

# ONE STEP AT A TIME:

## Reshaping life following crime within the family



by Shannon Moroney

This booklet is intended to provide information and ideas for those facing a situation in which they, or someone else in their family, have been hurt by the criminal behaviour of another family member.

Every family is unique. People can react very differently to the experience of being a victim and to the family member who offended against them.

Family-victims face numerous challenges and decisions along their road to recovery, and there is no guidebook to prescribe the exact route to take. What we do know is that information and support are vital. It is hoped that this booklet will be of some assistance in your journey.

## One Step at a Time

### When you are both the Victim of an Offence and the Family Member of the Offender:

Today's statistics show that many victims of crime are family members of the offender. Contrary to what is often presented in the media, "stranger crime" or "random crime" is far less prevalent than crime against family members.

Following the experience of crime, be it against the person or property, victims report feeling a wide range of emotions, including:

- shock
- anger
- sadness
- confusion
- anxiety
- depression
- grief
- stress
- loss of trust
- fear



Recovering from physical and emotional harm caused by criminal behaviour is overwhelming. It is a process that can take a long time.

When crime is perpetrated by a family member, the victim's (or victims') experience may become even more complex.

In addition to the responses listed above, family-victims may feel betrayed and in disbelief, and there is also likely to be tension among family members as different reactions emerge. Some family-victims report feeling guilty and ashamed, and they may even blame themselves at times for what happened. It is an enormous challenge to reshape life following trauma, loss, injury and breach of trust that results from criminal behaviour.

In addition to coping with the loss and injury caused by the offences, family-victims may also suffer what CFCN terms “the collateral consequences of crime”. For example, press coverage of a crime may result in a loss of privacy and stigmatization of the family. This can extend into the workplace for adults and into the school experience for children and youth. As the offending family member moves through the court system, some family-victims may be required to give evidence or even testify, which can intensify feelings of guilt, responsibility and divided loyalties.



Even when family members are not named as victims of the offences, it is still likely that they will experience victimization and similar reactions can result, causing serious short or long-term disruption to their lives. A lack

of services and supports that reach out to them leaves family members feeling forgotten and alone in coping with their losses and navigating the various ‘systems’ that can take control: the Justice and Corrections system, the mental health care system, and others.

Family members may find themselves pressured to polarize their support, either for the offender or for the “direct” victim. Consequently they may find themselves judged, misinterpreted, blamed, pitied, or even treated as “guilty by association”, depending on their decisions.



When a person is sentenced, family members sometimes feel they are being sentenced as well: separation by incarceration can feel like a death in the family. Other family members report feeling angry with the outcome of the sentence, feeling that it is too short or that justice has not been served. Nothing can be done to erase the harm endured: feelings of rage and wanting revenge are normal, but can also be toxic to a person’s well-being in the long-run. In short, the effects of crime ripple through whole families and communities, leaving great confusion and conflict in their wake: How could this happen to me/to us? Why did this happen? Some relationships will survive and strengthen while others will crumble. What once made sense, now does not.

Lengthy and confusing court processes usually add to the stress and strain put upon those affected by the crime, keeping everyone’s lives in limbo.

The outcome of the court case is something everyone is eager to know, but until that day, constant speculation can set people on a roller-coaster of hope and disappointment. If the accused is found not-guilty or not-criminally responsible, some may feel relieved while others feel outraged. Upon conviction and sentencing, people who are relatives or friends of the offender, the victim, or both, will face a number of difficult questions:

- Do I want to stay in contact with the offender?
- What will I tell other people about my relationship?
- How will others react to my decisions?
- How can I get information about my family member in prison?
- What if he or she is released—will I ever feel safe again?
- Can I participate in NPB hearings?\*



For some family-victims, incarceration means the end to family violence. Survivors of domestic abuse may experience immediate relief and welcome feelings of safety, and they may also have many difficult decisions to make in achieving and sustaining their recovery from physical, emotional or sexual abuse. \*\*

(\*For more information on attending National Parole Board hearings, please visit <http://www.npb-cnrc.gc.ca/parole/parole-eng.shtml>

\*\*For more on physical, emotional or sexual abuse, see page 14.)

## What is a FAMILY:

The Correctional Service of Canada defines a family as: “a group of individuals who are related by affection, kinship, dependency or trust.”

With respect to Aboriginal programming and families, “Extended family” includes not only those family relationships that exist by birth but also include significant others who are not related by birth, but are given the title of grandparent, parent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle or other relative.”

## Who is a VICTIM?

According to the Correctional Service of Canada’s “Corrections and Conditional Release Act”, someone is considered a victim of crime if:

- √ They have been harmed or suffered physical or emotional damage as a result of someone committing a criminal offence;
- √ They are a spouse, conjugal partner, relative of, dependent of or are responsible for a victim who has died or is not able to act for himself or herself (e.g., the victim is ill or is a child).

