

Safe Journey

The Women's Personal Defense Center Newsletter



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In This Issue

- Staying Safe: Can You Trust Your Inner Voice?
- The Practice of Focused Awareness
- The Language of Assault –7 Vital Signs That An Assault is Imminent, Part I of a 7-part series.

In Coming Issues

Inattentive Blindness. Reviews vital elements of focus and attention that you could cost or save you and why.

The Domestic Violence Dilemma. Examining why women stay in abusive relationships.

Charming & Dangerous. Part II of The Language of Assault series detailing the common language rituals used by rapists and other assailants.

Upcoming Events

Women's Personal Defense Workshop Level 1—Saturday, April 24th, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Women's Personal Defense Workshop Level 2—Saturday, September 25th, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Register on line at:

www.womenspersonaldefense.com/services.html

Send us your story. We may include it for publication.

For questions or comments, you may Email us directly at

Questions or Comments?

info@womenspersonaldefense.com or
Call us at 915-856-6560.

Staying Safe: Can You Trust Your Inner Voice?

In the countless number of personal defense seminars and workshops I have been asked to teach, there is inevitably at least one woman in attendance who has personally experienced an assault by an unknown assailant. I ask each woman the same vital question: Did you have a sense of alarm before the onset of the assault? The answer is always the same: Yes.



The Encarta World English Dictionary gives the philosophical definition of the word *intuition* as *to have immediate knowledge of something*.

Much has been said about the powerful role that intuition plays in the matter of personal safety. It is unequivocally your very first line of defense and, when heeded, it can easily become the only line of defense you may ever **need in order to move yourself out of harm's way**. The problem is that many women fail to heed their inner voice even when it beckons them.

There is, it seems, the matter of whether or not you can trust your intuition when faced with an apparently pleasant social interaction that nevertheless *feels* wrong. For instance, you may find it difficult to reject a man who seems pleasant enough, and bent on helping you even **when his help is unsolicited**. **What's worse he gives you the creeps**. What could possibly be making you uncomfortable?

Well, the truth is, what does it matter? In our information-crowded age, we may be tempted to hold firm to our need to know. But the truth is, you are far better off and much safer to simply acknowledge your inner warning system.

Gavin de Becker, the nation's leading expert on the prediction of violent behavior and author of the much acclaimed survival manual *The Gift of Fear*, puts it succinctly:

"When it comes to danger, intuition is always right in at least two important ways:

1. It is always in response to something.
2. **It always has your best interest at heart.**"¹

My own instructor, who has been a law enforcement officer for over thirty years and who is an internationally recognized martial artist, once told me that in order to train a woman well in the science of personal safety you **would practically have to "de-socialize" her to listen first** to her own intuition before she falls for the voice of persuasion—a voice which, for all intents and purposes, could be leading her off a cliff in the way of the pied piper.

So, if the question is whether or not you can trust your inner voice, the answer is a resounding, Yes! You can and, at all costs, should.

The Practice of Focused Awareness

Every reliable system of personal defense that I have encountered upholds a color code of awareness component in their training. There is sound reasoning behind this: for one, law enforcement is known to use this in the training of its officers which means that chances are that it is a reliable and worthwhile system and, secondly, it is a simple and effective tool for focusing awareness.

First, let me give you a few facts that underscore the need for focused awareness.



For starters, there is compelling evidence to indicate that a predator looking for a target is less likely to attack an individual who appears to be alert and aware of her or his environment over one who seems to be oblivious and preoccupied. To understand the reasoning behind this, put yourself for a moment in the mindset of a burglar looking for a target home to rob. Are you more likely to select a home that has alarm protection clearly posted and an apparent killer dog in the yard or a home with no protection and a window in the back that is slightly open? Criminals prefer not to overwork themselves in acquiring their marks. They really **don't think very differently from you or I; the difference is that they apply their brand of logic to unlawful trades.**

It is also important to keep in mind that a would-be attacker does not have all the time in the world to pull off his crime. Hence, the harder you make it for him, the better for you.

Focused awareness makes it possible for you to deny yourself as the target of a crime. It sends a message that you are in full possession of your senses and defenses—metaphorically speaking, you have mental alarm protection and a killer dog in your sensory yard.

Our recommended color codes go like this:

Code White, Threat Oblivion—An individual in code white is regrettably unaware of her or his environment and is sufficiently preoccupied so as to be “switched off” to potential threats. Holding an extended or heated conversation on your cell phone while walking a poorly lit parking lot would be an example of this.

