INTRODUCTION

Survival advice to kidnap victims.

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The most important point to remember should you become the victim of a kidnapping or hostage taking is that you do everything possible to survive the event. The advice contained within this document is drawn from debriefs of released victims, and training programs delivered by leading military and law enforcement agencies.
TO ESCAPE OR NOT

Often people will ask about whether they should try to escape or not if they think they are about to become the victim of a kidnapping or hostage taking. The decision to escape is down to you and the circumstances you find yourself in. But remember, your ultimate objective is to survive the experience, and more often than not, the risk of being seriously wounded or killed is hugely increased when trying to escape.

Factors to take into consideration as you become used to your surroundings in countries and regions where you could become a victim of a kidnap attempt are:

• Time and space – have you correctly recognized that you are about to taken hostage and if so, is there enough time and space for you escape?
• Armed or unarmed – are those trying to kidnap you armed or unarmed?
• Your fitness – are you able to run for a long distance to escape the attack area, and then perhaps walk for some distance before finding safety?
• Your local knowledge – do you know the region or area you are travelling through, do you know enough of the local language to ask for help, do know where a safe location is that you can get to?
• Alone or in a group – will your actions endanger those who do not choose to try and escape?

The final decision, a split second decision rests with you and you alone, and if you cannot respond to the factors above 100%, do not try to escape.

If it is your decision that you will try to escape the area of the incident, then remember the following:

• Do not hesitate once you commit to your course of action and be determined
• Act with speed and aggression
• Run away from the danger
• Make your way to a previously identified safe haven or security location

SURVIVAL ADVICE

During the abduction and in the moments immediately following abduction, the risk to the kidnappers and yourself is at its highest. Remember your ultimate goal is to survive the ordeal, so during these moments you should:

• Do your very best to remain calm
• Do not offer resistance
• Do not make things difficult
• Follow orders quickly
• Anticipate harsh or forceful treatment
• Be aware that you could be blindfolded and/or gagged
• You may be drugged
• If you are not drugged, engage in some positive mental activity and try to take note of what is happening and those around you
• Again, if you are conscious, try to remember the details of the journey
Once you have been transported to the location where you will be held, it is important to ensure you are doing everything you can to get through the ordeal with the minimum harm to yourself. So, you should consider the following:

- Do not be subservient to your captors, keep your dignity, and try to gain some respect from your captors.
- Prepare yourself mentally that the ordeal will take some time.
- Establish a routine.
- Look after yourself:
  - Make sure you eat and drink what you are given.
  - Keep yourself clean.
  - Do your best to exercise.
- Keep track of time and try to discern patterns.
- Ensure you keep yourself mentally active; take on a project in your mind.
- Identify those among your captors who may be open to dialogue.
- Establish a dialogue with those captors:
  - Stay away from contentious subjects.
  - Make sure you do not give away information that may be useful to the kidnappers.
  - Do not argue and do not be confrontational.
- If held with other victims, and where possible, engage in communication with them.
- If held with other victims, make sure you do not stand out among the others and try to blend in.
- As your relationship with your captors develops start to ask for small ‘luxuries’; these can be simple things such as toothpaste, a favourite food, soft drinks, or other items such as a radio, books, newspapers.
- Do not lose hope, and remember that your company and family will be working hard to secure your freedom.
- Above all else, maintain a positive attitude and know that the vast majority of kidnap victims survive.

### Survival Advice During a Rescue

Depending on where you are in the world and also dependent on whom your captors are, a rescue operation may be mounted by the authorities to secure your freedom. As with the moment of abduction, a rescue operation greatly increases the risk level for you as the victim.

It is imperative that you do your utmost to minimize the risk to you by remembering the advice below:

- Do not run or advance towards to the rescuers; they may think you are a kidnapper.
- Drop to the floor as soon as you recognize that a rescue operation is in progress.
- Spread your arms out with your hands opened out and flat on the floor.
- Do not move voluntarily, even if you think that the action has stopped.
- Follow all instructions given to you by the rescuers.
- Expect to be treated as a suspected hostage taker:
  - You may be restrained and treated in a forceful manner.
  - You will be searched.
- Wait for the confusion to clear and do your utmost to remain calm.
IN SUMMARY

The best way to survive is not to become a victim, however there is never a 100% guarantee that you will not be targeted so:

• Know your profile and understand how the security situation pertains to you
• Get briefed and understand thoroughly the preventative measures put in place
• Work out your contingency plans and rehearse them
• Know where the secure/safe locations are
• Report suspicious activity
• Never let you guard down
• If taken, know that a great deal is being done to secure your safe, timely, and secure release
• If you choose to escape, then you must be totally committed – think it through and prepare yourself now, later may be too late!