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# SECURITY: KIDNAPPING

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**KIDNAPPING** – one of the most important survival strategies is knowing what is likely to happen and preparing yourself for it in advance. The following is the general pattern of stages and advice for each stage. Recent statistics say about 80% of planned kidnappings end with a safe release. This may come after a ransom, or a rescue, or a change of heart by the captors. The goal then is **survival until release**.

## I. Abduction Stage:

- A. This is the most dangerous stage. There is chaos and confusion. The goal of the kidnappers is to terrify and intimidate. They can yell, curse, use physical force.
- B. At this stage it is very dangerous to try to escape. You have between 3 to 5 seconds to get away before a kidnapper can get you in his sights and fire. If there is sufficient chaos and confusion, and if you see an opportunity to escape in those first 3 to 5 seconds, you can consider taking it. Your decision must be instantaneous and determined. It is extremely dangerous. A half-hearted attempt will make a bad situation worse. The captors have chosen the location and timing most suitable to them.
- C. What distinguishes an amateur from a professional is consistency in how they do things.
- D. “Do”s and “Don’t”s
  1. do not resist
  2. do not argue
  3. do not act aggressively
  4. do not try to engage them in conversation
  5. minimize eye contact but do not avoid completely
  6. do not communicate with fellow hostages
  7. do not take leadership: you will be seen as trying to take control; you might be killed
- E. Be observant and try to retain:
  1. exactly what happened
  2. setting
  3. sequence
  4. what were the captors wearing, weapons, footwear
  5. get a sense of general direction and time the vehicle is taking
  6. observe terrain
  7. attention to captors’ voices
- F. It is wise to:
  1. submit
  2. answer questions promptly, politely and to keep answers minimum
  3. not lie
  4. show outer compliance but remain inwardly strong
  5. do self-talk/prayer

## II. Intimidation Stage:

- A. During this stage the captors seek to rapidly establish complete dominance over their captives in order to ensure compliance and reduce the risk of counterattack or escape.
- B. You are likely to be blindfolded or hooded, and drugged.
- C. They can be violent and brutal including: screaming at you; ordering, shoving you about; beating; torture; sexual assault; murder
- D. In general, it is best to try to absorb this abuse. The sooner the captors believe that they have complete control of you, the sooner they will stop abusing you, since you are generally of more value to them alive rather than dead. However, everyone has their own dignity and a line that they will not cross and survival may not be your only goal. Where is your line?

## III. Custodial Stage:

- A. The captors are still nervous and will continue to try to establish their dominance. You are likely to be shackled for long periods, denied water/food/toilet/medical care. The hostage's role is one of outward compliance while keeping up your own inner dignity and strength. Resistance can result in severe punishment. Be prepared to be moved around a lot which will cause emotional upheaval each time. Prepare yourself for a LONG ordeal, excruciating boredom, an emotional roller-coaster of hope and despair, and moments of sheer terror. Those who are forced to hurt others will generally need a longer time to recover from this kidnap ordeal.
- B. Be a "grey person:"
  - 1. keep a low profile, follow commands, blend in
  - 2. don't stand out as too strong/aggressive or too weak/submissive
  - 3. captors are more likely to abuse those they see as leaders
  - 4. try to make a "nest" – an emotionally ok relationship to the space
- C. Trust: as you build more trust you may ask for items (tooth brush, comb, Bible, notebook). If they say no, then back off. The "no" is just to intimidate. If you know more about the kidnapper's mind-set, you have a little more power.
- D. Guilt: do not blame yourself or dwell on "what ifs." This can lead to depression. You are alive and loved by God. Now make the best of this bad situation.
- E. Hope: you are not alone. God is with you. Your family, friends, and colleagues are doing everything in their power to win your release.
- F. Routines: establish these early and stick to them
  - 1. mental - include stories, games, and worship. Keep track of time.
  - 2. physical – exercise regularly and as much as possible in order to maintain physical health, sense of self, and relieve stress
  - 3. food – eat well to keep up your strength
  - 4. hygiene – keep up your personal appearance to maintain your own hope and self-respect, and garner respect from the captors
  - 5. spiritual – deal with negative pressures as you become aware of them. Pull up the positive to keep from falling into despair.
  - 6. space – take control of your own space as much as possible (housekeeping, arranging bedding and furniture, etc.)

- G. Communication with the captors: converse with them as often as possible about your families, your peacemaking work, your human needs; also use listening, smiles, gestures, nods. Become human to them and humanize them too. This conflicts with being the “grey person” in B above. You need to *find the right balance*.
- H. Communication with other hostages: talking to one another can be seen as a threat. If you are able to talk, deal with conflicts as they arise and talk it through right away so there is no distrust. You need to work well together. Care for each other and do what is needed to live out of love.
- I. Tricks: some kidnapers will try to divide you by picking one person and confiding in her/him or privileging them in some way in order to cause distrust between everyone; you may be told (frequently) that you are about to be released. This is a mind game which seeks to keep you compliant.
- J. Duration: prepare for a long ordeal – think long term. You will be more emotionally healthy. Don’t count days except as a record. Stay in the moment. You are always looking for little ways to have some control so you don’t feel helpless and utterly victimized.
- K. Endurance: you can withstand a lot of abuse, inactivity, hunger, stress. The human body and spirit have an amazing capacity for survival.

#### **IV. Resolution stage:**

- A. There are two ways in which you may be freed:
  - 1. negotiation
  - 2. liberation: it is incredibly dangerous to be freed by other people. It is chaotic and there are weapons present. The rescuers will not know initially who is captor and who is hostage. Protect yourself by:
    - a. going down flat on the ground
    - b. hide if you can
    - c. do expect possible rough treatment by your liberators
    - d. do not make sudden moves
    - e. do not pick up any weapons. You will be shot.
    - f. do say “help” or “hello” when there is less chaos
- B. Escape: experts are generally negative about the chances for escape
  - 1. if one escapes, the others might be brutalized
  - 2. if you escape, you will be facing a new set of challenges
  - 3. remember these figures: 80% of hostages are released. 20% of hostages are killed. Try to survive.
- C. Questions for team discussion:
  - 1. resistance?
  - 2. try to escape? Singly or as a group?
  - 3. how do you help someone who is deteriorating?
  - 4. should you resist rape or not?

## V. Prevention

### A. There are two types of kidnapping

1. opportunistic – the wrong place at the wrong time, e.g. during a robbery. The captor(s) are likely unprepared and unsupported. They can be desperate and violent and the outcome is unpredictable.
2. planned abduction – you will be observed up to a week before the abduction. The kidnapers will pick a place where they are safest and you are most vulnerable.

### B. Suggestions to minimize odds include:

1. make sure people know who you are as peacemakers
2. vary travel routes and routines
3. change your appearance
4. look for and remember strangers or strange vehicles observing you, following on foot or by car
5. if by car, notice the following car and the people in the car
6. if you think your car is being followed, make 3 unexpected turns and see if the follower is still with you
7. if you are being followed, go to your destination or to a “safe” destination
8. drive closest to the curb in order to be able to turn quickly into side streets
9. discuss the above with your driver in advance
10. write a protocol
11. in some situations, making your identity as peacemakers known to armed groups in the area may provide a measure of protection

### C. Questions for team discussion:

1. how and when to make appointments?
2. what are your “safe” destinations if being followed?

*Based on special training attended by Iraq team members after November 2005 abduction of 4 CPTers.*