

'Gangsters often send children to a crime scene to see if a person is dead'

Children are often found to be among the first present at a crime scene and the witnessing of cruelty and traumatic incidents has a strong impact on their behaviour and emotional duress. This is known as secondary trauma.

Specialist in the field of peace, mediation and conflict resolution Professor Brian Williams said that when children are exposed to traumatic incidents and crime scenes, it creates secondary trauma in an individual resulting in an imbalance of their emotional, physical and psychological states.

“Young individuals witnessing dead bodies lying on the ground and blood on the floor creates trauma in an individual and observing these disturbing incidents is linked to pain. Individuals then seek an outlet for the pain and they often turn to alcohol, drugs or lash out violently at other people.” Williams said that in disadvantaged areas, parents don't stop their children from observing a crime scene because they are also damaged.

The chief of the metro police department, Wayne Le Roux, said: “At a crime scene, the metro police are responsible for securing the scene until police arrive to do further investigations. Officers make sure that everyone surrounding a scene doesn't interfere with the process by ensuring that no one comes too close. Parents need to assist that their child is watched over at a scene and everyone, including neighbours, needs to support each other to ensure they are protected.”

Director of Molo Songololo and social worker Patric Solomons said: “Police must secure a crime scene and make sure that it does not get contaminated by curious onlookers. The police and paramedics also have specific protocols to deal with the dead they usually cover the body. It is not their responsibility to prevent children from being exposed to a crime scene. However, they should ask children to disperse or ask the adults to remove the children.” Solomons said children will experience classic psychosocial effects resulting in a child feeling scared, unsafe and vulnerable. They might have nightmares, become clingy and withdrawn. A child can also become short-tempered easily and become violent themselves.

A member of the Moms Move for Justice organisation in Hanover Park, Mary Claassen, said the community and children need to be educated about keeping youngsters away from violent scenes. “Gangsters also often sent children to a scene to check if a person was dead and we need to be more aware.”

9 JULY 2019 / SUKAINA ISHMAIL

<https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/gangsters-often-send-children-to-a-crime-scene-to-see-if-a-person-is-dead-28925761>