

A close-up photograph of a woman's face, showing a dark bruise on her left eye. She has a distressed expression and is covering her mouth with her hands. A man's face is partially visible in the upper right corner, looking down at her. The background is dark and out of focus.

5 Tips To Live Safely In An Unsafe World

A Complimentary Resource
Written By LD Thomas

INTRODUCTION:

I'm sure you don't need to be told about all of the craziness we live in. This world is full of evil, hate, and violence. You can't turn on a TV or look at a news feed without seeing reports of violent protests, mobs, looting, school shootings, active shooters, mass murders, etc....

However, without cutting yourself off from society, becoming a hermit, and ceasing to live and enjoy life, it is probably not realistic to expect to live danger free. Fortunately, there are simple things anyone can do to increase their chances of living safely in an unsafe world.

Before we get into the tips, why should you listen to me? Literally anyone could write a document, put a catchy title on it, and suggest that you take heed of their advice. My credentials aren't important and this resource isn't about me, its to help you. However, I want you to know that you can trust my advice or the words are meaningless.

My name is LD and I am the Owner and Head Instructor at OA Krav Maga in Auburn, AL. I teach Krav Maga and Self-Defense full-time professionally, am a certified Black Belt and Instructor in Krav Maga by the Federation of Israeli Martial Arts, and am recognized internationally as an expert in Krav Maga and reality-based Self-Defense. In addition, I am a retired State Trooper, K9 Handler, and Special Operations member, as well as a licensed attorney, with 15 years of trial experience. I have investigated, arrested, and incarcerated murderers, rapists, and international drug dealers. I have also defended people charged with murder and kept them from going to prison, when they were falsely accused or entitled to use self-defense. These tips come from a lifetime of professional, real-world experience, not some theoretical talking points I saw on the internet.

Let's jump in!

TIP #1 GET OFF YOUR CELL PHONE.

You park your car, lock it, and then walk to wherever it is you are going, using the spare time to check and respond to text messages, check Facebook, answer an email, call home, etc.... You are looking straight down and oblivious to your surroundings. The community you live in, the neighborhood you call home, and the sidewalk downtown is not as safe as you think or are led to believe it is. Certain institutions have an incredible financial motivation for Auburn, Alabama to have a reputation as being safe. Dangers lurk everywhere, you are just unaware of them because of the distractions that consume our daily lives or because those dangers are intentionally hidden from you.

Not to be conflicting, but there is a time when that cellphone can work to your advantage. Listen up ladies.... The next time you have to walk somewhere by yourself and are feeling a little freaked out. Hold your cellphone up to your ear and have a conversation - just talk to yourself. I can't promise that you won't get attacked, but it will certainly decrease the likelihood of it.

Yes, you may feel a little silly having one half of a fake conversation, but to a would-be attacker, you might as well have someone with you. The "person" on the other end of that cellphone would know you are in danger, may be able to identify your location, and could call authorities. A lot of assailants would rather wait on another potential victim, rather than take their chances with "whoever" you are talking to calling the police. If you want to take it a step further, put your phone on the "emergency dial" screen while you are talking to yourself. Then, if something does happen a quick tap of a button will get help on the way.

A cellphone is not necessarily what is putting you in danger. Instead, it's being so attentive to what's happening on that cellphone that you lose the ability to observe and orient to your surroundings.

TIP #2

DEVELOP OR IMPROVE SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Simply following Tip #1 will accomplish this to a degree. However, this is one of those things where more is better.

Violent attacks are rarely random. Instead, criminals watch, stalk, and carefully select their target. If you are attacked, with almost certainty there will have been indicators that you could have picked up on with good situational awareness.

Situational Awareness is a term used frequently in the military and law enforcement. Your situational awareness is the perceived state of your environment, the elements that create it, how they relate to one another, and where and how you fit into it all.

Where are you? Is it safe? What potential threats exist? How many people are there? How many exits are there and where are they? Are there obstacles that could prevent or delay your escape? I'm not suggesting that you become Jason Bourne, John Wick, or a CIA Operative, just that you pay attention to your surroundings. If a lunatic pulls out a gun and starts shooting, which general direction should you run to escape? If you can't get to that exit, is there another one? Developing or increasing your situational awareness will allow you to know the answer to those and many other potentially lifesaving questions. Then, when something bad happens, you don't have to waste valuable time figuring out those answers in the moment, you already know what to do, where to go, etc....

