



# SELF-DEFENSE FOR WOMEN

**DON'T BE ANOTHER STATISTIC**



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## INTRODUCTION

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Women have long been considered the weaker sex, much to the protestations of feminists everywhere. Unfortunately, this stereotype exists even today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perhaps that's why violent crimes against women are at an all-time high.

All women live with a certain level of risk for crime. In fact, a 21-year-old woman today has a 1 in 4 chance of having a violent crime committed against her. These crimes range from the shocking such as rape to simply intrusive like car jacking or purse snatching.

What's even scarier is that often, the crimes committed against women happen in their own homes by a loved one like a husband or boyfriend. What a horrible feeling to have to worry about your safety and well being in the place where you should feel safest.

The answer to combating crimes against women isn't as difficult as you might think. All women can benefit from self-defense hints and tips. Some just don't see the need at all. But one victim gives the following to think about when considering whether or not you need to know at least a few self-defense measures.



### Why You Should Care About Self Defense

1. Because you can't even imagine what it feels like to be violated like that.
2. Because he's stronger than you are and you will be helpless against him
3. All you have is yourself when it comes to self-defense
4. Being a victim stays with you for life and it's not easy to cope sometimes
5. When you defend yourself against a criminal, they know there's at least one woman he can't overpower
6. Knowing self-defense is a lot better than waking up at night screaming and crying from a nightmare about the crime
7. Look at it as insurance – insurance for you and your well-being

8. It's not difficult to learn and even easier to carry out
9. Learning self-defense is your best counterattack against surviving a rape or assault

Self-defense isn't karate or judo. It isn't learning how to shoot a gun or handle a Taser. It involves knowing how to avoid situations that put you at risk then coupling them with evasive techniques that can help keep you safe and sound.

Inside the pages of this book, you will find many, many tips and hints on how to keep yourself out of harm's way. The best self-defense is a proactive offense, and we'll teach you how to do that.

We'll also provide you with some basic self-defense moves along with ways to use common objects when defending yourself against an attacker. You'd be surprised at how many uses you can find from a small bottle of body spray!

There is an ongoing debate regarding the use of weapons by women when defending themselves. We'll look at that debate and give you some facts to help you decide if carrying a weapon is the right route for you.

You owe it to yourself to stay safe. Don't let the criminals win – prove to them that women can be strong too. Learn self-defense and be confident that when the time comes, you'll be able to defend yourself. There's no time like the present!

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## A FEW STORIES

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We can't stress enough the importance of women knowing first how to avoid situations that put them at risk for crimes against them and second how to defend themselves if they find themselves in a dangerous situation.

Perhaps a few testimonials might help to not only stress this point, but also put it in **bold** with CAPITAL LETTERS and exclamation points!!!!!!! The following stories are not for the faint of heart.

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### MELISSA'S STORY

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Melissa and John had been married for just a year before Melissa realized that her husband had a very, very dark side. The two seemed to have an idyllic life.

John was a successful stockbroker; Melissa was attending school to be a nurse. They had a modest three-bedroom home in an affluent suburb and money to spare. Melissa wanted children and so did John – maybe just a little too much. They were having trouble conceiving a child, though, and it was putting a strain on both of their nerves not to mention their relationship.

John often referred to Melissa as the barren wasteland and often made fun of her inability to conceive. He drank

more than he should have and took out all his frustrations and anger on Melissa on a regular basis. She wrote it off as him having too much stress and figured the attacks would stop once she became pregnant.

One sunny June day at a bar-b-que at the lake, though, Melissa had had enough of his temper and his violent behavior. They were with friends having a seemingly fun day. They had their speedboat out and all were enjoying a few cocktails. Then John started in. He began calling Melissa names, making fun of her in front of their friends, and grabbing her a little too hard for her liking.

When they got home from the lake, she endured the worst beating of her life and she left. At her mother's house, she cried and begged her mother for help. They went online and found resources at a women's help center. Melissa did everything she was supposed to do. She obtained a restraining order against her husband, filed criminal charges along with divorce papers, and moved in with her mother.

On August 18, 2003, John approached Melissa in the parking lot of her college. She tried to get away from him, but she just wasn't as strong as he was. John beat Melissa so severely that she died from her injuries two days later. Her mother still wonders if Melissa had taken the self-defense class she had suggested whether or not her daughter would be alive today.



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LISBETH'S STORY

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Many women are careless during shopping trips. Some are giddy over the bargains they found; others are just in such a hurry that they forget predators are out there everywhere. Lisbeth was finishing up her Christmas shopping at a local mall. It was about 7:00 at night and she was rushing to get home because her husband was making dinner.

She didn't see the man under her car. As she stood at the driver's side door, keys in hand, he reached out with a rather large knife and sliced her Achilles tendon. In horrible pain, she writhed on the ground.

He picked her up, put her in the back seat and drove her car to a secluded area where he repeatedly raped her before dropping her off at the same shopping mall parking lot where he abducted her. He left the car too. He was never caught.

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ALYSSA'S STORY

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She had gotten her dream job. After years of toiling away as a secretary, Alyssa had just landed a job as an administrative assistant at a radio station for the entire sales staff. She was being given a huge amount of responsibility and was excited about being in the world of radio.



Michael was a sales associate who was well known as a ladies man. He flirted with everyone – especially the new girls. At first, Alyssa didn't mind the attention. Michael was a nice guy and very good-looking. She enjoyed flirting. But then it went a step further.

Michael began touching her in ways she didn't like. She was young – only 21 - and this was the career she always wanted, so she didn't know what to do. One late night, they were both in the office. Michael approached her desk and started with his standard lines. Alyssa tried to be nice and brush him off gently, but Michael was relentless.

His touches turned into gropes, his gropes turned into invasive sexual advances. Before she knew it, he was raping her and she was powerless to stop him. The next day, he acted like nothing had happened, but Alyssa was devastated. She felt violated and desperate.

Alyssa took her own life two days later. In her suicide note, she told her mother she wished she had been strong enough to fight back.

These stories, while shocking and sad, are true and they happen all the time. There are hundreds more out there just like them. The one common thread woven through them all is the woman's feeling of powerlessness. All of these women wanted to resist, but they didn't know how. Would you know how?

Let's begin by looking at the most common crimes against women.

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## WHAT SHOULD YOU BE AFRAID OF?

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Rape is the most common serious crime against women. Although the reported incidence varies somewhat from year to year, most authorities agree that the number of rapes far exceeds the numbers actually reported.

Rape is a very serious crime. Actually, it is serious enough to be legally classified right up there with murder and robbery as the most serious of crimes. Even if a minimum of force is used to carry out the rape, the possible consequences to the woman (pregnancy, AIDS, herpes, other venereal disease, and post-traumatic physical and psychological effects) are extreme, severe, and very long lasting.

There are many different kinds of rapists, ranging from the easily discouraged to the sociopath who has decided that he won't stop until you are dead, or he is.

Carjacking is on the increase in part because so many cars now have good anti-theft devices. People who steal cars are discovering that while it's getting harder to steal a car that's simply parked at the curb, it's relatively easy to get the car by taking the keys from the person who is driving it.

Purse snatching has been a crime for years and years. Many women don't really pay much attention to how they are carrying their purse. Often we swing it while we're walking or just loop it around our elbow casually as we stroll from store to store. This is a huge mistake.

What you are essentially doing is inviting a purse-snatcher to help himself to your property.

Another common crime against women involves threats and threatening behavior by an attacker. While men commit most crimes against women, threats can come from other women as well. Your chances of resisting an attack by a woman are much more in your favor, but when a man threatens you, the situation can certainly change quickly.

Always, always, take threats seriously. It may be hard for you to realize that your life is actually in danger but, if someone is making credible threats, you must take steps to protect yourself. Most victims of domestic violence who are murdered (or murder is attempted) by their abusers were stalked, sometimes for days, sometimes for months, before the lethal attack. If your life is being threatened, you should consider yourself a stalking target, and take steps to protect yourself.

Finally, domestic violence is probably the most prevalent crime against women. Being in an abusive relationship is not only tragic for you and your children, but it could also be deadly. Domestic violence is the number one crime against women and resisting your attacker, even if you have loving feelings for him, can mean the difference between life and death.

Because this crime against women is the most common, we feel it warrants its own section.

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## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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The statistics on domestic violence are staggering and disturbing. Estimates range from 960,000 to as many as three million women who are abused by a current or former spouse or boyfriend in the course of a year. Around the

world, at least one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused during her lifetime.

