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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

Questions or Comments?

Got a story to tell or some advice to give? Write us about it. We may include it in future publications.

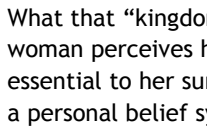
Stuck in a situation you don't know how to get out of? Let us know. We may be able to help.

For questions or comments, you may Email us directly at info@womenspersonaldefense.com or Call us at 915-856-6560.

Did you know?

- Women are significantly more likely than men to be injured during an assault: 31.5% of female rape victims compared to 16.1% of male rape victims reported being injured during their most recent rape.³
- The majority of more than 36 studies reviewed indicate that approximately 30–60% of children whose mothers are being abused are themselves likely to be abused.⁴
- Mental and emotional distress faced by women in abusive relationships is overwhelming. Almost 50% of the women reporting fit the criteria for major depression.⁵

The Domestic Violence Dilemma: Why women stay in abusive relationships



In the United States, an estimated 1.3 million women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner every year.²

Chances are that, whether you are aware of it or not, you know a woman who is in an abusive relationship. That you would know little about the abuse and degradation that she suffers is not only typical, it is one of the hallmarks of a woman in this kind of relationship. Normal people have an abject aversion to describing in detail what they perceive to be their greatest vulnerabilities, and a relationship that is so destructive so as to be indefensible quickly becomes a vulnerability. Who wants to admit that they are in an intimate liaison with (or continue to love) someone who treats them like they are of little more value than an old and battered piece of furniture?

Opinions abound as to why a woman (or man, for that matter) would stay in a relationship that is life-threatening, and though the research that addresses this dilemma is extensive, it is often not enough to compel a woman into leaving her abuser. The problem is not only complex, it is compounded by the fact that an overwhelming number of women do not report abuse and, hence, isolated from what may well become a strong support system, a woman continues to languish in the same closed-door environment that is perpetuating her personal self-doubt and physical peril.

Another consideration is that most programs that exist to assist victims of this crime are "after-the-fact" programs. By and large, although there are many effective and well-placed programs in support of the victims of domestic violence toward the end of constructing a new life once they have elected to leave their abusers, there are few successful programs aimed at preventing the abuse or eradicating a culture that accepts the abuse. This isn't, then, just a marital or relationship dilemma. It is a cultural one.

Although physical abuse of an intimate partner is in itself incomprehensible, the psychological damage is incalculable. We may consider it unfathomable, but many women in abusive relationships choose to stay in their relationships. In one form or another, they have come to believe that their abuser is the one and only holder of "the keys to the kingdom."

What that "kingdom" is may differ from woman to woman but, make no mistake about it, the woman perceives her significant other as the single provider of something she is convinced is essential to her survival, her well-being or the survival or well-being of those she loves. And a personal belief system is a very powerful force—powerful enough to come at the cost of her life and one that is not abandoned easily.

She may:

1. See him as her only source of financial support.
2. See him as a man who deserves her support because he's been abandoned by everyone else. This could be key to her sense of personal value.
3. Think of him as out-of-control only because he loves her so much.
4. Feel that he is so respected by others that she shouldn't hurt him by exposing his criminal acts. Although ill-perceived, this too could be what feeds her sense of value.

The list could go on ad infinitum. The point is that though it defies your logic, her logic is carefully woven into the fabric of the relationship. That is why logical reasoning is normally fruitless in persuading her to leave her abuser. Solve her reason for staying put, and she'll give you more reasons why she's "forced" to.

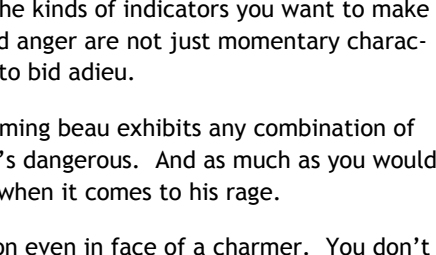
Logic alone may never be enough, as unreasonable as this may sound. Nevertheless, as powerful a force as a belief system may be, it is penetrable even if it doesn't respond to common sense and reasonable logic.

Your best bet is to appeal to the woman on an emotional level. You must understand that, to a great extent, this woman has become desensitized to the physical dangers that can beset her and emotionally dulled to the prospect of betterment. In fact, one of most shocking characteristics of a woman who is involved in an abusive relationship is her lack of disgust and anger about the treatment she receives—both emotional and physical.

So, rather than reason with her about how getting beaten is not a sign of love, ask her how she would feel if her daughter's teacher was beating her daughter because this teacher was convinced the daughter could do better in school. Tugging on her emotionally from a perspective other than self loosens her grip of a fragile rationale that is not rational in the least. It's not a fail-safe system, but it certainly shows up the cracks in the wall in a way that is safer to perceive than from a first-person perspective.

