ULTIMATE STREET DEFENSE

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Ultimate Street Defense

The world is no longer a safe place

I hate to say it, but the world is no longer a safe place.

Every day bad things are happening to good people, from muggings and robberies to kidnapping and worse. It's never been more important to learn how to stay street smart and keep your defenses up.

Because the danger around us isn't even the worst part. What I still find incredible is just how many people who simply refuse to believe that anything is wrong.

They walk around in their own little bubble, and they actually get shocked when bumping into you takes them by surprise. Most of the times these encounters are harmless enough, and after an embarrassed chuckle and a hurried apology they're back on their way again.

But what these people don't realize is they danger they're placing themselves in by acting like this.

 Our streets are no longer safe. We hear it on the news so often I'm surprised that more people aren't aware at how dangerous it really is. Walking around without paying attention is like painting a giant target on your back.

You've got to rely on yourself to stay safe, make one mistake and you could be staring down the business end of a knife, or the barrel of a gun in your face as your attacker demands your wallet.

I'll say this again because it's so important. You are responsible for your own safety. No one else. If you're not looking out for you, you're asking for trouble, and eventually it's going to find you.

In this guide we're going to teach you the fundamentals of street smart defense, to ensure you never become a victim. You'll learn how to stay alert and attentive, smart defensive moves that will help you to stay safe, and the rules to follow when you're out and about at night.

All it takes is one bad encounter for your life to dramatically change.

The first step is staying alert

One of the most important skills you can develop to stay safe on the streets is the ability to stay alert. In the military we called this situational awareness. It may sound complicated, but there's a simple concept at the core. You should be aware of what's going on around you at all times.

That's it.

If you've got poor situational awareness, there's a higher chance you'll do something that puts you in harms' way. Maybe by accident. Or maybe you don't notice where you've been walking and find yourself alone and at the advantage of some very nasty people.

Heck, I see people all around me, putting themselves at risk every day. Want to know how?

Smartphones.

Think about it. How many people do you see, who are stumbling along with their faces buried in their phone, earbuds in, and at best resemble a walking zombie. Sure, they're not really causing any harm apart from occasionally bumping into you, but their lack of awareness is putting them at risk.

Maybe it's a simple accident like walking straight into a street sign.

Or maybe, they're targeted by criminals who are specifically looking for people who are oblivious to what's going on around them.

You're like a walking beacon that screams "rob me!"

Anyone can use this lack of awareness to catch you by surprise, it's your job to ensure you never give anyone the chance.
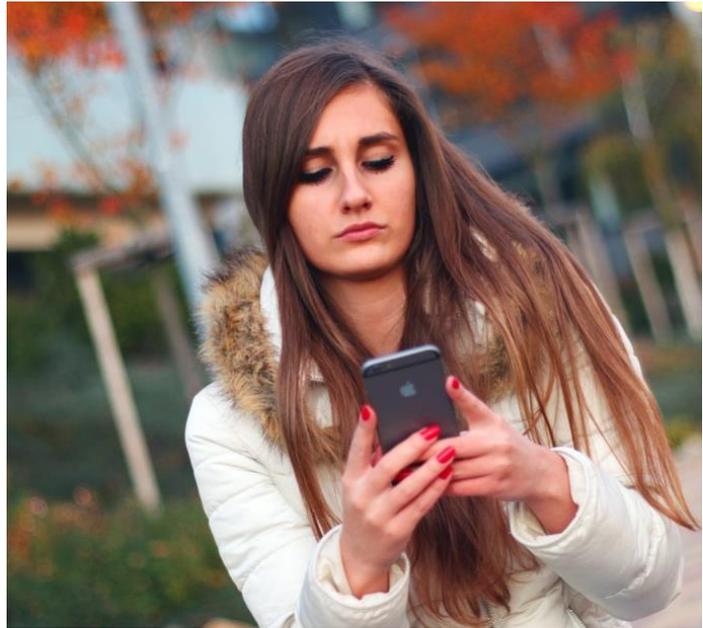
Learning how to stay alert

Luckily, situational awareness is a skill you can learn. It's really just about being mindful, and paying attention to what's happening around you. For me, I use a simple breathing technique when I want to stop and take stock of my surroundings.

