

LEARNED HELPLESSNESS¹

STRESS APATHY²

Part 1

1973 Event in Sweden

An Event occurred in the early 70's which included the puzzling, completely unpredicted reactions of 4 bank employees who became victims of a Hostage situation. On August 23, 1973, it happened that three women and one man were taken Hostage in one of the largest banks in Sweden by two ex-convicts.

These Hostage-takers were not political or religious fanatics "fighting for a cause". They were criminals who nevertheless operated using the Terror tactics much more common today than in the 70's. Thus, there was not even the pretense of a socially redeeming motive back of their actions. These were thieves. They wanted the money, not the "release of political prisoners" or a forum to voice a political position. As it developed, the 4 Hostages were held for 6 days. From start to finish their Terrorist

¹ LEARNED HELPLESSNESS" Then Is The Condition Of A Human Or Animal That Has Learned To Behave Helplessly, Failing To Respond Even Though The Person Or Animal Has Options Which Could Be Used To Either Avoid Unpleasant Events Or Gain Positive Rewards...

² "STRESS APATHY" Is That Condition In Which You Have Learned To Be "Helpless" ... i.e., You Don't (Or Don't Any Longer) Take Particular Notice Of Available **Resources** And/Or You Ignore **Demands**; Or You Don't (Or Don't Any Longer) "Calculate" The Difference (Shortfalls Or Surpluses) Between **Resources** And **Demands**; And/Or Do Not See That Your **Resources** May Be/Are Always Falling, Have Fallen, And/Or Are About To Fall Short Of The **Demands** Being Made Of You. People In "Stress Apathy" Routinely Say "They Have No Stress". Everyone Has Stress. It Is Impossible To Live And Not Experience It. PEOPLE WHO TELL THEMSELVES OR YOU THEY "HAVE NO STRESS" SUFFER FROM STRESS APATHY. (See Definition of **STRESS** - Pg 4 of this Commentary)

Captors openly threatened in the presence of the Hostages, to kill the Hostages one by one if their demands weren't met by the Bank and Law Enforcement.

Unexpected Element

An unexpected element of the situation was that the Hostages, during their capture, according to later reports, claimed that the Terrorists also exhibited to the Hostages what each of the four, one for one, later reported as "small kindnesses".

To the surprise of the world press at the time (the incident managed to attract international media attention while it was ongoing), after a relatively short period, it became clear that **ALL 4 OF THE HOSTAGES STRONGLY RESISTED AND WOULD GO ON STRONGLY RESISTING LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO RESCUE THEM. RATHER THAN TRY TO ESCAPE, THEY WERE QUITE EAGER, TO DEFEND THEIR CAPTORS, SURPRISING EVERY ON-SCENE OBSERVER.**

What appeared to set these Hostages apart from what was expected of captured prisoners was that virtually throughout their captivity they helped their captors and worked against anyone who was trying to free them!

Continuing the anomaly, several months after all 4 Hostages were saved by the police, they all still unhesitatingly expressed **WARM FEELINGS FOR THE TERRORISTS WHO HAD HELD THEM.**

Incredibly, two of the women eventually got engaged to their prior captors (then incarcerated), even after they were well out of danger or threat.

Historical Precedent

Journalists and other observers at the time speculated whether this emotional control by the Terrorist-criminals leading to the unexpected mental/emotional "surrender" by the Hostages, might not be merely a single, "freak" incident.

The Hostage situation observers wondered alternatively, whether similar incidents might have been a common occurrence in other, previous Hostage, or Hostage-like situations. No one expected to find out what they eventually discovered.

What no one predicted was that a study of history revealed that such different-than-expected Hostage response was disturbingly common. Moreover, the study revealed it was more the norm than the exception for Hostages to act this way.

Historically, what was being observed in this Bank Hostage situation had happened many times. Some of history's most stunning Hostage events were

discovered to be teeming with exactly this very Hostage Surrender behavior! Among the research findings: **Nazi concentration camp prisoner** behavior, as well as how **civilians** typically reacted in **Chinese Communist prisons**. The available historical data included the tendency of **pimp-procured prostitutes** to submit helplessly to their "employers", matched by the apparently inexplicable "cooperation" of **rape and incest victims** in their own sexual abuse; plus the seemingly endless, however inconsistent and bizarre, abuser-defending justifications concerning their injuries advanced by **victims of domestic and child abuse**. Similarities to the 1973 Bank Hostage Behavior further extended, during this review to the behavior of **prisoners of war**, countless **victims of airplane and ship hijackings** and others. All of these versions of apparently Inescapable "Capture", it was concluded, provoked attitudes and behavior extraordinarily similar to those of the 4 Bank Hostages of 1973!

Hostage Surrender or Helplessness regularly happened therefore, when most people would tend to expect (incorrectly, according to the review of relevant historical data), that any Hostage would want to be freed AT EVERY POINT and would eagerly welcome and aid any, all and every rescue effort!

