

HOSTAGE AND CRISIS NEGOTIATIONS: WISE BEHAVIOR FOR HOSTAGES IN A HOSTAGE SITUATION

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Abstract

Not all detentions of a person by another, against the detainee's will, are hostage situations. A domestic dispute would be a notable example of a non-hostage or crisis situation. Suicide attempts may or may not be a hostage situation depending on one's perspective. (Cooper, 1997). Certainly, it is a crisis situation. This paper will propose those behaviors and actions to be taken by hostages to elevate the probability of surviving such an ordeal.

Introduction

No set of guidelines is a guarantee. Crises may not always respond to the guidance that follows here. Some may be totally appropriate. The instant dynamic of any such situation, hostage or crisis, are important to consider before acting.

While hostage negotiations and crisis intervention are important courses of study, here the focus will be the survival of those actually taken hostage. What are suggested are best practices. They are intended specifically for situations requiring hostage negotiations rather than for situations requiring crisis intervention. This specificity is important because the dynamics of these diverse situations are different. For example, while a domestic dispute or crisis usually involves family members or other known persons, hostages are usually taken by strangers to those who are taken. Necessarily, what works or does not work for those detained against their will will be affected by the actual type of situation encountered.

Guidelines

Some of the guidelines are simple common sense reminders. Others may require some thought. Remember, the goal is to survive should you find yourself so involved. Take what follows seriously. Note that what you might want to do, or who you are, in day-to-day encounters, may get you killed in these particular predicaments. This is serious business and should be taken seriously. As a hostage, you will be used as leverage against the police who are seeking your release. Generally, it is to the hostage taker's advantage to keep you alive. Expect little more and

resist pushing the envelope. Hostages have been hurt or even seriously injured while in captivity even though not killed. Always attempt to stay out of harm's way if you can. These guidelines may help.

References on point are provided should you want to explore hostage negotiations in greater depth. The author may be contacted as indicated.

Guidelines for the Wise Hostage: Take a look at this non-exhaustive list of twenty-five.

1. This is no time for heroics. Probably, you will lose in your attempts. Accept your situation, and be prepared to wait as long as it may take. Take solace, if you can, in the actual fact that there are highly trained police working to gain your release.
2. Remember: If you are going to disregard the guidelines and try to escape your captors anyway, the best time to do it will be immediately after being captured. You will be in your best physical and mental condition at that time. Probably not so much later on.
3. Do not try to escape unless you are absolutely sure that you will be successful. You will have to make this decision very quickly and very early-on in your captivity. An escape failure will not be regarded well by your captors.
4. If you decide not to resist, then it becomes important that you do what is necessary to prevent harm to yourself or to other hostages. General cooperation with the hostage takers will help in this regard.
5. If you know that another captive is a law enforcement officer, do not identify this person to the hostage taker.
6. If you are held captive with an officer, do not make special demands on this person to act or to resolve the situation. They are hostages too. They will not be able to do anything differently than you are doing. All of you must wait it out.
7. Follow instructions. Remember that the first fifteen to forty-five minutes of a hostage situation are the most dangerous to all concerned both inside and out. Tension often runs high during this time because of all of the uncertainty present on all sides. During this initial period, try to regain and to maintain your own composure. This in itself will give you greater ability to think your way through the ordeal you are facing. Take on a survival attitude.
8. Do not speak unless spoken to, and then only when necessary. Give straightforward answers where you can. If you do not know the answer to a question posed by the hostage taker, tell them that you do not know the answer.
9. Try to rest and to maintain your strength. Exercise if you can and as needed. Move around if permitted but do not surprise your captors with your movements.

10. Do not act in a furtive manner or do anything to upset the hostage takers.
11. Don't make suggestions to the hostage taker. Do not take on the mantle of the authority who will tell them how to do what is best. This is true regardless of your experience in seemingly similar matters. Trying to reason with a hostage taker may prove fruitless and dangerous.
12. While hostage takers may present with various emotional and mental problems, do not attempt to solve these issues with them or for them. Go along to get along if you can and maintain your own sense of emotional balance.
13. If you need medical attention or medication, inform your captors. Ask them to get this assistance for you. This may prove helpful to those who are trying to negotiate for your release. This may also provide some additional protection for you if your captor is ministering to your needs. Don't overdo this.
14. Be observant. You may be released, or escape and your information may be helpful later on. Make mental notes but do not try to write down information. This may be seen as a threat to the taker.
15. Be prepared to answer the police/negotiator on the phone. A hostage taker may want you to speak for them to the police. Do not be afraid to do this and obey the taker's instructions to you. Do not try to give secret information to the police. Only give "yes" or "no" answers. If you talk to police negotiators, let them direct the conversation. They have a purpose in what they are doing and in what they are asking. Long explanations and extraneous details will not be helpful. When the police end the phone call, return the phone to the hostage taker. If the taker ends the call, do not argue with them about doing this.
16. Don't become argumentative in your interactions with your captors. Accept what your captors say without comment or disagreement. Do not be concerned if you happen to agree with the statements or positions expressed by the hostage takers. Respond appropriately.
17. Treat your captors like "royalty." Avoid confrontations. Do what is asked of you if you can. Do not become antagonistic or try to best your captors. Let them believe that they are in charge and are ruling the roost.
18. Keep your own sense of personal dignity. Stay out of corners and do not denigrate yourself in any way. While you will not want to challenge your captors, it is much harder for them to kill or to injure someone who has maintained their own self-respect and who represents it appropriately.
19. Be patient. There are well trained people on the outside working to resolve the current situation. And, they will resolve it.

20. During a rescue attempt, lie low. When the police come in, make no sudden moves. This is not the time to jump up and assert that you are one of the good guys. The police will sort you out in due time and will find out your identity. Do not take offense to if the officers' initial response to you is as one of the hostage takers. They may not know who you are immediately upon entry or resolution.
21. When the situation ends, or when officers make entry, initially you may be handcuffed. Take no offense at this. It is purely a safety procedure until police can be sure who you are and who the bad-guys are. If you happen to notice your captors trying to act as though they were hostages in order to avoid arrest, point this out to the police at your first opportunity after your release.
22. Keep other captives calm. Reassure them that help is coming. This is probably one of the most important things you can do. The calmer, the safer all will be.
23. If you are fed by your captors, eat what is provided if you can. Refusing nourishment may be bad for you and seen as a sign of disrespect. In fact, that they are taking care of your need for food and perhaps for other needs, as mentioned above, is a good sign and reduces the likelihood of you being injured.
24. While in captivity, try to establish a routine for yourself and keep track of time as well as you can. This will help you get through the long hours of waiting and of disconnect from the outside world. Keep mentally active during this time.
25. Remember, because you are a hostage, you will be regarded as such by the police and treated accordingly. Try to be cooperative.(Bolz, 1979, Greenstone, 2005)

Final Thoughts

What you know and what you do with what you know may save your life. Maintaining situational awareness in your daily life as well as while being held hostage will add to your response repertoire. Avoiding being taken hostage in the first place is better than trying to work your way through a hostage taking. While often overlooked in daily life, paying attention to what is going on around you and anticipating dangerous situations will do more to keep you safe than almost anything else. A great example of this would be the martial arts. It is often assumed that if one trains proficiently that proper response in any situation is assured. Actually, one of the basic principles of the martial arts says differently: "The best defense is 'don't be there.'"(Greenstone, 2013). Stay safe.

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