Courtesy: <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/fami/definition-eng.shtml>

**“Crime and prison are not normal,  
but being part of a family is.”**

**Lloyd Withers, CFCN**

## Child Victims

Tragically, many children are victims of crime, relatives of the offender, or both. It is a challenge for the adults who are caring for the child(ren) to know how to help them, what to say to them, and how to look after their needs. This is especially true if the caregiver was also harmed by the crime or its consequences. Traumatized adults need to look after themselves *and* traumatized children: an enormous task. It is vital that children's needs be met and that they receive the support they need to minimize the potential for long-term effects of unresolved trauma. (For more about child victims, see page 10.)

## Recovery is a Journey

Recovering from hurt and harm caused by criminal behaviour is a difficult journey and victims are in need of continuous support at each step of the way. This could be counseling, information, assistance navigating the judicial process, financial aid, and medical attention. It may also mean having the opportunity to address the offender through a victim impact statement. At the crux of all support there should remain a respect for the victim's dignity and ability to make informed choices about their lives. It is a long and difficult journey to recover after the crime of a loved one, a journey for which there is no clear map.



## How can you find help to meet your needs?

There are avenues of support in most communities in Canada, and CFCN maintains a database of agencies across the country (including the Northern regions) that may be able to provide assistance to you and your family members. This could be financial, spiritual, emotional, or logistical (practical) support depending on your needs. Needs may change at different points along your recovery from victimization and through the incarceration or loss of loved one.

In most cases, you will have to explain your situation, circumstances and needs to an intake worker, counselor, or other professional. Not all such people are familiar with the complex needs of family-victims, and you may even find yourself 'educating' others about your experience at the same time as you seek support from them. This can be very exhausting and draining.



If it is too overwhelming for you to make calls and tell your whole story, ask someone you trust to call around on your behalf. This "front person" can ask questions about what kind of service is offered and get a sense of if it is a good match for you or not. Alternatively, you can rehearse a condensed version of your story and what kind of help you are looking for, so that when you call or go for an appointment, you can share just enough to see if you feel comfortable and think the support offered will meet your needs. Ultimately, the choice is yours and you have to feel comfortable. Don't give up if you don't find a match right away: the benefit to finding the right person or people to help you will be worth the effort.

Remember: feeling isolated is a normal reaction, but keeping yourself isolated makes recovery more difficult. Talking, writing, or drawing (particularly good for children) about what happened in a trusting environment can release some of the pain and trauma you are experiencing. Many agencies provide free support, or charge fees according to what you can afford. **You can do it!**

### **The Role of Storytelling in Recovery**

The healing power of telling our stories to a listening and compassionate audience is undisputed in recovery literature and practice. Restorative story-telling gives the victim a voice and a renewed sense of strength and autonomy, and can help him or her regain a sense of “wholeness”.

Story-telling is not the same as “reporting”. The focus of story-telling is on the speaker’s unique experience, thoughts and feelings, as he or she feels comfortable sharing. Reporting is more about relaying information to meet the needs of the listener/inquirer. Constant reporting about the crime(s) that occurred, the status of your offending family member, or the well-being of victims or other family members can be exhausting. It sometimes makes family-victims feel vulnerable as they do not know how the listener will react. The most important thing to remember is that you have a right to your feelings and that you need to work through them in your own time in a way that is healthy and right for you..

While ‘reporting’ cannot usually be completely avoided, try to limit your reporting as you will need energy to face the many demands placed on you during this difficult time. As suggested on pg. 8, try assigning a trusted spokes-person” to provide third parties with information or updates and to filter out the “merely curious” from the genuine caregivers.

## **When a Child is a Victim**

Children, like all victims, were not given a chance to prevent the crimes against them or the effects that crime against another family member has on them. They need to be supported in the quest to gain back options and choices for the rest of their lives, accommodating their experience of victimization, survival and recovery in a meaningful way.

One example of child victimization by a family member is family homicide, particularly parent-to-parent homicide. In tragic situations such as these, children effectively lose both of their parents: one is murdered, the other faces long-term incarceration or mental health institutionalization. Children in these situations are usually put in the care of a maternal aunt or grandparents, but they may also go to the care of another family member or a foster family.

Child victims, including those harmed by the criminal behaviour of their parents, need consistent love and care from trustworthy and reliable adults.

Children & youth also need information and options in a manner consistent with their growth and evolving maturity.

All too often, siblings are separated and each experiences multiple changes of caregiver before more permanent arrangements are made. This instability can delay or impede recovery.

In these cases of family homicide, and in many other criminal cases (like incest or abuse), children have many decisions made for them.

# Children of Incarcerated Parents:

## A Bill of Rights

*By Gretchen Newby & Nell Bernstein*

### I Have the Right...

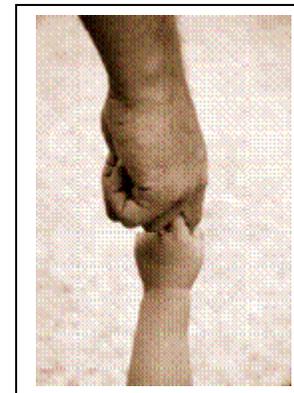
- ✓ to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest.
- ✓ to be heard when decisions are made about my parents.
- ✓ to be well cared for in my parent's absence.
- ✓ to speak with, see and touch my parent.
- ✓ to support as I face my parent's incarceration.
- ✓ not to be judged, blamed or labeled because my parent is incarcerated.
- ✓ to a lifelong relationship with my parent.