I simple pause whatever it is I'm doing, take a deep breath, and start considering what's going on around me. I've done it so frequently that it's now a habit that I follow, especially when I'm walking into a new room, or encountering a new situation.

All it takes is a split second, and I've considered the people around me, evaluated potential threats, and have a rough idea of what I'd do should something bad happen. But that's not even the coolest thing.

When you start using your situational awareness to react, it's almost like a superpower.

Being constantly ready to take action allows your body to react far quicker than you ever thought possible. Much like how professional athletes have trained to perform the same motions with every swing of their tennis racket, you'll almost be in the zone when an emergency hits.

By staying aware I've been able to quickly position myself between my wife and another lady who thought to hit her with a chair when her back was turned (long story), and managed to quickly save two bottles of liquor as a fight broke out and two morons came crashing through the bar onto our table. In both situations, I was able to act before anything happened, because I was aware.

The trouble is, staying aware requires a consistent effort, and when you're just getting started it can be difficult to always pay attention. After teaching these techniques countless times, I've found that most of my students fare far better when they follow a simple model.

The model that I always refer back to is one of the best I've ever come across for training situational awareness. Developed by air force pilot and military strategist John Boyd, it's called the OODA loop and it has four key parts.

- **Observe** what's going on around you and develop a feel of what's "normal"
- **Orient** yourself to actually make use of the important information you identify
- **Decide** what you would do should an emergency present itself
- **Act** on your decision with reflex-like speed

Here's a little more detail about how each stage works:

Observe

Once you start consciously telling yourself to pay attention to what's going on around you, the part of your brain that's responsible for monitoring these senses will kick into gear. It's like, your subconscious self wants to keep you safe, but it can't do it all alone. You need switch it on.

But the best part is that you don't need to be in a dangerous situation to practice this awareness. The key is to just have your head up and notice what's going on. This allows you to develop a feel for what "normal" is, and it means you'll actually start to notice when things change.

I also recommend that my students focus on any outliers, and identify anything that shouldn't be happening based on their knowledge of the area. Is there one person particularly anxious while everyone seems relaxed? Is there a particular group that's acting excessively loud and dominant? In my experience, it's the outliers what often spark a change, so pay particular attention to these.

Orient

The next step is to turn the data you've collected from your surroundings into actual information you can act on. This is known as orienting yourself. It could be as simple as standing so you've got a wall behind you and can still see the exits, to ensure you've always got an escape route and yet no one can sneak up behind you.

Of course this isn't always possible, so just do your best. Perhaps knowing what direction the exit is in is enough, or there may be some glass or a mirror's reflection you can use to keep an eye on who is coming in and out of the restaurant, without having to face the front door.

One thing I also recommend is to be ready to act. If someone is acting aggressively, or just outside of the norm, I'd quietly get my pepper spray or Strikepen ready. Just in case their focus turns to you, you've got to be ready to defend yourself. Being ready to act is the key to this step.

Decide

Now comes the important part. With the information you've gathered, you should be able to determine any likely scenarios that may play out. It's logical the two guys in a shouting match may start actually fighting, or that creepy guy in the corner who has been watching you the entire time may intend to follow you home.

But once you know what could happen, you've got to decide how you will act. Should a certain scenario come to life, what are you intending to do? Have you got a plan for an attacker walking in the front door with a semi-automatic rifle?

What about a knife?

By thinking this through and deciding what needs to be done, you'll greatly speed up your reaction times. It may seem silly to you now, but trust me. A lot can happen in a few seconds and having a plan of attack could make all the difference when it comes to keeping yourself safe, or even escaping with your life.

Action

The final step is the most important one. Taking action. Once you've decided what you will do, all that remains is putting your plan into action. When you're faced with an emergency there will not be time to improvise a solution, and your brain can only process so much information at once.

That's why so many people simply break down in a high-stress emergency, because they're overloaded and they freeze up.

But, this isn't going to help you get to safety.

Actually surviving a bad encounter depends on your ability to take quick and decisive action, so trust your instincts. When a situation doesn't feel right, or there's something off, position yourself defensively, figure out an escape plan, and be ready to book it out of there as fast as you can.

Losing your awareness is all too easy

Of course, it's all too easy to lose your focus. We're not typically trained to stay aware, and there's so many different things demanding attention around you it can just slip. In my experience, there's three main ways you can become unaware, so pay attention and don't let these situations get your guard down.

