, your medical examination will be paid for by the Arkansas Crime Victims Reparations Program and the Sexual Assault Reimbursement Program. The following information will give you some of the guidelines of these programs.

What is the Arkansas Crime Victims Reparations Program?

The Arkansas Legislature created the "Arkansas Crime Victims Reparations Act" when they passed Act 817 in 1987. The legislation provides a method of compensating and assisting victims and their dependents that have suffered personal injury or death as the result of a violent crime, including DWI and hit and run incidents that are a violation of A.C.A 27-53-10.

Where does the money come from?

The Crime Victims Revolving Fund

One of the most positive aspects of the Arkansas Crime Victims Reparations Program is that a portion of the funding comes from individuals who commit crimes. A major source of revenue for the program is the assessment of court costs and fees.

The program also receives money through the federal Victims of Crime Act as well as the court-ordered restitution collected from criminals.

When did Arkansas begin assisting victims of violent crimes?

The operation date for the program is July 1, 1988.

Who qualifies as a claimant?

- A victim
- A dependent of a homicide victim
- An authorized person acting on behalf of one of the above

Is there anyone excluded from acting as a claimant?

Yes. A service provider cannot act as a claimant for the purpose of filing for compensation.

Who qualifies as a victim?

- A person suffering personal injury or death as the result of a criminal act
- Any Arkansas resident suffering personal injury or death as an act of terrorism committed outside the United States
- A minor child of an eligible victim
- An immediate family member of a deceased victim, a sexual assault victim, or a child victim
- A person who resided, at the time of the crime, in the same permanent household as a deceased victim
- A person who discovers the body of a homicide victim

Who is an immediate family member?

- Parents
- Siblings
- Grandparents
- Spouse
- Children of the person suffering personal injury or death as the result of a criminal act

What are the eligibility criteria?

- Victimization must have occurred in Arkansas on or after July 1, 1988
- Claim must be filed within one (1) year of incident (and may be waived for good cause)
- Victimization was reported to the proper authorities within 72 hours (minors excluded, may be waived for good cause)

- Victim must have suffered personal injury or death due to criminal act of another person
- Victim/claimant must be cooperating with the investigation and/or prosecution
- Victim must not have been covered by a collateral source
- Victim/claimant must not have been convicted of a criminally injurious felony
- Victim's conduct must not have contributed to the victimization
- Victim must not have been involved in illegal activity at the time of the incident
- Victim must not have been incarcerated at the time of the incident
- The injury cannot be the result of a motor vehicle accident unless the act was
 1. In violation of Omnibus DWI, A.C.A. §5-65-101 et. seq., Intent
 2. In violation of A.C.A. §27-53-101 – leaving the scene of an accident involving serious injury or death
 3. Intentional
- Compensation must not unjustly benefit the offender or accomplice

What types of assistance are available to eligible victims?

- Medical, including rehabilitation and dental
- Repair and/or replacement, such as eyeglasses, dentures or hearing aids
- Mental health
- Work loss
- Funeral
- Loss of support for dependents of a homicide victim
- Crime scene clean-up

What does crime scene clean-up involve?

This expense is available to survivors or dependents of homicide victims only. There is a maximum limit of \$3,000 to cover reasonable expenses involved with removing, or attempting to remove, from the crime scene, blood, dirt, stains, or other debris caused by the crime or the processing of the crime scene. Reasonable expenses include, but are not limited to, cleaning supplies, equipment rental, labor, and hazardous waste removal. The location of a crime scene may include a structure or automobile; however, a distinction exists between cleaning and property replacement. Property replacement is prohibited. Additionally, the approval of assistance with this type expense is contingent upon all other eligibility criteria having been met.

What expenses are not covered by the program?

- Pain and suffering
- Property damage or loss
- Attorney fees

What are the maximum limits?

