

GUNS, CRIME AND SURVIVORS

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# **GUN CONTROL**

## DEFINITIONS

### SURVIVOR

The word survivor can refer to someone who stays alive after something like an accident or event.

Examples:

“There were only two survivors of the plane crash...”

“...a breast cancer survivor...”

Another meaning of survivor is when someone copes well with difficulties in their life.

Examples:

“...adult survivors of child abuse”

“She is a born survivor.”

### ARE YOU A SURVIVOR OF GUN VIOLENCE?

Whether you’ve been shot or threatened by a gun, witnessed gun violence, or know someone who’s been killed, injured or threatened by a gun – you’re a survivor of gun violence.

Source: Macmillan dictionary  
Dictionary.com

## THE COST OF GUN VIOLENCE INCLUDES:

### DIRECT COSTS

**Police, paramedic and ambulance transport costs when they respond to gun violence incidents.**

**Productivity costs. This means that a gun violence survivor may not be able to work at the same pace or in the same job as before.**

**Loss of income for family and friends of a gun violence survivor because when they have to take care of a recovering a gun violence survivor at home, they may lose their jobs.**

**Administrative costs. This refers to the gun violence survivor making disability and social grant claims. Sometimes, they also have to pay legal and court fees.**

### INDIRECT COSTS

Mental health costs. A survivor of gun violence may be struggling to continue with life as before.

Quality of life costs. This means that the nature of the gun violence survivor’s injuries can cause pain, can reduce their ability to work in the same job and change the way they relate to their family. In other words, life as a gun violence survivor will be very different from the life they lived before.



Source: Daily Maverick

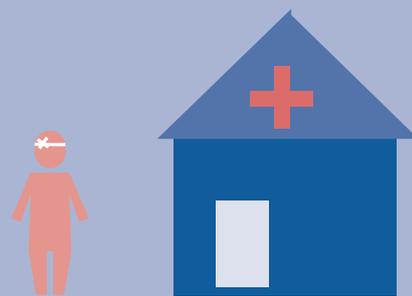
**DID YOU KNOW?****IN 2014**

**THE COST FOR ALL ABDOMINAL GUN SHOT INJURIES TREATED AT ALL STATE HOSPITALS IN SOUTH AFRICA WAS APPROXIMATELY 4% OF THE NATIONAL HEALTH BUDGET: R6 BILLION ANNUALLY.**

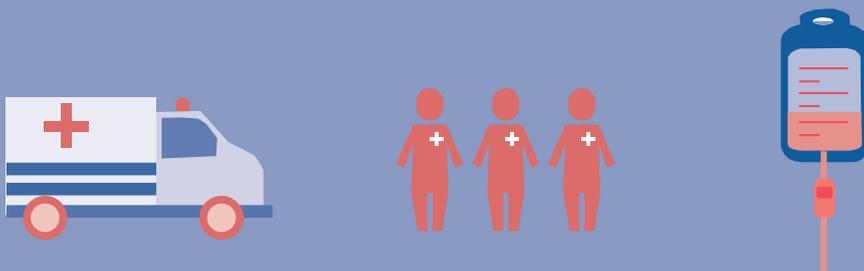
**BULLET WOUNDS THROUGH THE HEAD, LUNGS, HEART, MAJOR BLOOD VESSELS OR BOWEL CAN BE DEADLY IF PATIENTS ARE NOT TAKEN TO THE HOSPITAL FOR AN EMERGENCY OPERATION.**



**A PATIENT WITH A GUNSHOT INJURY USUALLY UNDERGOES SEVERAL OPERATIONS TO REPAIR THE INJURY AND CAN FACE MONTHS OF REHABILITATION**



**COMPARED TO OTHER INJURIES, GUNSHOT PATIENTS CONSUME MORE RESOURCES BECAUSE THEY NEED MORE INTENSIVE CARE, BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS AND LONG-TERM REHABILITATION THAN PATIENTS WITH OTHER INJURIES.**

**Remember**

**Violence can be prevented. One practical step is to support legislation that controls who owns what gun and for which purpose so that only people who are fit and proper are granted the responsibility of handling a lethal weapon.**



## SURVIVING TRAUMA

- Experiencing gun violence is something that is not a normal life experience. That is why it is called a traumatic event.
- Traumatic events can affect us all.
- People who experience trauma show it in different ways. Sometimes a person who has experienced trauma may not show it right away and only become emotional weeks or even months later.
- A traumatised person can have up and down emotions that can last a short time or a very long time.
- When a person who suffers from trauma is emotional, they might need to see a professional counsellor. This does not mean that they are weak or mad. It just means that the gun violence incident was just too powerful for the person to manage alone.

## COMMON REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

A gun violence survivor may experience:

- Numbness, shock
- Worrying, nervousness
- Fear that something else will happen
- Anger at what has happened
- Guilt at surviving
- Depression

## RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA AND LOSS

Try to remember: You are having a normal reaction to an abnormal event!

- Talk openly about your feelings and symptoms
- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise
- Keep contact with friends
- Practice safety measures to be taken in the future
- Try relaxation techniques
- Be aware of trying to take away the pain that you are feeling with drugs or alcohol

## HELPING FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

Sometimes it is difficult to know what to do or say to somebody who has just survived a traumatic event.

- Let the person know that you care
- Spend time with the traumatised person and just listen
- Avoid telling them how they should feel
- Help them find support, like a professional counsellor if they feel that they need it

Remember: In order to take care of others, take care of yourself! Make sure you are in a healthy frame of mind.

Source: Gun Free South Africa

### EXTRA RESOURCES ON THIS TOPIC:

**Seeking professional help  
There are organisations across  
South Africa that can help you deal  
with trauma.**

#### ➤ **Life Line South Africa Counselling Line (National)**

- Toll free number: 0861 322 322
- Lifeline offers free, anonymous counselling over the phone 24/7, throughout the year

#### ➤ **The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) (National)**

- SADAG offers a range of counselling services, including:  
Suicide Crisis Line: 8am-8pm, Toll free number: 0800 567 567, SMS: 31393
- SADAG Mental Health Line, 8am-8pm, Tel: 011 262 6396, [www.sadag.org](http://www.sadag.org)

#### ➤ **The Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture (Cape Town)**

Tel: 021 465 7373

#### ➤ **The Trauma Clinic (Johannesburg)**

Tel: 011 403 5102

## DIFFERENT WAYS TO TALK ABOUT GUN CONTROL

These questions can help guide your radio shows and outreach.

They are angles to the bigger topic of guns, crime and survivors.

You have many examples of how to develop your outreaches and radio shows from previous guides. Use them to expand on some of the angles below.



What are the ways gun violence survivors can be supported?



How can we prevent gun violence from happening in our communities?



What are the signs that someone is experiencing trauma from a gun violence incident?



What are the ways we can remove the stigma around trauma survivors seeking professional help?