The first is often referred to as the "bubble" or "tunnel vision." It happens when you start focusing on a particular task at hand, but by doing so you lose your ability to pay attention to everything else that's going on around you. Perhaps you're caught up in a good book, are getting stuck into a presentation for work, or are even just browsing entertaining videos on YouTube. When this happens, you're effectively placing a target on your back.

The second biggest risk is complacency. It's normal to assume that the things around us are normal, and they will continue working normally. Because let's be honest, the vast majority of the time this will be the case. But it leads to complacency, and you'll never be ready should an unexpected event occur. The trick is to be aware of this and to always ensure you're proactively paying attention. Otherwise, that one time you do need to react, you're going to be caught by surprise like a deer in the headlights.

Finally, you've got to be careful of fatigue. Your body needs rest to recharge, and when it all comes down to it, you're not going to function well when you're tired. After a long night shift it's easy to forget about staying aware as you're fumbling for your keys at your car, or even keeping your eyes open while you're riding the train home. Once you give in to fatigue, your guard will fall and it becomes far easier for an attacker to approach you unawares. Fight the urges to sleep, but ensure you're getting

enough so that you're still able to focus. When your concentration slips, that's when you become a target.

How to know when you've become a target

Having someone following you is a scary experience. Perhaps you heard a quick couple of steps, or a strange sound behind you when it appears there's no one around. In fact, studies have shown that people tend to sense trouble before it comes, so trust your gut, and if something doesn't feel quite right, it probably isn't. You may already be a target.

The first step is to figure out if there is someone after you. Because let's face it, you may just be paranoid, and before you let your fears get the best of you, you need to verify if there is actually a threat. Of course, they may not immediately copy you, so trust your instincts and if you feel unsafe, it's time to take action. In my experience you should never, ever, ignore your instincts.

From here, you could:

- Cross the street, to see if the person behind you does the same
- Start walking faster, to see if the person behind you does the same
- Pause briefly, using the reflection in a window to see if they're behind you

Of course, they may also be far more aggressive, if they're stood blocking your way, are loud and are shouting at you, or are making threats and have a weapon out and aimed in your direction. When this happens you've become a target.

What you need to focus on now is getting away.

Using your surroundings to escape

Before panicking too much, take a breath and tell yourself that you can handle this. You need to calm down, and start thinking logically. Once you give in to fear, there's a good chance you'll miss just the thing you need to save yourself. So keep a level head. Look around you. Is there anywhere that looks safer?

Perhaps there's a crowd inside that late-night restaurant, or that big old hotel that always has security guards out the front. Think, and make a plan. You want to get yourself to a heavily populated place, where you can use the safety of the crowd to protect you from your attacker. Generally, they won't want to be seen or identified, so this will be enough to escape.

Increasing the distance

Once you know where you're headed, you need to start looking for ways to increase the distance between you and your attacker. Perhaps there's a fence you can slip through, or a shortcut you can take that slows down your attacker enough that they lose sight of you. If this happens it's the perfect chance to escape, so start running as fast as you can and get yourself to safety