If nothing else, trust your gut. If the hairs on the back of your neck are standing up or you have that eerie feeling that something isn't right, you are probably in danger. That is your body's subconscious perception alerting you to a threat. By following your gut feeling, you have everything to gain and nothing to lose - even if it's wrong, you lose nothing. However, if it is right and you ignore it, you may lose your life.

TIP #3 PROJECT CONFIDENCE

People committing acts of violence are opportunistic. They don't want a challenge. Instead, they study and select perceived weakness and easy targets. A confident person isn't perceived as an easy target. If feeling confident is an issue for you, you may be asking, "How do I do that?"

First, believe it. If the ability to do so, isn't a reality for you, well that's a different conversation we need to have. For now, simply enrolling in Krav Maga will help you believe in yourself and your ability to defend yourself. That in turn will allow you to project confidence. When you know that you can defend yourself, disarm someone with a gun or knife, escape from a choke, or not get pinned down, confidence in yourself naturally follows.

In addition to learning how to defend yourself, you need to remove the things or people from your life that are causing that lack of confidence. It's hard to be confident with everyone around you constantly trying to tear that confidence down. Once you remove these people and things from your life, there is a tremendous foundation to build upon.

Second, if you don't yet have that confidence, "fake it until you make it." If you don't have it, act like you do. Stand up straight with your head up and shoulders back, walk with a purpose, and maintain eye contact.

Most people have heard the saying, "93% of communication is nonverbal." That's actually over simplified. The study that produced that myth originated in 1967 when Albert Mehrabian, a famous psychologist, published his findings about "message incongruence." He found that 7% of communication came from the verbal message, 38% from the tone of voice, and 55% from body language. So, while 45% of communication came from what or how something was said, more than half came from body language. Therefore, more than half of what you say, isn't coming out of your mouth.

TIP #4 MAKE IT DIFFICULT

I hope you are never attacked. Statistically, you will be, but let's hope for not. If or when you are (depending on how you look at it), make that attack and yourself as difficult as possible. It's not that hard to do either. Let's look at how you can become a difficult target:

- Learn safe boundaries. Once you know those, it's much easier to recognize when you are in danger. Think of those boundaries as a fence around your property. Anytime someone crosses over that fence it should get your attention. It may be harmless, but alarm bells should go off alerting you to the potential danger. This goes far beyond just safe distances.
- Don't ever give up. If you are attacked, the point you can guarantee you are going to get injured or killed is when you give up. Fight with every breath until there is none left. If you get tired, keep fighting. If you get hurt, keep fighting. If you get cut, keep fighting.
- Know vital target areas. There are areas you can strike that will leave your attacker incapacitated. There are areas you can access that will cause your attacker to be both unwilling and unable to continue the attack.
- Have a plan. This can become really complex, but the complexity can reveal a simplicity. Through training you can have a plan for everything. Mike Tyson famously said, "Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." That's true. But, what if you had a plan for when you get punched in the mouth? What if you had a plan for when your plan doesn't work? You could even have a plan for when you don't have a plan. With training and planning, cognitive thought and heat of the moment decision making in a life-or-death situation become unnecessary. Instead of failing to act or acting inappropriately, you revert back to your training and plan, which will have significantly better chances of producing a lifesaving response and outcome.

- Learn indicators of violence. Before someone throws a sucker punch, they will do one of three things. If someone has a gun hidden, there are a handful of indicators they will give to tip you off. When someone is about to lunge at you with a knife, they will always make two small movements before doing so. People making an effort to conceal their identity stick out like a sore thumb. You can easily determine if you are being followed just by knowing what to watch for.
- Use everyday items in a tactical manner. The ring on your finger, a key, shoelaces, belts, your cellphone, a pen or pencil are just a few of the common, everyday items that can be used in various ways, either as improvised weapons or to escape multiple life-threatening situations. You have weapons even when you don't. You have escape tools even when you don't. You have survival gear even when you don't. The trick is knowing how to use them. Even more important, there is no permit required, you can take them anywhere, and they are so common, it's not even noticed when you do.