Code Yellow, Descriptive Awareness—Code yellow is a condition of sustained, descriptive awareness of your environment, with the operative word here being *descriptive*. Picture yourself driving down a freeway while describing aloud everything that is going on about you. The practice would require you to sustain an active, focused awareness—the same type of awareness you would use if you were having to cross a busy intersection. Descriptive Awareness equates to environmental attention. It allows you to quickly cue on potential physical dangers such as someone walking behind you in a parking lot, as well as powerful psychological signals, such as a sudden sense of fear.

Code Orange, Threat Evaluation—Threat evaluation is your would-be lifesaver. Its effectiveness is tied to Code Yellow. There is an immense difference between walking down a street at night and failing to notice the man who crosses it to walk quietly behind you, and quickly noticing the man and taking action to avoid a possible assault. Threat evaluation requires you to take stock of what has already caught your attention. Keeping in mind that your intuition will warn you of potential danger, if there is anything about a circumstance such as this that makes you immediately uncomfortable, you should take quick and decisive action in order to secure your personal safety. This is not the time to second guess. It is almost a given that you would much prefer to later be talking to a friend in the safety of your home about how you reacted (or over-reacted) than you would to be giving a report to a police officer from your hospital bed.

Code Red, Threat Management—Code red indicates that you have identified a threat that is now upon you. By far your best option is to flee if that is at all possible. Never consider opting to fight if you can get away from your assailant, but if escape is physically impossible you must develop your defense skills to be a powerful and vigorous offense. With few exceptions, you should never concede to your assailants demands, especially if they require you to go to a secondary location with him—your chances of survival are grim should you do so.

Of these color codes, by far the most pivotal is Code Yellow. The successful application of Code Orange and Code Red depend on your ability to maintain a descriptive awareness. A lack of focused awareness is a direct invitation to any would-be predator.



So, always remember that personal safety is a practice. In order to stay safe, you must live safely and practice sound awareness and prevention.

The Language of Assault—The 7 Vitals Signs That an Assault Could Be Imminent

Rapists and intimate criminals (those that come face-to-face with their intended victims) are masters of distraction and deception and often enlist the use of predictable behavior to conceal their deadly intentions. Because this behavior can become ritualistic, in a sense, the very methods they employ to camouflage their objectives can become the signposts of their intended criminal intentions.

Rapists and criminals look and sound very much like you and me. Equally as frustrating is the fact that, in many instances, their approach is seemingly kind and disarmingly obliging—a dangerous combination especially when you consider that most of us have been socialized into being at least moderately polite, if not **completely forthcoming, with someone who is being “nice” to us.**

So how can you tell if something lurks behind the smile of the man who appears to simply want to be helpful?

You learn to understand his language. You learn to read the signposts.



Signpost #1: Coercive Coupling

Take a simple example: You're loading your groceries into the trunk of the car when, out of nowhere, Mr. Charisma appears to offer you a hand. “We sure did a lot of shopping today,” he politely comments while he hands you a bag from your shopping cart. “Here, let me help you. We can get this done in no time.” His smile is warm and unassuming.

So hey, what's the harm? Right?

Wrong. Take another look—a **man you know nothing about is making reference to you and he as a “we.”** This man has paired himself with you and has likely done so because he plans to coerce you into doing something you may not normally do like accept his advances, even if begrudgingly so.

Don't chalk this up to a manner of speaking. You are likely very capable of loading your own groceries, so, no matter how uncomfortable it may make you feel, turn him down. Turn him down flat.

Take into account that it is more than a little presumptuous for him to consider you and he coupled in any endeavor even if it's only groceries and even if it appears to be said with levity. **This type of inappropriate coupling will almost always be coercive.**

Keep in mind that Ted Bundy, the rapist and serial killer who was active in the '70s, was himself warm, polite and unassuming. Seen as friendly and unpretentious, his skill was gaining the trust of the very women he brutally raped, mutilated and killed.

Your safest bet, then, is to regard with suspicion anyone you don't know who approaches you with a forced mutual empathy. In a perfect world, there may be no harm. But our world is far from perfect, and apparent generosity can wind up being deadly.

Learn to protect yourself by practicing responses to scenarios that may ordinarily stump you. Stay alert, and listen to your intuition. And finally, take into account that the most dangerous predator you may encounter may not be the one who prowls in the dark—out of view—but rather, the one who approaches you with a smile.

(Look for Part 2 of [The Language of Assault](#) series in our next newsletter.)

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