If there's nothing of the sort, just start slowly speeding up. Don't make it noticeable, but once they've dropped a little back start into a light jog increasing the distance between the your attacker and you even more. When there's a big enough gap, it's time to book it and run.
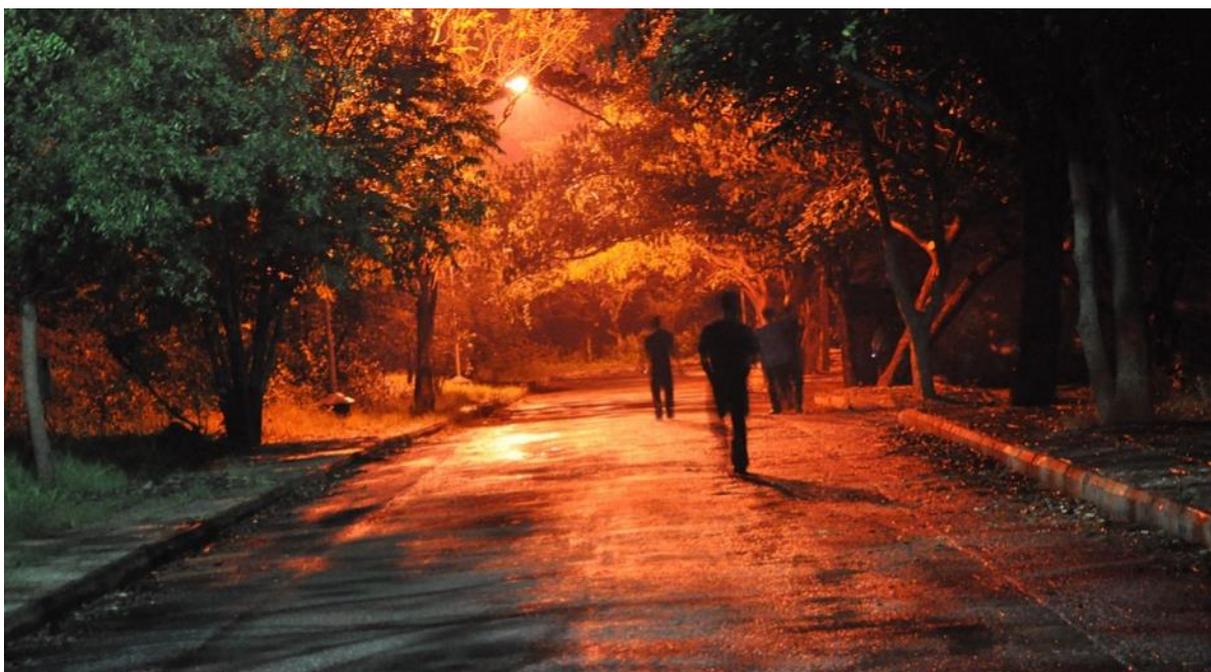
Just book it and run

It doesn't matter if your attacker is still following you at this point, my advice is to put as much distance between you and the threat as possible. Perhaps it was just an opportunistic mugger who has no desire to keep following you. Or maybe it's an angry ex-lover and they'll continue chasing until they catch up. No matter what happens, you need to book it and run.

From all of my experience, I can honestly tell you that nothing good will happen if you stay. You need to presume the worst and get yourself out of there as fast as you can.

As you do, you've got to make a few judgment calls.

The first, is to determine whether or not you're still being followed. After sprinting away initially, slow down and see if your attacker is still coming. You can't keep this pace forever, so slow down, which will help you to keep a little energy should you actually need to fight back. You may also need to pace yourself if you're a long way from safety, to avoid getting winded and your attacker catching up.

You also need to pay attention to your surroundings. Wherever you are running make sure you're thinking ahead and take care never to head into a dead end, or an area where you could be trapped. It goes without saying, but avoid dark alleys and backstreets, and I'd also avoid anywhere dark where you could potentially be held hostage. Your goal is to be running towards a public place, with lots of

light, and many other people. If you're not familiar with the area you're running through, keep a good eye on what's coming up ahead so you don't find yourself stuck.

Once you see your attacker slowing down, try to increase your speed and further increase the distance between you two, before settling back into your normal running pace. It might be enough to get them to call off the chase, especially if you've got more endurance than they do.

The key to running to safety is to always remember that you can run.

Toss your heels and rip your skirt if you need to, but running is always an option. Just make sure you're fit enough that you can manage a brief run, as it's not always about how fast you can go. Timing comes into play, and if you can create enough distance or draw enough attention, you can discourage an attacker from reaching you.

This may seem obvious but it bears repeating, once you are safe call the police immediately, and then have a family member or a friend come to pick you up and escort you to safety.

But avoid going straight home. You can never assume that your attacker has stopped chasing you, they may just be hiding in wait and will start following you again once you leave the safe spot. Going home will lead them right to you, where they'll have the opportunity to sit and wait for another chance to get you alone.

When your attacker catches up

Now, the previous advice works if you're able to get to a safe place, but in the real world this may not be possible. Perhaps it's too late and no one is around, or there's nowhere to run to. Or maybe your attacker is faster than you and they've caught up already.

From here you've got two options. Play along, or confront your attacker. You'll need to make the call here as there are a thousand different factors that could influence the situation, the goal is just to get you safely through the attack and on your way to safety.

