

There are plenty of situations in which you may have to defend yourself. Whether you mean to put yourself in harm's way or not, you could be the victim of any number of crimes that require you to respond to your fight or flight response.

These [self defense scenarios](#) can be scary, but they don't have to be. As long as you're prepared to handle whatever comes your way, you'll know exactly what to do. In this article, we've revealed some of the best tips to protect yourself, no matter what.

1. BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS.

Anytime you leave home, you should constantly be aware of your surroundings. Put the phone away, but in a place where it's easy to reach. Be vigilant as you walk down the sidewalk, through a parking lot, or in a parking garage.

Knowing what's going on around you can help you be prepared for anything that might happen, and it will also improve your memory about the situation so you can describe it more accurately later.

2. MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS.

Not only should you put your phone away, but you should make sure you zip your purse up and minimize all distractions. Don't be tempted to check emails, text, look at social media, or fish through your purse for your chapstick.

Getting distracted means you're not doing a very good job of #1.

3. BE SAFE WHEN EXERCISING OUTSIDE.

If you run alone, don't listen to music. If you need music for motivation, consider leaving one earbud out and the music low enough that you can hear what's going on around you. Be alert and watch behind you periodically to make sure you know what's going on and who might be around.

4. BE SAFE IN A PARKING LOT.

If you're walking through a parking lot or parking garage, keep your keys in your hand. You'll need them once you get to your car anyway, so get them out and be ready. If someone is following you, you'll be ready to get in your car quickly and lock the doors.

Keep in mind that you should never unlock your car from across the parking lot, giving someone time to get in it while you're still far away. Once you approach the car, press the unlock button on your remote once to unlock the driver's door only. Never give anyone hiding on the other side of your car a chance to slip in without you noticing.

Your key can also be used as a weapon if you're attacked.

5. TELL PEOPLE YOU'RE UNCOMFORTABLE.

If someone gets too close to your personal space, you can communicate your boundaries, especially if you're feeling vulnerable. Be firm and use a serious tone when you tell someone to get out of your space or back up.

Some people may back up, because they didn't actually mean any harm. You may also alarm someone enough to make them give up on you. However, even if they do keep coming, setting the tone up front means you can now defend yourself with more powerful means because you called out a warning.

6. USE WHAT YOU HAVE.

Most self defense laws state that you should attempt to run if you're attacked. However, if you can't run or you get cornered, use whatever you have on you to defend yourself. Stab your attacker in the arm or hand with your keys to loosen their grip on you.

The throat, eyes, and groin are also sensitive areas you can aim for to disable your attacker and give yourself a chance to get away. You can also arm yourself in advance with pepper

spray, a whistle, and a firearm.

7. KNOW HOW TO ATTACK.

The most vulnerable places to attack are the throat, eyes, and groin. However, you may also want to practice some self defense tactics or take a martial arts class so you're familiar with how to attack in every situation.

8. SHOW NO FEAR.

You can use powerful body language to show how strong and confident you are. You're a better target if you look weak. Demonstrate that you're not scared and you have no time for nonsense.

Keep your head up and your shoulders back. Don't be afraid to make eye contact with people, even if you don't know them, and especially if they look suspicious. For one thing, it gives you a better look at them when you have to describe them or identify them later.

For another, it could intimidate them just enough to back off or think twice about approaching someone who seems like they could defend themselves.

9. TRUST YOUR GUT.

Your instincts are biological tools you can use to keep yourself safe. If you have a bad feeling about something, listen to that feeling and do what you need to do to avoid the situation. More often than not, you can trust your gut to be correct.

10. PROTECT YOUR SPACE.

If someone is going to attack you physically, they need to get close enough to do so. Use what you have to your advantage when protecting your personal space. If you can place an object in between you and your attacker, like a chair or table, do so.

You can also keep yourself positioned far enough away from them that they can't touch you.

11. SIGN UP FOR A CONCEAL CARRY OR GUN SAFETY CLASS.

If you would like to protect yourself by carrying a firearm, you can look up conceal carry and gun safety courses in your area. Most gun shops offer them. You can learn a lot about how to carry and how to shoot.

You'll learn how to care for your gun and you'll get an opportunity to practice using it so you're prepared if the worst were to happen.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Self defense is more than just carrying a weapon. It's about your mindset, your awareness, and your ability to avoid situations that may put you in harm's way. Be smart about who you're with, where you go, and how you carry yourself when you're alone.

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