



STRANGULATION INVESTIGATIONS

Part 4: Impeding Normal Breathing & Circulation of Blood

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing Part 4, officers will be able to:

- Understand and recognize symptoms that indicate normal breathing and/or blood flow was impeded;
- Document relevant symptoms as evidence of an asphyxiation assault; and
- Describe the importance of connecting victims to medical professionals.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

If you would like RESPOND Against Violence to facilitate an extended version of this discussion, email info@respondagainstviolence.org to set up a virtual meeting.

1. What are the most common symptoms of normal breathing being impeded?
2. What is the significance of a victim reporting pain in the throat or difficulty breathing AFTER the assault? What should an officer do when this is observed or reported?
3. Why is it important to ask victims if they have noticed any changes to their voice since the assault occurred?
4. What are the most common symptoms of blood flow being impeded?
5. What questions can you ask to investigate the element of “impeding the circulation of blood?” Why is this evidence so critical?
6. Why might a victim be unsure if she lost consciousness? Why is it important to document this?
7. Discuss reasons a victim of asphyxiation may not remember events or report symptoms they experienced.
8. Why is incontinence such a significant symptom of strangulation? How can you encourage the victim to share this symptom with you? What evidence should be collected if incontinence occurred?
9. Why is it important for victims of an asphyxiation assault to receive a medical assessment regardless of external signs of injury?

10. Discuss your agency's protocol for referring victims to medical. Consider whether anything within the protocol needs to be updated.

- How might an officer encourage a victim to seek medical attention after an assault?
- Why is it important to document in your report the reasons a victim refused medical?
- Has your department worked with EMS, forensic nurses, or local hospitals to create a protocol in asphyxiation cases?