- Overall maximum is \$10,000 per victim, but this can be raised to \$25,000 if the victim suffered catastrophic injury that resulted in total and permanent disability;
- Medical expenses are paid at 65% of balance submitted, but if the provider accepts payment they are agreeing to accept as payment in full;
- Mental health expenses are paid up to \$3,500 for out-patient treatment and \$3,500 for in-patient treatment
- Funeral expenses are paid up to \$7,500;
- Crime scene clean-up expenses are paid up to \$3,000.
- Up to one week of work loss directly related to participation in criminal justice activities
- Mileage directly related to participation in criminal justice activities can be paid up to \$300
- Lodging directly related to participation in criminal justice activities can be paid up to \$300 (reimbursement basis only)
- Lodging that is medically necessary for the victim who suffered personal injury can be paid up to \$300 (reimbursement basis only)
- Up to \$500 can be paid for installation of locks and windows for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence who are victimized in their primary residence (reimbursement basis only)

Who makes the decisions?

The administrative staff is responsible for conducting an investigation on all claims submitted. This involves gathering information regarding the victimization and reviewing all aspects of the case to determine whether the eligibility criteria have been met. The administrative staff will then prepare a synopsis of each claim submitted and forward it to the Board for review during one of its meetings or conference calls. A staff recommendation will accompany the synopsis; however, the Board will make the final decision on each claim.

Can a victim whose claim is awarded file additional expenses?

Yes. These additional expenses are considered supplemental expenses, regardless of whether they are for treatment rendered at the time of the incident or for ongoing treatment related to the

victimization. It should be noted that the expenses for any treatment rendered after the decision date of the claim must be submitted in compliance with ACVRB Rule No. 24. This rule stipulates that all supplemental expenses be submitted within one year of treatment or payment by a collateral source in order for them to be considered for compensation.

What recourse do victims have if a claim is denied or diminished?

A victim or claimant can appeal the decision within forty-five (45) days of receipt of the certified notice. The claim will be scheduled for the next available board meeting. The victim or claimant or a representative is required to be present at the appeal hearing.

How often does the Board meet to review the claims or appeals?

The Board holds six annual meetings at the Attorney General's Office to hear appeals. These meetings take place on the third Thursday of January, March, May, July, September and November. In addition, the Board meets via conference call during the months of February, April, June, August, October and December.

What is the recourse for the victims who are denied or diminished by the Board after an appeal hearing?

The victim or claimant may file an appeal in Circuit Court within thirty (30) days of receipt of the Board's decision. The petition may be filed in the Circuit Court in Pulaski County or the county in which the victim or claimant resides.

Do I need an attorney to file a claim?

No. Assistance in filing a claim is available from the Arkansas Crime Victims Reparations Program. In addition, the law does not provide for attorney's fees to be paid by the program.

Do I have to prove financial need in order to be eligible for compensation?

No.

Does there have to be an arrest or conviction of the assailant before compensation will be paid?

No.

How do I file a claim?

A claim form may be obtained from your nearest prosecuting attorney's office, law enforcement agency or the Arkansas Crime Victims Reparations Program. You may also download and print the

form by [clicking here](#) (downloadable claim form requires the free [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#)). It is necessary for the claim form to be completed in its entirety and accompanied by the following:

- Documentation verifying that the incident was reported to the proper authorities within 72 hours (minors excluded); and
- At least one itemized statement

Where can I find more information?

You can contact the Program at the following address:

Arkansas Crime Victims Reparations Program
Office of the Attorney General
323 Center Street, Suite 200
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Phone: 501-682-1020 or 1-800-448-3014

Another resource that can help you is the Arkansas Crime Information Center.

The ACIC addresses your need for safety and peace of mind by providing a service called the Arkansas VINE[®] Program – Victim Information and Notification Everyday. Arkansas was the first state in the nation to implement an automated information and notification system (VINE) that includes data from all county jails, all prosecuting attorneys, and the state prison system.

