

Reframing Strategies

Regardless of the court outcome, the following are true statements about the participation of a victim in their court process:

'I showed courage and strength in seeing this process through.'

'I stood up for myself.'

'This victimization does not define who I am.'

'Any shame from this victimization is not mine to own.'

'I am moving forward.'

Additionally, your Victim Services Worker or the Crown Witness Coordinator may have many more positive truths specific to your involvement in the court process. Hearing these can be helpful.

It helps to understand that your voice was heard, your experience was validated, and what actions you can take as you move forward.

To positively-reframe our thoughts, we must stop-and-think about where they come from...

"Why am I having this thought?"

Often, our thoughts stem from feelings. If you are angry or upset, you are more prone to negative thinking. It is important to consider your feelings.

How can we train ourselves to positively reframe negative thoughts?

1. **Stop:** Identify the negative thought you are having.
2. **Think:** Ask yourself, "Where is thought coming from? What am I feeling, and why am I feeling this way?"
3. **Reframe:** Once you've identified the source of a negative thought (fear, anger, embarrassment, etc.), you can reframe it.

Resources

Victim Services:

Crown Witness Coordinator:

Counselling:

RCMP:

Probation:

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Reframing your thoughts



Information is Power

You may wonder: “*Why is it important to consider what I am thinking?*”

Your **thoughts** are connected to your **feelings** and influence your **actions**.

Likewise, your feelings impact your thinking. It is important to know how to reframe your thoughts to improve your feelings. Doing this will often impact what you do. Taking action can help to restore a feeling of being in control. When you are victimized and for some time afterwards, especially through the court process it can feel like you are not in control of anything. It is time to change that!

A bit about our thinking:

- Our thoughts are shaped by what we believe we know
- It is important to get facts to help shape our thinking
- Finding the “truth”, makes a difference in knowing the realities

One of the most frequently asked questions following court is: “*What just happened?*”

There are a number of aspects of the court process that when considered may give us a better understanding of this question.

It can be helpful to talk this over with the Crown Witness Coordinator and/or your Victim Services Worker.

Using Information

Key Pieces to know:

- **Roles & Responsibilities:** Who were the people involved? What were their responsibilities? This includes you as a witness
- **Verdict:** What was the judge’s decision? What went into that decision? What influenced it?
- **Outcomes:** What exactly do they mean?
- **Follow-up Actions:** What are the next steps that I can take based on how things have ended? How do I go about these next steps?
- **Processing:** How did this help me? What are the concrete benefits for having actively participated in the court process?

How this will help:

Roles: By understanding the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the court process, it may help to not personalize negative feelings that sometimes arise during court.

Responsibility: Understanding and actively participating in a criminal justice process can help guide your thoughts and feelings to a more positive place. For example, writing a Victim Impact Statement allows you to have your voice heard on how the crime has affected you. It is important to understand that this has no impact on the ‘finding of guilt’ verdict.

Verdict: A guilty verdict requires proof *beyond a reasonable doubt*. This means that the judge or jury are certain that the crime was committed. Awareness of this can help relieve any personal feelings of self-doubt or failure in your role as a witness. Hearing a judge’s full decision and how it was reached often gives insight into how the decision was made. Hearing this is often affirming or validating for someone who was victimized.

Outcomes: For the most part, people have a fairly limited understanding of criminal sentences. Typically categorizing: *Did they get jail? Did they get probation? Did they get off scot-free?* The reality is, there are many different sentencing options. It helps to know more details specific to the case that you have been involved in. Understanding the exact outcome of sentencing will allow you to know what actions you can employ to increase your safety, and continue to hold the offender accountable.

Follow-Up Actions: Depending on outcomes, there may be some considerations for further action on your part. For example, registering for the Victim Notification Program, so that you can be made aware of developments in the offender’s status once their sentence is being served. This is also often the time that you may feel ready to do something for yourself, to begin healing. Thinking about getting into counselling? Talk with your Victim Service Worker to set this up.

Processing: Whether working with your Victim Service Worker, counsellor, family, friends, or with yourself, it is important to feel empowered by what you have gone through. This is when it is important to positively reframe what you have accomplished through this journey. For example, what have you learned about yourself? How has this impacted your decisions about actions going forward?