*Reprinted with permission from the authors.*

However, a decision that made sense when the child was younger may begin to come into question as the child gets older. For example, a caregiver may have decided that the children will not visit their parent in prison, but as the children get older and become adults, they may feel a need to investigate possibilities for visiting, reconciliation or restorative justice.

Youth and adults who were children at the time of the offences or legal proceedings may decide that they want their voices to be heard in parole board hearings, especially if they were not able to make victim impact statements at the time of the sentencing.

To recover from trauma, crime and loss, children need the care of reliable and supportive adults who will consistently tell them:



**“What happened is not your fault”**

**“I love you. We will get through this together.”**

**“You can talk to me about anything, anytime.”**

Children also need their caregivers to help them return to a routine quickly. This helps them to regain a sense of order and stability. Having a set bedtime,

a story hour, and keeping up attendance at school or daycare are essential during and following the crisis of crime.

Children also need to make sense of their experience and to express their thoughts and feelings about what happened to them. For young children as well as adolescents, drawing, painting, or creating other artwork can help them express themselves if they are not able to talk about their feelings. If you are a caregiver, be pro-active in helping children and teens: create time and space where they can open up. Silence, or what may appear as 'normal play' does not mean that children are 'fine'—there can be a lot going on under the surface.

If children have to testify in court, it is recommended that they be put in touch with a victim-witness assistance program that is specialized to children's needs. Courtrooms are intimidating places for most people, especially children, but there are many services that can help. Contact your local police station or CFCN for a referral.

For a list of recommended readings for caregivers, children and youth, please turn to page 34.

Children may not know or understand what prison is, but they may have images from the media. Some adults may choose not to tell children about the incarceration of a family member, but if children are not given an answer or a plausible explanation for the person's absence, they may create their own explanation to fill the void. CFCN advises that children are smart: while they can be convinced that the incarcerated parent or family member is in the hospital, away working or on vacation, the child may become mistrustful & confused by the discrepancy between what they are told and what they experience. Consider that it may be better for a child to find out that a family member is in prison from a caregiver rather than in the school yard or in the media. Talk with your family, a social worker or school counsellor to decide how and what to tell children.

## Hurt in the Home: Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can happen in any family. Victims, who may be children, teenagers, spouses or intimate partners, other adults in the home (including the elderly), and even pets, are never responsible for the violence that occurs.

Violence includes abuse of all kinds that is an attempt to hurt, intimidate, humiliate or control others. Some examples are:

- Threatening to hurt or kill someone
- Threatening suicide
- Destruction of property
- Stealing
- Financial control or exploitation
- Insults and verbal degradation
- Physical assault
- Unwanted sexual contact
- Sexual assault and rape

Many types of domestic violence are criminal, and all are harmful. Domestic violence can escalate over time and lead to fatalities.

Victims, including children, experience a range of emotions and responses to experiencing or witnessing domestic violence that can include all those listed on pages 2 and 3, as well as: shame, isolation, powerlessness, self-blame, and betrayal.

Left unaddressed, these emotions and responses can lead to loss of self-confidence, depression, poor self-esteem, withdrawal from others, and sleeping and eating problems. These, as well as physical injuries like bruises, broken bones and

bleeding, can all lead to poor performance or absence from school and work. Sexual abuse can result in pregnancy or transmittal of disease. Such results can easily spiral into long-term problems and create cycles of victimization and violence.

Some people, especially children, may act out with aggression. Others internalize their pain. Some try to cope by using alcohol or drugs, which only inhibit healing processes. Seeking help and re-gaining safety are vital, but not always easy. It takes strength to come forward and ask for help.

Being hurt by a family member—someone with whom you are supposed to hold a relationship of care and trust—is devastating. Victims often feel conflicted and afraid that if they take action, they could be putting themselves (and possibly other family members) in danger by angering their abuser. Calling the police and charging a family member may mark the beginning of a long and stressful court process, but it can also mark the beginning of safety and recovery for victims. In a situation whereby the person who has caused the harm takes responsibility, it is also possible that treatment for him or her and restitution/reconciliation with the victim(s) may begin.

Sources: Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General, BC,  
document PSSG0700—March 2007

There is a great deal of information available to help victims of domestic violence make informed choices. ☞

If you have questions about what these choices are, how to make a safety plan, or if you are in need of a shelter, call your local helpline. In an emergency, call 911.

You can also search the Internet, and many sites, such as [www.shelternet.ca](http://www.shelternet.ca) have information in multiple languages and show you how to delete your computer's history if you do not want another user to know what you have been searching.

Don't wait for things to get worse before you seek help. Prevention and early intervention are vital to ending violence and saving lives.