Give in to the attackers demands

It's not ideal, but for the sake of your contents of your wallet or your smartphone, often the smartest choice is to give in to the attackers demands. Once they've got what they wanted, you'll be free to run home. It's not worth getting stabbed over, and potentially losing your life.

In this situation I'd avoid making eye contact with your attacker, giving them the space they need to get what they want. But don't hand it to them. If they're after your purse, bring it out of your bag slowly, then toss it to the side as a distraction. When they lunge to grab it use this as your opportunity to escape, and get yourself out of the situation as fast as you can.

Now, there will be times when giving in is a bad choice. Perhaps your attacker wants to beat you, or there are other, obvious, desires that you're not willing to give in to. That's when you need to take action.

Confronting your attacker head on

Turning to face your attacker can give them pause. Often, it can be enough to get them to back down completely, but not always, so get ready for a fight.

As they get closer, make note of any details that could help the police to identify your attacker at a later stage, and take a defensive stance. Hold your fists up and scream as loud as you can. Yelling something loudly like "stop following me," or "leave me alone" will alert anyone nearby to what's going on, drawing attention that your attacker may not want. You want to make as much noise as possible. Grab a rock and smash a car window to set off the alarm, or whistle and scream in the hope someone hears and comes to investigate.

By getting lout it demonstrates to your attacker that you're not the easy target they expected. And by making as much noise as possible you begin drawing attention to what's going on, which presents a risk for your attacker. They could be identified, or even caught.

I had a student in a similar situation just a couple of weeks back. They were being followed but used a rather novel tactic to deter their attacker. They started broadcasting the encounter on Facebook Live, announcing to the guy following them that they were about to be captured on live video, and become an internet sensation. In this instance it was enough to give the attacker pause, and my student was able to get away safely.

If your confrontation has stopped the attack, it's time to get away. Do it fast, putting as much distance between the two of you as possible. Just make sure you're running towards a populated area. I'd also be calling the police at this stage, and follow the directions of the operator.

Of course, it could also be that after confronting your attacker you haven't scared them off. The vast majority will be spooked by the attention you raise, but it pays to be prepared, and that means defending yourself. By any means necessary.

Defending yourself on the streets

Knowing how to fight back is an important skill.

No matter how well prepared you are, lady luck won't always shine on you and you could find yourself face to face with someone who intends to do you real harm. Perhaps you've been followed to your car after your shift, or someone's tried to pull you into their van as you were jogging down an isolated patch of road.

You need to know how to defend yourself, and take the fight to your attacker so you don't become a victim yourself.

But before we do, I want to make one point very clear.

Street fights are brutal. There is no chivalry. They often end in tears, and a world of pain. Other people may jump in to help out, or perhaps just for the hell of it, as there are no rules to follow. Because of this fights happen fast, are unpredictable, and can leave you a painful and bloody mess.

I always recommend finding a way out before that first punch gets thrown.

Can you walk away?

Much like giving in to an attacker's demands, before a fight breaks out I recommend asking yourself this question. Can you walk away?

If all they want is your wallet, just hand it over. The only way to guarantee you walk away from a street fight is to end the fight without a punch being thrown. And because you never know what may happen, a bruised ego or a lost wallet is far better than a mouthful of broken teeth.

When it's time to fight back

Street fights are nasty things, but it gives you an edge. You can do whatever it takes to win, so take a breath, and get ready to start fighting back.

Now wake up, things are going to get ugly fast.

The first thing you need to do is keep your eyes on your opponent, and look for any little signs that may signal an attack. Some people shift their weight on their feet, while others tense up and drop their chin. I actually used to spar with a guy who would take a big breath before every attack, and by properly identifying it, you can anticipate the punch. So you can either dodge or block it.

Of course, paying attention to your opponent isn't always enough.

You've also got to keep an eye out for what's happening around you. From how many of the attackers "friends" you may need to fight off, or keeping an eye on the sneaky one edging around the side to attack you from behind. When you're in a street fight you need to pay attention to everything around you. Heck, you may even identify something you could use as a weapon, someone you could call for help, or a path you could use to escape.

Before it all goes down though, you need to settle into a fighter's stance. This improves your balance, and helps you put more weight and force into each punch you throw.

