

Coping after a Robbery



A robbery can be a disruptive event. Whether a weapon was presented or not, it is still reasonable for those involved to feel like their life was threatened. At times like these, leadership has the dual responsibility of both supporting the employees and guiding them back to productivity with good customer service. To be most effective, it can be helpful to know what kind of reactions you might expect from employees, and what you can do to be helpful to them.

Common reactions to job loss

- › Feeling shocked or in disbelief.
- › Range of responses - may be anything from emotional outbursts or crying, to no visible reaction at all.
- › Fear and anxiety - about what happened and about it happening again.
- › Being more suspicious of customers.
- › Anger and blaming - toward the perpetrator, coworkers, themselves, leadership, or the organization.
- › Feeling unsafe - regardless of whether there is a current threat.
- › Poor concentration and decreased productivity for a time. People will want to talk about what happened, so try to be flexible and allow them time to do so.
- › Irritability - may be quick to anger or become annoyed.
- › Interacting more with others or withdrawing.
- › Hypersensitivity - any sight, sound, or customer that reminds them of the robbery may trigger reactions similar to when it happened.
- › Reluctance to do a particular task or come to work.
- › Physical reactions, such as - fatigue, headache, stomachache, or shakiness.

Tips for supporting employees

- › As soon as possible, communicate directly with all employees to share as much factual, honest information as you can.
- › Update employees periodically if new information arises. This will reduce rumors and positions leadership as a reliable source of information.
- › Acknowledge the impact of what happened, and that you know it may have an effect on the employees and their work for a time.
- › Express care and concern for employees' safety and well-being.
- › Acknowledge and thank employees for an effective response during and after the robbery.
- › Allow employees some time to talk with each other and process what happened.
- › Be visible and check in with employees, ask how they are doing and express that you are glad they are safe.
- › It is a normal response to freeze or have difficulty thinking. If an employee forgot to do something during or immediately after the robbery, talk to them individually in private.

What to avoid

- › Don't minimize what happened or employees' reactions - saying things like "at least it wasn't worse," or "you will get over it."
- › Don't make employees talk about what happened (more than is necessary to investigate) – If needed, an avenue for sharing their reactions can be made available, but not required.
- › Don't assume whether employees want time off - for some it is more helpful to keep their routine and continue working, others need a day or two off work.

Take care of yourself

The aftermath of a robbery is a stressful time for leadership as well, even if you were not present at the time of the robbery. It is important to take care of yourself, especially during times of high stress, as it will enable you to be more productive and helpful to your employees. Here are some suggestions:

- › Eat healthy and drink lots of water - your body and mind need the nutrients to recover from stress and expel the stress chemicals.
- › Engage in regular exercise - this helps to boost chemicals that improve mood, reduce stress, and improve sleep.
- › Try to maintain your usual sleep routine. If having trouble sleeping, get up and do a relaxing activity for a little while to distract your mind from worries.
- › Help someone else - be a support to your coworkers; offer assistance to the person and/or family of the injured colleague, such as making a meal or babysitting.
- › Do some things you enjoy - part of taking care of yourself is making time to relax and have fun; this gives you a break from grieving and helps to maintain balance.
- › Talk to someone - family, friends, coworkers, a counselor, faith mentor, or anyone else with whom you feel comfortable sharing your feelings and is helpful to you.
- › Return to routine - as soon as you can, engage in your normal routine; this may help you regain your sense of control and predictability of life.
- › Think about other times when you coped with difficult situations. What positive coping strategies worked for you then? Can you practice those now?

When to seek professional assistance

If you or your employees

- › Are unable to care for yourself or dependents.
- › Experience significant impairment in your ability to function at work or in your personal life.
- › Feel intense sadness or depression for more than two weeks.
- › Have increased use of drugs or alcohol.
- › Have thoughts of harming yourself or others.



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