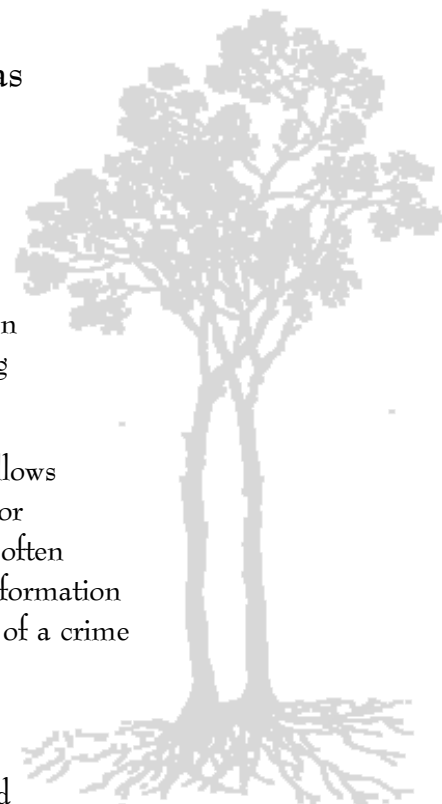
The Arkansas Crime Victim Information and Notification System allows anyone to check the location and status of offenders, and to register for notification of events related to a particular offender. The program is often referred to as the VINE system. VINE is an acronym for "Victim Information and Notification Everyday," however; you do not have to be a victim of a crime to use this system.

First in the Nation

Arkansas was the first state in the nation to implement an automated information and notification system that includes data from all county jails, some prosecuting attorneys, the Arkansas Department of Community Correction, and the Arkansas Department of Correction.

How the Arkansas VINE System Works

The Arkansas VINE system consists of a network of computers gathering information from each county jail, participating prosecuting attorney's offices, the Department of Correction, the Department of Community Correction, and the Attorney General's Office. The system captures information on



an offender's custody status and parole/probation status. The system also provides court event information on criminal cases handled by Prosecuting Attorneys. Victims, or interested persons, may register with the VINE system by using a touch-tone telephone or visiting the VINELink website at www.vinelink.com. Once registered, a victim will be notified of custody, parole/probation, and/or court case status changes on an offender. Victims may also use the VINE system to check on the status of an offender or case 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 1-800-510-0415 or visiting the website at www.vinelink.com.

General Features

- * Use of the Arkansas VINE System is free to everyone.
- * The Arkansas VINE System will automatically call or email you if there is a change in the offender's custody status, parole/probation status, and of upcoming court events or case status changes.
- * All telephone registrations through the Arkansas VINE System are anonymous. You will be asked to choose a special PIN (Personal Identification Number) to acknowledge notifications from the system.
- * You may register more than one telephone number. Each registered phone number must have a related PIN for that number.
- * You can register against an Arkansas offender regardless of where you live in the country, but to register against other state offenders you would have to refer to that state's VINE program.
- * The VINE system calls every 30 minutes for a 24 hour period. If you are not at home when the VINE system calls with a notification, the service will leave a message and call back every two hours for a 24 hour period. If your email address is registered you will only receive one email containing the status change information of the offender you are registered against.
- * You may call the VINE System as often as you want from any touch-tone telephone to check on an offender's custody and court status, 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

Legislative Authority

In 1997 the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 1250 which authorized the development of an automated victim information and notification system. This responsibility was placed on the Arkansas Crime Information Center (ACIC). The legislature also passed the "Arkansas Crime Victims Rights Law" which mandated that victims of crime be notified of certain events pertaining to an offender.