Spread your feet so they're roughly shoulder-width apart, with one foot a little in front of the other so your body is at a 45 degree angle. Oh, and bend your knees slightly as you raise your fists up to protect your face, tucking your chin down slightly and clenching your teeth together. Be ready to move quickly if your opponent starts to attack.

Now this advice may be a bit controversial, but I'm all about practicality. If you're getting into a fight, you need to unleash extreme violence.

In the real world most fights only last a few moments, with a few punches being thrown before someone is down for the count. My advice is to never be that guy, so if you truly believe you've got no other choice, don't wait. So unleash the beast.

Be the one swinging the first punch.

Be the loudest.

Be the most aggressive.

Be the one on the attack.

Here's where you need to be targeting your attack:

- **Eyes**. The eye gouge is exactly what it sounds like. Using two fingers or the thumbs of both hands, push hard into the eye sockets. Your goal is to crush or scoop out the eyeballs from the cavity. It's extremely painful, and if done correctly will put your attacker down.

- **Throat**. The windpipe is very susceptible to being attacked, and all it takes is a strong, straight punch or an uppercut to crush it. Once you have, your opponent will struggle to breathe, and even only a modest strike is going to do significant damage.

- **Groin**. A strong knee to the groin can knock the wind out of your attacker, or you could also stomp down hard on it should you get them on the ground. Put as much force into the strike as you can, and use the seconds you gain to escape.

- **Knees**. As a weapon knees can be strong, but if you attack by sweeping from the sides you can do a huge amount of damage, and ensure they're not able to even get up to walk, let alone continue following you. Kick, sweep or use your weight to knock their knees out.

- **Temples**. If you land this correctly it's one of the most effective knockout blows, as a strike here rattles the brain inside your attackers head and leaves them disoriented. Just extend your middle knuckle from your fist before you strike, and use as much force as possible.

- **Jaw**. This is best done with a hook punch, but if you catch your attacker off-guard and land a solid punch to the jaw it can rattle them by quickly spinning their head around, and knock them out. You want to aim for the part where the jaw connects to their skull.

- **Nose**. Using the palm of your hand you want to attack the nose at a rising 45 degree angle, like you're trying to push it from your attackers face. Do it hard enough and it'll break, and your attackers eyes will tear up, giving you plenty of time to escape.

Now it's not only about where you target, but even without any weapons you've got some pretty impressive abilities to cause serious damage. Remember, it's a street fight. It's nothing like what you watch on television, and your only goal should be to incapacitate your attacker so you can escape.

That being said, don't be afraid to use any of these to bring the fight to your attacker.

- **Biting**. If you're given the chance, bite your attacker. Hard. Your teeth are sharp, and your jaw has the ability to deliver a huge amount of pressure, especially if you're going for a particularly sensitive area, like your attackers face, hands, or really anything soft that you can get your teeth into.

- **Elbows**. Elbow strikes are forbidden in many forms of martial arts because they're so effective. It's one of the hardest parts of your body, so if you get in close use your elbows as an uppercut strike to the jaw, or as a hook strike to the jaw or temple.

- **Kicking**. In a fight far too many people forget about their feet, but you can do serious damage if you aim your kicks at vulnerable areas like the groin or the knees. Just make sure you're putting enough force into your kicks to do real damage, so you can create an opportunity and escape.

- **Head-butting**. Your forehead is another part of your body that's very strong, and if you're in close to your attacker use a head butt into their nose, using your forehead to strike. If you're lucky this'll break their nose, and they'll be all teared up so you can make a quick escape.

I want to say this again before we get too far, because far too many people glorify fighting like they see in a Hollywood movie. The reality is far from this. Street fights require you to be ruthless, using everything at your disposal to eliminate the threat that's in front of you. Keep hitting until they're down, and no longer a threat. In a street fight you may very well be fighting for your life, so give it all you've got to ensure you make it through.

What to do when you get hit

If you're in a fight it's expected that you're going to get hit. And I've got to tell you, it hurts like hell.

But getting punched is a side effect of fighting, and no matter how much training you've had it's not going to be possible to avoid every punch your opponent throws your way.

Getting punched the first time is a shock. It's just something we've never gotten used to. You can try to protect your face by keeping your hands up in a boxing guard position, and tuck your chin down. I also try to keep my elbows in to protect my ribs and the vital organs in my sides, and be in a wide stance so you don't get knocked off balance.