A woman in an abusive relationship is always in danger. Though she lives in a web of unpredictable chaos, it is, paradoxically, the very lack of this predictability that continues to foster hope—hope that they will return to his old wonder see how valuable she is to him. Any which way, her hope is typically tied to him.

Nonetheless, there actually is hope. It is not, however, tied to him but, rather, to those of you who are willing to get involved. There is hope whenever there is anyone who is willing to ask not just, "Who? Who did this?" But also, "What? What promotes this behavior? What makes this acceptable?"



Change begins within. Yet the catalyst for this change is not only cultivated by what we can do for ourselves but, too, what we do for others.

Take care...of each other.

The Language of Assault—Part 2 Charming & Dangerous

One of the key components of teaching a child personal safety is getting the child to understand that "bad guys" don't look or act like monsters. The reasoning is simple: young, innocent minds don't grasp the concept of maliciousness easily. Most expect that someone who is going to do them harm will appear evil—in whatever form they conceive that to be.

The surprise is that most adults are no different. The concept of stranger danger is not easily grasped by children and, in truth, it's not easily grasped by normal, knowledgeable and savvy adults either. The fact of the matter is that it is easy to tell the "black-hat" if he comes up behind you and holds a knife to your throat. There's no leap of judgment required. But the problem is that not all predators attack in such a manner. Some prefer to soften their prey or to solicit their prey's cooperation, a tactic that makes moving the prey to a secondary (or less public) location much easier.

I mention this because one of the cardinal rules of personal safety, once an assault has begun, is to never, ever go with your assailant to a secondary location. The chances that you will emerge alive, if you do, are greatly reduced.

But what if you don't know that this is what you are doing? What if your soon-to-be attacker has charmed you into going somewhere (even if it is your apartment or his) as a part of a carefully orchestrated plan? Statistically speaking, this still does not bode well for you. Think Jeffrey Dahmer and Andrew Luster, the Max Factor heir. One was a convicted serial rapist/killer and the other is a convicted serial rapist.

Although there are a host of well-known examples, there are thousands upon thousands of other not-so-well-known rapists or killers that women or men have encountered that are charmed to their ill-fated ends.

Signpost #2: Charming & Dangerous

In most social circumstances, our social manners dictate. Most of us are raised to be polite and amicable when the setting calls for it, and in the vast majority of our social interactions these are good practices. Genuine good manners are the aromatic oils that emulsify constructive and upbeat relationships. We find charming most people who possess them.

In the right context, there is nothing wrong with a delightful and charming individual. The key, then, is in understanding and making sense of the context so that you can make heads or tails out of whether or not the person's manners are genuine or completely fraudulent.

Most individuals who *are* don't *try to be* charming. And when someone whom you don't know is truly turning on the charm, coupled with any of the other signposts, you don't have a naturally charming individual before you, you have someone who is trying to charm you.

The verb *charm* is a derivative of the Latin word *carmen* which at its root means *song*, *magical formula*. So, think of the Indian snake charmer who by virtue of playing his instrument can mesmerize the snake into allowing itself to be manipulated in a number of ways. So too is the mysterious charmer who appears out of nowhere to offer you a hand. If you are wary, then beware.

This warning, however, does not just apply to the stranger offering you a lift when you're stranded on the highway with a flat tire. It can also apply to the man you met at the party who swept you off your feet with his charming ways.

Therefore, in order to understand the context of what you are dealing with, follow a prescribed set of rules:

1. Never accept a favor from someone you don't know, especially if this favor includes transportation, an invitation, or a secondary destination. This is, in essence, the same advice (different words, perhaps) you would give a child. This includes such things getting a ride home, going for a walk, or meeting someone on the street who has offered to carry your groceries into your apartment for you. The stakes are too high. Don't do it.
2. Always remember that relationships evolve. The charming bloke you met at the party may turn into a complete psychopath when you go to his apartment for a nightcap after dinner a couple of days later. This is the stuff of date-rape. Take the time to get to know someone before you unwittingly put yourself in a compromising, intimate situation.
3. Look for consistency. Personality flaws are not the kinds of indicators you want to make excuses for. A history of violence or uncontrolled anger are not just momentary character quirks. They are signs that it is time for you to bid adieu.
4. Understand the language of assault. If your charming beau exhibits any combination of the signposts, he's more than just charming. He's dangerous. And as much as you would like to think so, you will never be the exception when it comes to his rage.
5. And finally, practice rebuffing unwanted attention even in face of a charmer. You don't have to be "rude" if it bothers you to be so, but you *do* have to be firm. There are no exceptions to this. Failure to do so could cost you dearly. Moreover, studies show that training (read this as *practice* in this case) removes the discomfort of uncertainties and makes it easier for you to stand your ground at a time when it could be crucially important that you do so.

