



Travis County Victim Services Program



Travis County Victim Services

October 2014

Responses to Trauma *by Samantha Marquez*



As Victim Service providers we may arrive on scene with a fixed idea regarding how someone should appear after having experienced a traumatic event. We may be surprised at how individuals respond to law enforcement personnel or how they react to receiving information from us. I will be reviewing typical responses to trauma; however, I believe it is important to remember that there are no "right" or "wrong" ways for individuals to respond in these situations.

Responses that we often see on-call are:

- Intense emotionality
- Lack of emotionality
- Inability to remember important aspects of the event
- Feelings of guilt
- Anger
- Shock
- Nausea
- Anxiety
- Confusion
- Calm affect
- Mood swings

Victims may experience the above responses individually or at the same time; how and to what degree they are experienced vary greatly and serve as a reminder that not any one person will have the exact same response as another.

Frequently victims of domestic violence and sexual assault will describe being unable to fight or flee during the event. This can cause victims to feel as though they "let this happen" to them. We often hear of fight or flight, but what about freeze? To freeze is to enter a state of tonic immobility where it is no longer a choice, but a matter of survival for these individuals. Therefore, victims sometimes have no control over how they respond during a traumatic event.

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Trauma also has an effect on memory. Victims may feel guilty if they cannot “fill in the blanks” or if their account of the event “doesn’t make sense.” This may also evoke feelings of powerlessness in the individual as they may believe that understanding equals power.

Taking this into consideration when we enter into the lives of individuals, who never asked to be involved in the circumstances they have found themselves in, may allow us to better empathize with what they are experiencing. It permits us to provide them reassurance that what they are feeling are normal responses to a very abnormal event and hopefully assist in providing the best service we can.

Congratulations Brenda Hummell, VA39



The Austin/Travis County Family Violence Task Force asked the community to stand up against family and dating violence at fourth annual Paddle Parade on October 1, 2014. This family friendly event was a great success! As part of the Stand Up For Safe Families Paddle Parade, the public submitted original poems on the subject of domestic violence. Brenda Hummell’s VA39 winning poem is on page 3 of the newsletter. Congratulations Brenda!

Drifts by Brenda Vicars Hummel

He slams the door. He grips my arm.
 Fear thud, thuds in my heart.
 I force a smile and hold my breath
 And pray, "Please don't let her see."

My thumb drifts down to the scar.

Sweet, my two-year-old, ignores the slam,
 And stirs her make believe soup.
 She sets a bowl in front of her doll
 And croons, "Ima like a mama."

My thumb drifts down to the scar.

The scar, three years old, rippled and puffed—
 A perfect caterpillar, on my front hip bone.
 He didn't mean it; he cried when he saw my blood.
 The whiskey in him shoved me too hard onto the stone.

He tightens his grip. My arm grows numb.
 He kicks a toy across the floor.
 I pour his drink. He jerks away,
 But at least he leaves the room.

My thumb drifts down to the scar.

Sweet shifts her, clear blue-eyed gaze towards me
 And offers a taste of her soup. When I say, "Yum,"
 A dimple forms with her smile. She hugs her doll.
 "Ima like a mama." Thank God she didn't see.

He returns—angry—some missing tool.
 I plead, "Not here in front of Sweet."
 His greasy pliers snake up under my shirt
 And pull and twist a chunk of flesh.

With a kiss, Sweet, puts her doll to bed.
 Hot pain sears me from the metal yank.
 He jerks away, grabs his keys,
 And slams the door again.

I muffle my gasp and hide my face.
 Sweet leans against my leg,
 One thumb finds her mouth.
 The other drifts down to her side.

Her side? I raise her skirt to check for a wound.
 She strokes an invisible scar. "Ima like a mama."
 Too soon she knows. Too long I waited.
 My thumb drifts down to the—Stop.

Now I make the call.

**TRAVIS COUNTY
SHERIFF'S
OFFICE VICTIM
SERVICES
TRAVIS COUNTY**

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[www.tcsheriff.org/
victim_services.htm](http://www.tcsheriff.org/victim_services.htm)

Got News?



If you have news-
worthy items or
announcements for
the newsletter
please pass them
along to Amy at
Amy.Durall
@traviscountytx.us

**TRAVIS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
VICTIM SERVICES**

MISSION: WHY WE'RE HERE

To enhance the response of law enforcement, Travis County Sheriff's Office Victim Services provides crisis intervention, advocacy, and access to resources that reduce the impact of trauma on individuals and the community.

VISION: WHERE WE'RE HEADED

Travis County Sheriff's Office Victim Services envisions a community in which individuals experience compassionate support of choices, effective utilization of resources, and enhanced outcomes through collaborative services delivered with integrity and respect.

VALUES: WHAT WE BELIEVE IN

Travis County Sheriff's Office Victim Services strives to empower individuals through enhanced knowledge of rights and resources while demonstrating integrity, compassion and respect.

STRATEGIES: WHAT WE DO

- Criminal justice system education
- Crisis intervention
- Advocacy
- Referral

RESULTS: HOW WE WILL KNOW WE DID IT

- Reduced emotional trauma
- Multi-agency collaboration
- Victim empowerment

Signed in Support February 2011, by



Victim Services Manager Amy Durall

Captain Paul Knight

Major Phyllis Clair

Chief Deputy Jim Sylvester

Sheriff Greg Hamilton

[Handwritten signatures of Amy Durall, Paul Knight, Phyllis Clair, Jim Sylvester, and Greg Hamilton]

