

Recovering from the Trauma of a Burglary

We are slowly and cautiously emerging from the prolonged and devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of us may be experiencing a sense of safety, connection, and joy once again and the recent burglaries have disrupted our community. The feelings of vulnerability and fear associated with and around COVID-19 may resurface and be more pronounced due to the recent house break-ins. Please contact the Department of Social Services at Newton City Hall if you would like more information on support services available (617-796-1420).

- Those who have been burglarized find that the **emotional damage can be much more devastating than losing material possessions.**
- After a burglary, it's **normal** to experience a variety of emotions, including a feeling of being **violated, helplessness, anger, sadness, and fear.**
- The key to healing after a break-in, experts say, is to **let these emotions run their course.**
- People who've been burglarized used to believe that their home was the last safe place, but that security has been breached and they feel **violated.**
- It's not uncommon for burglary victims to feel unsafe and have **trouble sleeping.**
- For some people, *sleeplessness can last a couple of weeks, while others will remain extremely vigilant and easily startled out of slumber for many months afterward.*
- Whatever you do after a burglary, **never minimize your feelings.** "People may say to you, 'Thank goodness you weren't home.' Although it is fortunate you weren't harmed, it doesn't mean you shouldn't feel anything," Framer said. "**You've been intruded upon and it's OK to feel badly.**"
- Instead of wringing your hands, the best approach is to take **preventive action.** "**Be aware and informed and educate yourself because that is likely to give you some control and power back,**" Framer said.
- Every possible **precaution you can take is positive because it gives you a feeling of empowerment,**" Stark said, "Just don't go overboard and barricade yourself in your home."

Explaining a Break-In to Your Children

Be very sensitive to your children's reaction to the burglary "It's best to let them ask you questions about what happened. Even if they ask the same question over and over, **let them talk about what happened as much as possible,**" she says. "This is their way of coming to terms with what happened."

Many kids will have difficulty sleeping after a burglary. "This is perfectly normal and will pass," Stark said. "They may need to sleep with you for a few nights until they feel comfortable again, and that's OK."

"Kids get their cues from you. When they see you go into recovery, they will too," she says. "If you need to talk to someone about how upset you are over the burglary, talk to another adult, not your children."

When to Seek Help

If your life is already chaotic or the burglars vandalized your home, you may be having a difficult time coping. It might be a good idea to consider getting professional help if you answer yes to two or more of the following question:

- Do you have chronic insomnia since the incident?
- Have you lost your appetite, and do you find it difficult to eat?
- Is it getting harder to perform daily functions?
- Are you often agitated or anxious?
- Do you have recurring nightmares?
- Have you turned to alcohol or drugs for comfort?
- Are you too frightened to leave the house?

Davis, Julie B. "Burglary Can Leave Emotional Scars: Anger, Fear May Be More Damaging Than Material Loss." *Los Angeles Times*, January 2018.