

STOCKHOLM SYNDROME

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Stockholm syndrome is named after a botched bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden in 1973. Two robbers were trapped in the bank, holding two employees hostage, for over five days. The police were surprised to find that, as time went on, the hostages formed more and more of an alliance with the hostage takers. The hostages spoke on the robber's behalf, and continued a relationship with them long after they were freed.

One of the fundamental goals of a pimp is to create Stockholm syndrome in those being prostituted. This keeps them feeling bonded to him even when there are opportunities to escape.

The first step is to obtain physical control of a victim, and isolate them from help. All sources of information other than that provided by the pimp and his associates are cut off. The pimp then demonstrates his ability to inflict overwhelming pain and to kill the victim if he wishes.

It is important to understand the huge psychological differences between a pimp and a person being forced into prostitution. People who become pimps typically are psychopathic and sadistic. The feelings and needs of others have no controlling effect on them. The victims, on the other hand, usually are normal, ordinary people, who feel empathy, concern, and loyalty to those around them.

When the pimp allows them to live, they are grateful. They try to relate to him as they would others in their lives, and hope that a relationship will protect them from further harm. The pimp interprets this as the victim being under his control, rather than being deserving of caring and respect.

A pimp often will make claims on a victim's sympathy, referring to having had a hard life, being a member of a minority, being in dire need of money, and being in danger from the police.

This is especially effective if the person being prostituted also has suffered abuse in their family of origin, or had trouble with police or juvenile authorities. He keeps the hope of a protective relationship alive by claiming to be the victim's protector, lover or husband. He implies that, if the victim can sufficiently prove her love and loyalty, by doing whatever he wishes, that she will be loved in return, and not harmed.

The victim comes to believe that this fantasized relationship is real, and greatly overvalues any small kindnesses, despite being continually dominated with physical violence. She comes to feel she is in an alliance with the pimp against other criminals, the police, and the straight community. The criminal justice system treats prostituted persons as criminals in their own right. This strengthens the victim's feeling that she has no other choice but to remain allied with the pimp.

If the pimp has several victims under his control, they often come together in a form of "group think" allying themselves with the pimp against the outside world. They may actually help prevent escapes, and participate in the punishment of those who displease him. Female pimps are rare, but a dominant female in a group of prostituted women who acts as the pimp's second in command is not.

How long Stockholm syndrome lasts varies greatly, depending on the skill of the pimp, the psychological sophistication of the victim, and the amount of violence involved. Breaking away is more likely if a survivor still has connections to a previous identity and relationships.

It is harder to break away from a relationship that has had intermittent good and bad times, than if it were always one or the other, because the victim keeps holding on, waiting for the next "good" time. The higher the price a person has paid for something like a relationship, the harder it is to face the fact that it has been valueless and destructive. Some people never get free, and remain in one or another destructive relationship until they are killed or die of some other cause.

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