

## Hostage Survival Tips

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What if you were taken hostage?

The United Nation is struggling to forge solid consensus on the Gaza hostage crisis. But the UN indeed has definitive guidance on file for its staff possibly subjected to hostage-taking in the field.

Based on decades of UN experiences, some of the following might help keep you alive if you were taken hostage.

(a) At the time of your seizure, do not fight back or attempt to aggravate the hostage takers. You may be injured if you attempt to resist armed individuals.

There is a possibility that you will be blindfolded and drugged.

(b) Be prepared to explain everything you have on your person.

(c) Immediately after you have been taken, pause, take a deep breath and try to relax. Fear of death or injury is a normal reaction to this situation. Recognizing your reactions may help you adapt more effectively.

(d) Do not be a hero. do not talk back or act "tough". Accept your situation. Any action on your part could result in a violent reaction from your captors.

(e) The first fifteen to forty-five minutes of a hostage situation are the most dangerous. Follow the instructions of your captors. Your captors are in a highly emotional state, regardless of whether they are psychologically unstable or caught in an untenable situation. They are in a fight or flight reactive state and could strike out. Your job is to survive. After the initial shock wears off, your captors are able to better recognize their position.

(f) Keep a low profile. Avoid appearing to study your abductors, although, to the extent possible, you should make mental notes about their mannerisms, clothes and apparent rank structure. This may help investigators after your release.

(g) Be cooperative and obey hostage-takers' demands without appearing either servile or antagonistic. Be conscious of your body language as well as your speech. Do not say or do anything to arouse the hostility or suspicions of your captors. Do not be argumentative. Act neutral and be a good listener to your captors. Do not speak unless spoken to, and then only when necessary. Be cautious about making suggestions to your captors, as you may be held responsible if something you suggest goes wrong.

(h) Anticipate isolation and possible efforts by the hostage-takers to disorient you, including unverifiable stories by your captors or frequent movements to different locations.

(i) Try to keep cool by focusing your mind on pleasant scenes or memories or prayers. Create games and amusement in your mind. Try to recall the plots of movies or books. This will keep you mentally active.

(j) Ask for anything you need or want (medicines, books, and paper). All they can say is no.

(k) Build rapport with your captors. Find areas of mutual interest which emphasize personal rather than political interests. An excellent topic of discussion is family and children. If you speak their language, use it -- it will enhance communications and rapport.

(l) Exercise daily. Develop a daily physical fitness programme and stick to it.

(m) As a result of the hostage situation, you may have difficulty retaining fluids and may experience a loss of appetite and weight. Try to drink water and eat even if you are not hungry. It is important to maintain strength.

(n) Do not make threats against hostage-takers or give any indication that you would testify against them. If hostage-takers are attempting to conceal their identities, give no indication that you recognize them.

(o) Try to think of persuasive reasons why hostage-takers should not harm you. Encourage them to let authorities know your whereabouts and condition. Suggest ways in which you may benefit your captors in negotiations that would free you. It is important that your abductors view you as a person worthy of compassion and mercy. Never beg, plead or cry. You must gain your captors' respect as well as sympathy.

(p) If you end up serving as negotiator between hostage-takers and authorities, radio or telephone.

(q) If there is a rescue attempt by force, drop quickly to the floor and seek cover. Keep your hands on your head. When appropriate, identify yourself.

(r) Escape only if you are sure you will be successful. If you are caught, your captors may use violence to teach you and possibly others a lesson.

(s) If possible, stay well-groomed and clean.

(t) At every opportunity, and where possible, emphasize that you are neutral and not involved in politics.

(u) Be patient.

Admittedly this is much to keep straight in the rough and tumble of an emergency. As heavyweight champion George Foreman said, every boxer has a plan - until they get punched in the face. Nonetheless, bear these points in mind. And pray that those suffering in captivity are doing so, as well.