**Suggested websites:**

[www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org)  
[www.SafeCanada.ca](http://www.SafeCanada.ca)  
[www.childabuseprevention.ca](http://www.childabuseprevention.ca)  
[www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org)

## Wheel of Self-Care: A pullout activity sheet

### Instructions

This is a pullout activity sheet. If you have not already done so, pull out this page from the centre staples and begin reading about the Wheel of Self-Care on page 20. Then come back to this page and follow the instructions below.

1. Imagine that the centre of the circle is '0'. Imagine that the end of each line that touches the circle is '10'.
2. In each category, rate between '0' and '10' the level of satisfaction, peace or contentedness you are experiencing in that area of life. Using a pencil, pen or marker, place a dot that shows your rating for each category. For example, if you are experiencing a great deal of financial stress and choose a '2', then place a dot very close to the centre of the circle in the Work and Money category.
3. Once you have put a dot in each category, connect the dots.
4. Reflect: How bumpy or smooth is your life? What category needs the most attention to improve the balance of the wheel?

You may find it helpful to re-draw or photocopy this wheel onto larger paper.

Using this tool may help you identify your priorities and needs as you face the many challenges of coping with your experience as a family-victim. Re-do, change and add to your "wheel" as you wish: needs and priorities can change over time.

Adapted with permission from: *Youth S.T.A.R. – When Violence and Trauma Impact Youth, Facilitator's Training Manual*. By V. Hart (Harrisonburgh, VA: Eastern Mennonite University, 2007, p. 66.

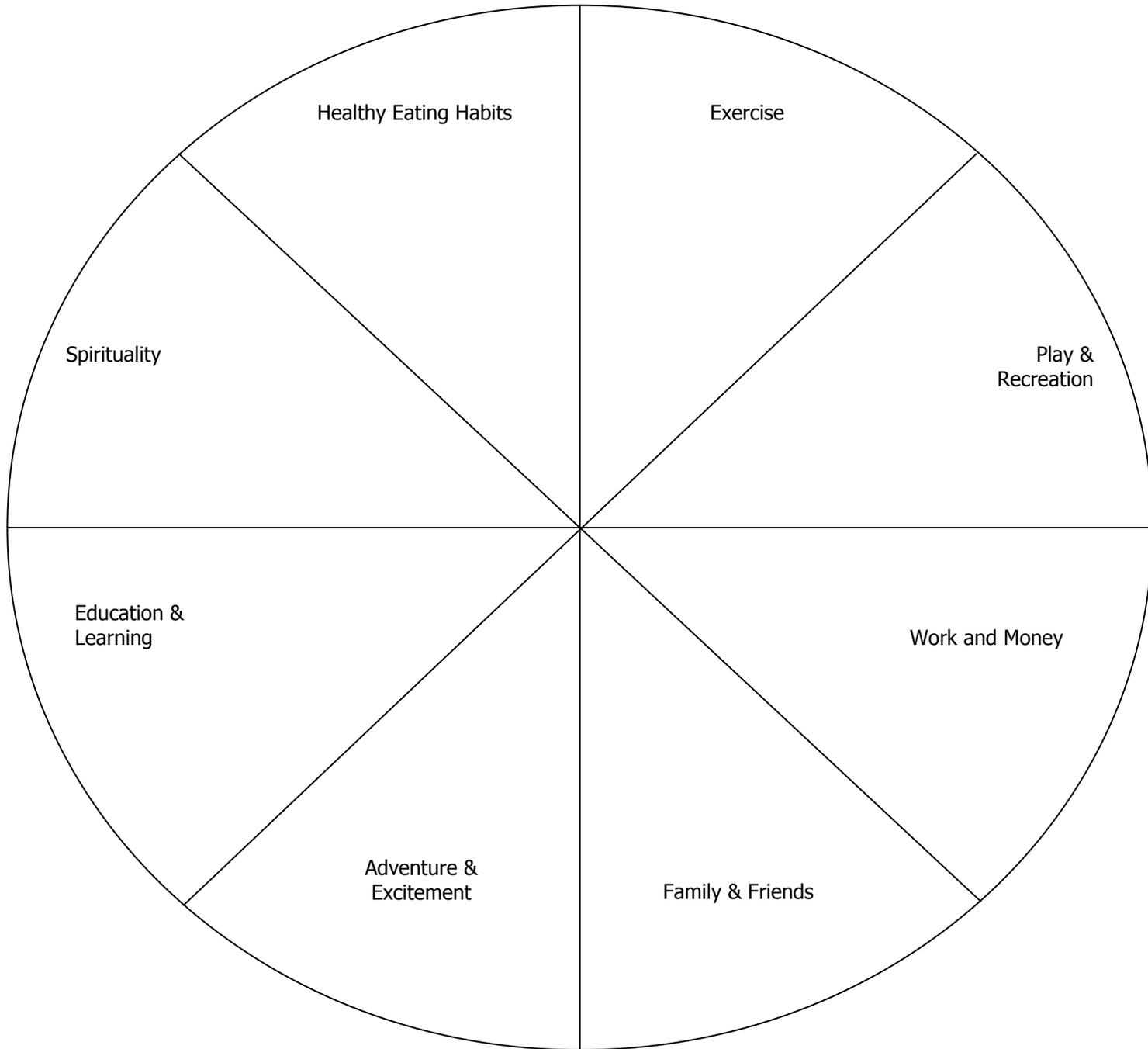
### **As a Family-Victim, what are your needs?**

#### **Wheel of Self-Care: A pull-out activity sheet**

Being a victim of the crime of a family member can destabilize your world and fracture many aspects of your life, from your health, your personal relationships, your self-concept, to your 'status' in society. It can be hard to identify what steps you need to take toward recovery, especially if you experienced or witnessed trauma. Trauma and violence leave us in a state of shock and disorganization. We need help and support to regain a sense of order and control. It can be a long process: "one step at a time" often becomes the mantra.

