

## ***How Children Experience Family Abduction***

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Through its program work with former abducted children, Take Root has discovered that many abducted children share common experiences during the abduction ***regardless of the taking parent's motivation***. Many of these common experiences have to do with sudden, unexpected, extreme changes in the following areas, which, taken together, Take Root calls "Identity Rupture":

### **Components of the Identity Rupture that accompanies Family Abduction**

Sudden, unexpected changes in:

**FACTS** - autobiographical facts about the child's life, such as

- \*name*
- \*place of birth*
- \* date of birth*
- \*name and status/existence of family members*

**FACTORS** - environmental factors; people, places, things in the child's life, such as

- \* family members*
- \*friends*
- \* pets*
- \*belongings*
- \*school*

**FORM** - expected and acceptable behaviors, for example,

- \* the child often becomes "adultified,"*
- \* the child is often taught to lie and hide*

Children abducted by family members are often:

- forced to go underground with the abducting parent,
- given a new name, birth date or place, and identity,
- told not to tell or to lie about their past,
- forced to have only one person to depend on for information, viewpoints and reality-testing...their abducting parent
- many abducted children are physically and/or sexually abused, some are forced into domestic servitude
- kept out of school
- made to fear "discovery"
- removed from:
  - Family members including siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins
  - Home and all personal belongings
  - Pets
  - School and neighborhood
  - Friends
  - Community and activities
  - **All that is familiar**

During the abduction, the child is also taught to deal with life very differently. For example, they frequently begin taking on adult burdens and responsibilities, often becoming an emotional caretaker for the taking parent. The child may find themselves with a parent who is incapable of providing parental guidance and orders not to reveal their situation to anyone else, leaving the child to fend for themselves. In an effort to avoid detection the child may be forbidden to answer the door, told not to play outside, to close the blinds, to hide when riding in a car, to avoid authority or evade personal questions or lie. In such situations, hiding, secrecy, and distrust or fear of authority may become the norm.

Some children are taken deep underground. In an attempt to conceal the child, the taking parent may not allow the child access to proper educational, medical, and social services and support. Some abducted children are physically and/or sexually abused or forced into domestic servitude, while some are neglected and many are emotionally abused. This makes the abduction that much more complex for the child. The child is dependent on the abusive or neglectful parent and does not have a safe caregiver to turn to for protection. Although family abduction is almost always devastating for the child, the health, safety, and welfare of the child become particularly compromised in these situations.

Also see: Take Root's Gray Papers "*Reframing Family Abduction*" and "*Reframing Recovery*"