

Safety

What is the "fight or flight response?"

This fundamental physiologic response forms the foundation of modern day stress medicine. The "fight or flight response" is our body's primitive, automatic, inborn response that prepares the body to "fight" or "flee" from perceived attack, harm or threat to our survival.

What are the signs that our fight or flight response has been stimulated (activated)?

When our fight or flight system is activated, we tend to perceive everything in our environment as a possible threat to our survival. By its very nature, the fight or flight system bypasses our rational mind—where our more well thought out beliefs exist—and moves us into "attack" or "retreat" mode.

Safety Tips for Mentors

If you think you are being followed - Make a sudden turn, cross the street, accelerate, or go into a nearby business. If being followed by a car, reverse your direction - it will take them a much longer time to turn around and they will likely just continue on to find a different target. If you are unable to shake the follower, turn around and scream, "What do you want?" in your most indignant voice. This is likely to embarrass the innocent and frighten off a large portion of potential attackers. If this doesn't work, now you must:

Scream - Your voice is your primary weapon - remember that the last thing the bad guy wants is a fuss. Screaming ANYTHING halts the attack in many cases, or at least buys you a couple of seconds while they consider whether there might be easier prey. Over the years, experts have warned not to yell, "Help" but to yell, "Fire." I favor, "Leave me the \$%#& alone! Get away!" If you carry a personal alarm or whistle, use it.

Run/retreat - Put yardage between you and the perpetrator. *Distance equals time*; you are giving yourself time with every footstep you put between you and him. An all-out run is what you need. Be screaming continually while running. Keep screaming. Don't stop screaming until you are completely out of danger.

Run toward other people - If there are other people nearby, run to them. If there is a lighted business or home, run to it. Even if they won't let you in, you are attracting attention which will likely cause the attacker to leave the area.

But what if he has a weapon? If the bad guy displays a gun, knife, baseball bat, etc. do the scream and run double time. Putting distance between you gives you protection against weapons - if it is a gun, run in a crooked line, looking for cover but mostly concentrating on gaining distance. It is very difficult for even the best marksman to hit a moving target, so become a moving target. Hitting anything over 15 yards away is very difficult. By displaying a weapon he has threatened your life, and you have to believe he means it. You need to get out of the situation before he completes his threat. The odds are on your side more with every yard you gain.

But what if he shows a weapon and wants me to get in a vehicle or go off into the bushes? Unless he has you physically restrained, scream and run. If you are female, you have almost 100% chance of being raped and may be killed if you get into a vehicle. If you are male, you have almost 100% chance of being killed. With those odds, your odds are much better that he can't hit a moving object with a bullet, and in almost all cases he won't shoot anyway - he wants to scare you into the vehicle or bushes, not shoot you or he would have done that already. Remember, unless this is somebody you know, they aren't looking for you, they'll let you go and look for an easier target.

If you are grabbed - At this point, if you freeze and do nothing, and you survive, you did the right thing - don't dwell on what might have been. Freezing is a natural reaction to the unexpected, even in those trained in self-defense. But the odds are not with you in using this as a defense. If your attacker surprises you and gets you into a grip, now is the time to fight - because "only your life depends on it" (Clint Smith of Thunder Ranch). You need to get out of his grip and be able to run. Learn grip-breaking techniques. When you can't break the grip, now you've got to inflict surprising and/or incapacitating pain on your attacker. Gouge eyes, puncture eardrums, crush his windpipe, rake his shins, break his thumbs, rip his ears off (easy to do), jam a sharp object into any available portion of his body, and with caution regarding AIDS risk - bite any part of him you can. Fight dirty, cheat, win. Get away.

Crash the Car - If you have been forced into a vehicle, make every attempt to cause a traffic accident and crash the vehicle. By getting you into the vehicle, they attackers have shown they plan to seriously injure or kill you. Your chances are better in causing an accident and escaping in the confusion.

Practice - In an emergency, the mind is often frozen with indecision. The body carries through if you have practiced or trained for this emergency. Practice often, out loud, screaming at somebody who is accosting you and running in retreat. You need to "look forward to being attacked," and practice what you need

to do in every detail. You may wish to warn your neighbors beforehand, or get them to join in. Mutual awareness and protection is a good thing to build in your neighborhood!

Cell phones - Carrying a cell phone is a good idea - you can call 911 in case of a medical emergency. When accosted, don't waste a split second with a phone, you need to be screaming and running. Even if you got a call off and the police responded immediately, most attacks take less than five minutes to complete, and your attacker will be long gone before help arrives. Far better to use it to report to the police after you have effectively stopped the attack by screaming, running, and fighting as necessary.

Look Forward, Don't Surrender Your Freedom - As a law-abiding citizen, I have earned the right to walk the streets unmolested. I will exercise that right and be prepared. Go forth, and - be careful out there.

Prevention - There is no technique or tip or weapon to guarantee you won't be attacked. If you have been attacked, and you are reading this, you did the right thing - whatever you did allowed you to survive. You won. The bad guys have surprise on their side and even the best martial arts expert can become a target. If it happens to you, don't agonize over coulda-shoulda-woulda. You survived. You won.

High pedestrian traffic areas - Bad guys don't want witnesses. Being in view of a well-traveled vehicular street is good, but having people on the path with you is better.

Open areas - Paths lined with bushes and trees are pleasant for walking, but afford many hiding places for the bad guys and places they can take you to finish their crimes out of view.

Deterrents - Strangers aren't out to attack YOU. It is nothing personal, they are just looking for a target of opportunity. Your goal, therefore, is to look like somebody who will be too much trouble to mess with. They also want to make you their victim without attracting attention from others.

Attitude - Keep your head up and striding purposefully. Look aware of your surroundings and be aware of them. Headphones may give the impression that you are less aware. Lt. Jim Bullard suggests your mental attitude should be, "No low life scum is going to spoil three minutes of my day!"

Companions - Walking with a friend or group reduces your chance of attack significantly.

Dog - Walking with a dog, even a little ankle-biter, will greatly reduce the chance of attack. Obey all licensing, leash, and doo-doo ordinances in the jurisdiction you are walking through.

Stick - Why mess with somebody with a walking/hiking stick when there are lots of people without one?

Alarm - A brightly colored personal body alarm can be a deterrent when visibly worn. Bad guys don't want to attract attention. A whistle is also a good signal device.

Pepper spray- Where legal, carrying this in your hand or visibly displayed may be a deterrent.

When accosted - As I said above, there is no guaranteed way to prevent being chosen as a target, some bad guys just can't read the clues that you are more trouble than they bargained for. Now is your chance to prove it.