



The 5 Levels of Awareness

Effective self-defense training provides awareness and preventive skills, not just physical techniques. Evaluating yourself and your surroundings is the first step to understanding your own personal self-defense needs. By considering these questions, you can get a sense of how prepared you are to address dangerous individuals or circumstances.

1. **Mind:** Evaluate your experience with confrontation and your general awareness. Do you view yourself as a confident person? Are you someone who is comfortable coming off as loud, rude or even causing injury to a threatening individual? Are you able to easily identify a suspicious individual or situation? Do you have any communication skills that would help you prevent a conflict? These skills include both empathy and assertiveness.
2. **Body:** Evaluate your current physical condition. Could you run or fight effectively if you needed to? Do you use any medication or substances which could inhibit your ability to defend yourself? What kind of body language do you portray to communicate with those around you? Do you have any physical abilities that could be useful in a physical altercation? These abilities include both martial arts and conventional athletic skills.
3. **Everyday Carry:** Evaluate the items and attire you most commonly have with you. Are you wearing anything that may draw unwanted attention or affect your ability to move? Do you carry anything with you that could be used as a weapon? These items could include self-defense tools like pepper spray, or they could be improvised items like a pen, a backpack or an umbrella.
4. **Environment:** Evaluate the everyday environments that you have some control over. Do you live or work in a place where you may be in contact with threatening individuals? Could someone easily gain entry into your home or office? Are there any items in your home, office or car that could be used as weapons? Do you have an escape plan if you need to get out of the building or area? Do you have emergency supplies prepared in each of these locations? The supplies include a first aid kit, water and useful tools.
5. **Community:** Evaluate the people and places you interact with. A significant percentage of violent attacks are committed by someone the victim already knows. Is there anyone in your life that exhibits aggressive, controlling or volatile tendencies? How safe is your neighborhood and your daily commute? Do you travel alone through isolated areas? Do you spend time in areas where other people may be unstable or intoxicated? These areas include bars, clubs and entertainment venues.