

How to Care for Yourself and Child: A Guide for Parents and Loved Ones of Child Survivors

Learning that your child has been harmed brings about many different emotions and pain, and changes your life forever. It will trigger many reactions that you may struggle to deal with. Notification from the Office of the Victim Advocate that your child's offender is eligible for parole will likely stir up all of those feelings and reactions again. You may feel like you are reliving the trauma of the crime all over again, as it brings about sadness and anger about what happened to your child. Providing input to the Parole Board can also be very emotional and cause fear and anxiety about the outcome.



Your feelings and reactions are normal, such as:

Denial: For some people it takes time to overcome the pain and acknowledge the crime against their child occurred

Shock: Feeling numb and unsure of how to respond

Anger: that the crime happened.

Helplessness: Unsure of what to expect and you may feel out of control.

Guilt/Self Blame: Feeling like it is your fault. Remember the offender is responsible for the crime, not you.

Hurt: Sadness for your child

Anxiety: About how to respond

Betrayal: If a spouse or loved one was the offender or if friends of loved ones were not supportive

Financial concerns: Due to lost income

Fear that offender may try to harm you or your children

How Can I Help My Child Recover?

- Listen to the child's words but do not pry for more information than they may be ready to give.
- Believe your child and support them as they work through their emotions and pain
- Treat your child no differently than before the crime occurred
- Allow your child to express their thoughts and emotions about what happened to them— anger, sadness, anxiety, or positive feelings about the abuser
- Reassure the child that he or she has done nothing wrong

- Point out what your child does right to continue to build confidence
- Encourage the child, saying that he or she did the right thing by telling and that it was brave to tell
- View your child as a survivor
- Take care of yourself and your feelings about your child's abuse
- Refrain from talking with other adults in front of your child about the abuse, your child's case or the abuser
- Seek out counseling. Encourage your child to participate in recommended counseling and participate in your child's treatment
- Believe your child can heal and be happy again
- Be patient with your child and yourself – healing takes time
- Participate in your child's treatment

Taking Care of Yourself and Coping

- Participate in counseling
- Take care of your mind and body – rest, sleep, eat regularly
- Exercise – to combat feelings of sadness, depression, and anxiety
- Spend time with and talk to positive people in your life who support you
- Think about positive times and good memories of your child, they can give you hope
- Recall things that helped you cope in the past

Pennsylvania Resources

PCCD-Victim Compensation Assistance Program

1.800.233.2339

www.pccd.state.pa.us

PA Coalition Against Rape (PCAR)

24-hour hot line: 888.772.PCAR

www.pcar.org

PA Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV)

1.800.932.4632

www.pcadv.org

SAVIN – www.vinelink.com

You may contact OVA at 1.800.563.6399 for local referrals or visit <http://www.ova.state.pa.us>