By yourself or with a support person, try completing the "Wheel of Self-Care" on the centre page of this booklet. Pull out the page from the centre staples. This way you can also photocopy it for yourself or others. It may help you to identify your needs and set some priorities. Once you know for yourself what your needs are, it may be easier to search for appropriate support and resources.

Now, just follow the instructions ....



## VICTIM'S BILL OF RIGHTS

An Act Respecting Victims of Crime - Victims' Bill of Rights, was proclaimed as law on June 11, 1996. The Act supports and recognizes the needs and rights of victims of crime in both the criminal and civil justice system.

These principles specify how victims should be treated by justice system officials at different stages of the criminal justice process. The statement of principles requires that victims:

- be treated with courtesy, compassion and respect for their personal dignity and privacy;
- have access to information concerning services and remedies available to victims;
- have access to information about the progress of criminal investigations and prosecutions and the sentencing and interim release of offenders from custody;
- be given the opportunity to be interviewed by police officers and officials of the same gender as the victim, when that victim has been sexually assaulted;
- be entitled to have their property returned as promptly as possible by justice system officials, where the property is no longer needed for the purposes of the justice system (for example, to carry out an investigation, trial or appeal);
- have access to information about the conditional release of offenders from custody, including release on parole, temporary absence, or escape from custody;
- have access to information about plea and pre-trial arrangements and their role in the prosecution.

(<http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/about/vw/vicrights.asp>)

## Incarceration of a Family Member due to a Domestic Violence Conviction

Incarceration of an abusive family member can offer victims safety and relief from violence. It may be a welcome chance to start life over free from continued hurt, betrayal and injury.

Family members who are victims, witnesses or otherwise affected by the criminal behaviour may also feel:

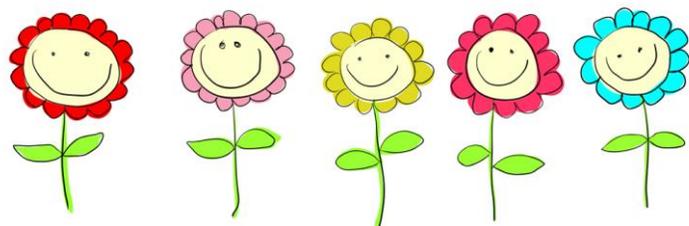
- ♦ Anger (toward the offending family member and/or toward the justice system for imposing a sentence that is thought to be either too light or too harsh)
- ♦ Fear (about the offender's future release)
- ♦ Shame (at having a family member in prison /at being a victim)
- ♦ Sadness (at the loss of the good times shared together or dreams for the future)
- ♦ Stress and worry
- ♦ Financial difficulty
- ♦ Medical/injury related pain or need for care
- ♦ Uncertainty about continuing the relationship with the incarcerated person
- ♦ Intimidated by the realities of visiting in a prison setting
- ♦ Hope that their family member will change.

Some types of domestic abuse continue, or even begin, during incarceration. Insults, manipulation or threats can continue by phone or in personal visits. Family members who visit and/or correspond with their family member 'inside' may be asked by him or her to provide money or contraband.

Such requests frequently evoke fear and conflict for the family member on the 'outside', who is put in a stressful and difficult position. Neither is fair, and both are dangerous: they can perpetuate relationships of extortion and can result in a loss of visiting privileges or even criminal charges. One parent or family member in prison is already too many.

They may be being asked to support a person's addiction or to protect their loved one from harm by other inmates. A family member may feel conflicted about "reporting" problems to Correctional staff at the prison. On one hand, he or she may feel it is morally the 'right thing to do', but also be concerned that their family member will be punished, that visiting privileges will be lost, that their family member will be hurt by other inmates, or that their family member will be very angry as a result.

It is recommended that professional advice and support is sought to help make the right decisions if abuse or extortion is taking place in visits or correspondence. The primary goal is health and safety for all, and an end to victimization.



## The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) operates a national Victim Services ...



**For links to Victim Services in your area, visit:**  
**[www.csc-scc.gc.ca/victims-victimes](http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/victims-victimes)**  
**[www.victimfirst.gc.ca](http://www.victimfirst.gc.ca)**

**Victim-witness assistance programs (VWAP) are available in all provinces and territories and have toll-free phone numbers.**

**In an emergency, call 911**

## **When a family member is a victim: An interview with David Molzahn and Christina Guest of CSC Victim Services.**

This is an excerpt from the full article by Lloyd Withers which appeared in the Spring 2008 issue of the CFCN newsletter, available at: <http://www.cfcn-rcafd.org/>

'Stranger' crime happens, but it is the family home that may be the most dangerous place to be. Murder, rape, domestic violence, child abuse, incest, robbery - the list in which one family member, or someone who was previously in a relationship with the offender, is the victim. The list probably includes every crime.