The trick though, is to learn how to properly absorb any punches you can't avoid, so your attacker only does a minimal amount of damage.

If they're aiming at your head, tighten your neck and clench your jaw, bringing your chin down so your forehead takes most of the impact. Your forehead is the hardest part of your head, and you can actually damage your opponents hand if they hit you there. Otherwise, you're going to want to roll with the punches, which effectively just means moving in the same direction as the punch that's been thrown. Stepping back, or rolling backwards can turn a direct hit into a glancing blow, and it will hurt a heck of a lot less.

If your opponent is throwing body punches, tighten your stomach muscles and take a side-step so they land off center, instead of connecting directly with your stomach or vital organs. You want the meaty

areas of your body, like your shoulders and hips to take the brunt of any attack. Plus stepping like this can throw off their swing, causing them to miss altogether. In boxing it's called ducking-and-weaving, so start moving your feet and be a harder object to hit.

I also recommend focusing on your breathing. You never want to get hit while you're holding your breath, as the hit will knock the wind out of you and it'll take time for you to recover. Instead, you should be shooting short bursts of air from your nose with every move you make, and tightening your stomach muscles at the same time.

Now once you've successfully come out on top of a fight, get the hell out of there. You're putting yourself in even more danger by hanging around, as even a knocked-out opponent may come-to at any time. Get yourself out of there and get somewhere safe, as quick as you can.

Once you're safe, you should also look for any injuries that may not have been immediately apparent after the fight. If you feel confused or dizzy, are seeing lights, are vomiting or experiencing memory loss, it's time to go see the doctor. It can take time for symptoms of a brain injury to show, so have a friend keep an eye on you for at least another day after the fight.

Improvising a weapon in a street fight

We mentioned earlier that in a street fight anything goes.

In our Strikepen Defense guide we run through many of the self-defensive items you could use against an attacker, but what happens when you haven't prepared in advance?

My advice, is to grab whatever you can and hit your attacker with it. You want to find solid objects, that allow for a little range against your attacker.

Rocks make good projectiles, while a heavy branch or a piece of pipe make a great improvised baton.

Here's a few more things you may not have considered:

Using a backpack

Most of the time I'll have my backpack with me, and it makes an excellent shield that you can use to block any punches or attacks. You can even swing it around to slow down or confuse an attacker, using it to create a little distance between you both.

Using a drink

You can get bottles from anywhere, and they make an ideal weapon, especially when they're weighted down with some liquid. I've got a solid aluminum bottle that comes everywhere with me, and is the perfect size to hold in my hand as a solid striking weapon.

Using an umbrella

Of course, I'm not talking about a foldable pocket umbrellas. You need a large, solid one with a metal tip on the end for this to be of any use, but if it's been raining or you happen to be carrying it with you, use it like a spear to hold your attacker at bay.

Using a pen

I'm sure there's a pen floating around in your backpack somewhere, but when you use it to stab your attacker, it's particularly effective if you're targeting the soft areas of the body. Like the throat or into the eyes. Just hold it tight in your fist and it becomes a deadly weapon.

Using a scarf

We've all seen the socks stuffed with rocks, but that can be a little odd to carry around. Instead, if you've got a scarf with you just make a quick fold and tie something heavy inside for it to become a similarly improvised mace.

There are countless items around you that could be used when you're needing to defend yourself. All you need to do is pay attention, and grab whatever you can to give yourself an edge.

The rules for staying safe on the streets at night

In this final section I wanted to cover what I believe are the fundamental rules to staying safe on the streets at night. Because whilst staying safe at any time is a challenge, things get much worse at night because that's usually when the predators come out.

If you're working late, are up early going for a morning jog, or are headed home from a night on the town, there's a few fundamental rules you need to follow to keep yourself safe.

Never lose focus

When you're walking at night, especially if its dark and you're alone it can be a frightening experience. It's totally normal that you're going to want to take your mind off things. The trouble is though, especially if you've been drinking, that 'taking your mind off things' is going to put you in real danger because you lose your situational awareness.

Do not get out your phone to start checking Facebook, message your friends, or even get your partner on the line, because these are all distractions. When you're distracted, it's far too easy for someone to surprise you, as you're not going to hear the footsteps coming up behind you, or see the person stepping from the shadows into your path until it's too late. Never lose your focus, and pay attention to everything that's going on around you until you're home safe.

