

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

BECOME A HARD TARGET

Those with malicious intent generally single out individuals that seem meek, vulnerable, or unaware of their surroundings. Body language plays an extremely important role in how you are perceived by others. Exuding an aura of confidence, awareness, and capability, regardless of how you actually feel, can help broadcast to any threats that you are an undesirable target, and increase your personal safety.

EXITS

Always be aware of your exits, and have an exit strategy. Practice devising alternate methods of escape if your primary exit becomes compromised. This does not just apply to buildings, but can be practiced in cars, public transportation, elevators, and even in outdoor environments. This principle can also be applied to travel routes, and being conscious of obstacles, choke points, alternate routes, and so on.

VISUALIZE

Play out scenarios in your head beforehand. If you spot a situation in your immediate vicinity that could pose a threat, such as a blind corner on a sidewalk, ask yourself, "If there was a threat behind that corner, how would I react? Where could I escape?" Premeditating such responses can help them to become second-nature in the event of an actual emergency, making your response more effective.

ELECTRONIC DISTRACTIONS

Whether it's staring down at your phone or listening to music, using electronic devices can seriously impair your ability to be aware of what is going on around you. Only use your devices after you've determined you are in an area or situation where it is safe to do so. Look up occasionally to re-scan your surroundings and make note of any changes. If you're using headphones, consider using only one, or keeping the volume as low as possible in order to still be able to hear what is going on around you.

PERIPHERAL VISION

Attempt to focus on something while also observing what's happening at the edges of your vision. This widens your monitoring range for detecting anything out of the ordinary.

PERSONAL SPACE

If someone is crowding you, seems suspicious, or is displaying threatening body language, scan them for subtle signs of violent intent. Increase the distance between yourself and this person, allowing you some reaction time if they become an active threat.

INTUITION

Trust your gut. If you get the sense that something is wrong or doesn't add up, do not ignore it. Your instincts exist to protect you – it is always better to be overcautious than to ignore warning signs that turned out to be legitimate.

STOP AND PRETEND

If you feel like you are being followed, either on foot or in a vehicle, stop and turn around, pretending as if you went the wrong way. The reaction of the person following you will help you determine if they are indeed a threat: If they stop or reroute to mirror your actions, then you can confirm that they are following you intentionally.

SCAN

Most people automatically scan new situations or environments, but don't always focus on the most useful information. Practice looking for exits, barriers, suspicious objects and people, and any other unique elements that could be of importance to your personal safety. Additionally, be sure not to get complacent in familiar environments, such as your workplace or a regularly frequented lunch spot. Just because it is safe one day does not mean it will be safe every day.

SPEAK UP

If any situation or any person is making you feel uncomfortable; it is always better to report the incident rather than remain silent. A common statement to police after an incident is, "I did not want to bother you if it was nothing". An officer will never view an unfounded call as a burden. Traditionally, police officers have more information than civilians, so though you may feel your call is meaningless, it could have a significant impact.