The Canadian Families and Corrections Network knows from its work with families that the offender is much closer to home than anyone likes to talk about. The CFCN also takes a wider view, that even if a family member is not the victim of the offence, the family is still harmed by the criminal behavior of the offender and its consequences on the family.

The CFCN was very interested with the start-up of the Correctional Service of Canada's Victim Services and about what services could they offer to families. David Molzahn and Christina Guest, who work with Victim Services for the Correctional Service of Canada, agreed to discuss this topic.

**CFCN:** There's a lot of concern and discussion about 'stranger' crime, but perhaps not as much discussion about crime happening with a family relationship. What do you think that's about?

**DM:** I have some personal theories on why that is. It's easier to think about people and offering services to them when there is a separation between the victim

and the offender. When there is not, it becomes much more complex emotionally, psychologically, spiritually. Within the correctional system, there are some challenges from an operational perspective where staff deal with the offenders in the institutions and hear, for example, that the victim is a spouse. On top of that, the family member would like to continue the relationship. It's difficult for some folks to comprehend. Not difficult, of course, in the community where you see that kind of thing happening all the time, but operationally staff wrestle with that a bit more. I think that this is a growing edge for us in Victim Services of the Correctional Service of Canada – to become clear about who the victims are and who the registered victims are. In many serious crimes, the crime occurs within the context of the family and we haven't been able to talk about that as clearly as we need to. I think some of the work that the CFCN is doing is helping us ask those questions.

**CFCN:** Could you tell us about when, how and why Victim Services was started?

**CG:** In 1992 the law (the Corrections and Conditional Release Act) was changed to include an obligation on the part of the government of Canada to provide information to victims of federal offenders. A process was set up by which the Correctional Service of Canada could provide information to registered victims - victims who requested to receive that information about the offender who had harmed them.

**CFCN:** If a family member registered with CSC Victim Services, what kind of information can you provide?

**CG:** There are two categories. One is the information that CSC must disclose to registered victims: the offender's name, the offence for which the person was convicted, the court that convicted them, the date when the sentence began, and then the dates when the person will become eligible for temporary absences and parole. The second category is discretionary information that may be disclosed based on the balance of the offender's rights and the victim's rights. The victim may be told the offender's age, the location of the penitentiary, the date that the offender is to be released for various reasons, times of hearings, conditions that are attached to the offender's release, the destination of the offender when released and whether the offender is in custody, and if not in custody, the reason.



David Molzahn and Christina Guest.

What victims often are interested in is finding out when the person might be allowed out of the institution, for example to do a work program, an educational program, mental health program. We are obliged to tell the victim the date that the person is being escorted outside the penitentiary. This can be reassuring to the victim or the victim's family members to know, to be kept in the loop, that when they don't hear anything, the offender is inside the penitentiary.

Registered victims can have access to sentencing information such as the parole eligibility date, the end date of the sentence – anything that might affect the victim in terms of the person's release. If they are interested, they can inform the National Parole Board about their feelings about the person's potential release in the form of a Victim Impact Statement when the offender goes before the Board for a decision.

**CFCN:** In the CFCN's work, some family members who are victims end the family relationship. Others continue the relationship. There is conflict inside the family because one family member wants to support the offender, while another family member doesn't want to have anything to do with the offender. What have you found so far inside Victim Services around that?

**CG:** Clearly there's that mix. One of the things that is important for family members to know is that in cases where children have been harmed a family member can register on behalf of the child. It's clearly stated in the legislation who can serve as an 'agent' of the actual victim if the victim is incapacitated, under age or unwilling to deal directly with the Correctional Service.

**CFCN:** A grandmother, an aunt?

**CG:** A grandmother, an aunt, a stepmother, and as you said, a number of families fall apart. For example, if a child was the victim and the mother has divorced the offender, the mother can register as a victim and can also register as the agent for the children. She could qualify under both those categories.

Victim Services is not there to judge the relationship that they choose to maintain or not with the offender. The services are available to those who qualify as victims.

**CFCN:** If there was one thing that you would want family members who are victims to know, what would it be?

**CG:** Call. Check out the services that are available. I would want them to know that the Correctional Service, although it has the mandate to manage the sentences of offenders, also has the mandate, equally valid and important, to assist people who have been victims. We have a role in helping them to live in the aftermath of the crime, to give them options and freedom, as well as access to CSC's victim services and the National Parole Board's services, to help them take charge of their lives in whatever way they choose to do that.

**CFCN:** So that whatever happened doesn't have to control their lives any further.

**CG:** There may have been a horrible time in their lives, but there are resources to help people work through and get beyond it.