Nearly one-third of American women (31 percent) report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives. Thirty percent of Americans say they know a woman who has been physically abused by her husband or boyfriend in the past year.

On average, every day in this country, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends. In 2000, 1,247 women were killed by an intimate partner. The same year, 440 men were killed by an intimate partner.

The health-related costs of rape, physical assault, stalking and homicide committed by intimate partners exceed \$5.8 billion each year. Of that amount, nearly \$4.1 billion are for direct medical and mental health care services, and nearly \$1.8 billion are for the indirect costs of lost productivity or wages.

The signs of domestic violence are easy to see, but for many women, they are easier to ignore. The main reason women stay in relationships where they are being abused can be attributed to low self-esteem, but also, the fear of leaving makes them stay. They are afraid that if they leave the relationship, they will be hurt worse than if they stay.

While this may be true, it's important for abused women to realize that they don't have to endure this abuse. In fact, staying in the relationship can be morally and

mentally devastating to not only her, but her children and family members as well.

How can you recognize if you or a loved one is in an abusive relationship? Here are a few common warning signs:

Does the person you love:

- Track all of your time?
- Constantly accuse you of being unfaithful?
- Discourage your relationships with family and friends?
- Prevent you from working or attending school?
- Criticize you for little things?
- Anger easily when drinking or on drugs?
- Control all finances and force you to account for what you spend?
- Humiliate you in front of others?
- Destroy your personal property or sentimental items?
- Hit punch, slap, kick, or bite you or your children?
- Threaten to hurt you or your children?
- Use or threaten to use a weapon against you?
- Force you to have sex against your will?

If you find yourself saying yes to several of these questions, you are in an abusive relationship. When you are being abused by someone you know, it may be much more difficult to acknowledge that it is actually happening to you.

There are strong emotional and social forces that can keep even a very abusive relationship going for a long, long time. It can also be emotionally more difficult to decide that you need to take strong action to protect yourself, but

knowing your attacker does not change your right to protect yourself.

What exactly do we mean by protecting yourself defensively?

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## SELF-DEFENSE

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Self-defense is a set of verbal, psychological, and physical techniques you can use to defend yourself in situations ranging from unwanted or harassing comments to physical abuse and rape.

Self-defense training helps with everyday assertiveness and boundary setting as well as preparing you to fight back in physical attacks. Women's self defense training incorporate an understanding of the kinds of violence most often experienced by women and the common social and psychological barriers women face in learning to fight back.



Women learning self-defense gain both physical and verbal defense skills and the will to use them against an attacker. Self-defense classes also give women a rare opportunity to explore the broad spectrum of emotions that often arise when we start to understand the level of violence in our society. It is an excellent vehicle for exploring anger, grief, and fear, and for tapping into the joy that comes from finding your voice and discovering your own internal power.

Self-defense is much more than just fighting back against your attacker. It is knowing what to say, how to think, and how NOT to put yourself in danger.

The first rule in self-defense is to not put yourself into a situation that would put you in danger. How do you do that? The easy answer is in many, many ways. They might seem like common sense, but so many women ignore this basic piece of advice. We think it needs stressed.

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## HOW NOT TO BE A VICTIM

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The key to being on the defense is to put yourself on the offense. How do you do that? Here are a few general guidelines.

First and foremost, stay aware of people in your surroundings. Not surprisingly, criminals exhibit predatory behavior in preparing to attack. They will try to pick a casual location to look for their prey. They will look at with their intended victim far more and for longer periods of time than social norms. They will move when the prey moves.

They will stop and look around for witnesses. They will often make several passes by the prey in a sort of 'dry run', seeing if the victim will react or to get a sense of how the attack might work. Pay attention! Who is looking at you? Has the same person or car passed by you twice? Does someone appear to be moving with you?

If you find yourself in this type of situation, simply change your route but also be prepared to run or defend yourself. If you do have to run, run towards people. Surround yourself with as many people as you can so get to a crowded place like a mall or a store as soon as you possibly can.

Do not wear conspicuous jewelry or clothing while walking on the street. This brings attention to you and opens yourself up to an attack. If you are wearing expensive jewelry, take measures to cover it up. Flashing a huge diamond or expensive earrings is just an invitation for a robber to mug you and take that jewelry.

Do not act like an easy target. Walk with confidence and purpose. If an attacker sees you walking like you have no particular place to go, they are more likely to tag you as easy prey.

If a stranger approaches you, maintain eye contact with them as you keep on walking. Most fights are won before they start. Many aggressors will back down if you convey the message that they do not intimidate you.

Do not ever let yourself be taken somewhere. Police call it a “secondary crime scene” and it’s where you will likely experience your worst nightmare. Never, ever get into a vehicle with someone and never put yourself in a place where you are alone or where there are no people around.

An attacker's worst fear is getting caught. If you find yourself in an attempted abduction, drop to the ground to prevent him from carrying you. Draw attention to yourself and your situation.

Attract attention from anyone you can. The first thing he will say to you is "don't scream or I'll kill you". He's telling you exactly what will ruin his plan. Go ahead, ruin his plan -- create a disturbance, scream, throw things, blow the horn. If you think you should yell "fire" go right ahead. You can't count on others coming to your aid, but you want to appeal to his fear of getting caught and make him think that someone could hear you and be coming.

We also advocate singing. That's right - sing. Sing anything and sing it at the top of your lungs. We especially like "The Star Spangled Banner" because if people see or hear you in the middle of a street singing the national anthem, they'll look around to see who is crazy enough to be doing that. Plus, your attacker will not want this type of attention and he will most likely flee at the earliest possible moment.

Keep a barrier between you and the bad guy. Use a barrier to block him or use distance to gain time. Keep your doors locked, and stay in your car. Force him to get through a barrier before he can get to you.

Use your strongest weapons against his weakest targets. His weakest targets are those that are most valuable, yet ironically, cannot be entirely strengthened. His eyes, throat, groin and knees are your primary targets. Your secondary targets are his face and his abdomen. Strong weapons that you can employ are your kicks using the bottom of your feet, your elbows, fists and palm heel strikes.

In general, it's always a good idea to fight back when you find yourself in an attack situation. Women who fight back are injured less often and are more successful in stopping the attack no matter what kind of attack it is. They feel better about themselves afterwards too.

People who've never been in a situation where they *wanted* to fight often think that they *couldn't* fight, but you will find, if you're faced with a life or death situation, that it's very easy to fight. But you need to know *how* to fight back in order for that instinct to be effective. You need to break through that emotional barrier you've instilled and be confident that you have the ability to protect yourself.

It's not necessary to take years of training in order to become an effective fighter or in order to develop a personal protection plan that works for you. In a couple of hours or a few days, you can become proficient in a number of different techniques and learn something about how you apply them.

There are, however, some things you can carry with you in order to protect yourself. Some of them are a bit controversial and experts believe that certain tools are better than others. Let's take a look.

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## TOOLS OF PROTECTION

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Sometimes, violence comes despite the best possible avoidance measures, and when it does, there is often no opportunity to summon help. In those cases, a woman is forced to face her attacker alone, using only her own resources and knowledge to survive. Fortunately, women who are properly trained and confident in their ability to protect themselves can do so quite effectively.

"Fighting back" is a difficult and uncomfortable subject for many women to think about, but it does not have to be that way. The concept is easy to understand. It's your life or his comfort. He has no right to be comfortable when he is assaulting you.

In fact, fighting back can actually stop the cycle of abuse that often propagates itself. Maybe if more girls and women learn to defend themselves physically by harming their attackers instead of walking away or crying then maybe they could begin to turn the tide of abuse from themselves and women in general. Maybe if boys and men knew that they could be seriously hurt if they lifted their

hands or opened their pants against the opposite sex, their abuse could be stopped.

But fighting back involves more than just a swift kick to the “family jewels”. It encompasses putting yourself in the right mindset and allowing you the right to be safe no matter what. Yes, you’ll probably have to hurt another human being, but you have to decide which is more important - hurting someone else or letting him or her hurt you. I don’t know about you, but I opt for keeping my own life.

Even though each and every situation is different, if you find yourself being attacked or assaulted in any way, there are some things you can do to protect yourself at most times.

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#### KNEE TO GROIN

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First and foremost, kick him where it hurts. The male groin area is a particularly sensitive area.



When you are able to come out with a good swift kick to the testicles, chances are amazingly good that your attacker will fall to his knees in pain thus allowing you to run away out of harm's way.

