

DEALING WITH BREAKING AND ENTERING

Breaking and entering (B & E) is the most common property crime in Canada today. But victims of a B & E can suffer more than the loss of their property. They may experience strong feelings, such as anger, fear, and a sense of personal violation.

As a victim of a B & E, you may have feelings that are difficult for you to deal with and you may feel confused and frustrated by the police and court system. You may also want to know how to protect your home in the future. This pamphlet will answer some of your questions. It will reassure you that what you are feeling is completely normal and tell you some of the ways you can help yourself cope with this difficult time. It will also tell you where you can get help or more information.

What You May Experience

Shock and Disbelief

You may feel *shock* and *disbelief* that something like this has actually happened to you, that your home has been broken into and your belongings gone through and stolen.

Sense of Violation

Part of the shock of a B & E is the *sense of violation* you may feel. This sense of violation and loss is both financial and emotional. Your privacy and sense of personal security and trust have been taken away from you, as well as your possessions.

Anger and Frustration

Anger at the intruders is a very common feeling. You may feel *frustration* because you are not able to express this anger directly at

those who committed the crime. You may also feel frustrated and angry at the police and the court system, especially if police have not been able to return your property or find the people who did this to you.

Fear

After a B & E, you may *fear* that your home is not a safe place anymore. You may feel uncomfortable being alone at home, or worry when you're not there. Many people fear that their home will be broken into again. This may happen, and asking your local police or Victim Services at the police station about crime prevention can help to lessen the chances of another B & E happening.

Some people fear that they are being singled out, but most of the time the thieves want your possessions and did not break into your home because of who or what you are.

Suspicion

Many victims of B & E find themselves full of *suspicion* about strangers in their neighbourhoods. Police departments encourage citizens to phone the police about suspicious persons or activities.

Stress

After a B & E you may experience a lot of *stress*, and you may develop physical symptoms, such as sleeping or eating difficulties. Anxiety and fear can add to the stress. It can also be stressful dealing with the frustrations and confusions of the police and court system. If you have children, dealing with their feelings can also be stressful.

Guilt

Victims often feel *guilt*, as if there might have been something they could have done to help prevent the B & E. Of course, you are in no way to blame — when someone else breaks the law it is not the victim's fault.

Dealing with Children's Feelings

Remember that children will experience same feelings, but they may be more into and children may have a hard time expressing their feelings in words. Their fear, anxiety anger may be expressed in changes in behaviour. They may have nightmares, or trouble eating or sleeping. They may go back to earlier childhood behaviours, such as bedwetting. Some children might become more aggressive and some might become quiet and withdrawn.

All of these responses are normal reactions to stress. Do not hesitate to see your doctor or counsellor for help in dealing with these feelings, especially if they go on for a long time.

What You Can Do

You have been through an experience that is frightening and disruptive. Remember what you are feeling is perfectly normal and that these feelings will pass in time. Meanwhile, there are some things you can do to make this time easier and to make things better for yourself in the future.

Looking After Yourself

- Dealing with a B & E can be very stressful, so be sure to take care of yourself, both physically and emotionally.
- If you're frightened, get someone to stay at your home with you, or stay at a friend's home with a member of your family.
- Talking about the experience is a very good way to relieve your feelings. Family and friends can be a great support.
- Children will often need special reassurance at this time. They may be frightened and need to know that their home can once again be a safe place. Encourage your children to talk about their feelings.

● For you or your family, signs of stress, such as difficulty sleeping, depression, or anxiety, will fade with time. In the meantime, you may want to see your family physician for advice or referral.

Remember that help is available.

Do not hesitate to ask for it. For more information, contact your local Victim Services or call the Victims Information Line at 1-800-563-0808.

Dealing with the Justice System

After a B & E you will have to deal with the police and you may also have to go to court. The police will ask you questions as part of their investigation. If they find the person who they think is responsible for the crime, you may have to go to court as a witness. This can be a confusing and frightening experience.

There are services to help you, with trained people available to provide you with information, practical help, and emotional support. You may be able to get your property returned or get some compensation from the offender.

Making Your Home More Secure

After a B & E, you may want to know how to prevent this from happening again. Making your home more secure can also help you deal with your feelings of anger, frustration, and fear.

Consider becoming involved in your local Block Watch or Neighbourhood Watch Crime Prevention Program — an excellent way to help safeguard your home. Adding extra outdoor lighting, getting deadbolt locks on doors, and seeing that sliding doors and windows cannot be forced or lifted out of their frames are ways that you can make your home more secure.

For additional copies of this brochure, write to:

Policy and Communications Division
Ministry of Attorney General
Fifth Floor, 910 Government Street
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4
Fax: (604) 356-9037

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