

Assess Your Empathy

Empathy is often defined as the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes in order to understand their feelings. This Tool will help you examine your empathy at the time you were involved in your offense as well as afterwards, when you had more time to think about what happened.

empathy

The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

Part A

1 How do you **feel** about the offense you committed? **Why?**

2 Do you **think** your actions **harmed** anyone? If so, in what way?

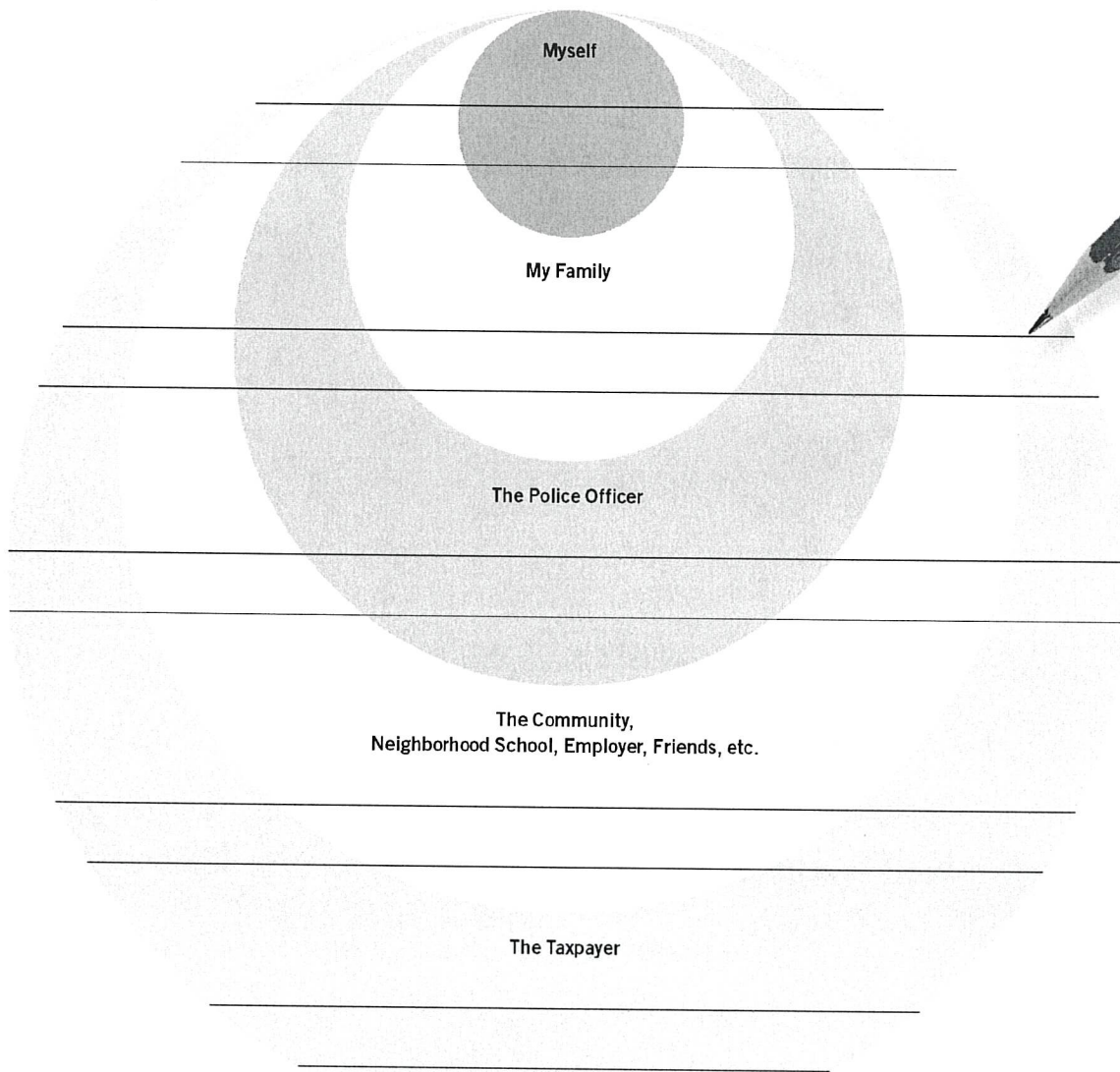
3 What were you **thinking** when you **committed** your offense? What do you think about it **now?**

When I Committed My Offense	Now

4 How did you **feel** when you were **committing** your offense? How do you feel about it **now?**
Refer to the Feelings Chart on page 14 for some ideas about common emotions that people experience.

When I Committed My Offense	Now

5 Name everyone, besides the victim, who was affected by your behavior and describe how they were affected.



Myself

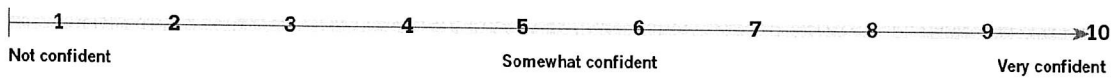
My Family

The Police Officer

The Community,
Neighborhood School, Employer, Friends, etc.

The Taxpayer

6 a. How confident are you that you understand how others were affected by your offense?



b. Discuss with your corrections professional how you could increase your confidence in knowing the impact of your offense on others.

Now that you have assessed your level of empathy for others, Tool 2 will help you assess the impact that you had on your victim.

Feelings Chart



Adapted from "How Do You Feel Today?" by The U.S. Department of Justice, The National Institute of Corrections.

Tool 2

What Are the Effects?

In Tool 1, you looked at who may have been affected by your offense. In this Tool, you will explore how the offense may have affected the victims.