Use what you have to defend yourself. When walking to your car, place a key in between your index and middle fingers. If someone should try to accost you, shove the key in their eye or the soft spot just below their Adam's apple. Then run like crazy!

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SPRAY THEM WHERE IT HURTS

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Most women carry some type of perfume, hair spray, or body spray in their purses. These substances can work the same magic as mace or pepper spray. A little squirt in the eyes will be just painful enough to allow you to get away from your attacker.

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### EVERYDAY TOOLS FOR DEFENSE

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Almost anything can be used as a tool against a potential attacker. A pen, a table knife, anything sharp would be effective against your assaulter. An effective impact weapon can be created by placing something small and dense (a cake of soap, an ashtray) into a sock, pantyhose toe, or shirt sleeve with a knot tied at the wrist.

The range of potential improvised weapons is limited only by your imagination, but you should not depend on "found" weapons unless your usual tools are unavailable.

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### WHISTLES OR NOISEMAKERS

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Many people advocate carrying a whistle or personal alarm with you.

A personal alarm is a noisemaker, usually battery-operated, that makes a loud, piercing noise when it is set off. Lung powered whistles, often called "rape whistles" also fall into this noisemaker category.

However, most experts feel that having a noisemaker on your person is an over-rated concept. When you believe that someone will come to your rescue when you blow a whistle or set off a siren, you are fooling yourself. In general, don't fall for it. Not only are noisemakers and rape whistles ineffective at deterring crime, they are likely to do more harm than good, for several reasons.

Counting on an alarm to summon aid means that you are depending on someone else to come forth to rescue you. That is, you are betting your life on the hope that someone will hear the alarm, and will respond, and will be capable of stopping the attack. That's a lot of 'ifs' that are out of your control.

The act of activating the alarm or blowing a whistle can take anywhere from 2 to 20 seconds, but the outcome of an attack is usually decided within the first 8 to 10 seconds. So, if the noise doesn't work, you may be out of time, the loser, before you can try other options.

Screaming can sometimes be effective, since the human voice has an impact that is quite different from a mechanical sound. But instead of just making noise, you could be doing much more constructive things that would decrease your likelihood of victimization, such as running away, kicking, striking effective blows, counterattacking with pepper spray, or reaching for a weapon.

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STUN GUNS AND TASERS

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Stun guns and tasers are also a well-liked self-defense tool. Stun guns are hand-held, battery-powered electronic devices designed to deliver an electric shock to an attacker. They are not guns in the traditional sense of the word. A stun gun has two metal contacts, which need to be pressed against the attacker.

Tasers (also battery-powered) propel two metal barbs over a distance of several yards. These barbs, connected to the hand-held unit by wires, are intended to attach themselves to the attacker. These wires are then electrified to incapacitate the assailant at a distance.

These devices stop attackers by pain, rapid fatigue of their muscles, and/or overriding the body's neuromuscular system and disrupting voluntary muscle control.

You should know that in some parts of the United States, these types of weapons are illegal. If you carry one of these weapons, be advised that it could get you into trouble. However, if you use it to defend yourself against an attacker, police are probably going to “look the other way”

with regards to your weapon of choice. Responsibility, however, begs us to advise you of their legal standing.

Based on manufacturers' and dealers' claims, one would think that these devices are remarkably powerful defensive tools, which unfailingly stop assaults. Reality, however, sometimes falls short of the marketing hype.



Studies show that in actuality the application of a stun gun, while temporarily immobilizing an assailant, doesn't take immediate effect. This allows the attacker an unbelievable time to pull and shoot a gun or cause damage to the victim.

The stun gun will hurt, but as far as completely immobilizing an attacker, it falls short. To be effective, the stun gun, a contact weapon, must be held in contact with the assailant for a number of seconds, or he must voluntarily break off the attack.

Various stun gun manufacturers are coming out with new units with ever increasing claimed voltage. They still suffer from the traditional downsides, the principal of which is the necessity of having to hold the unit in contact with your assailant for as much as 5 or 6 seconds, during which time he will not exactly be cooperative. Other factors include

battery strength, voltage, and the fact that you must be close to your attacker.

There is a new generation of Tasers that have recently come onto the market. Law enforcement magazines and first person reports have been very positive with respect to the effectiveness of the new higher wattage tasers.

While the "older" models had outputs in the 5 to 14 watt range, these new devices have outputs up to 26 watts. Note that there are civilian and law enforcement versions. For instance, one Taser manufacturer limits civilians to their 18 watt model having a range of 15 feet, while the LE version's specs are 26 watts and 21 feet.

There are many variables affecting the efficacy of these devices, including model, wattage, contact time, battery strength, and so on. The taser must be aimed at, and hit your attacker. You only have one, or at most two, sets of darts in a taser.

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#### PEPPER SPRAY AND MACE

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Pepper spray and mace can also be effective tools against a physical assault.

Pepper spray is a natural derivative of hot peppers. The essence is extracted, combined with a carrier and propellant, and put into a spray canister. When it is sprayed into the eyes and face on an attacker, it is extremely painful, but it does not rely on pain for its effectiveness. Pepper spray causes physical effects even in people who are "feeling no pain" such as drug users or drunk individuals.

Pepper spray makes the eyelids slam shut or spasm, causing hampered vision or even temporary blindness. When even a small amount is inhaled, it constricts the bronchial tubes, causing extreme choking and coughing, though it does not cut off breathing. It is usually effective on most people and animals, including the mentally ill and those under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Pepper spray comes in various concentrations, and various degrees of heat. If you're going to get pepper spray, you should purchase a product which has an SHU rating of 1 to 2 million or more.

A 1% to 5% concentration is the best range. Sometimes concentrations higher than 5% do not atomize well, and are therefore less effective; also, they lengthen the recovery time beyond the usual 45 minutes or so, and there is no advantage to that in personal defensive situations.

Pepper spray has been used by police and federal law enforcement organizations for decades, and it has an excellent safety and effectiveness record. It is probably the best "general purpose" self-defense tool that you can find, though nothing is 100% effective. The spray may not work on some violent, goal-oriented, people, and may not work fast enough to be effective against someone who is armed.



In most states, pepper spray is legal to purchase. You can probably find it at hardware stores or firearm retail outlets. The likelihood of you finding it at Wal-Mart, however, is slim.

Please do understand that the effective use of pepper spray depends on a variety of factors. Police officers do use pepper spray, but they have had a class on how to use it correctly. Factors that influence its effectiveness include the proximity of the attacker versus you, how much spray you deploy, and where you deploy it at. For maximum effectiveness, it must be sprayed in the eyes.

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#### GUNS

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Finally, we feel the need to address the subject of carrying a firearm. Many people, women especially, do not like guns. This author is no different. However, proper training and handling of guns make them one of the more effective ways of defending yourself and intimidating your attacker.

The key to having and being able to use a firearm lies in your training. There are several different kinds of firearms training. There is basic safety and marksmanship training that everyone who has a gun needs, and there is more specialized defensive firearms training that is

specifically for those who have guns for self-protection as opposed to hunting, or sports.

For basic safety and marksmanship, you can usually find good training quite locally. Regardless of what you might think of the NRA, they have created excellent introductory courses. You don't have to join the NRA to take these courses.

Two courses that are quite good in theory are Home Firearm Safety, and Basic Pistol. Whether the courses are actually good in practice depends on who teaches them. You can ask the NRA for a list of certified instructors in your area, and try to pick out a woman if that would make you more comfortable, or you can go to a couple of local gun shops and ask what instructors they recommend, or you can call local firearms stores and gun clubs to ask whether they offer instruction.

For defensive firearms training, it is wise to be very, very selective. There are a number of excellent, private gun schools around the country. Additionally, there is a list of gun schools that appears from time to time on the Internet. We cannot recommend one over another. What we can do is recommend that you do your research and choose a school that fits your needs and comfort level.

If you are thinking of getting a gun, get training first. If that isn't possible, get training as soon as you get your gun. Owning a gun without getting the right kind of training is like owning a bathing suit without knowing how to swim -- you may look good, but you won't be able to save your own life in an emergency.

The very best way to figure out what kind of gun is right for you is to go to a club or take a course where you

have the opportunity to shoot several different types and sizes of guns, so that you can learn about their differences, what they feel like to shoot, how easily you are able to handle them, and how accurate you are with them. Pinpoint accuracy isn't necessary for self-defense, but the better you can shoot in class the more confidence you will have in your ability to shoot under stress.

