

COPING AFTER A ROBBERY

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A robbery may stir up many thoughts and feelings. The traumatic event can affect the psychological functioning and coping ability of victims. Sometimes, you may not be aware you are impacted because trauma symptoms may surface days, weeks, or months after the event.

Initially, you may experience any or all of the feelings of:

- Shock
- Disbelief
- Denial
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Helplessness
- Hopelessness
- Guilt
- Feeling the experience is surreal
- Agitation
- Panic

Afterwards you may feel:

- Sadness
- Grief
- Overwhelmed
- Confusion
- Despair
- A sense of unfairness
- Anger
- Fear
- Helplessness
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Depression
- Numbness
- Outrage
- Alone
- Vulnerable

These feelings are a normal response to a frightening event. It is important to allow yourself to feel your emotions. Be aware that you can cycle through different feelings. Sometimes these cycles might take minutes, or they can take hours, days, or weeks. Other people may be “stuck” in one or more of the same feelings. It’s also possible that certain employees might not have any reactions.

Traumatic events can layer on your psyche. If you’ve experienced robberies or other traumas in your life, those memories, feelings, and symptoms may resurface, so you’re emotionally hit with a doubly whammy.

It’s important to remember that everyone responds differently to a traumatic event based on each individual’s coping ability, values, life experiences, personality, support systems, fears, expectations, and beliefs. You and other employees may experience the same feelings at the same times, or your feelings may be different from others you know who suffered through the robbery.

Reactions to extreme stress or post-traumatic stress:

- Difficulty with focusing and concentrating
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Sleeping too much
- Not eating OR overeating
- Emotional and/or physical fatigue
- Irritability
- Tearfulness
- Hopelessness
- Jittery
- Headaches
- Diarrhea
- Feeling lost
- Overwhelmed
- Weight loss OR gain
- Numbness
- Overly critical
- Forgetful

- Making “stupid” mistakes
- Shorter attention span
- Flashbacks
- Overly sensitive
- Denial
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Intrusive thoughts
- Muscle tension
- Feeling unsafe or vulnerable
- Mood swings
- Changes in sexual functioning
- Increased Blood Pressure
- Feeling uncoordinated
- Depression
- Heartburn
- Helplessness
- Tremors
- Difficulty making decisions
- Worry about others
- Difficulty in solving problems
- Profiling people/customers who look/dress similar to the robbers
- Hyper-alertness

You may experience these reactions immediately after an event, or days, weeks, or even months later. The symptoms may last for a few days, a few weeks, or even longer. The reactions and feelings of trauma may come in waves; reminders can trigger a new wave. Each day doesn't get progressively better. You can have a good day, then a bad day.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

- Give yourself time to recover.
- Don't dwell on what might have happened, i.e., “I might have been killed.” This will only traumatize you further.
- Remember that your traumatic stress symptoms are normal and will diminish with time.
- Make sure to get enough sleep. Take naps if necessary.
- Eat regular, healthy meals, even if you don't feel hungry.
- Exercise regularly, at least 20 minutes of cardio-vascular activity every day. Take a brisk walk, jog, play basketball, swim, bicycle, or dance. This will help discharge pent-up feelings and stress, leaving you feeling calmer.
- Allow time to be alone or to be with others as you need it. But don't isolate yourself.
- Avoid the use of drugs or alcohol to numb the pain or help you cope. It will only prolong or complicate your recovery.
- Maintain your basic routine, but allow yourself to take a break or relax when needed.
- Avoid excess caffeine.
- Do things you enjoy.
- Talk with people you trust.
- Set boundaries with others when you don't feel like talking.
- Journal your thoughts and feelings, especially if you're emotional, having trouble sleeping, or wake from disturbing dreams.
- Ask for help if you need it.
- Be kind to yourself, both mentally and physically.
- Communicate your feelings clearly.
- Take Omega Three Oils, such as Salmon Oil capsules, to help heal your brain.

Seek professional assistance if:

- You feel you need or want it.
- Disturbing behaviors or emotions last more than four to six weeks.
- Disturbing behaviors or emotions make it difficult to function normally, whether at work, school, or in family life.
- You are concerned about your behaviors or emotions.