Background on the VINE System

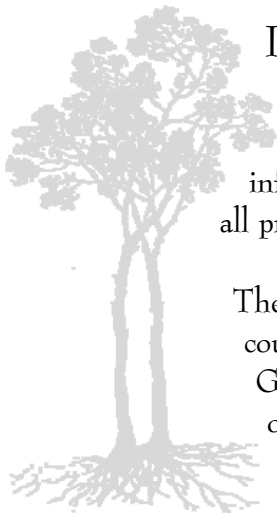
In December of 1993, Louisville, Kentucky was faced with a tragic event. A twenty-one year old woman named Mary Byron was murdered as she left her place of employment. The killer was her ex-boyfriend who had been released on bail from the county detention center where he had been held on charges of rape and kidnapping. The young woman did not get notified of his release on bond, as previously promised, and he shot and killed her 3 days after his release.

The violent murder prompted the leaders in Louisville to look for a method of notifying victims of

crime when their attackers are released from custody. The goal was to prevent another tragedy from occurring similar to the death of Mary Byron. The search went nationwide, but found that no other community had a fast, effective way of providing this type of notification. Based on these findings, Jefferson County Kentucky selected Interactive Systems of Louisville, Kentucky to develop an automated process to inform and notify victims. The acronym, VINE, was coined for this project, representing the words Victim Information and Notification Everyday. From the beginning, the critical nature of this system was paramount. Once on-line, the system would be responsible for warning individuals when their very lives might be in danger.

More Information About the VINE System

For information about the Arkansas VINE system, including brochures and posters, or to schedule public awareness trainings, please call ACIC at (501) 682-2222.



Information about VINELink

Arkansas was the first state in the nation to implement an automated information and notification system (VINE) that includes data from all county jails, all prosecuting attorneys, and the state prison system.

The Arkansas VINE system consists of a network of computers placed in each county jail, prosecuting attorney's office, the Department of Correction, the Attorney General's Office, and the Parole Board . The system captures information on an offender's custody status. The system also provides court event information on criminal cases handled by Prosecuting Attorneys.

In May, 2004, Arkansas implemented an additional method of accessing offender information and registering against those offenders found in VINE. This new method, known as VINELink, is the web-based version of VINE and allows crime victims and concerned citizens to search a website for offender information.

Individuals are now able to search for offenders in custody in their community, and in 38 other participating states throughout the country, through www.vinelink.com. The state in which an individual wishes to search for an offender would then be selected. If Arkansas is selected, the opportunity is given to search for that offender throughout the entire state, in the Department of Correction, or in county jails by filling in the first and last name of the offender. If the offender is located, more detail about his/her location and biographical information will be presented. It is also an option at this point to register for notification by telephone or e-mail and for the message to be delivered in Spanish or English. Once you have registered for notification, an email or telephone call will be immediately sent about any custody and/or court events that occur with the offender.

Individuals can still register with the VINE system by using a touch-tone telephone and calling 1-800-510-0415 or by contacting the Arkansas Crime Information Center.

For information about the Arkansas VINE system, including brochures and posters, or to schedule public awareness trainings, please call ACIC at (501) 682-2222.

I still feel so out of control.

Who's in charge of the legal process?

You may be concerned about how the case will proceed from this point. Although the prosecuting attorney determines if there is enough admissible evidence to issue a formal complaint against the person who assaulted you, it is important that you feel that you have some control in this process. Give the prosecuting attorney as much information as you can to encourage prosecution of your assailant. At times you may feel as if the criminal justice and court system is controlling your life during this process. Express your concerns to a victim assistance professional or to the prosecuting attorney. You have a right to be heard and your feelings taken seriously.

If the case is prosecuted, you do not have to hire an attorney. The prosecuting attorney's office will provide an attorney to represent you in court. You will have opportunity to consult with this attorney, or his or her assistants, as much as you need to so that you feel as comfortable as possible.

After an arrest warrant is issued, the suspect is arrested and brought before a judge to enter a plea of guilty or not guilty. If the suspect pleads guilty, he or she is charged. Then a sentencing date is set. If the suspect pleads not guilty, a "probable cause" hearing is scheduled. If the judge determines that there is probable cause, the case goes to trial. There will likely be additional hearings along the way before the case actually goes to trial.