Most gun magazines run frequent articles on the selection of a self-defense gun and reviews of individual firearms. Note that not all articles may be completely objective, so get advice from several sources.

We should tell you that should you decide to use a gun, be very aware of the circumstances that surround your use of a firearm. Bare fear (that is, fear alone) is not justification for using lethal force against someone. The fear must be accompanied by circumstances that a reasonable and prudent person would interpret as immediate and unavoidable danger.

If every person who was "afraid" could shoot with impunity anyone who frightened them, the world would indeed be a terrible place for us all, as timid folk would constantly gun down anybody who looked at them the wrong way.

If you are going to take the extreme option of owning and carrying a gun, it is imperative that you obtain very intensive training so you know how to shoot the gun in a variety of situations. You should also be prepared to shoot if you have to draw the gun. A display of confidence and know-how must be present when you are carrying a weapon.

Also, please be advised that in most states, carrying a concealed weapon is a crime. Above everything else, be sure you have a Firearm Owner's Identification card (FOID card). The fee for applying is small (\$5 or so) and it shows that you have had a background check and are eligible to, at the very least, own a firearm.



There's a lot more to defending yourself with a gun than drawing, aiming, deciding, and, if necessary, pulling the trigger. But those steps are all that most people practice in advance. Unless you practice how to talk to someone at gun point, you could find yourself floundering when you suddenly have to do it.

Try this, right now while you are reading this: imagine yourself in a victim's position, with the assailant at the end of your gun. Now say, out loud, "Don't move!" It might feel a bit silly, and sound a little weak. Take a deeper breath, and say it again, louder and more firmly, "DON'T MOVE!" Did it come out better that time?

If you make this part of your practice sessions, you will find that it gets louder and better, and you become more confident that you'd be able to say those simple words even under the incredible stress of an armed encounter.

You can also plan in advance what to do after the encounter is over. You ought to practice turning you head to

look around. This overcomes the inevitable tunnel vision that might be preventing you from seeing a second assailant, or someone who could help you. And you ought to plan to get to the nearest phone to call the police.

Just thinking about these plans isn't enough. Going through the actual physical motions every time you "practice", right down to picking up the phone, will help to embed these actions in your subconscious repertoire just as concretely as the actions involved in drawing your firearm, and will make it easier for you to carry them out if you ever need to.

Remember, you'll be running "on automatic", so you'd better be programmed to do the right thing. If you have no program, you'll flail around trying to create one.

There is a certain mental state of mind that takes over when you find yourself in a threatening situation. Experts call this Tachypsychia.

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## YOUR MENTAL STATE

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Tachypsychia is a distorted sense of size and time and it is very common under stress.

Movie makers use slow motion at some critical moments to try to convey this mental state. Another very common effect of stress, one that can occur with tachypsychia or alone, is tunnel vision.

One victim describes this sensation very well. "I didn't know anything about anything that was around me. I was aware of what was in front of me and of him. I knew exactly that I had a gun in my hand, and I knew where he was. Other than that, I couldn't have told you anything. It could have come up a blizzard in the middle of the parking lot, and I wouldn't have noticed. I thought I was going nuts!"

It's almost as if life is happening around you, but you are invisible. The world begins to occur in slow motion and you are acutely aware of sounds like your own breath or the bead of sweat that is falling from your forehead.

You may feel paralyzed and out of control, but the exact opposite is true. You are in full control, you are just at another level of consciousness – that of taking your life into your own hands and holding on to it with all your might.

Also called the "fight or flight" response of the body to an event our mind considers threatening, tachypsychia is believe to include some or all of, but is not limited to, the following occurrences:

- The autonomous nervous system is stimulated causing the adrenal glands to release the hormone epinephrine (or adrenaline) directly into the blood stream which affects the body in various ways.
- The cardiovascular system responds with increased heart rate and blood pressure. Your pulse will race and you will be susceptible to fainting.

- The respiratory system will dilate the bronchial passages allowing a higher absorption of oxygen. Your pupils will dilate to allow more light to enter. The tunnel vision will result in a loss of peripheral vision, but you will have greater focus.
- Glucose will release into the blood stream thus releasing extra energy by raising the blood sugar level.
- You won't hear much around you although you might have intensified hearing when in the midst of gunfire. You can actually hear the individual empty shell casings hitting the ground.
- You may find yourself with an increased level of pain tolerance, a loss of color vision, a bit of short term memory loss, loss of fine motor skills, and an inability to communicate.
- You could lose the ability to reason effectively along with not knowing the right thing to do – a loss of common sense.
- It is also normal to have a decrease in coordination along with a loss of the ability to walk or run.
- Above all else, you will have a misperception of the passage of time. A second will seem like an hour.

When under extreme conditions of stress, the condition of tachypsychia is common and normal, although it won't seem like it at the time. You will recall this later, but not while it is happening. However, if you know that the condition will present itself, while it is happening to you, you won't be taken in by it. You will just react the way your body wants you to.



There are some specific situations that we feel we need to address. When in these situations, there are things that you can do to protect yourself.

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## RAPE

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There are many schools of thought as to what you should do when you find yourself in a rape situation. Some people feel you shouldn't resist and let it happen to prevent serious harm, but we don't advocate that. Rape is more than a physical assault; it's a mental assault as well. The emotional implications of allowing yourself to be violated in such a way are far worse than the physical violation.

You should use whatever method you think will be appropriate. For a rapist who is fairly casual about the situation, it might be possible to talk him out of it but, in

most cases, that's not something you can count on. You should definitely have a repertoire of other things that you can do if talking doesn't work or if there isn't time to talk.

Control his hips and his hands. This might sound strange, but the concept works. Control his hips to prevent penetration. If you can get your feet on his hips you can control the distance between the two of you. His hands are the weapons he will use against you. He will hit you, slap you, stab you or shoot you, but he has to use his hands to do the damage.

As we have said before, never let him put you in a car and take you to another location. There is virtually a zero chance of survival at that point if he succeeds. Sometimes, however, you may not be able to help it and he will get you into a car.

One girl who had been knocked out by her attacker and put into his car regained consciousness while in the backseat. When her assailant stopped at a traffic light, she jumped out of the car and ran. She was able to keep her wits about her and seize the opportunity to get away.

In a moving car, everyone is vulnerable – even your attacker. There may be opportunities that depend on how thoroughly you are restrained. You may be able to lunge sideways and forwards, and blow the horn by butting it with your forehead. If your hands are free, you can jerk the steering wheel. If your feet are free, you can stomp on the accelerator. Your attacker has to use at least one hand to drive the car. He is limited in his ability to fend you off.



If you can cause an accident, you have disrupted his plan by destroying his method of transportation, and probably have produced several witnesses.

As you no doubt know, however, traffic accidents are dangerous. Choose your chance as carefully as you can.

Never forget the option of directly attacking your attacker. Gouge out his eyes, crush his throat, jam a pencil through his eardrum, and use your belt to garrote him. If you accidentally get a finger in his mouth, don't pull back -- try to shove your entire hand down his throat.

If you are out of the car, and he is getting out of the car to attack, realize that he is using much of his strength and balance just to get out. *If you decide that fighting is better than running*, don't let him out of the car.

Shove him back in. If there's a rock handy, hit him with it. If there's a stick or branch, club him over the head, or jab him in the face. Car doors are hard and heavy. Kick the door closed onto his head, and keep slamming it into him. And, of course, make as much noise as you can.

If you are in the trunk, kick out a taillight and wave your hand or foot through it. Any driver behind the car will see this. Don't be timid; kick the light as hard as you can; they pop out pretty easily.

Another caution: don't over-estimate your fighting ability. If you have a chance to get away, don't, don't, don't stay to fight!

Although many of these defense strategies sound violent, that's because they are. They're supposed to be. When it comes to down to your life, you must be willing to do anything you have to in order to stay alive. That means hurting another person, of course, but it's nothing compared to what he wants to do to you.

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## CARJACKING

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Many people think that carjacking isn't as prevalent as other crimes, but actually, it is. Carjacking is just the precursor to something much more horrible like rape or murder,

so you really need to take precautions against allowing you and your vehicle to be broached.

Be aware of the possibility that it might happen. Look around you when you approach your car in a parking lot or on the street to see if anyone is close by. As you're walking towards your car, look underneath to see if anyone is under the car.

When you approach the car, it's a perfect opportunity for an attacker to grab you by your feet and pull you down or worse. The Achilles tendon runs along the back of your foot just above your heel. If that tendon becomes damaged, you are almost completely disabled and at the mercy of your assailant.