Understanding the depths of malevolence to which a rapist, assailant or murderer can sink is difficult for most people, but not impossible. Much of the difficulty arises from the what-you-would-never-do formula most of us abide by. "I would never pretend to like someone I don't like." Or another example—"I would never take advantage of someone." Most of us abide by certain social boundaries.

The rapist, however, respects no such boundaries. He is a master of deception who takes no moral issue with destroying your sense of appropriate behavior. The greater your shock and awe once the façade is broken, the easier his job.

You do have recourse, however. Understand the language of assault and you will unequivocally understand where your interaction with this pleasant, charming stranger is really going.

Safe journey!

(Look for Part 3 of *The Language of Assault* series in our next newsletter.)

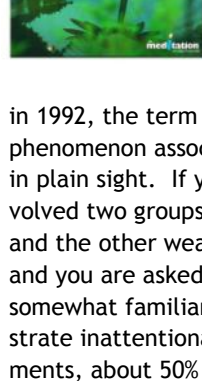
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1. *The Unfettered Mind*, p. 49.
2. National Coalition Against Violence, *Cost of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the U.S., 2003*. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, National Centers for Injury Prevention & Control. Atlanta, Georgia
3. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, Research, Development & Evaluation, (Tjaden & Thoennus, 2000)
4. *Ibid*, (Graham-Bermann, & Edleson, 2001)
5. *Ibid*, (Goodwin et al., 2003)

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Inattentional Blindness—Are you missing something?



"The Wu-hsin (no mind) is the same as the Right Mind. It neither congeals nor fixes itself in one place... When this Wu-hsin has been well developed, the mind does not stop with one thing. It is like water overflowing and exists within itself. It appears appropriately when facing a time of need."

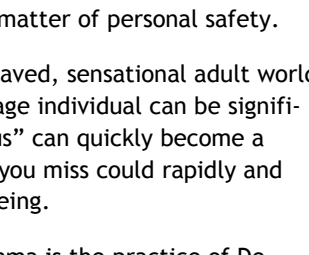
Coined by Brian Mack and Irvin Rock in 1992, the term *inattentional blindness* describes the phenomenon associated with a failure to perceive what is in plain sight. If you ever took the on-line test that involved two groups of people, one wearing black t-shirts and the other wearing white t-shirts, passing a basketball and you are asked to count the number of passes, you are somewhat familiar with the experiments that demonstrate inattentional blindness. In most of these experiments, about 50% of the participants missed the gorilla walking through the scene of the basketball tosses. This is a perceptual blindness related to how our minds see and process information in our surroundings.

The selective focus of attention to whatever is most important to us is a fundamental survival principle. This focus can be internal or external.

For example, if you are walking down a street and are engrossed in thoughts of a conversation you had earlier in the day with your significant other, you are likely to miss the drunk driver whose car came within inches of your walking area, the dog that is pacing immediately behind you or any number of other innocuous, or not so harmless, events going on about you. You may not even remember how you crossed a particular street! This doesn't mean that these things didn't occur. It just means that you weren't aware of them when they did. This would be an example of internal selective attention.

An example of external selective attention is, say, when you are driving down the street with a coffee cup held between your legs. Forced to stop suddenly, the scalding coffee spills on to your inner thighs and the seat. This is enough to get your attention and so, hence, while you're busy managing the burn, the cup and the seat, you may not notice the car that pulls out in front of you or the child crossing the road just ahead. That you can't remember the car or the child does not mean that they didn't exist. Rather, though they existed, they did not form a part of your perception.

You are capable of multi-tasking, and probably do so numbers of times in a given day, especially with routine, non-stressful activities. This type of focus is called "soft-focus," and involves a number of senses or thoughts at a time.



Functionally, stress levels are directly related to your ability or inability to multi-task. The higher the stress level, the more intense your focus and, thus, the more prone to perceptual blindness you are. And it is this fact precisely that speaks in the matter of personal safety.

In our high-speed, impact-craved, sensational adult world the stress levels of the average individual can be significant. The idea of "soft-focus" can quickly become a distant memory. If you miss could rapidly and adversely affect your well-being.

A viable answer to this dilemma is the practice of Descriptive Awareness as described in our January 2010 newsletter.

Because we found that to tell an individual to be aware of her/his environment is not enough, we resolved to recommend the practice to be as dynamic as possible, and description of the environment offers a simple and feasible solution. Whereas a suggestion of awareness can easily meet with fierce competition—emotions, telephone conversations, problems in the workplace—the active involvement offered by dynamic descriptions maintains a gentle dialogue with and connectivity to the environment. It is easier for an individual to sustain. The person is more likely to perceptually record a potential threat and take action to avoid it if at all possible.

Most potentially dangerous encounters *do* reveal themselves prior to the advent of an all-out assault. The key, then, is to see what is more than likely already in plain sight.

Stay safe!