Before trial, your case will be assigned to a deputy prosecuting attorney and to a victim assistance representative. The victim assistance professional (or victim advocate) in the prosecuting attorney's office will be your liaison to the court. Feel free to ask the victim advocate or your attorney to explain anything you

do not understand about the process. They will help prepare you for the trial and answer your questions about the legal process. You may also continue to seek assistance and information from your Safe Places advocate.

During the trial, both sides will present evidence and call witnesses to testify. If it is a jury trial, the jury will decide if the defendant is innocent or guilty. If it is a non-jury trial, the judge will decide the case.

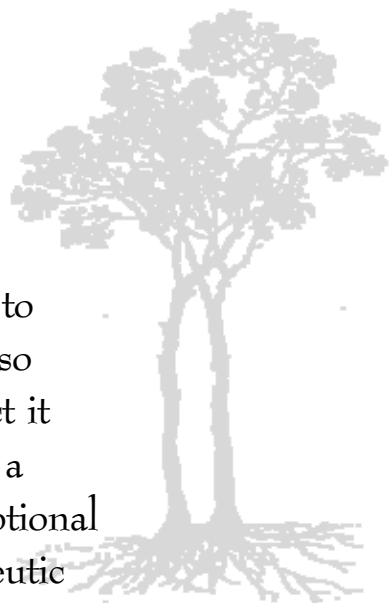
Remember that judges and juries determine innocence or guilt based upon the physical evidence presented and testimony given at the trial. If your offender is found “not guilty” it does not mean that no one believes your story. It simply means that there was not enough admissible evidence to convict “beyond a reasonable doubt.”

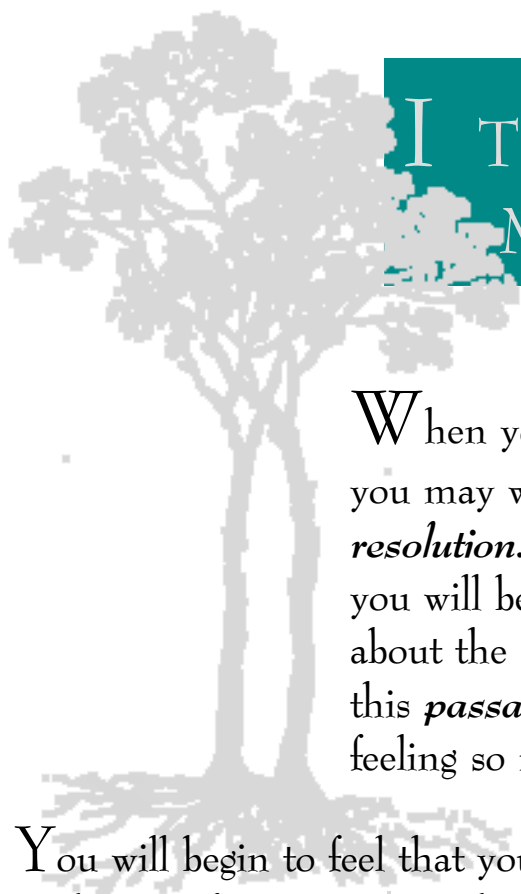
The Victim Impact Statement

Victims of crime and their families have the right to participate and to be heard in the criminal justice system through the use of Victim Impact Statements.

A Victim Impact Statement can give you an opportunity to address the court prior to sentencing. This opportunity also allows you to personalize the crime and express the impact it has had on you and your loved ones. This process can be a powerful one for you, and one that helps you in your emotional recovery. Safe Places can help you with a series of therapeutic victim impact sessions that will provide you the opportunity to get your feelings out more clearly. Ask your Safe Places advocate about this process.

Your Victim Impact Statement can be written or oral. It gives you not only an opportunity to provide information for the judge to consider at sentencing, but allows you to articulate the pain, anguish, and devastation the crime has caused. Judges and other criminal justice system personnel have little opportunity to hear directly from you how the crime has affected your life and the lives of those who are close to you. A Victim Impact Statement provides the court with essential data which leads to appropriate sentences and suitable restitution.





