

Personal Protection

Not self defence. Firstly it is a proactive, not reactive, system. Secondly, mindset is important – you are generally safer with a positive, controlled attitude than if constantly on the defensive.

Four stages to consider. First, actions to take at all times to reduce the chances of being exposed to violence. Second, how to recognise that a dangerous situation is developing. Third, how to defuse or escape a violent situation. Lastly, a few tips on how to fight back if it seems necessary.

Avoiding danger

General:

- Avoid isolated, poorly lit areas if possible
- Know or ask for advice on safer and riskier local areas
- Look confident, but not arrogant
- Trust your instincts – if you feel somewhere isn't safe, try to leave

On duty:

- Don't crowd people
- Keep a clear route to the nearest exit
- Consider placing kit between yourself and the casualty
- Get police/security/other first aiders to stay nearby
- Keep control informed of your location and status

Recognising danger

Potentially anyone can be a threat. A significant number of people are assaulted by someone known to them.

Increased risk:

- Alcohol or illicit drugs consumed
- Psychiatric patients
- Recent violence from individual or in area
- Crowded environment
- Confused person (including the elderly)

Physical features:

- Flushed or (often worse) pale skin
- Short, sharp movements
- Dilated pupils
- Verbal abuse

Dealing with danger

As a rule of thumb, running is better than losing your possessions, and losing your property is better than being hurt. With this in mind, running (if possible) is a first resort, and fighting is a last resort. Be aware that anything other than compliance carries a risk of antagonising the attacker and leading to greater risk of harm.

Someone who was content to take your wallet may decide to ‘teach you a lesson’ if fought. It is rarely possible to be certain that they are not armed, and do not have friends nearby, and so resisting should be considered a risky action.

Attempting to fight back is generally only wise if you suspect death, serious injury, or rape is likely if you submit. Even in these cases, running is preferable to fighting if it is an option. Also consider shouting – if others are around they may be able to help.

Making this decision is rarely a single choice – it should be re-evaluated continuously as the situation changes.

Attempt to appear and sound confident, and use your voice to calm the situation. A low, slow tone is less likely to inflame the situation. Maintain eye contact if possible – if this is difficult then focus on the nose (gives a similar impression to the assailant, but easier to maintain).

Fighting back

- Don't try anything flashy
- In order of range:
 - Kick to knee
 - Palm strike to nose or throat
 - Knee to groin
 - Elbow to ‘solar plexus’ or throat
- Grappling isn't pretty. Break fingers, use nails and teeth – any target is fair
- Shout and strike – attracts attention, and also adds force to a punch/kick
- Aim to disable rapidly, then run
- If a knife is in use, expect to get cut
- Watch out for additional assailants

Law permits use of ‘reasonable force’ to defend yourself from assault.

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