

HOSTAGE SURVIVAL

Research has shown that stress related trauma can be minimized with preparation and understanding the psychological and physical effects of being taken hostage.

Immediate Reaction to Being Taken Hostage

Psychological Effects

- Disbelief
- Denial
- Confusion
- Helplessness

Physical Effects

- Dizziness
- Vomiting
- Cardio-Vascular Increase
- Adrenaline Increase

Long Term Reaction to Being Taken Hostage

Psychological Effects

- Acceptance
- Catatonic State
- Sleep to Escape
- Guilt

(Hostages alternate between festive moods, fight or flight, resignation, reason)

Physical Effects

- Trembling
- Sobbing
- Loss of Bodily Functions

Studies on past hostage situations have examined the hostages themselves, comparing and contrasting those who **survived** and those who **succumbed**. Almost without exception these studies found that **survivors** reacted one and the same way and **succumbers** acted another.

Survivors are those who returned to a meaningful existence with strong self esteem and who went on to live healthy and productive lives with little evidence of long term depression, nightmares, or serious stress-induced illness.

Succumbers are those who either did not live through the ordeal or upon release or rescue required extensive psychotherapy to deal with real or imagined problems.

HOSTAGE PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTIONS

Survivors

- Had Faith
- Contained Hostility
- Maintained Superior Attitude
- Fantasized
- Rationalized Situation
- Kept Routines
- Controlled Outward Appearance
- Sought Flexibility and Humor
- Blended with Peers

Succumbers

- Felt Abandoned
- Acted Out Aggression
- Pitied Self
- Dwelt on Situation
- Despaired
- Suspended Activities
- Acted Impulsively
- Behaved Obsessive Compulsive
- Stood out as Complainer/Resistant

Successful Coping Strategies (Survivors)

- Have Faith in Yourself and in the Authorities**
(Never forget that everything is being done to safely end the situation)
- Contain Your Hostility Toward Your Captors**
(Hostile reactions to your captors can and must be masked)
- Take a Superior Attitude**
(A superior attitude will help you rise above your hostage situation so long as you do not implement the attitude into hostile actions toward your captors.)
- Fantasize to Fill Empty Hours**
(Many former hostages speak of the happy ability to escape mentally from their trauma by engaging in fantasy.)
- Rationalize the Abduction**
(No matter what the circumstances of the abduction, you must never blame yourself or dwell on what you should have done: you must force yourself to rationalize and accept your actions.)
- Keep to Routines**
(Keeping to normal everyday routines will greatly relieve stress)
- Control Your Outward Appearance**
(A mature, stable and controlled appearance, no matter what the inner turmoil, conveys a sense of confidence that may help settle the captor.)
- Strive to be Flexible and Keep Your Sense of Humor**
- Blend with Your Peers, Stay Together**
(Stay with other hostages, safety in numbers)

Additional Recommendations for Hostage Survival

- Recognize and Accept the Role of a Hostage**
(Recognize that the hostage takers have placed themselves in the role of authority. Not recognizing and acknowledging your role as a hostage and their role as the authority, could affect the successful survival of you and other hostages.)
- Be a Good Listener and Control Your Conversations with the Hostage Taker**
(If the hostage takers engage you in conversation, be polite; if they want to talk, listen. Demonstrate and convey interest. Whenever possible talk normally about who you are. If the opportunity arises, let the hostage taker tell his story. Work to establish a rapport.)
- Listen: Do Not Be Judgmental or Interject Values**
(Good listening prohibits trying to control or direct the conversation.)
- Know and Understand the Stockholm Syndrome**
(Hostages identify psychologically with hostage takers.)
- Avoid Physical Resistance**
- Prepare Yourself to Remain a Hostage for an Extended Period of Time**

(Reach deep inside for the personal resources needed to successfully survive the situation. Make a commitment to maintain a positive attitude throughout. Believe in the Sheriff's Office and know that it will rescue you. Suggestions to pass time: *Fantasize to Fill Empty Time, Be Flexible and Maintain a Sense of Humor, Establish Routines Whenever Possible, Help Others.*)

-If Possible, Remain in View of Outside Forces

(If there is a window or place where you can be seen by the control center, tower, etc, try to stay in that area.)

-Do Not Try to be a Negotiator or Give Advice

(Hostage takers will sometimes force hostages to make their demands. If this happens, say what they want you to say, say nothing that will anger your hostage takers and don't attempt to be a hero. Respond in a positive manner without offering suggestions.)

-Whenever Possible, Attempt to Give Credibility to the Negotiator

("He / she is okay", "I am glad he /she is out there", "You can talk to him / her")

Expectations During a Hostage Taking Incident

-Potential for Danger and Violence is Greatest During the Initial Hostage Taking and During the Rescue Attempt

- You may be assaulted.
- You may be restrained with own restraints or something else.
- Your uniform may be removed from you and exchanged with inmate clothing.
- Keep in mind, if the hostage takers wanted you dead they would have already killed you.
- Dead hostages are of less value than live ones.
- Killing hostages will likely trigger a rescue attempt.

-Physical Resistance can be Very Dangerous

- Resistance is not only dangerous to the aggressor but also to other hostages that may be present.
- If you must resist, try verbal resistance first, passive resistance second and if the situation deteriorates to imminent danger to life, then active resistance.
- If you decide to resist, be quick, be strong, be decisive, rely on your training.

- Actions and Emergency Plans During a Rescue Attempt

- Expect to be scared or startled, sudden darkness, diversionary devices, oleoresin capsicum munitions, weapon fire, and to be restrained by tactical team.
- Scene goes tactical, **fall to the floor with your hands plainly visible and do not move.**
- Position yourself against a solid wall or furniture away from doors and windows.
- Do not attempt to help, you may be confused with an inmate.
- Should you feel your life is in danger, don't respond passively.
- Have an escape plan. However do not attempt an escape unless you are **absolutely** certain of success or you may cause deterioration of the already serious situation.

Talk to Your Family About the Job Related Risks in a Non-Alarmist Fashion

- Do your best to make your family aware of the risk of a hostage situation and the resources that the Sheriff's Office has to successfully resolve the matter.
- Do not leave them in the dark until a crisis occurs.