

AFTER THE SHOOTING: ALEX'S STORY

Alex was shot three times while playing basketball in the park. Two other people were also hit and the shooter was never identified. Alex survived the event and began physical therapy to recover from his injuries.

At first, Alex felt lucky he survived and focused on his physical healing, but after a couple weeks, things changed. At night, he dreamt about the shooting and during the day he avoided that area of the neighborhood. He stopped visiting his grandmother because she lived on the other side of the park. He didn't feel like playing basketball with his friends anymore either. His cousin suggested he join a support group for survivors of community violence but he was doubtful. Alex thought about getting a gun to feel safer.

One day, he heard a loud noise from a passing car and dropped to the ground. He felt like he was back in the moment of the shooting, reliving it.

Alex decided to give the support group a chance. At the first meeting he did not speak at all, but listened to others share their stories. He was surprised to see that there were other people going through similar things and eventually began talking about his own experience. Alex continued attending meetings and slowly began healing from his trauma.

WHO WE ARE

The **Save Our Streets** (S.O.S.) program works to reduce shootings and killings in Brooklyn. We use a public health approach that capitalizes on the credibility of local residents who have been on both sides of a gun and work to change the thinking and behavior of people who might be involved in a violent incident.

Make It Happen is a program for young men of color who have experienced community violence and aims to provide participants with the necessary tools to overcome trauma and reach their goals.

Both programs are part of the **Crown Heights Community Mediation Center**, a community based project that works to make the neighborhood safer and healthier for everyone. For more information, please contact us.

256 Kingston Ave
Brooklyn, NY 11213
Phone: 718-773-6886
crownheights.org
soscrownheights.org

Adapted from resources provided by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2013), the Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy web-based learning course (2005) and the National Institute of Mental Health, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.

CROWN HEIGHTS
COMMUNITY MEDIATION CENTER

SHOT, STABBED OR ROBBED?

Information to help yourself
or someone you know
after a violent event

CROWN
HEIGHTS
COMMUNITY
MEDIATION
CENTER

SAVE OUR STREETS
S.O.S.
CROWN HEIGHTS

MAKE
IT HAPPEN

"Not everything that is
faced can be changed,
but nothing can be
changed until it is faced."

— James Baldwin

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE DOESN'T HAVE TO DOMINATE YOUR LIFE

Some people who experience violence go into “survival mode,” feeling worried and ready to fight or run at all times. Trauma can affect your mood, view of the world, and sense of control. If you find yourself feeling this way, know that you are not alone and that it can get better.

No one deserves to go through life in constant survival mode. There are ways to help you process traumatic events and move forward.

Witnessing or experiencing beatings or shootings, seeing bullet holes and police tape: these are examples of violence that no one should be exposed to, but sadly, for so many of us, these are frequent experiences

and can seem “normal.” In some communities, violence becomes the norm and we become used to the trauma, not realizing something is wrong. While community violence impacts many neighborhoods, it doesn't have to control your life.

Some things that might help include thinking about which streets are best to avoid and who you can travel with that will help you be safe. Consider if the people you choose to spend time with are still safe for you. Plan ahead where you would go in an emergency and who you would call. Memorize their number.

UNDERSTANDING POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

PTSD is a condition that some people get after seeing or living through a dangerous event or series of events. **When in danger, it's normal to feel afraid.** This fear can trigger split-second changes in the body, preparing to defend against the danger or to avoid it. This “fight flight or freeze” response is a healthy reaction meant to protect a person from harm. But in PTSD, this reaction is changed. **People who have PTSD may feel stressed or frightened even when they're no longer in danger.**

PTSD symptoms can be grouped into three categories:

RE-LIVING THE TRAUMATIC EVENT

- Flashbacks—replaying the trauma over and over, including symptoms like a racing heart or cold sweats
- Bad dreams
- Intrusive thoughts

AVOIDING REMINDERS OF THE TRAUMATIC EVENT

- Staying away from places, events, or objects that are reminders of the experience
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Feeling strong guilt, depression, or worry
- Losing interest in activities that were enjoyable before
- Having trouble remembering the dangerous event

BEING EASILY TRIGGERED AFTER THE TRAUMATIC EVENT:

- Being easily startled
- Feeling tense or “on edge” and/or having angry outbursts
- Difficulty sleeping

HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF OR A FRIEND AFTER A VIOLENT INCIDENT?

To help yourself, Find someone you can trust to help you stay safe. Talk to a family member, friend, doctor, or religious counsel about what you are going through. **Not all people will understand what you are going through—** Some people see therapists or join support groups. If you find yourself getting anxious or triggered, try relaxation activities like taking slow, deep breaths, visualizing yourself in a calming place, or tensing and relaxing individual body parts like your hands or shoulders to calm down.

Set realistic goals for yourself and expect symptoms to improve with time, not immediately. If you feel overwhelmed, stop, breathe, break large tasks into small ones, prioritize, and do what you can. Be patient with yourself, it may take time, but it's okay.

If you know someone who has experienced a traumatic event, it affects you too. The first and most important thing you can do to support a friend or relative is to help him or her get support and professional treatment.

Offer emotional support, patience, and encouragement. Listen carefully and let them know you are there for them. Be aware of situations that may trigger trauma responses. Invite your friend or relative out for positive distractions such as walks, outings, and other activities. Some find writing, drawing or other arts to be a useful way of coping. Above all else, remind them that with time and treatment, it can get better.