I THINK I JUST MIGHT MAKE IT.

When you begin to feel even a tiny a twinge of hope, you may well be moving into a *passage* called *resolution*. This is a good place to be – a place where you will begin the process of resolving your feelings about the sexual assault, the attacker, and yourself. In this *passage*, you will feel yourself moving away from feeling so much like a “victim.”

You will begin to feel that you will survive – that you *have* survived! It is in this *resolution passage* that you will integrate the sexual assault as an accepted, though very painful, part of your life. This *passage* is a long-term process. It may last throughout your life, but it is a place where inner peace grows and resolution replaces pain.

Remember that every person who has suffered sexual violence travels through these *passages* – not necessarily in a smooth and timely way, not necessarily in any order. You may find yourself in two *passages* at the same time. You may return to a previous *passage* for a time, even more than once. You may even get temporarily stuck in one place.

But this feeling of being “stuck” is an important time for drawing yourself inward. . . sort of like that “cocoon time.” Don’t be afraid of a cocoon-like dark place along the journey. Safe Places victim advocates can help you get through *any* part of your journey with support, compassion, counseling, and information. The journey to healing and hope is not always an easy one, but know that you can call us when you need a friend to walk with you



FINALLY, REMEMBER . . .

Remember . . .

that you do not deserve what happened to you. That the sexual violence, no matter how it occurred, was not your fault. That no matter where you were, what you were doing, what you were wearing when the assault occurred, you did not cause it. It was the attacker that committed a terrible crime against you.

Remember . . .

that you survived the assault. You are alive. You are strong, and you are a survivor with the courage to heal.

Remember . . .

to give yourself permission to feel exactly what you are feeling. Cry if you need to. Laugh, scream. Kick the walls. It's okay to be angry. It's okay to be sad. It's okay to feel whatever you are feeling.

Remember . . .

that every person is unique and that everyone copes with trauma differently. After you were sexually assaulted, you may have told a family member or a friend, a police officer or a doctor. You may have talked with a victim advocate. If you never told a single person, remember that this is *your* experience to tell, whenever you feel you can. And remember that holding the secret inside can be harmful for you.

Remember . . .

to be very kind and gentle with yourself. Your body has been violated and you will need time to heal – physically, emotionally, spiritually.

Remember . . .

that it is important for you to feel safe – to find safe places to be and safe people to be with.

Remember . . .

that you did not have any control over your assault, but you have all the control over your recovery.

Remember . . .

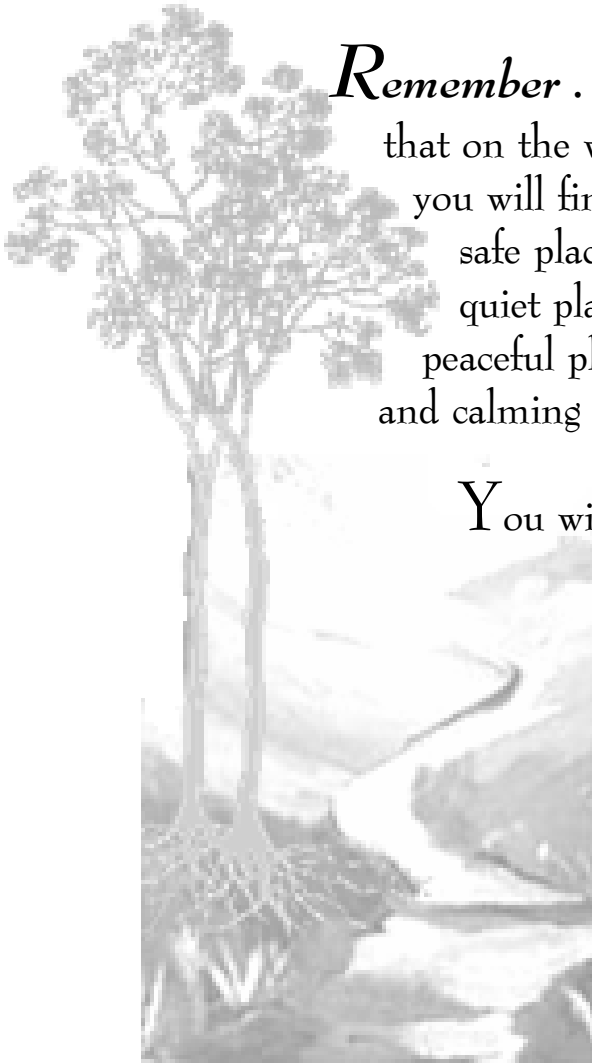
that on the winding pathway of the healing journey you will find many places of rest along the way – safe places for weeping . . . quiet places for thinking . . . peaceful places for restoring your spirit and calming your soul.