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## Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice is becoming more and more recognized in Canada as a community-based approach to justice which focuses on addressing the harm caused by criminal behaviour. It is not new: it stems from ancient roots in the First Nations of North America and New Zealand. The need for such an approach to be revitalized is being seen globally.

Leading expert Howard Zehr describes Restorative Justice as a process of thought, action and collaboration that is primarily concerned with answering and addressing three questions:

1. Who has been harmed?
2. What are their needs?
3. Whose responsibility is it to address their needs?

These questions are in contrast to the criminal justice system, which focuses primarily on

1. What laws have been broken?
2. Who did it?
3. What do they deserve?

*(Zehr, The Little Book of Restorative Justice, 2002:21) \*see reading list for details*

Essentially, Restorative Justice aims to restore the balance, trust and relationships that were violated by crime. To accomplish this usually involves participation by victims, offenders, family members, police, counselors, social workers and possibly justice officials.

When a severe wrong has been committed, such as murder, and there is no possibility of righting that wrong directly, symbolic steps which include acknowledgement

of responsibility to the victims by the offenders can assist victims in their process of reshaping their lives after suffering crime. It remains the primary obligation of the offender to put things right, but the community may also have responsibilities to support both the victims' and the offender's processes, as well as recognizing and working to change the socio-economic situations that may be causing or supporting crime (Zehr, 2008).

Restorative Justice processes, which can include writing letters, engaging in mediated dialogue, and developing a plan to repair damage, normally follow a pace determined by victims. Restorative Justice recognizes that at the heart of all crime is the breaking of trust in human relationships. It takes time and willingness by all parties to rebuild trust.

CFCN suggests that Restorative Justice processes also need to address prevention of re-offence and re-victimization. "How can we make sure this doesn't happen again?" is a question that needs to be addressed within the RJ process. Creating support and safety plans over the long-term are necessary for victims, offenders, families and communities.

In Canada, Restorative Justice programs and services are emerging both within the government and the non-profit sector.

**For information on how or if restorative justice can assist you and your family members recover from victimization, please visit the websites listed below or call CFCN for a referral to resources in your area.**

[www.cjiwr.com](http://www.cjiwr.com)

[www.restorative-justice.com](http://www.restorative-justice.com)

[www.restorativejustice.org](http://www.restorativejustice.org)

[www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/rj/](http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/rj/)

## **RECOMMENDED READING:**

### **On Restorative Justice:**

*The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, by Howard Zehr (Pennsylvania: Good Books, 2002).

*Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice*, by Howard Zehr, (Waterloo: Herald Press, 2005).

*Restorative Justice*, by Marian Liebmann, (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007).

*Family Group Conferences: A hopeful approach when youth cause harm*, by Allan MacRae and Howard Zehr, (Pennsylvania: Good Books, 2004).

### **On Facing the Incarceration of a Family Member:**

*Family Arrested: How to Survive the Incarceration of a Loved One*, by Ann Edenfield, (New Mexico: Americana Publishing Inc., 2002).

*Time's Up: A reintegration toolkit for families*, by Lloyd Withers, Marg Holland and Elizabeth Martin (Kingston: CFCN, 2005).

### **On Domestic Violence:**

*The Domestic Violence Sourcebook*, by Dawn Dawn Bradley Berry, (McGraw-Hill Publishers, 2000).

*Understanding Abuse, Partnering for Change*, Edited by Mary Lou Stirling, Catherine Ann Cameron, and Nancy Nason-Clark, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

*Preventing Family Violence*, by Kevin Browne, (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd., 1997).

*Also see websites listed on page 16 for more recommendations.*

## RECOMMENDED READING:

### Writing by Victims of Crime:

*Forgiving the Dead Man Walking: Only One Woman Can Tell the Entire Story*, by Debbie Morris, (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 2000).

*Walking After Midnight: One Woman's Journey Through Murder, Justice and Forgiveness*, by Katy Hutchison, (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2006).

*Transcending: Reflections of Crime Victims*, portraits and Interviews by Howard Zehr, (Pennsylvania: Good Books, 2001).

### Writing by Incarcerated People/Released Offenders:

*Doing Life: Reflections of Men and Women Serving Life Sentences*, portraits and interviews by Howard Zehr, (Pennsylvania: Good Books, 1996).

*Three Paths to Healing: First person accounts from three men who have sexually offended*, Forward by Mark Yantzi, (Kitchener, ON: Community Justice Initiatives, 2002).

*Finding Freedom: Writings from Death Row*, by Jay Jarvis Masters, (San Francisco: Padma Publishers, 1998).

### Writing for Incarcerated People:

*The Little Book of Restorative Justice for People in Prison: Rebuilding the Web of Relationships*, by Barb Toews (Pennsylvania: Good Books, 2006).

*Sexual Offending and Restoration*, by Mark Yantzi, (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1998).

## RECOMMENDED READING: CHILD VICTIMS

### For Caregivers:

*When Father Kills Mother: Guiding Children Through Trauma and Grief*, by Dora Black, J. Harris-Hendricks and T. Kaplan, (London: Routledge, 2nd Ed. 2000).

