

## On the Street and Other Places

When going out for a walk:

- Don't go out under the influence of alcohol or drugs. They will impair your judgment and reactions.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Walk with a friend, family member, or big dog.
- Don't go out alone at night, venture into unfamiliar or dark places, take shortcuts, talk to or accept rides with strangers, or hitch rides. Don't walk in or near alleys, on deserted streets, near dark doorways or shrubbery.
- Don't approach vehicles even if the occupants say they need directions or assistance.
- Avoid verbal confrontations. They may lead to physical altercations.
- Carry a working cell phone. Otherwise know where phones are located along your route. 911 calls are free but carry charge for other calls for assistance.
- Carry only necessities, i.e., identification (not a Social Security card), medical information, names and phone numbers of people to call in emergencies, some cash, and a credit card.
- Don't carry a gun, knife, club, chemical spray, or other weapon. Some are illegal to carry and all could be used against you.

If you are out running, also:

- Vary your route.
- Don't run on deserted streets or trails.
- Don't run at dusk or at night.
- Run with a partner or a dog.
- Don't wear a headset. Not only won't you hear someone approaching but you may get so distracted by what you're listening to that you won't be aware of your surroundings.

If you want to learn self-defense, take classes only from knowledgeable instructors. But don't substitute self-defense training for common sense, alertness, and caution.

Follow the four **A's** of self-defense to avoid becoming a target, and if threatened or attacked, what to do. These are **ATTITUDE, AWARENESS, ASSESSMENT, and ACTION.**

Maintain a confident **ATTITUDE.**

- Know where you are going and walk with confidence.
- Make eye contact with people you pass.
- Speak in a strong assertive voice if someone approaches you in a hostile or suspicious manner. Tell them to stop or back away.

Be **AWARE** of your surroundings and who or what is nearby.

- Listen to your intuition. If something doesn't seem right, it probably isn't.
- Watch your surroundings. Leave any places in which you are uncomfortable. Be especially alert for suspicious persons around banks, ATMs (Automated Teller Machines), stores, your home, etc.
- Be wary of strangers who seem overly friendly, ask a lot of questions, or ask for help.
- Never turn your back to a stranger.
- Be wary if a vehicle pulls up beside you.
- Be especially alert when alone in a dark parking lot or structure or any isolated area.

**ASSESS** the situation and possible threat if you find yourself in an uncomfortable or potentially dangerous situation.

- Consider your options in the event you are threatened, e.g., scream or blow a whistle to attract attention, escape to a safe area, stay and fight, etc. Decide what you plan to do and practice your responses so you can recall them in a real situation.
- Does the person threatening you have a weapon? What kind?
- Does the person threatening you have an accomplice?

**ACT** quickly and decisively if you cannot avoid physical actions against an attacker.

- Keep a safe distance from strangers who stop you for directions or conversation.
- Cross the street if you think someone is following you.
- Call 911 and walk into the nearest open business or other safe place if someone is following you.
- Don't let someone get close enough to grab you. Watch their hands and feet for indications of hostile intent.
- Don't let anyone back you up against a wall or other object.
- Try to dodge blows by moving to the side and then behind the attacker.
- Move to the side, not backwards if someone is striking at you.
- Don't struggle or try to pull away if someone grabs you from behind. Use your feet, elbows, fingers, and the base of your hand to disable the attacker and then escape.
- If you fall to the ground, yell and kick.
- Aim for the most vulnerable body parts, i.e., eyes, nose, throat, chin, knee, and groin.
- Objects like umbrellas, keys, and shoulder bags make effective weapons when used against vulnerable body parts.