The research showed that Hostages didn't typically try to help their rescuers at all, despite what "everyone thought they knew!" But at the time there was no known available adequate Brain Science to explain why this happened.

Hostage (Human) Helplessness is "Learned"

Unknown to the on-scene researchers in Sweden was the recent work of researcher, Dr. Martin Seligman. In 1965, Dr. Seligman had discovered that animals that had on first trial experienced an electric shock while the animal was in a harness that **did not allow the animal to escape** the shock (such lack of escape possibility is called, experimentally, an **Inescapable Stressor**), failed to learn how to escape or even try to escape in a second trial in which escape was possible both because the animal was no longer in a harness and there was an opening out of the cage – the 1973 researchers did not have access to these findings or their implications for Humans.

Dr. Seligman also found that another set of animals when on first trial were **allowed to escape** the electric shock by jumping out of the cage were, on subsequent trials, capable of learning new ways to stop the shock like pressing a lever or jumping out a new opening and in fact would continue to take various actions to stop or escape the shock. Without a prior experience with an inescapable stressor (harness and shock) an animal could and would learn a new way to escape or stop the shock and would continue by trial and error until successful.

In other words, the "non-stressed-at-inception-of-stress" animals were able to LEARN A NEW SKILL AND TAKE ACTION to avoid a shock, when upon first exposure to it, they had "learned from/at the start" to escape. When the first "learning experience" within a stressful event/type of event was instead "inescapable", the animal NEVER THEREAFTER COULD LEARN HOW TO ESCAPE and didn't, being "emotionally and physically pulverized" time after time after time, piling up what would now become not just STRESS, but full-fledged PTSD.

Mirror/Simulating Neurons

In 1973, even more stunning information wasn't available for the on-scene researchers to evaluate, concerning Hostage behavior, viz., crucial discoveries in Neuroscience that did not occur until the early part of the 21st-century.

These discoveries concerned a type of Brain Cell or Neuron, that came to be called collectively "Mirror Neurons", or "Simulating Neurons". These Specialized Neurons are found in only three or four distinct locations in the Human Brain (and in the brains of only a handful of primates, by no means all primates with genetic similarities to Humans); and their importance to any discussion of Hostage (Human) Helplessness/Surrender, Learned Helplessness, Stress Apathy, etc. ... is enormous.

That is because **"Simulating Neurons" are the Brain cells by and through which we learn to do things, to act or take action.**

Ever learn to ride a bicycle? Your Mirror or Simulating Neurons were pivotal to that process. Ever learn to throw a baseball? Your Mirror or Simulating Neurons were pivotal to that acquired skill, too.

You learned to stick out your tongue because when you were just a baby your mom or dad or both stuck their tongues out at you and smiled—which you also copied.

Mirror/Simulating Neurons capturing your parents' actions made it possible for you to repeat them. And hundreds and thousands more such actions thereafter. Your parents certainly didn't explain to you, when you were a baby, that "your tongue is in your mouth, and that you can voluntarily move it around in and out of your mouth"; nor did they try to explain the muscle physiology necessary to produce the effect.

But these Simulating Neurons do not operate just in infancy or childhood. They are at work every time you or I learn to do anything.

Always "On"!

Now there's a peculiar fact about these Simulating Neurons: **they are in the "On/Record" position all the time (not all Brain cells are)**; which means that whomever/whatever you are in the vicinity of, these Mirror Neurons cause you to copy or mimic ... not only behavior but also the intention(s) driving it.

This becomes problematic when you are in the vicinity of someone or some situation which causes you stress; where **STRESS is defined as follows: "THE FACT OF AND/OR THE FEELING THAT THE DEMANDS BEING MADE OF YOU EXCEED YOUR RESOURCES TO MEET THEM - ON ANY/EVERY LEVEL, AT ANY/EVERY LEVEL, IN EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE WHETHER PURELY VISCERAL OR COGNITIVE OR BOTH. "**

Simulating Neurons are biologically engineered, i.e., evolved, to be "On" at all times because as humans our ability to survive depends on our ability to learn what others, differently experienced, older and/or more successful than ourselves are doing to deal with life's different situations. Both before and after the dawn of Human Language, Evolution/Natural Selection favored Mirror Neuron development in the "On/Record" position, as environmental challenge (Demands on the Organism) were such that there wasn't (millions of years ago) and isn't more so than ever (to this day in Human history), time to hear about or read about all the things one needed/needs to learn to do ... **in order to learn enough, fast enough to maximize each of our chances of living long enough to reproduce offspring, who live long enough themselves to reproduce offspring (The Basic Equation of Evolution).**

Evolutionary Natural Selection tested out and proved by actual survival results or lack thereof, that Simulating Neurons couldn't succeed in a default position of "Off". Hence, by DNA design, they are always "On". This produces a survival challenge nested within the genetic benefit; to wit, a "potential genetic tripwire" for us Humans because under Stress, our Simulating Neurons **copy and replay from within our Brains, behavior and intentions** (Simulating Neurons register, encode, remember and replay both Goal-Oriented Behavior and Intentions), **not necessarily so likely to help us survive at all**: the behavior of the Stressor and whomever else around us is also experiencing his/her generated **Stress = an overabundance of Demands vs. Resources**].

