Support Following Release

As a family member, you might be wondering how you can help support your loved one who was recently released. The guidance below explains some areas to focus on and some challenges to look out for as your loved one is rebuilding their life. Hostage US can help your loved one with reintegration and rebuilding their life after being held hostage.

Seek medical help and ongoing treatment for physical or mental health needs. It is common to experience a variety of health issues that can be resolved or treated with the help of a professional. Hostage US has regional hospital partners where your loved one can go for a few days to get full medical check-ups. Hostage US will coordinate the appointments and cover the cost of the travel for your loved one to get medical care. Hostage US can also identify mental health practitioners in your area who take your loved one’s insurance or practice at a low cost. The things to look out for include:

- Physical health needs – address the immediate physical health needs first to ensure timely recovery. Some immediate physical health needs include:
  - Injuries
  - Malnutrition or other dietary issues
  - Vitamin deficiencies
  - Illnesses or diseases contracted while in captivity
  - Sleep issues including disturbances or difficulty sleeping, sleeping too much or sleeping too little

- Mental health needs – addressing the physical health needs first helps to alleviate the mental health needs. Some signs of mental health issues include:
  - Anger issues and short tempers
  - Difficulty concentrating
  - Difficulty retaining information
  - Nightmares or flashbacks
  - Intrusive thoughts about what happened
  - Hyper vigilant about surroundings

Establish a routine without being regimented. Routines can help former hostages to regain stability and control over their lives. This can include going on routine walks or helping out around the house. Take guidance from your loved one to understand what their needs are in creating a routine.

Be open and communicate how you are feeling. Recovery and rebuilding life after being held hostage takes time and talking through challenges with your loved one is helpful. Be realistic that the recovery will take time and will be an emotional journey. Returning home to different family dynamics after being held can be particularly difficult to navigate for a former hostage. Recognize that this is a possibility and communicate how you are feeling with your loved ones and discuss how to work through this.

Be patient during the reintegration process. Making decisions and getting back into normal responsibilities will be a difficult process for them. Be patient as they navigate the process.

Discuss major decisions or changes that were made while your loved one was away. It is likely there have been several changes while the hostage was in captivity especially if it was a long-term kidnapping. Try to be open and talk about these decisions with the former hostage and explain the reasons behind them.
Think though potential triggers or difficult situations and how they will affect your loved one. Common difficult situations include:

- Loud noises
- Light or dark rooms or spaces
- Decisions (too many choices or not being given choice)
- Crowds, rush hour traffic and other chaotic situations
- Eating (too much or too little)

Get help and resources for challenges as you help your loved one rebuild their life. Get assistance through their employer, insurance policies, the government, social programs, Hostage US or other non-profits. Returned hostages often have financial issues including late payments of bills or late IRS filings. Hostage US has pro-bono partners and advisors to help you solve these challenges and can also guide you to useful resources.