Staying Healthy for Civil Disobedience Actions

General preparation

- THE POLICE WILL USE FEAR AS A WEAPON AGAINST YOU. The more prepared you are, the less they can intimidate and control you.
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- 0 Get training – legal, "know your rights", health and safety, nonviolence, civil disobedience, etc. Talk through your plan with the group, anticipating what might go wrong and how you will respond. Discuss the likelihood of arrest and other potential outcomes.
- 0 The more you can anticipate and imagine possible scenarios ahead of time, the less likely you are to have long term problems from stress and trauma.
- 0 Talk with people who have done similar actions in your area. Find out how they were treated by the police, the courts, the media, the activist community, etc.
- 0 If possible, arrange for a support person for AFTER the action – someone who can look after your emotional health, give you massages and do whatever else helps you feel safe and cared for.

Preparation for arrest – do this stuff AHEAD OF TIME

- 0 Think about how you will cope with the stress of being arrested. This is true for everyone, but especially people prepared for extra abuse. See www.ocap.ca/legalguide/translegal.htm for more info. color, LGBT folks and anyone that looks different from their narrow definition of normal, so these folks should be who have anxiety, panic attacks, claustrophobia or something similar. Also, police are likely to target people of
- 0 Think about the health effects of detention, especially if you have a disability, diabetes, asthma, HIV/AIDS or any medical care even if you have a life-threatening emergency. For more info see other serious medical condition. In jail you may not have access to your medications, assistance devices or

- 0 Have an outside support person -- someone who will not be arrested. Give this person a list of your emergency else that needs to be taken care of (pet care, appointments, etc.). contacts, medications, medical conditions, phone calls that should be made if you are arrested, and anything
- 0 If you have legal support have the phone # written in indelible ink somewhere on your skin. Have other #s you might need written on you, as long as you don't mind the police seeing them.
- 0 Decide on whether you want to give the police your true name or practice jail solidarity (see government issued ID with you. www.indybay.org/news/2001/03/2218.php for info on solidarity). If you plan to give your name have a
- 0 Know the weather and dress accordingly. To lessen problems from chemical weapons, have most skin covered or contact lenses. Do not use oil based soaps or lotions on your skin. and bring a bandanna (ideally soaked in apple cider vinegar and sealed in a bag) and goggles. Don't wear fleece
- 0 Consider carrying with you: water, food (nuts, carrots, energy bars), extra clothes (protection against cold tile floors, a good pillow, etc.), a rain poncho.
- 0 in your area. A legal support person (someone trained in legal assistance for activists) should be able to tell you Consider carrying enough cash or a credit card to pay the standard fine/bail bondsperson fee for a misdemeanor
- 0 Have medications in original containers with a 2 copies of a doctors note stating you must take them. Give one container are the same copy to your outside support person. The letter will only help if the name you give police and the one on the
- 0 If you use personal assistance devices such as canes and braces, consider bringing them (and a doctor's note saying you need them). It's better to have them and not need them than be without.
- 0 When you go to do civil disobedience, don't carry anything you can't replace or anything you don't want the police to see. They can, and probably will, search your bags and pockets

If arrest seems imminent. . .

- 0 Your bag will probably be taken from you, so be sure that ID, meds and money are on your person. You will probably get your stuff back, but there are no guarantees. If you can, consider giving your bag, house keys, and car keys to someone who won't get arrested.
- 0 You may not be searched for a while so consider having the following on your person (not in a bag): cell phone (beware of any sensitive #sA in memory), food, extra clothes, pen, paper
- 0 If you want to get anything past a search, this is the time to hide it. Pens, phones, and meds can fit nicely in the front of your underwear or bra

If you are put in plastic handcuffs

- Plastic cuffs have caused some people long-term nerve damage. If you have pain, numbness or tingling in your hands at any time immediately request that looser cuffs be put on. If one officer refuses, ask another and don't
- Try not to move around too much, as this can tighten the cuffs. Consider requesting that your hands be cuffed in stop asking until they change the cuffs. front. Ask if anyone in your group can demonstrate how to contort yourself so that you can get the cuffs in front.
- If after the cuffs are removed you experience pain, numbness or other unpleasant feelings have these symptoms documented ASAP by a medical professional and get in touch with your local street medic organization. Also check out action-medical.net/library/aftercare/handcuffs.htm

you have a medical problem before or during detention

- If you have a medical condition that could cause problems while you are being held consider telling the police immediate professional medical attention. Do this early, as it may take a long, long, long time for the police to do in your group starts having a medical problem tell the police ASAP (with the person's consent), and request group tactics to get the police to respond. anything. If you don't get a response initially keep asking until help arrives. Consider using chanting or other ahead of time. This may encourage them to respond more quickly if you start to have problems. If you or anyone
- While you are detained Stay as calm as you can. The police may try to unnerve, dehumanize and generally stress you out. Try yoga, singing, meditation, sharing stories with fellow detainees, etc.
- Remember, police lie and manipulate. They will tell you things that aren't true (that your friends have blamed you and are getting out, that you'll get out in an hour, etc.)
- 0 Think about what good can come of your arrest. Can you do a skill-share with you cell mates? Learn new songs?
- Talk about favorite movies? Tell jokes?
- If police are abusive in any way (emotional, physical, violating your rights, etc.) note the officer's name and badge number. Try to remember as many specific details of the event as you can. If you have a pen, write it all down!

When you get out

- Release can be paradoxically stressful -- suddenly you have to deal with the outside world again
- Try and talk about your experiences before you go to sleep, ideally with the people who were with you. If experiences they have a higher incidence of long-term problems. others talk about what happened can help. Research shows that if people sleep before talking about traumatic possible, recount what happened and how you felt about it. If you don't feel comfortable talking, listening to
- o Try and be gentle with yourself. Sleep (after talking), eat healthy food, relax, get friends to give you massages, indulge, BUT avoid alcohol, tobacco and other drugs as much as possible.
- 0 Don't go through this alone! If your regular friends aren't sympathetic, find fellow activists or groups that can help Some medics are trained in counseling, or you can call the International Critical Incident Stress Hotline at 410
- 0 Try different options for stress management, including herbal therapy, counseling, massage, Reiki, etc. See www.geocities.com/healingtrauma/index2.html for more info.
- experience. This is normal, and may also be a sign that you could benefit from some more formal processing of Even if you don't feel terribly stressed you may have nightmares, a short temper or other reactions to your

For more information

- www.action-medical.net street medic site with lots of good information on plastic handcuffs and other health
- www.geocities.com/lfaid2000/processing.html basic suggestions for arres
- 0 students.washington.edu/afa/filecabinet/legal.html more arrest suggestions
- g8-binder.emmett.ca/papers/legal_tips.html even more descriptions and suggestions for arrestees
- www.bc.edu/bc_org/hyp/programs/stress/handout.html info on coping after a stressful event
- effects.htm a fact sheet on effects of trauma

www.bostoncoop.net/~balmsquad This document produced by the Boston Area Liberation Medic Squad (BALM Squad)