You will find good places for learning all about beginning again, and places to gather your courage for the next day's journey.

And one day you'll reach that place where fear transforms into courage, and new hope replaces lost hope!

Where you can finally breathe again . . . a weight is lifted from your shoulders, your steps become lighter, and you realize that

the journey is not so hard anymore. Suddenly you can fly, soaring above all that hurt and pain to a place you cannot begin to imagine, to a place you never thought you would see again, to a place of healing and hope.





HELPFUL RESOURCES

If you are a victim of sexual or domestic violence, child abuse, or any form of violent crime, contact:

Safe Places

501-374-SAFE (7233)

Victims of sexual violence may also contact:

Safe Places Sexual Violence Support Center

Sexual Violence Crisis Line: 501-801-2700

Statewide Toll Free Crisis Line: 1-877-432-5368

You may also contact any of the following resources for assistance:

LOCAL RESOURCES

Little Rock Police Department Victim Services	501-918-3504
North Little Rock Police Department Victim Services	501-771-7117
Dorcas House Domestic Violence Shelter	501-374-4022
Women and Children First Domestic Violence Shelter	501-376-3219
Little Rock Air Force Base Family Advocacy Program	501-988-7377

NATIONAL RESOURCES

National Sexual Assault Hotline	1-800-656-HOPE
National Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-799-SAFE (7233) 1-800-787-3224 (TTY)
Child Abuse Hotline Numbers	
Arkansas Child Abuse Hotline	1-800-482-5964
Childhelp® USA National Child Abuse Hotline	1-800-4-A-CHILD® (1-800-422-4453) TDD: 1-800-2-A-CHILD



A MEDITATION

*I had always reported the “fact” of my assault
with the emotional detachment
and objectivity of a news reporter.
Now my heart would have to speak of its wounds
and my soul of its desolation.*

*I had told my story over and over again, but I had only
reported the facts. I never spoke my feelings. I never
allowed my tears to fall, no tears at all.
Until the day my heart spoke
and my soul poured out its desolation.*

*After so many years, I had finally found the
one person who could hear my story through the ears of the heart. When
I looked into the compassionate eyes of my friend, I knew that for the first
time in my life, I could tell my story with all its buried pain. I knew that
this person would hear my sorrow and bear my tears without running
away.*

*When I had described every wound and every scar, all the pain and the
memory of pain, I was free to live again! I was free to hope again, to trust
one more time. I was free to soar on the wind! Free!*

*Soar on the wind to good and pleasant places. Know the freedom that
comes when your soul finally expresses its desolation. Today, seek out one
person whose heart will gladly hear your story.*

Let your tears fall.

Let your anger rage.

Let the pain go!

Begin again!



Safe Places
Sexual Violence Support Center

1609 Broadway
Little Rock, Arkansas 72206

501-801-2700
Statewide toll free: 1-877-432-5368

www.SafePlacesLR.org

Healing and Hope: An Aftercare Guide for Survivors of Sexual Violence
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