Have your keys in your hand so that you can get into your car very quickly and lock the car immediately. Keep the car doors locked and the windows rolled up nearly all the way, or all the way, when you're driving. Whenever you stop, be sure that you can see the road between your car and the car in front of you; that will give you enough space to maneuver if you have to suddenly pull out to one side or the other. Always check the back seat area before entering your car.

When you get inside your car, lock the doors immediately. Be aware of this as you are driving as well. It's easy for a carjacker to open your car door while you're stopped at a traffic light and commandeer you and your vehicle. Also be aware of people around you while you're driving. Even a rolled down window can be a risk you don't want to take.

If someone approaches you while you are getting into your car, it might be the best thing to simply let them take the car, as long as they're not trying to take you or your child with it. One way to foil their plan is simply to throw your keys as far away as possible. If someone is threatening you with a weapon, you are entitled to defend yourself; you're not protecting your car from the carjacker, you're protecting yourself from the carjacker.

The one thing you should try never to do is let the carjacker take both you and the car. If, despite everything you can do, you find yourself in the car with the carjacker (now a kidnapper), some things you might try are to make the car crash by grabbing the steering wheel, or attacking the kidnapper's eyes. If you are put in the trunk, use your cell phone to call for help, or kick out a tail light and wave your hand through the opening.

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## PURSE SNATCHING

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One way to prevent purse snatching is not to carry a purse, or to carry it in a way that makes it quite inaccessible, such as wearing it under your coat.



Many women think that wearing a shoulder bag with the strap diagonally across their body is a good idea but, in fact, if someone grabs the purse in that position and tries to run with it, it can catch the strap around your neck. Keeping your purse close to your body and your arm over it makes it a little bit harder for someone to grab the purse. Also, being aware of who is around you is also very important.

Some people think it's better to just allow the snatcher to take your purse in order to protect their life. We can't say yes or no to this state of mind. That's a decision that you have to make on the spot, and that decision is influenced by a lot of different factors.

If the person is trying to injure you to get the purse, you have the right to defend yourself to protect against being harmed. In some situations, women make the decision that they would rather give up their purse and assume that the person is going to leave with the purse and not bother them further.

If that's the decision that you make, that's a reasonable thing to do. If you decide that you want to fight for your purse, you should know how to fight and you should make sure that your attacker is not armed.

You might reduce your anxiety about this crime by taking advance steps to minimize its impact, such as not carrying much cash, making sure you have copies at home of the favorite photos you carry, and knowing the procedures for reporting stolen credit cards. If you have taken these precautions, it might be easier to give up the purse without a fight.

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## HOME INVASION

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Home invasion is a traumatic, dangerous event. It is impossible to stop each and every incident. However, being prepared may allow you to avoid one, or even more important, survive.

- When answering the door, always check ID's first before you open it. If you have a window close by, talk to the person through the window. Remember, once you open the door, you have compromised your security.
- Always lock your doors and windows even when you are home.
- Never admit that you are home alone.
- Install a peephole in your entrance door to ID anyone at the door.



- Teach your children, babysitter safety risks about answering the phone or door.
- Keep a pen and pad near your front door. If you see a suspicious person or vehicle write the information down and call the police.
- Rehearse with your family what to do. If you hear an unusual noise in the middle of the night like breaking glass or someone moving around, call the police. If you are alone, lock your bedroom door. Keep your cell phone in your bedroom.
- Keep an eye on your neighbors. Remember, no one knows the routines of your neighbors like residents.
- If you are living alone use only you Last Name and First Initial on your mail box. You may also want to make a name up and put it on your mailbox to give the appearance of a roommate.
- Keep one light on inside the house at night.

Use common sense and rely on your intuition. If something seems suspicious, don't rationalize, call the police.

If you were locked out of your house, would you still be able to get in? Maybe you keep an unlocked window in the back, or a hidden key in your mailbox or on top of a window ledge? You may think this is a good idea, but guess what? If you can break in, so can a burglar!

One out of ten homes will be burglarized this year. For a small amount of time and money you can make your home more secure and reduce your chances of being a victim.

Many burglars will spend no longer than 60 seconds trying to break into a home. Good locks - and good neighbors who watch out for each other - can be big deterrents to burglars.

- Keep your doors, garage doors and windows locked.
- If you just moved in, change the locks
- Keep your yard neat and your landscaping trimmed.
- Leave your front light on at night or install motion sensor lights.
- Your front door should be solid core (not hollow) or purchase a steel security screen door.
- Don't use the mail box in front of your house to mail bills with checks in them. Drop off your bill payments at the Post Office directly.
- Don't hide keys in obvious places such as under the doormat or on top of a door frame.
- Use your peep hole before opening the door.
- Don't allow visitors such as utilities employees unless they have proper identification and you have verified it with the company before allowing them to enter.
- Disable and lock your trailer so it can't be easily moved.

- Lock and secure bicycles when parked- even if in the garage.
- Any firearms should be stored in a locked cabinet out of sight. Remove a working part from the firearm and store ammunition separately.
- Lock up your lawn equipment and tools such as lawn mowers, ladders, blowers and trimmers in a secured area.



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#### CHECK THE LOCKS

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Did you know that in almost half of all completed residential burglaries, thieves simply breezed in through unlocked doors or crawled through unlocked windows?

- Make sure every external door has a sturdy, well-installed dead bolt lock. Key-in-the-knob locks alone are not enough.
- Sliding glass doors can offer easy access if they are not properly secured. You can secure them by installing commercially available locks or putting a broomstick or dowel in the inside to jamb the door. To prevent the

door from being lifted off the track, drill a hole through the slide frame and fixed frame. Then insert a pin in the hole

- Lock double-hung windows with key locks or "pin" your windows by drilling a small hole into a 45-degree angle between the inner and outer frames, then insert a nail that can be removed. Secure basement windows with grilles or grates.
- Instead of hiding keys around the outside of your home, give an extra key to a neighbor you trust.
- When you move into a new house or apartment, re-key the locks.



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#### CHECK THE DOORS

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A lock on a flimsy door is about as effective as locking your car door but leaving the window down.

- All outside doors should be metal or solid wood.
- If your doors don't fit tightly in their frames, install weather stripping around them.
- Install a peephole or wide-angle viewer in all entry doors so you can see who is outside without opening the door.
- Door chains break easily and don't keep out intruders.

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#### CHECK THE OUTSIDE

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Look at your house from the outside. Make sure you know the following tips.

- Thieves hate bright lights. Install outside lights and keep them on at night.
- Keep your yard clean. Prune back shrubbery so it doesn't hide doors or windows.
- Cut back tree limbs that a thief could use to climb to an upper-level window.
- If you travel, create the illusion that you're at home by getting some timers that will turn lights on and off in different areas of your house throughout the evening. Lights burning 24 hours a day signal an empty house.
- Leave shades, blinds, and curtains in normal positions. And don't let your mail pile up! Call the post office to stop delivery or have a neighbor pick it up.
- Make a list of your valuables - VCRs, stereos, computers, jewelry. Take photos of the items, list their

serial numbers and description. Check with law enforcement about engraving your valuables through Operation Identification.

- Ask local law enforcement for a free home security survey.

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#### CONSIDER AN ALARM

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Alarms can be a good investment, especially if you have many valuables in your home, or live in an isolated area or one with a history of break-ins.

- Check with several companies before you buy so you can decide what level of security fits your needs.
- Do business with established company and check references before signing a contract.
- Learn how to use your system properly! Don't "cry wolf" by setting off false alarms. People will stop paying attention and you'll probably be fined.
- Some less expensive options...a sound-detecting socket that plugs into a light fixture and makes the light flash when it detects certain noises, motion sensing outdoor lights that turn on when someone approaches, or lights with photo cells that turn on when it's dark and off when it's light.



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### BURGLARS DO MORE THAN STEAL

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Burglars can commit rape, robbery, and assault if they are surprised by someone coming home or pick a home that is occupied.

- If something looks questionable - a slit screen, a broken window or an open door - don't go in. Call the police from a neighbor's house or a public phone.
- At night, if you think you hear someone breaking in, leave safely if you can, then call the police. If you can't leave, lock yourself in a room with a phone and call the police. If an intruder is in your room, pretend you are asleep.
- Guns are responsible for many accidental deaths in the home every year. Think carefully before buying a gun or keeping weapons in the home. If you do own one, learn how to store it and use it safely.