If you have an abusive spouse, you will have a neural "predisposition" to mirror his/her behavior and intentions, BECAUSE abuse puts you under **Stress** and your Mirror/Simulating Neurons are by default in the "On/Record" position.

Examples: The Bank Hostages (unconsciously) mirrored their captors in 1973! If you lived under the highly stressful perverse iron hand of 1930s' Nazi Germany, you would have felt pressured (quite unconsciously) to act in kind, within the limits of what your environment allowed in your own behavior and intentions, etc., etc.

STRESS, ADVERSELY SHAPING THE ACTIVATION OF MIRROR NEURONS, IS WITHOUT EXAGGERATION THE ROOT OF EVERY BIT OF CONTAGIOUS HUMAN SUFFERING, DISCORD, ATROCITY, TERROR, HARMFUL AND DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR THERE IS OR EVER WAS.

Fortunate Evolution

On the other hand, what's fortunate about Simulating Neurons, fortunate as well as fascinating is that the conscious portion of the Human Brain (The Executive Brain, Working Memory, The Prefrontal Cortex, etc.), if not incapacitated by stress, **acts as a near perfect manager/check on the automatic mimicry which is genetically characteristic of Simulating Neurons UNDER STRESS.**

Therefore, IF YOU ARE AROUND SOMEONE OR SOMETHING THAT CAUSES YOU STRESS OR MEANS YOU HARM ACUTELY OR CHRONICALLY, then like the Bank Hostages and all the other Hostage victims researched, you will mimic ACUTELY OR CHRONICALLY, their anti-survival/negative/harsh treatment of you which MAKES YOUR BEHAVIOR ON A COMPLETELY UNCONSCIOUS LEVEL, SELF-DEFEATING AND SELF-DESTRUCTIVE.

BUT FORTUNATELY, TO THE DEGREE AN INDIVIDUAL CAN AVOID OR RAPIDLY/CONSISTENTLY REVERSE STRESS, THE STRESS RESPONSE, ETC., AND KEEP HIS/HER EXECUTIVE BRAIN FULLY OPERATIVE (SINCE STRESS WILL REDUCE EXECUTIVE BRAIN FUNCTION UP TO 15%) ... FULL/RESTORED EXECUTIVE BRAIN FUNCTION OVERRIDES AUTOMATIC MIRROR NEURON COPYING OF STRESSOR BEHAVIOR AND INTENTIONS. IN THAT CIRCUMSTANCE, AN INDIVIDUAL CAN SUCCESSFULLY COUNTER, BE FREED FROM, AND AVOID AND/OR REVERSE BEING MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY TRAPPED INTO SLAVISH MIMICRY TO A PERSON OR PERSONS STRESSING HIM/HER.

This is what the 1973 Mirror-Neuron-Affected Hostages could not do: THEY COULD NOT CONTROL THEIR MIRROR NEURONS' AUTOMATIC RECORDING AND UNCONSCIOUS ADOPTION OF THEIR STRESSORS' BEHAVIOR AND INTENTIONS.

Because they were at inception of the incident, terrified by their captors, had no knowledge of the existence let alone the function of Mirror Neurons and had no way to reverse the decline of Executive Brain Function due to that very Stress, they compulsively, were driven unconsciously to aid their captors in every way.

Executive/Conscious Brain Incapacitation

To reiterate, the conscious portions of the 1973 Hostages' Brains were incapacitated by **STRESS** significantly and as a result **they exactly mimicked, in their attitudes toward their captors and themselves how their captors felt about them**, which explains both the belief they were receiving small kindnesses and additionally, how later on two of the Hostage women decided to marry their captors while still in prison.

Note: Mirror/Simulating Neurons ARE NOT CONSCIOUS BRAIN CELLS!

The Mirror-Neuron-Affected Hostage Effect

The 1973 Bank Hostage researchers discovered that virtually anyone can fall prey to the not-so-unusual-after-all, Hostage-Type-Response they were studying and trying to understand **when the following Four (4) Conditions are simultaneously achieved and for as long as they are simultaneously maintained:**

Returning to the 1973 Bank Hostage Situation ... The Conditions ...

