Joyful Musings

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Stolen Goods

I was really looking forward to vacation and finally it was time. Got up at 3:30 am for an early flight and arrived in Portland ten hours later, tired but glad to be there. Within 15 minutes, the glad-bubble burst as we received a phone call from the house-sitter letting us know our house had been burgled.

In shock and disbelief, we booked my husband on the first flight back to Mexico to deal with this unexpected catastrophe. What a horrid way to begin a vacation!

Burglary is an ugly, unwelcome fact of life. Not just in Mexico, but wherever you may live. This recent burglary brought back a flood of all the awful feelings from when we were burgled in Oregon more than 20 years ago.

Shock is an almost universal reaction to a home invasion. Anger, fear, guilt, and worry are also common feelings.

The sense of security in what we believed to be our safe, private space is often a greater loss than the material goods that were taken. Studies have shown that many victims continue to suffer from symptoms such as anxiety, insomnia, or nightmares long after the actual event.

After our first burglary, I carefully scanned the house upon my return from every outing. If anything looked out of place, I felt panicky until I carefully checked for anything missing. It took a long time for that anxiety to pass.

Many people dismiss the likelihood of being broken into with thinking such as, “I don’t have anything worth stealing anyway.” A burglar can’t tell how much or how little there is from the outside. What’s more, in an area such as Lakeside, there is great financial disparity among us. You may not have much by U.S. or Canadian standards, but you may look wealthy to the average burglar.

It’s important to do all you can to prevent a home intrusion. Assess your property for any vulnerable points of entry and enhance security wherever possible. Good locks are important, and you may want to use them even when you’re at home to avert any unwanted surprises. Do what you can, and then let go of worry. Worry is not a security enhancement, and it spoils your enjoyment of every day.

And if the worst should happen, how do you cope? First thing to do is report it to the authorities. Even if they don’t do anything to recover your property, it’s important to let the powers-that-be know that crime is really happening and needs to be addressed. Don’t be too dismayed at how little they do beyond paperwork. Even after our burglary in Oregon, the police informed us they take a report but rarely do any follow-up because they just don’t have the time. If you have

insurance, a police report is required to file a claim.

Get any damaged locks or entries repaired or replaced immediately. Clean up and return things to their usual places to restore a sense of order and control in your home. Do another assessment of any additional security measures you can take to prevent a re-occurrence.

If you are haunted by fears and anxiety for a lengthy time, seek help to cope with these feelings so you can get back to enjoying your home and your life. Don't let the thieves continue to steal your peace of mind long after they're gone.

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