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### THERE'S MORE YOU CAN DO

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- Join a Neighborhood Watch group. If one doesn't exist, you can start one with help from local law enforcement

- Never leave a message on your answering machine that indicates you may be away from home now, say "I'm not available right now."
- Work with neighbors and local government to organize community clean-ups. The cleaner your neighborhood, the less attractive it is to crime.

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## ATM SAFETY

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The primary focus of an ATM crime prevention program is user safety. Due to heightened user awareness and prevention applications, a recent survey indicated that ATM crime incidents are on a downward trend. Because of the variety of ATMs, the unique characteristics of each installation, and crime considerations at each location, no single formula can guarantee the security of ATM customers.

Therefore, it is necessary for ATM customers to consider the environment around each ATM and various procedures for remaining safe when using an ATM. Criminals select their victims and targets, focusing on the unaware or unprepared.



Criminals are also drawn to environmental conditions that enhance the opportunity to successfully complete their crime. The attitude and demeanor you convey can have a tremendous effect on potential assailants. There are a number of things you can do to increase your personal security and reduce your risk of becoming an ATM crime victim. The following crime prevention tips can help make the use of ATM's safer for everyone.

- Walk purposefully and with confidence. Give the appearance that you are totally aware of your surroundings
- Be aware of your total environment and what is going on around you. Criminals tend to avoid people who have this type of demeanor
- Perform mental exercises and think out what you would do in different crime or personal security situation.
- Follow your instincts. If you feel you are in danger, respond immediately. Remember that your personal safety is the first priority

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#### ATM SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS

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The law sets minimum standards for ATM lighting, procedures for evaluating the safety of ATM's and requires notices to ATM users outlining basic safety precautions for using ATM's. Although ATM environmental design issues are covered in the law, there are other considerations that an ATM customer needs to consider prior to selecting and using an ATM. For example:

- Do not select an ATM at the corner of a building. Corners create a blind area in close proximity to the

customer's transaction. Select an ATM located near the center of a building. An ATM further from the corner reduces the element of surprise by an assailant and increases effective reaction time by the user

- Identify an ATM with maximum natural surveillance and visibility from the surrounding area. This will create a perceived notion of detection by a criminal and increases the potential for witnesses
- Select an ATM at a location void of barriers blocking the line of sight of the ATM. This includes shrubbery, landscaping, signs and decorative partitions or dividers. Barriers provide hiding areas for would-be assailants. Select an ATM that is in a well-lighted location
- Whenever possible, select an ATM that is monitored or patrolled by a security officer
- Select an ATM with a wide-angle transaction camera and/or a continuous transaction surveillance camera. Consult the bank or location management for this information
- Solicit prior criminal activity statistics from law enforcement for the ATM site and surrounding neighborhood
- Avoid ATM locations with large perimeter parking lots and numerous ingress and egress points

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#### CONSIDERATIONS PRIOR TO AND DURING TRANSACTIONS

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- Always watch for suspicious persons or activity around an ATM. Be aware of anyone sitting in a parked car in close proximity to or at a distance from the ATM

location

- If you notice anything strange, leave and return some other time. Even if you have already started a transaction, cancel it and leave.
- Maintain a small supply of deposit envelopes at home, in your car or office. Prepare all transaction paperwork prior to your arrival at the ATM site. This will minimize the amount of time spent at the ATM
- Maintain an awareness of your surroundings throughout the entire transaction. Do not become so involved with your transaction that you are not aware of changing conditions in the area
- Do not wear expensive jewelry or take other valuables to the ATM. This is an added incentive to an assailant.
- If you get cash - put it away right immediately. Do not stand at the ATM and count it.
- Never accept offers of assistance with the ATM from strangers; ask the bank for help.
- Never lend your ATM card to anyone; treat it as if were cash or a credit card.
- If you use a drive-up ATM, ascertain your vehicle doors and windows are locked.
- During evening hours consider taking a companion along, park close to the ATM in a well lighted area and lock your car. If the lights around the ATM are not working properly, do not use it.

- When leaving an ATM location make sure you are not being followed. If you are being followed, drive immediately to a police, sheriff or fire station, crowded area, well-lighted location or open business. Flash your lights and sound your horn to bring attention to your situation.
- If you are involved in a confrontation and the attacker is armed with a weapon and demands your money or valuables, GIVE IT TO THE SUSPECT. Do not resist, property may be recovered later or replaced.

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#### FRAUD CONSIDERATIONS

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- Memorize your Personal Identification Number (PIN). Do not write it down or keep it in your wallet or purse. Do not tell anyone else your PIN ANYONE !! (including bank employees, the police, etc.)
- Shield the ATM keypad from anyone who may be standing or parked nearby or anyone crowding you in an attempt to view your PIN and/or transaction. Use your body as a shield if necessary while you enter your access code.
- Make sure you retain your transaction receipt. Do not throw the receipt away at the ATM site.
- The National Consumers League has opened a toll-free number to provide information on ATM frauds and scams. The National Fraud Information Center at 1-800-876-7060 employs counselors who will refer consumers to the proper agency for reporting a fraud

or scam.

- Immediately report any stolen or lost ATM card to the proper entities

As far as your security is concerned, you can never be too careful, too prepared or too aware. Share this information with family and friends. Schedule family discussions and practice regularly to ensure that everyone you know is safe and informed.

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## STOPPED BY AN UNMARKED POLICE CAR

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The police are supposed to be safe people. People you can go to in times of danger who will save you from a threatening stranger or situation. Unfortunately, there are

people out there who have the overwhelming desire to be a policeman, but lack the credentials and training.

These unscrupulous people will drive a non-descript vehicle and display an illegal siren on the dashboard in an attempt to get you to stop. We don't really need to go into too much detail on what could happen if you perceive them to be a real police officer.

Most state traffic laws require drivers to immediately yield to authorized emergency vehicles that are making use of their visual or audible signals and that drivers shall yield right-of-way when possible by moving to the right hand edge or roadway curb, clear of any intersection, and stop.

This is the law, and failure to obey the law may result in fines, court appearances, and incarceration. Some of the more advanced police agencies (like the New York State Police) never use unmarked patrol cars for routine traffic stops. Unfortunately, even in New York State many other municipal police agencies have not yet adopted this policy.

Predators have posed as police officers. Just recently Lacy Jo Miller a University of Northern Colorado education student lost her life at the hands Jason Claussen who abducted Lacy only minutes away from her Fort Collins home.

Her molested and burned body was found days later in a remote wooded area. Again, following the safety advice below may have you explaining your actions to a police shift supervisor or a judge. If you are concerned about the

legitimacy of an unmarked vehicle attempting to stop you, especially if you feel that you were doing nothing wrong, safely proceed a short distance in a non-evasive manner, to a well-lit, public place.

Your goal at this point is to find an open gas station, restaurant, hospital, hotel, fire station, or police station – any place that will have people (witnesses).

Most police officers are trained to radio for backup, when the car that they are attempting to stop refuses to pull over. You are likely to see more police cars in a few minutes. Remember do not try to speed away, or drive evasively. Stay well under the speed limit and turn on your interior lights (dome light). This is done to illuminate your cars interior and help make the officer feel safer.

Switch on your four way hazard flashers. Using the hazard flashers provides officers an indication that you are at least aware of the police behind you.

If you can not get to such a location and are forced to stop:

- Only roll down the car window enough to hear the officer and pass documents. Drivers should never exit their car until told to do so by a law enforcement officer.
- If you are told to exit the vehicle and you feel unsafe, stay in your vehicle. Do not let yourself be intimidated by the voice commands of the officer. Act on your instincts and stay firm on your decision to remain in the car. Do not ignore the officer. Show respect to the officer by staying calm and do not use profanity. Understand that a police officer working alone pulling over a car with unknown occupants at night in a

secluded area is dangerous for him as well.

- Do not take this information out of context. When you have a genuine concern for your safety and fear that something just does not seem right – then you must act on your instincts.
- Look for an authentic law enforcement uniform. If still unsure or the officer is wearing plain clothes, you could ask to see official credentials including photo law enforcement identification and accompanying law enforcement badge. More importantly listen to what the officer is saying – does it make sense.
- Use your cell phone to call 911 and check the validity of the officer with the dispatch center. This requires you to know your exact street location.
- If still concerned, ask to have a uniformed officer in a marked vehicle respond.