Part A

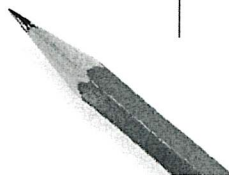
1 Has anyone close to you ever **witnessed** or been the **victim** of an offense? If so, what happened?

2 What immediate and long-term **harm** did he or she suffer (e.g., financial, physical, emotional, social, lifestyle)? Think about **immediate** effects and **delayed** effects.

3 How do you think he or she **felt** as a result of the experience? Why?

4 How did you **react** to the fact that this person was **harm**ed either as a witness or a victim?

What Did You Think?	How Did You Feel?	What Did You Do?



Part B

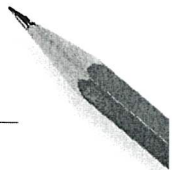
primary victim

A person who was harmed by being *directly* involved in the offense.

1 Who was the primary victim, or who were the primary victims, of your offense?

2 What harm (immediate and long-term) do you think the victim(s) suffered?

	Primary Victim(s)
Financial/material losses (replaceable and irreplaceable)	
Physical injury	
Emotional suffering (e.g., fear, anger, sadness, loss of control, violation of space/privacy)	
Social effects (e.g., relationships, loss of trust)	
Changes in lifestyle that may have been made to avoid future victimization	
Other	



3 Think about the effects of your offense on the primary victim(s). How do you think the victim(s) felt as a result of your behavior? Why?



4 What do YOU think and feel about the victim's feelings?

I Think ...	I Feel ...

5 How would you have felt if YOU had been a victim of your offense? What emotions would it have triggered in you? Why?

6 How could you have changed your thoughts and behavior before the offense occurred to avoid the harmful effects that it had on the primary victim(s)?

Part C

secondary victim

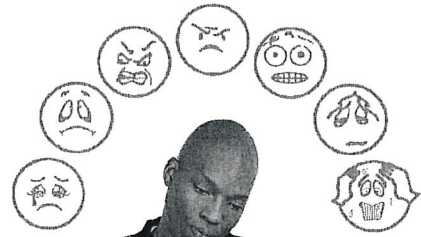
A person who was *indirectly* affected by the illegal act and therefore harmed by it (e.g., a witness, a relative or friend of the primary victim, someone who lives in the area where the offense was committed, your relatives or friends).

- 1 Name two **secondary victims** of your offense. You may want to refer back to your answers to Tool 1, Question 5 (page 13) as you think about your secondary victims.

- 2 What **harm** (immediate and long-term) do you think the secondary victims suffered?

	Secondary Victim 1	Secondary Victim 2
Financial/ material losses (replaceable and irreplaceable)		
Physical injury		
Emotional suffering (e.g., fear, anger, sadness, loss of control, violation of space/privacy)		
Social effects (e.g., relationships, loss of trust)		
Changes in lifestyle that may have been made to avoid future victimization		
Other		

3 How do you think the secondary victims felt as a result of YOUR behavior? Why?



4 What do you think and feel about the secondary victims' feelings?

I Think...	I Feel...

5 How would you have felt if you had been a secondary victim of your offense? What emotions would it have triggered in YOU? Why?

6 How could you have changed your thoughts and behavior before the offense occurred to avoid the harmful effects that your illegal act had on the secondary victims?

LETTER FROM THE PERSON I VICTIMIZED

In this assignment you will work to understand the effects of the crime you chose to commit on the person you victimized. You will put yourself in the place of the victim and write a letter to yourself, the offender, about how the victim was affected. The letter should be from 1-2 pages in length. You should use your primary crime. If you are not sure which victim you should use contact your probation officer.

In order to write an acceptable letter you will need to consider the many ways the person you victimized may have been affected. Persons who are physically harmed have to deal with the pain and seek and pay for medical treatment. People who are victimized have to take time to deal with police and often insurance companies (their rates may go up). They may have to take time from work or school. However, usually the most significant affects of crime against others is the emotional impact on the victim. Beyond the rage of being violated, persons who are victimized may have a sense of powerlessness to protect themselves and those they care about. The person(s) you victimized may lose trust in people in general and not feel safe. They may be afraid something else may happen to them or you will seek revenge. They may limit what they do and/or take extra precautions to guard against being victimized again. They may experience nightmares or worry about the safety of their family. Victims often feel guilty that they did something wrong which caused them to be harmed. They may also feel embarrassed and humiliated as they are asked to repeat the story of what happened to them to family, friends and neighbors. These important people in the victims life can also be affected in many of the above ways by your crime. An additional insult to the victim is when the offender denies he did the crime or blames the victim.

Letter to the Victim

Writing a letter to the victim can help you imagine the harm caused by your offense. It can also give the victim some comfort to know that you have learned from this experience and have taken steps to not repeat the behavior.

Part A

1 Use the space below and on the next page to write a **letter** to the primary victim of your offense. This letter will not actually be sent to the victim unless you and others (i.e., your corrections professional and a victim advocate) agree that it is appropriate to send. The purpose of the letter — even though your victim may never receive it — is to **reflect** your understanding of the fact that your actions impacted them and how they impacted them, and to **explain** how you intend to use this understanding in the future.

In your letter

- describe your offense;
- briefly describe the **harm** you caused the victim and **explain** why you are responsible;
- write how the victim probably **feels** about what happened or how you would feel if you were in the victim's shoes;
- describe the harm your behavior may have caused the victim's **friends, family, and neighborhood**;
- explain how you feel about your offense **NOW**; and
- describe what you have **learned** from this situation and how you will **change** your thoughts and behaviors as a result of what happened.

The form consists of a large rectangular area with horizontal lines for writing. A vertical line is drawn on the left side, creating a margin. On the right side, there is a small illustration of a pencil pointing towards the writing area.