

Making Sense of Commonly Taught Tips & Advice on Personal Safety © CRGI & Erik Kondo

The following are commonly taught and heard Tips & Advice provided by self-defense "experts" and organizations. The actual wording may differ slightly. But they generally follow this type of format. In order to gain more value from this information, the underlying principals, and concepts need to be understood. Otherwise, these Tips & Advice have minimal value in actual situations.

1. Always be aware of your surroundings, especially at night. When parking, walking or returning to your car, remain in well-lit and populated areas.

Translation: People that are unaware make for easy targets. They can be taken by surprise. They stumble into dangerous areas and situations. They are unprepared mentally and physically to respond to threats. They send a message of vulnerability as opposed to deterrence. Many crimes occur in "fringe areas" that border well lit and populated areas. Criminals need to control their victim in privacy because of the danger of being interrupted or caught. Thus, other people and lights serve as a **deterrent**.

2. Wear sneakers or shoes that allow for added mobility.

Translation: If physically attacked, moving/running away quickly to safety is an effective tactic. Anything that improves movement is a benefit. Anything that hinders movement is a detriment to escape. But at any given time your odds of being attacked are relatively low. Therefore, this advice is not particularly practical for many women who wear heels.

3. Be watchful and aware. Keep your head up. Make quick eye contact with those around you and be observant of passing vehicles. Don't become distracted by talking on a cell phone or listening to an iPod/similar device.

Translation: The concept here is **deterrence** by being aware of potential threats AND also conveying your awareness to others by your actions. A head down and no eye contact convey fear and submissiveness. Cell phones, iPods, and other electronic devices show both your lack of awareness to others and reduce your ability to recognize potential threats.

4. Avoid walking alone late at night. Walk with friends and people you know.

Translation: A busy daytime areas can turn into a fringe area at night. Darkness provides criminals with concealment. Light provides exposure and creates a deterrent. Generally, a lone person makes an easier target than a group of people. But as a practical matter, many people come home from work at late hours. Therefore, if walking at night, carry and use a flashlight as a **deterrent**.

5. Keep a whistle within reach. If you feel threatened, use the whistle to signal residents that you need assistance. Yelling "Fire!" "Help!" and/or "Rape!" are ways of drawing attention and alerting people that you need help.

Translation: Most people have the ability to use their voice. Screaming is a fairly common reaction to fear. The problem is that most people don't know WHEN to blow the whistle or to yell. Too early and they feel silly. Blowing a whistle while being attacked is difficult. A more practical strategy is to **deter** an potential assault by demonstrating your strong voice and willingness to use it with clear verbal boundary setting.

6. Hold your keys in your hand to use as a weapon against an attacker.

Translation: Every weapon has a positive and negative side. A key is a relative ineffective weapon unless you happen to strike the attacker in the eye while he is attacking you. The problem is that the act of clutching a handful of keys interferes with your ability to use your hands for creating a physical fence, open handed striking, and more. Your primary focus should be on deterring a possible assault as opposed to responding to an attack already in progress.

7. Carry a cell phone.

Translation: A mobile phone is a great safety device because it allows you to call for help as long as time is not of the essence. Unfortunately, a mobile phone can provide you a false sense of security. Talking and playing on the phone is also a distraction that greatly reduces your situational awareness. Many people use their phone as a social clutch to hide behind when feeling uncomfortable as opposed to assessing and responding to the situation.

8. Call ahead to your destination to alert them that you're on your way. Make sure they expect you at a certain time, so that in the event you fail to show up, they'll know enough to begin looking for you.

Translation: This is great advice if you are going hiking or going to some secluded area where this is a real risk of getting lost or injured. As a safety measure from physical assault this method will most likely make your destination person anxious. Its usefulness comes into play mostly in the unlikely event that you are kidnapped while traveling.

9. Walk with confidence. Be assertive. Don't let anyone violate your space. Know this: anyone at anytime can be a victim of crime. Don't assume, "IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN TO ME."

Translation: The general concept here is to prevention through preparation. Acknowledging the presence of risk is the first step in minimizing it. Confidence, assertiveness, and maintaining personal space are boundary setting tactics designed to **deter** unwanted behavior. It works by constantly warding off potential threats by not allowing predators to probe and exploit weaknesses.

10. If an unarmed attacker confronts you, believe in your ability to scare, distract, or even incapacitate the attacker enough to escape.

Translation: Your immediate goal is to **disrupt** an attacker's plan in order to **disengage** to safety. Many predators with asocial based motivations such as sexual assault are looking for a "soft target" they can force to comply with their demands. The initial phase of this plan involves scaring or "freezing" the victim into inaction. Those that don't freeze and respond immediately with defensive measures are by definition not a soft target. Thus, increasing the odds that the predator will be identified/caught and influencing him to move on to an easier victim.

11. If you think that someone is following you, switch direction or cross the street. Walk toward an open store, etc.

Translation: The thought process here is to confirm you are really being followed and/or get away from a potential assailant. This advice doesn't address the situation in which the assailant is very close behind you and there are no safe places to go into as is common in fringe areas at night. In such a situation, your goal is to convey the message of **deterrence** through strong body language and assertiveness. If a stranger is following you then he or she may be sizing you up for a potential attack. You want to deprive this person of his intent and/or means and/or opportunity to attack you by the most appropriate means available.

12. Trust your instincts a/k/a listen to the warning of intuition.

Translation: Your intuition is a warning device that provides false positives. As a result it tends to be ignored. Listening to the warning of intuition is an important first step in taking action. It can keep you away from trouble. But your intuition doesn't provide you with confirmation of a person's bad intention. It just senses possible threats. Since you can't depend upon your intuition to make a clear determination, you must take proactive steps to set and maintain your boundaries. Boundary violation is a confirmation of bad intention regardless of the state of your intuition.

SUMMARY: The underlying concept is using strategies and tactics that will make you a less appealing target to attack. These methods are **deterrents**. They are not guarantees of personal safety. But they do reduce risk. You may follow all these methods to the letter and still be attacked, or conversely you may violate each one and never be assaulted. Regardless of the outcome, employing **deterrents** is an effective means of risk management for personal safety.