"Children Traumatized by Witnessing Acts of Personal Violence: Homicide, Rape, or Suicide Behavior", by Spencer Eth and Robert Pynoos, in *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Children* (Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1985)

*All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated*, by Nell Bernstein (New York: The New Press, 2005).

*The Scared Child: Helping Kids Overcome Traumatic Events*, by B. Brooks and P. Siegel, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1996).

*Breaking the Silence: A Guide to Helping Children with Complicated Grief—Suicide, Homicide, AIDS, Violence and Abuse*, by L. Goldman (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2001).

### For Children and Youth:

*My Daddy is in Jail*, by J. Bender, (Youthlight, Inc., 2003).

*Visiting Day*, by Jacquelin Woodson (New York: Scholastic, 2002).

*What is Jail, Mommy?*, by J. Stanelin, (Lifevest Publishing Inc., 2006).

*While We're Apart*, by Carole Gesme (Minneapolis: Pine Tree Press, 2001).

*Help for Kids*, by Carole Gesme (Minneapolis: Pine Tree Press, 1993).

## For the Parents of One Who Has Committed a Crime

By John O' Donohue, Irish Poet

No one else can see beauty  
In his darkened life now.  
His image has closed  
Like a shadow.

When people look at him,  
He has become the mirror  
Of the damage he had done.

But he is yours;  
And you have different eyes  
That hold his yesterdays  
In pictures no one else remembers:

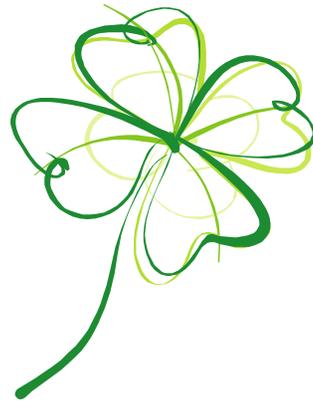
Waiting for him to be born,  
Not knowing who he would be,  
The moments of his childhood,  
First steps, first words,  
Smiles and cries,  
And all the big thresholds  
Of his journey since...

He is yours in a way  
No words could ever tell;  
And you can see through  
The stranger this deed had made him  
And still find the countenance of your son.

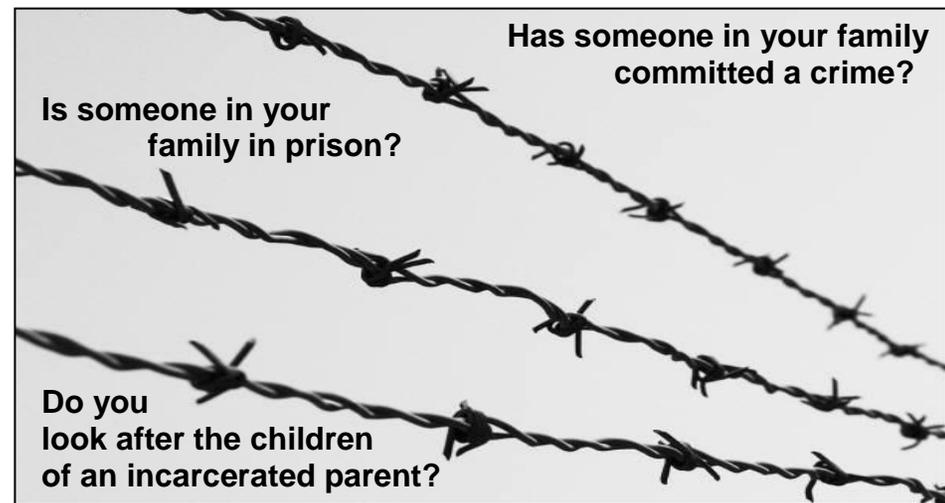
Despite all the disappointment and shame,  
May you find in your belonging with him  
A kind place, where your spirit will find rest.  
May new words come alive between you  
To build small bridges of understanding.

May that serenity lead you beyond guilt and  
blame  
To find that bright field of the heart  
Where he can come to feel your love

Until it heals whatever darkness drove him  
And he can see what it is he has done  
And seek forgiveness and bring healing;  
May this dark door open a path  
That brightens constantly with new promise.



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Has someone in your family  
committed a crime?

Is someone in your  
family in prison?

Do you  
look after the children  
of an incarcerated parent?

If you answered "yes", you may be on a difficult journey  
that feels like an emotional roller-coaster.  
It can be hard to find answers and support.

### Canadian Families and Corrections Network

is a nationally incorporated Canadian charity  
offering support and information to families  
affected by criminal behavior.

**Please visit [www.cfcn-rcafd.org](http://www.cfcn-rcafd.org)  
or call (toll-free) 1-888-371-2326**

"Building stronger and safer  
communities by assisting  
families affected by criminal  
behavior, incarceration and  
community reintegration."



"Contribuer à bâtir des milieux de  
vie plus stables et plus sûrs, en  
offrant un soutien aux familles qui  
doivent composer avec le  
comportement criminel, l'incarcération  
et la réinsertion sociale."

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