

Case of stockholm syndrome

Psychology



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The normal animal response to danger is either flight or fight. When we get hurt, we either run away, or we try to beat what hurt us. When those fail, we are left helpless at the mercy of whoever is threatening us. There are many reactions to such a situation. It can range from rage, to tears, or even withdrawal. One of the most interesting reactions to helplessness is attachment to the captor. This is what happens in Stockholm syndrome.

According to a news report by Jennifer Donelan (2011), an 11 year old girl named Jaycee Lee Dugard was kidnapped on June 1991. She was found through an investigation on August 24, 2009, 18 years later. She had been raped and held captive by a sex offender and his wife, bearing two daughters within the time of her capture. She admitted to feelings of dependence on her captors, and when her daughters were born, fear, which kept her from effecting an escape.

One could argue that she was a child when she was kidnapped and that she was powerless to do anything about it. This is the main reason why Stockholm syndrome is prevalent in children. A child is powerless against an adult and is easier to convince of the kidnapper's 'goodness' since children are dependent in nature. At first that was so, but as the abduction went on, she was given many opportunities to ask for help. She was allowed outside more than once and even had access to a telephone and email. During the initial questioning when Garrido was brought into custody, Ms Dugard (under the name "Allissa") even said, "he was a changed man" and that he was a "great person" who was "good with her kids" (Allen, 2009)

According to de Fabrique, Romano, Vecchi and van Hasselt (2007), "Stockholm syndrome is a paradoxical psychological phenomenon wherein a positive bond between hostage and captor occurs that appears irrational in <https://assignbuster.com/case-of-stockholm-syndrome/>

light of the frightening ordeal endured by the victims” (p. 12). There are many ways to do this, but essentially, four things need to happen to make the victim like the captor: The victim is given no means of escape and depends on the captor for basic needs as well as the victim’s life; the victim is cut off from the outside world with only the captor as a source of information and communication; the victim is threatened and most likely hurt to show them that the captor has the power to do so, making the victim come to the conclusion that making the captor less angry is safer. Usually, it involves deprivation, beating, death threats, rape or almost any show of force that can frighten the victim enough to be desperate; and lastly, the captor shows some degree of kindness to the victim. This is essential because it humanizes the captor and makes him out into something other than a bad man. In an isolated area where there is only that one person whom you rely on for everything, an act of kindness makes him look like a good person even though he was the one who kidnapped you. The whole process would leave the victim bruised and battered physically, emotionally and psychologically.

Whether stockholm syndrome comes about as the intention of the kidnapper or not, the victim is still on the losing end of the deal. This is not just limited to kidnappings and children. Whenever there is a battered wife hoping that her husband will be nicer if she cooks right, or if a child starts to follow the orders of a bully, there is a shade of stockholm syndrome in all abusive relationships. When there is no where to go and no means of escape from pain, the mind tries to find a way to reduce the pain, even if it means becoming a slave to your abuser. It is never the victim’s choice. It is part of human psychology.

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