It is very important you to remember that taking these basic safety steps when stopped by an unmarked law enforcement vehicle does not absolve you from the duty to yield and stop or from the responsibility to follow lawful orders or directions from a peace officer. You may have to explain your actions and safety concern in court



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## STREET SAFETY

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Have a plan. Understand that you could be the victim of a violent crime anywhere at anytime. Think about what you would do in a certain situation (i.e., answering your front door, driving home, taking money out of an ATM)

Assess your surroundings. Understand that most sexual predators and street criminals plan their crimes (at least to some extent), most also look for certain characteristics that make for good targets. It is safe to assume that the assailant has been watching you for a while before he initiates the attack. Act confident and be aware of your surroundings.

Do whatever it takes. If the aggressor wants material possessions like your brand new leather coat or the contents in your purse - give them up because they are not worth risking a physical confrontation.

Understand that when you feel that you are in imminent threat of harm, you have the right by law to use as much force as necessary to defend yourself from that threat. We suggest that under these conditions you strike first. The assailant has chosen you as his victim because he views you as an easy target, your decision to strike first at him will not be expected.

Remember the street safety steps. When a stranger approaches you in an isolated area and your instincts tell you something isn't right about the situation - always act on your instincts. Maintain at least a 3 - 5 feet distance out of the reach of the aggressor.

Face the aggressor, running is only an option if you can get to a safe place before he catches up to you. Keep your hands free, look at his neck area (do not look down or turn away). If he asks a question, no matter how legitimate it may seem, respond negatively. For example, if he asks for directions to main street - respond with a "no, I can't help you" If he comes up with more questions tell him to leave you alone.

Women are faced with a disadvantage; traditional ways of educating our children are responsible for not allowing girls an opportunity to defend themselves in threatening situations.

Some type of unwanted sexual aggression will victimize currently over 50% of women in Canada. Women can do a great deal to reduce the threat of violence. Empowering young women with the resources to recognize and escape the violence is what we consider an essential life-skill that should be part of the high school curriculum across the nation.

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## WORKPLACE SAFETY

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### PERSONAL SAFETY IN THE WORK PLACE

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Workplace violence is one that is often overlooked. Sexual harassment is a cloudy area that can be taken to the extreme or not reported at all. Occupations with high incidences of violence include: health care, social workers, teachers, taxi drivers and people working alone.

Fortunately, you can take action to avoid becoming the victim of crime while at work. Your best defense is to know and discuss what security measures are available through your employer. In addition, you should take other necessary precautions to protect yourself and your valuables.

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SOURCES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

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The main sources of workplace violence can be classified as follows:

- Robbery / Theft
- Domestic Dispute
- Employer / Employee Directed
- Revenge

Some common ways that this type of assault occurs at work include any of the following:

- Verbal Abuse
- Disruptive Behavior
- Threats
- Physical Violence
- Sexual Harassment

The company you work for should ultimately be responsible for the safety of its employees. Responsible companies will have a formalized written policy statement regarding workplace safety and sexual harassment. This policy should include definitions along with possible punishments.

Supervisors and employees should receive a brief training sessions designed to recognize warning signs of potentially violent persons. Security procedures should be in place to protect all workers. Counseling and stress management procedures should also be available.

Some possible suggestions for workplace safety from an employer's standpoint should include the following:

- There should be a receptionist at the entrance to control access at all times
- All visitors should be escorted in and out of work areas
- Staff should be encouraged to challenge and assist any unaccompanied strangers they encounter in the workplace
- Keep restrooms locked when not occupied
- Have procedures in place for dealing with suspicious mail and packages
- Have a prompt response to incidents of conflict in the workplace
- Develop and use a Crisis Management Plan

There are some classic signs of a potentially violent person in the workplace. Be on the lookout for the following personality characteristics:

- Resists change
- Sullen, angry and/or depressed
- Identifies with or praises acts of workplace violence
- Recently collected or obtained a weapon
- Uses threats, intimidation and manipulation towards others

- They are paranoid - thinking others are out to "get" them
- Over-reacts to criticism
- Blames other people for their own mistakes
- Has had recent Police encounters
- Has a history of assault
- Other persons are afraid of, or apprehensive about this person

The typical stages of aggression would include:

- Person becomes anxious - "on edge"
- Displays negative attitude and/or behavior (refusal to cooperate and questioning)
- Verbal - Physical release
- Calms down

How do you respond to these stages?

- Show support and empathy for them
- Be firm and set limits

- Escape and get assistance
- If future contact is expected - set firm ground rules

Be completely aware of non-verbal clues that a co-worker or any other person might have the propensity to become violent. Watch for these clues:

- A violation of your personal space
- Body language (clenching / unclenching fists)
- Facial expressions
- Tone of voice

When confronted with instances of workplace violence, do not take threats lightly. If the person you suspect of harassment says any of the following phrases, you have a problem:

- "I'm going to kill you"
- "If you report me - you'll regret it"
- "Be careful going home tonight" "I know where you live"

You should report and document all threats immediately. More importantly than that, however is to remember you should first stay calm and assess the situation. Agree with your aggressor and then calmly remove yourself from the situation.

If you panic, beg, please, or argue, you will most likely agitate the perpetrator and find yourself in an even more dangerous situation. DO NOT minimize his or her threats and DO NOT fail to report the incident.

You have the right to be safe in the workplace. No one has the authority or right to harass you in any way while you are trying to make a living. There are very specific laws that deal with this type of assault, and you should, at all costs, pursue those avenues if you find yourself in a threatening situation in the workplace.

If you work shifts or work into the evening alone, it is wise to take precautions to reduce your vulnerability and protect yourself:

- Whenever possible, try to avoid working alone.
- If you are required to work alone, develop a check -in system with a friend or family member who you can let know you are okay. Give them instructions on what to do if you do not check-in on time (i.e. calling the police or a manager).
- If you work in an office make sure all doors and windows are locked. Turn on several lights to make it appear the building is occupied.
- Let someone know when you are leaving, the route you will be taking and when you are expected to arrive home.
- If possible have someone escort you to your vehicle. Try to park your vehicle in a well-lighted location close to the door.



Remember that your office should have a strict policy protecting you and other employees by not giving out any personal information at any time. This policy should include never providing a home phone number or address of an employee.

Also, never disclose that a person is on vacation or on business travel. This could be setting that person up for a crime. A message should be taken and the person advised that the employee will return their call at a later date.

You should never leave valuables (purses, laptops, cell phones, etc.) on a desk if you are away from them. Take them with you or lock them away. Never leave a wallet in a coat pocket. Always keep money in a safe place . Even if it's only the coffee fund never leave it in an unlocked drawer during the day. At night put the money in a safe or remove it from the building altogether.

Watch for signs of unusual behavior from co-workers. Now there's no need to get overly paranoid, but there are warning signs that a person you work with could be a potentially dangerous person. This is where it is very important to trust your instincts. If a client or co-worker makes you feel uncomfortable, discuss the situation with a supervisor or co-worker you trust.

If you feel threatened by the other person do not hesitate to call the police. Dealing with a potential problem in the early stages will often prevent the situation from escalating. Develop a plan to deal with potential problems.

Avoid confrontations with co-workers and be aware of the emotional climate at work. You should be especially sure

that what you are experiencing is sexual harassment or a physical threat. There's no need to "jump the gun", but you want to be sure you are protected. If you feel someone's behavior is wrong, keep an eye on that behavior and keep very specific notes.

Be assertive regarding any unwanted sexual attention at work. It is recommended that you keep a record of repeated incidents of sexual harassment. Report it to your employer. In an emergency, get yourself to safety and call the police immediately. Never hesitate to call 911 in an emergency.

Assault doesn't just happen against women, it also occurs against children. Because this author has a special place in her heart for children, she feels compelled to educate YOU on how to educate your children so they can avoid a potential attacker and/or kidnapper.

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## THE KIDS

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There are many, many predators out there just waiting to prey on innocent children. Because they are wise to the

ways of the world, children are much, much more susceptible to the lure of a possible abductor or attacker.

There are certain things you can do to help your child recognize the signs of a potentially dangerous person and to protect them from becoming a victim. Consider the following suggestions:

1. Establish a "family password" and drill your kids so that they understand that if anyone ever comes to pick them up at school "because Mommy or Daddy is sick" that person **MUST** give them the family password, or the child should not leave with them. Kids like family secrets, and should have no trouble dealing with this concept.

This author used this strategy with her children and it worked beautifully. Luckily, we weren't ever faced with a life-threatening situation, but I can remember one day my daughter becoming very adamant about everyone saying the "family password" before she would even talk to them!