Don't act like a victim

There's another neat trick you can use to deter an attacker, and that is to show confidence. Stand tall, be alert, and act confident, even if you're walking down a dark street alone in the middle of the night. This sends an unconscious signal to any potential attacker that you may not be an easy target, and there's a chance they'll wait for another, easier, victim.

Of course, the real secret to this rule is actually being confident in your ability to fight off an attacker, so take a self-defense class and learn how to throw a punch. You're far less likely to become a victim if it doesn't look like you're afraid of every shadow you walk past.

There's safety in numbers

We've all got the potential to become victims, but unfortunately there are certain people who are targeted more frequently than others. Students are often picked, because they're younger, and more likely to be carrying expensive gear in their backpacks, like a laptop in addition to their phone and wallet. Plus, many don't come from the area, which can make them easier to intimidate.

Single females are also a target, because many guys believe they can be easily overpowered. While it's not true in all cases, you've got to take proactive steps to avoid becoming a victim. My advice is to follow the simple rule that there's safety in numbers. If you're walking anywhere at night stay close to well-lit areas, and never walk alone.

Make as much noise as possible

If you ever find yourself in a bad situation, do not stay quiet. You want to make as much noise as possible, so your attacker cannot continue what they're doing unnoticed. Rape-whistles will get scoffed at by your friends, but if you're ever in a situation where you need it, you'll be glad it's there to help you alert the entire neighborhood to what's going on.

If you don't have a whistle the sound of glass smashing will also raise attention, especially if you follow it up with your screams. So grab whatever you can and smash a window, double points if you also manage to set off the car alarm too. The key to getting out of a bad situation is to make as much noise as you can, and demonstrate to your attacker that messing with you is more trouble than it's worth, because they risk getting caught.

Always have a plan

If there are particular areas you regularly walk at night, my advice is to spend a couple of minutes to devise an escape plan. Should someone approach you, would you know the best direction to run in, or would you simply turn and flee? The problem when you don't have a plan is this can backfire horrifically, especially if your path to escape sends you into a more secluded area.

Pay attention to what is around you, and if you do run make sure it's to a place where there are other people. Convenience stores, fast-food joints, and even bakeries will be staffed late at night, or duck into a hotel or managed building and ask the security staff for help. There's nothing wrong with seeking assistance when you feel unsafe, so ensure you've got a plan to do so.

Don't take unnecessary risks

Sure, cutting through the backstreets, that alleyway or even the park may save you five minutes from your walk, but you never know who is lurking in the shadows waiting to surprise you. At night, you should never walk through a secluded area, so stick to the pavement, and well-lit areas.

If there's no footpath, walk on the side of the road facing oncoming traffic, so you're able to see the cars approaching you. This makes it more difficult for a car to sneak up behind you and catch you unawares. Walking at night is dangerous enough, so don't do anything silly that puts you even more at risk.

Don't be afraid to get a cab

When all else fails, call a cab and let them take you home. Of course you should never get into an unmarked cab, but there are plenty of legitimate operators who will ensure you make it home safely. Often this will be your best option, and the price of the fare is cheap compared to making it home in one piece, with all of your belongings intact.

Pay attention to the details

If you are attacked, pay attention to as many details as possible to help the police identify the suspect. Try to notice how tall your attacker is, features like their hair and eye color, the clothing they're wearing, and any noticeable identification marks like scars or a tattoo. If they escape on a bike or a car, do your best to remember the make, model, and the license plate number. This will greatly help the police track down the criminals who attacked you, which can stop them from hurting even more people.

The bottom line to stay safe

Staying safe on the streets requires a constant vigilance, because there are bad people out there with the drive, intent, and desire to do you harm. I can't say this enough. The world is a dangerous place, and if you want to survive, you've got to adapt. You've got to learn. You've got to be able to rely on yourself, as you're the only one who is looking out for you.

So before trouble finds you, take action. Learn how to apply the principles we taught and start practicing awareness. Take a self-defense class and get a feel for what it's like when you're in an actual fight so you don't freeze up when it all goes down. And always follow the rules for staying safe on the streets, especially when you're out and about at night.

Stay safe fellow patriots.

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