ASD (Acute Stress Disorder) is an acute amount of stress that is experienced in the immediate aftermath of any traumatic event (particularly crime victims in this case). It is characterized by the development of dissociation, severe anxiety, derealization, dissociative amnesia, subjective sense of numbing, reduction in awareness of surroundings and other symptoms all within a single month of the traumatic event. Individuals with ASD have a decrease in emotional responsiveness and are often difficult if not impossible to please because of their inability to experience pleasure due to the traumatic experience of the event. If the symptoms have not passed after the 2 to 30-day mark then the victim can be experiencing PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). This is said because ASD’s symptoms are like PTSD, however, is not associated with long term effects.

A crisis is defined as a specific set of temporary circumstances that result in a state of disequilibrium, characterized by the inability to cope with a situation that they normally can solve with problem-solving. Compared to a crisis reaction, ASD does not occur in stages. Crisis stages include the impact stage, recoil stage, and the reorganization stage. Each of which is experienced immediately after the crime rather than within a 2 to 30-day time period. Each stage exists because this is the normal way for an individual to psychologically go through a crisis, in stages so that it does not spiral into something worse. ASD can be described as a severe crisis reaction happening all at once. In essence, individuals who are experiencing ASD rather than a normal crisis reaction are experiencing beginning stages of PTSD which can lead to long term psychological problems rather than dealing with the crisis in stages to eventually go back to everyday life.