



Tips to Increase Your Personal Safety

1. ***Situational Awareness:*** It is my experience that most people fail to recognize potential threats until it is too late. It is paramount to understand that the situation itself is the most important aspect as it is in constant flux and determines our options. For this reason, our choices may and often times create a potential for violence. Where we frequent or find ourselves? Where we park our vehicle and when? How much alcohol we choose to consume while out alone or with acquaintances? By becoming more aware of these cognitive decisions, we increasingly create a greater awareness of the situations that we may find ourselves and the consequences associated to them.
2. ***Animal Instincts:*** When a gazelle senses its predator, a leering cheetah nearby, its immediate reaction is to escape to the nearest safe haven as fast as it can. Humans through evolution have become docile and either dismiss or rationalize these same inert feelings that have always been with us through our earlier primal years. Of course, there are few exceptions such as a new mother out with her infant for the first time in a strange environment on constant alert. What we must do is embrace these feelings that have been identified as our intuition and instincts; rely on the tingling 'spider-sense' to warn us when danger is near and then react as an animal fearing for its own personal safety would.
3. ***Understand Violence:*** There are two key elements that we need to know about violence that will assist with the applications of these guidelines;
 - a. ***Social Violence*** typically involves an audience during or just prior to the encounter and may include; gang related acts, an individual protecting his ego or manifested by a group or individual such as a swarming or riots. These acts are usually random in nature and can be avoided through properly applied risk management and situational awareness.
 - b. ***Asocial Violence*** usually involves predator behavior associated with psychotic tendencies and includes more serious offences such as murder, sexual assaults and specific robberies. Although the majority of these acts are premeditated in that the predator will spend some time learning about its prey prior to contact, they may also be random or more specifically, opportunistic when the subject has developed a pattern and recognizes the opportunity for violence when it presents itself.
4. ***Use of Force Continuum:*** Already adopted by law enforcement agencies, military and most private security firms, a use of force continuum is a model which identifies opponent behavior and provides an appropriate force application based on legal accountability. What this means to you as a civilian is that we need to identify specific violent characteristics starting with non-

verbal intimidation, i.e. starring, hand gestures, etc., verbal confrontations, physical attacks commencing with shoves, grabs and strikes, finishing with multiple assailants and lethal situations. When applied properly, this model not only provides a guideline for us, but also legally justifies our actions.

5. **Legal Justification:** This is important to address here for numerous reasons, mostly to protect yourself from criminal and civil liability. Firstly, you as a civilian have the right to protect yourself and to use as much force as is necessary to do so, refer to the Use of Force Continuum above, unless the attack was provoked by our own actions. Secondly, if we use excessive force, in that we continue to exert force when the conflict has been resolved or an opportunity presents itself to refrain from continuing to apply force, we may be held liable both criminally and civilly for those actions. In essence, you may be charged criminally and sued civilly for compensation even if found not guilty in criminal court if you continue to exert force once you successfully protected yourself.
6. **Warning vs. Danger Signs:** To simplify the difference; during the posturing or intimidation stage, your opponent will stand tall, puff up their chest and stare through you in an attempt to make themselves as large as they can. During the danger or pre-incident stage, the attacker will ball up, lowering their center of gravity, blading, tuck the head in dropping the chin and raise their hands above waist height to prepare and attack. It should be noted that all initiation attacks require the same biomechanical loading to launch.
7. **Environmental Awareness:** Many confuse Situational Awareness for this, however they are both separate yet complement one another. To enhance our personal safety, we must become aware of our surroundings and identify key points such as escape routes, improvised weapons, distractions and deterrents. We must analyze these concepts in all of our settings; sitting in a coffee shop, out at a local bar or pub, sitting in your vehicle at a delayed red light or stop sign and shopping in the local mall. Knowledge of the above prior to a violent encounter will expedite your options and decision-making.
8. **Weapons:** One of the most common questions I receive during seminars is “What should I carry to protect myself, a knife or pepper spray?” Unfortunately, the reality is neither. Take an inventory of what you currently carry or have at your disposal and identify a tactical application for it. A nail file or keys in your purse, an ice scraper in the center console, rings on your fingers, etc. When you’ve mastered this, then survey your opponent and identify what they have brought with them to the encounter; a hooded sweatshirt, a large pendant around their neck and even a weapon of intimidation. Remember that what you or your opponent brings can be taken away and used by the other.
9. **Efficient Striking:** When called upon, you may have to strike and in doing so are better off using an open hand strike to the head area and closed fist or even better, an elbow to soft tissue. Elbows and knees are more efficient in close quarters when grabbed or clinched by your adversary and learning to

strike alternative targets, rather than head hunting all of the time increases your options.

- 10. *Strength in Numbers:* Although all of the above points will benefit you when confronted by your opponent, when traveling to foreign locations, going out for a night on the town or even planning an early morning or late-night run, doing so with a group of trusted friends will decrease your chances of being attacked. Doing any of these activities in highly visible areas with low crime rates will also increase your chances. If however you must travel alone, provide someone with an ETA and carry a cellular phone with you. Even unregistered cell phones will allow you to call 911 and if enabled with a GPS, provide your location.**

Thank you for taking the time and reading the above brief article. We are confident that you will gain some useful insight into the understanding of conflict and it's consequences. To better understand each point, I would suggest that you re-read one point at a time. Once you have thought of all your options for each point, table-top the material, openly discussing "What if" situations with colleagues, friends and family to prepare you mentally for such an encounter.

Please feel free to contact our organization if you have any questions or wish to pursue leading edge training to support these concepts and many more.

Stay safe and train hard.

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