TIP #5 LEARN SELF-DEFENSE

It is about being self sufficient. Nowadays, you just can't rely on someone else to protect you. A friend, spouse or Good Samaritan won't always be there. Even if they are, the mentality needed to risk you life to save someone else is fading in our society. There are multiple instances where women have been raped and bystanders chose to not get involved- they didn't even call 9-1-1. If someone won't help a woman being sexually assaulted, the chances of them assisting someone being attacked in a different manner are nonexistent.

So learn Krav Maga. But why not Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, MMA, Kickboxing, Muay Thai, Karate, etc...? Each of those are amazing martial arts. They ALL teach great skills. However, they have to be used for their intended purpose, none of which, is self-defense.

Taekwondo, Karate, Muay Thai, Judo, Wrestling, and Boxing are all **official Olympic sports**. The only reason Jiu Jitsu is not an Olympic sport is the IOC (International Olympic Committee) decided that it was too similar to Judo. Competitions have rules. Competitions have techniques that are illegal because they are likely to cause injury to opponents. Competitions have referees. Competitions have 1st place, 2nd place, and so on. Competitions have sportsmanship and fair play. Being violently attacked does not!!!

If you are attacked, there are no rules that tell your attacker what they can and cannot do. Your attacker will not be disqualified if he or she does something that might cause you injury. There is no referee that is watching closely to ensure that no illegal techniques are used, prevent someone from being hurt, or to declare a winner. In self-defense the winner is the woman that fights off a rapist, the man that defends his family, or the police officer that survives an ambush and goes home to his or her family. In self-defense the only rule is, survive.

BONUS TIP #6 DON'T BRING A GUN TO A KNIFE FIGHT

I know what you are thinking... "The saying is, 'don't bring a knife to a gunfight.'" Indeed, it is. However, for the point I am about to make, I mean, "Don't bring a gun to a knife fight." Hear me out...

If you are within a three-foot radius of me and pull out a gun, I am going to take it away from you. Your gun is going to be in my hands, pointed at your head before you can blink an eye.

Let's change it up a bit. If you are any distance away from me and you pull out a knife, I am going to turn and run and keep running until you either catch me or I feel like I am far enough away that you are no longer a threat.

I can take a knife away from you. However, in the process of doing so, I am going to get cut or stabbed. It is the simple nature of knife fighting and it is unavoidable.

I don't want to get cut or stabbed. I don't want to find out if you are really willing to use that knife to hurt me. I don't want to find out if your knife fighting skills are better than mine. So, if I have the opportunity, I'm going to run. That does not make me scared or a sissy - it makes me smart.

Now if we change the scenario, what I do will change with it. If you pull a knife and I can't run, or escape; If you attack me before I have the opportunity to run or escape; If you are closing the distance faster than I can put it between us.... Then, and only then, am I going to fight. However, I am going to fight having already accepted the fact that I am going to get stabbed or cut and am going to bleed - I may even die. At point though, you are now attacking someone that can take that knife away from you, is willing to get cut, and is not afraid to die.

What's the point?

The point is, you have a significantly better chance of surviving a gun pointed at your head than you do a knife swung at you. With a gun, if you are within arm's reach, you at least have a chance of disarming them. With a knife and within arm's reach, the chances of you surviving unharmed are minimal at best. If one person has a gun, another has a knife, they are within 21 feet of each other, and both are willing to kill, the person with the knife is going to win. That may seem hard to believe, it was for me too, but it has been scientifically proven time and time again. It's known simply as the "21 Foot Rule."

CONCLUSION:

We all live in a dangerous world. I wish I could write a few pages of information that could change that reality for you, but that's not realistic.

Despite that, there are things you can do to increase your chances of living safely. The tips I have presented here are just a few of many things you can do. I hope that you can incorporate something you read here into your life to live safer.

If you want to learn more, we continually discuss these and many other ways to live safer in our Krav Maga classes and you are welcome to join us anytime.



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