2. Tell them success stories about kids defending themselves, such as the 12 year old girl who was recently accosted by a man with a gun on her way to school.

He told her to get into his van. She was more afraid of the van than the gun (wise child), and managed to break free and run away. He didn't shoot at her, and was later picked up by police and charged with several child murders.

The point is that it is important to resist strongly and early in the interaction, not to go along (in the van, for

example), hoping that the situation will somehow get better later on.

3. Role-play with them in a low key way, so that they really know how to respond to a variety of situations.

One girl who was walking home from school when she was accosted, and had trouble running away because she was afraid to drop her schoolbooks, fearing that her father would be angry at her if she lost the books.

Parents spend a lot of time trying to get kids to understand and adopt our usual adult priorities, and it is very important that kids understand that all those normal rules are suspended if they are in personal danger!

4. Give them a bit of training about firearms. A good message to convey is that if you see a gun, don't touch it, leave the area immediately, and tell an adult. This is critical for even very young children to understand, since they might come across a firearm in the home of a friend.
5. Far more important than formal classes are the attitudes about self-protection that parents convey to kids. If Mommy is alert, unafraid, and self-reliant, the kids will tend to be so, too.

Teach them that it is OK to scream, really loud, if they are in danger. If someone covers their mouth, teach them that it is alright to kick and scratch (not wildly, but targeted areas such as groin, eyes, throat and knees).

6. Don't have backpacks and clothing with the child's name visibly on it. It allows a stranger to call the child

by name, and kids are less suspicious of (and more likely to obey) someone who knows their name.

7. Remember that the media strive to entertain as well as inform, and horror stories involving children get a huge amount of press and air time, because they sell a lot of papers and make people watch the TV, NOT BECAUSE THEY HAPPEN OFTEN.

Kidnapping is every parent's worst nightmare, but it is NOT a common crime. It may not be increasing, though the "extensive media coverage" may make it feel that way.

While teaching your children how to protect themselves from that, don't forget to teach them how to protect themselves from much more common threats, such as school yard bullies, friends experimenting with drugs, pedophiles, purse snatchers, etc.

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## A STREET CHASE

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If you are walking alone in the dark and you find someone following or chasing you. You may choose to Scream "FIRE!", and not "help". People don't want to get involved when people yell "help", but "fire" draws attention because people are nosy.

Consider breaking the window of a home that appears occupied by throwing a rock. Consider kicking the bumper of an expensive car on the street to set off an alarm. Most importantly run.

If the aggressor is closing in on you (within ten feet), find an obstacle, such as a parked car, and run around it, like "Ring around the Rosie." This may sound silly, but works.

Your last hope is getting under the car. Once you are under there, are tons of things to hold on to, and he will not be able to get you out, and will most likely not come under for you. Usually they give up by this point. In order for this to work you must practice getting under the car.

If someone is following you from a distance - never go home. It might be a natural instinct for you to do this because home is a safe place, but DON'T! When you go home, you are telling your aggressor where he can find you. He might back off temporarily, but chances are very good that he'll be back.

If you are on foot, go to a busy area, change directions – if he persist do not hesitate to contact the police. As we've said before, go to a public place. Call for help, beg someone to help you, do whatever you have to do in order to keep yourself safe. Be persistent; don't let people off the hook. Tell them you are being following and/or chased and that you need help – NOW!

If someone is following you while driving, do not go home. Drive to a busy area: a police station, a mall, anywhere that you will have people around you. If you have a cellular phone, contact the police immediately. It's better to be safe than sorry!

When considering your car, some things that might discourage potential avengers include tinting your windows. In some states, this is illegal, so you should check with local law enforcement to make sure you aren't breaking the law.

The idea here is to mask who you are while behind the wheel of the car so a potential aggressor can't see you and target you as his next victim.

Also consider wearing a hat to help conceal that you are a female. As we have said before, the majority of violent crime happens against women, so being "sexually ambiguous" will protect you more in situations where you might be in danger. We're not advocating androgynous behavior all the time. By all means, you are allowed to dress up and have fun as a woman. What we are saying, however, is to be aware that how you dress and act can open you up to a potential attacker.

Be prepared in all situations and be ready to defend yourself! Of course, many people advocate martial arts as a means of self-defense in this arena. Yes, this might be the secret to defending yourself effectively.

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## MARTIAL ARTS

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Learning the art of martial defense is definitely one way to effectively protect yourself against a potential attacker. Martial arts focuses on doing damage defensively in the spots that can take down an attacker with a minimum of force. You might be surprised at what effect a finger hold on a pressure point can do to another person.

We are not experts of martial arts, so we cannot tell you how to perform these moves. There are many, many styles of martial arts – karate, judo, shotokan, shudokan, jeet kune do, kung fu, etc., etc. No one style is any better than another.

Even if we were to show you pictures of effective moves that can fend off an attacker, they would do little good in the reality of an attack situation. While information is empowering, putting that information to work is much, much better.

What we can do is suggest you find a local school who can teach you the basics of one of these disciplines. Any training is better than no training at all. Martial arts can teach you the best places to target your attacker. It can also teach you how to do the most damage with the least amount of effort.

All types of martial arts can teach you at least a little something about how to defend yourself. Taking a class or two can be beneficial. You need not become a black belt master. You just need to know the basics and then go as far as you feel you need to.



A well placed palm to the chin can do much more to thwart off an attacker than a drawn firearm. An effective flip will allow you time to run away and allow you to save your own life. The martial arts can be invaluable as a means of protection.

Talk to people, find out what style they recommend and who they suggest teach it to you. Even in the smallest of towns, we're willing to bet that you can find someone somewhere who is qualified to teach you, or at the very least show you the basics of some style of martial arts.

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## CONCLUSION

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The bottom line is that YOU have to be pro-active when deciding to take action against someone who wants to hurt you. Women are at risk more than men. It may be unfair, but it's reality, so you may as well do what you can do to make sure that you don't become a victim.

The emotional implications are devastating. If you are approached and attacked and don't fight back, you will find yourself emotionally troubled and tortured thinking of what you could have or should have done. Don't second guess yourself. Take steps to protect yourself.

It takes amazing courage to hurt another person. Just keep in your mind the thought, the reality, that it's a "him or me" choice. You can hurt him or he can hurt you.

Samantha, the survivor of a street ambush, perhaps sums it up best. She says the following:

"I never thought I would be strong enough to win over someone who wanted to hurt me. My sister and I took a self defense class a few months before I actually had to put those lessons to use. It could never happen to me. I was relatively sure of that. Until I read an article about how to protect yourself against an attacker. Then I knew it would be better to be prepared than to be clueless.

My sister bought a gun and took classes on how to use it. I wasn't as brave as she was. I just paid close attention in the shotokan class at the local rec center and practiced every chance I got. My husband wasn't so happy about being my practice dummy – until this past May.

I was walking to my car after shopping for groceries after work. My cart was full. I had to take advantage of any time available to perform these mundane tasks of life. It was 6:23 at night and the sky was just getting dark. I remember the time because I knew that Rob, my husband, would be home and wanting dinner.

I had bought the makings for spaghetti and my mind was occupied with the new recipe for meatballs that a co-

worker had given me. I approached my car, loaded up the groceries in the trunk and took the cart to the “cart corral”. As I walked back to my car, a disheveled man approached me and asked me to buy some homemade fudge.

I told him “No thank you” and proceeded to unlock my car door. He grabbed me from behind. I’m so glad I took that shotokan class. I stomped on his foot, elbowed him in the face, turned around and caught him straight in the groin with my knee. He was moaning on the ground by the time I started the car and headed for the police station.

They caught him later that night. When I had a moment to think back on that moment, I realized that I reacted on instinct. I would have had no idea how to defend myself if I hadn’t had that class. So many women think they can’t be strong in the face of danger, but I’m here to tell you that anyone can be. If you think about it long enough and hard enough, you begin to realize that YOU are the only one who can help yourself.

That’s what I did. I don’t want to think about what would have happened if I hadn’t helped myself. I’m just glad I did.”

Women don’t have to be the weaker sex. We can be strong and effective. It just takes a changed mind-set as well as some easy defensive techniques to protect yourself against a person who wants to hurt you. Don’t be a victim. Learn now.

It can literally mean the difference between life and death. Choose life.

The following websites were referenced in researching this book.

[www.defendu.com](http://www.defendu.com)

[www.aware.org](http://www.aware.org)

[www.about.com](http://www.about.com)

[www.fearlesstiger.com](http://www.fearlesstiger.com)

