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du·ress  (d -rēs , dy -)

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n.

1.

a. Compulsion by threat or violence; coercion: *confessed under duress.*

b. Constraint or difficulty caused by misfortune: *"children who needed only temporary care because their parents were ill, out of work, or under some other form of duress" (Stephan O'Connor).*

2. Law

a. A fraud achieved through the use of a threat or compulsion: *She had a cause of action for duress. His claim was based on duress.*

b. A criminal defense for an act undertaken under threat of serious bodily harm: *His defense was duress.*

3. Forcible confinement.

[Middle English *duresse*, harshness, compulsion, from Old French *durece*, hardness, from Latin *dūritia*, from *dūrus*, hard; see **deru-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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