1. The Mirror-Neuron-Affected Hostage perceives (this is experienced most profoundly in the unconscious portions of the Brain) a serious threat to his/her survival and believes that his/her Terrorist captors (Stressors of any kind beyond the mildest, short-lived variety), are willing to act on that threat, meaning to kill, harm or severely injure him/her or a loved one or another Hostage in some way physically or just emotionally.
2. The Mirror-Neuron-Affected Hostage at the same time, during his/her confinement (physical or emotional), will perceive what he/she considers to be "small kindnesses" from the Terrorist Captor(s) (Stressor) in the middle of the ongoing Terror (PTSD or Stress event). So as to be clear with respect to this very counter-intuitive point: despite the fact that the overall situation clearly terrorizes the Mirror-Neuron-Affected Hostage and despite the fact he/she is threatened with execution at every moment ... the Mirror-Neuron-Affected Hostage will irrationally "decide" he/she is being shown "small kindnesses" by the same Terrorist Captor(s) (Stressor) (physically or emotionally), who are concurrently threatening to execute (destroy the unstressed, genuine identity of) the Hostage, as a bargaining chip to obtain their demands (or whatever it is they

desire to take from having captured the Hostage). [Those who routinely stress others, seek to rob their victims of resources to try to meet their own disorderly, confused and turbulent internal, emotional and physical unmet demands].

3. The Mirror-Neuron-Affected Hostage is deliberately isolated from a true picture or understanding of the situation he/she is in, except as dictated and only when "permitted" by his/her Captor(s)/Stressor(s). In any of the multiple dozens of ways it might be achieved, the Hostage is restricted to seeing "the reality of his/her situation" only from the Terrorist Captors' (Stressor's) well-orchestrated, highly choreographed point of view [complicating this is that the person perpetrating the Hostage situation is under pressure from his/her own Terrorist(s)/Stressor(s), present or past]. The Terrorist/Stressor, using for persuasion, everything from overt cruelty to misdirection, keeps his Mirror-Neuron-Affected Hostage(s) "cognitively" off balance and in the dark about the Terrorists' true actions, motives and plans!
4. The Mirror-Neuron-Affected Hostage experiences a perceived inability to escape from the Terrorist Captor(s)/Stressor, to the extent that he/she ceases and all too often never even begins to believe he/she could be in any other condition than "captured", all below the level of consciousness. This state of mind deteriorates to trance-like lack of clear perception that he/she is being held captive at all = the condition defined on page 1 as **STRESS APATHY!**

Mirror Neuron/Stress Dynamics ... Global Context

To give this all a real-world, "ripped from the headlines" perspective, demonstrating that the Mirror Neuron/Stress Dynamics of the Human Brain not only can but have many times sweepingly and irreversibly influenced world events, let alone the life of an individual or a family or company or marketplace or client base, etc., detrimentally ... consider this one more than representative example ...

... On September 11, 2001, the U.S. and the World viewed with horror an exact instance (in form, if not content) of the 1973 Bank Mirror-Neuron-Affected Hostage Situation times four, or perhaps more accurately times three and a half. As everyone knows, that morning at the outset, four planes were successfully hijacked, (passengers and

crew taken Hostage) . Two of the aircraft were eventually crashed into the World Trade Towers in NYC and a third slammed into the Pentagon.

As the abduction proceeded, **The Mirror-Neuron-Hostage Effect** (as one might call it), unfolded exactly according to the 4 Conditions laid out earlier. The Bin Laden Terrorists had taken over four airliners in broad daylight using nothing more sophisticated than box-cutters and simple knives. How did they do that? By counting on **The Mirror-Neuron-Hostage Effect**, they estimated correctly that their Hostages would submit at least long enough for them to accomplish their respective missions.

Except that on United Flight 93, one passenger on a cell phone was relayed information from the ground, breaking the hold of Condition 3. above. The Terrorists' choreography was breached when Todd Beamer discovered that 3 other planes had been hijacked that day and how they had been crashed into the Towers and the Pentagon; Beamer now had "the big picture" his Captors didn't want him to see.

Abruptly, **The Mirror-Neuron-Hostage Effect** was broken and Beamer and others went into action, forcing that plane into a Pennsylvania field, far from its intended destination.

Had Beamer and his compatriots known about **The Mirror-Neuron-Hostage-Effect** prior to boarding, and acted earlier in the Flight, they might have even saved their own lives in addition to saving either **The White House** or **The Capitol**, whichever their Terrorist Captors would have otherwise successfully reached had they not been stopped, and instead reached Washington, D.C. that day.



Purpose of The TRUSTCard™

As you will learn a great deal more about on this and related websites and in other SALVAGE TRUST, LLC Locations, **TheTRUSTCard™** Reverses The Mirror-Neuron-Affected-Hostage Effect, freeing an Individual, Families, Groups, Whole Countries perhaps from Learned Helplessness and Stress Apathy, about which more to follow in subsequent articles on this web page.

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