

Soar
WITH US



The student streetwise guide for personal safety

Critical life skills that protect you for the future



A recent study of 22,419 women found that 99.7% of women had been repeatedly subjected to violence including assaults, harassment and rape. On average, a woman in the UK will experience 37 acts of violence in their lifetime. However it's not just women; men are more likely to be victims of violent crime than women, and are three times more likely to be victims of stranger violence.

If these statistics seem high - then it's time to change them.

While work is underway culturally to put the focus on perpetrators, in the meantime we can all take an active role to feel a little more safe by equipping ourselves with the knowledge and critical life skills so we know how to avoid and act in potentially dangerous situations.

We've created this download to help equip yourself with the fundamental principles and critical thinking skills that could one day save your life or of those around you.

Whether you're travelling to or from school/college or in the classroom or exploring your independence, these transferable life skills will help you now and in the future.

Within this pack we'll be covering:

- **Why personal safety is important.** It can happen to anyone.
- **The 3 A's of personal safety.** Awareness, avoidance and action.
- **Fight, flight or freeze.** Our basic instincts and how best to respond.
- **Our 5 top tips of wisdom.** Critical life skills that everyone needs.

Together let's spread awareness, build your confidence and help create safer communities for you and the generations after you.

Stay safe, and soar with us.

Libby, Silpa and Shelly

Why personal safety is important	3	Primal responses to fear:	
The 3 A's of personal safety.....	4	Fight, Flight or Freeze.....	6
Spotting the signs:		7 top tips for personal safety	7
Awareness & body language	5	What's next?	8



Why personal safety is important

You might think caring about personal safety is obvious, but all too often we take our safety and wellbeing for granted, until it's too late.

We touched on some of the stats around risks of violence in the introduction to this pack, but the bottom line is that none of us knows what is around the corner. We may lead a completely happy and healthy life, with nothing causing us harm - but to assume that will be the case puts us at risk. That's why we need to be prepared.

WHO IS YOUR ATTACKER?

It's often assumed that, if we are going to come to harm, it's most likely to be at the hand of a stranger - however statistically that is not the case. Try to avoid putting yourself into vulnerable situations with those you don't know well, and be aware that sometimes even those you love are capable of causing you harm. If someone close to you ever does hurt you, remember that it is not your fault (whatever they may say) and that you should not tolerate it. Find someone safe to confide in, and remove yourself from the situation as soon as possible, while trying to avoid confrontation.

WHAT ARE YOUR ATTACKER'S MOTIVES?

Motives for attacks are as varied and complex as those who carry them out, however, it is usually possible to break them down into three main categories:

1. **Anger or retaliation.** Fairly self-explanatory, in these instances perhaps violence is a response to a verbal argument escalating, or as a response to a perceived threat. In these instances, your priority should be de-escalation and doing your best to remove yourself from a situation as soon as possible.
 2. **Sexual and predatory motives.** Women are most likely to be victims of these kinds of attacks, and are most likely to be targeted when alone, so the emphasis is on reducing vulnerability. Covering drinks when out in bars and walking confidently and assertively via well-lit routes when alone are the kinds of things which can help prevent you from being identified as a potential victim.
 3. **Hate crimes.** Those from minority groups are particularly vulnerable to hate crimes, and these are often hard to predict or mitigate. However, if confronted, it is best not to engage and, if you feel threatened, to run towards a busy area likely to have CCTV, such as a supermarket or high street.
-

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

The human brain is a supercomputer which, even today, is not fully understood. Our instincts, for example, are highly attuned to dangers which we may not entirely be aware of, however, they are usually right. If a situation or a person is making you feel unsafe, or simply unsure of your safety, trust that instinct and find a way to distance yourself from the situation. Don't worry about being rude or following social conventions if you're uncomfortable; the worst-case scenario, if they're harmless, is some slightly hurt feelings. The worst-case scenario for you, if they're an attacker, is infinitely worse.



The 3 A's of personal safety

When it comes to personal safety, there are three core elements to remember that apply at all times.

AWARENESS

Be aware of your surroundings, the environment, people, and potential risks.

When you enter a new space, do a quick scan of the room so you're aware who is around you, as well as potential exits should you need to make a quick getaway.

AVOID

The best form of self-defence is to avoid confrontation and escape the need for physical defence as soon as possible.

Escaping high-risk situations at the earliest opportunity is always the best option.

ACT

Be decisive. Act quickly to stay safe, and do your utmost to remain calm.

And remember, your voice is a tool. Use it!



Spotting the signs: awareness & body language

It's not always possible to spot an attacker, however, there are some key warning signs to be aware of that might help you to identify an individual who is not behaving typically, giving you enough warning time to remove yourself from a situation before it potentially escalates.

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF IN ANY SITUATION THAT FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE.



BODY LANGUAGE AND MOVEMENT

Are they fidgeting or moving around a lot? This could be a sign of nervous energy, indicating they could be experiencing adrenaline or anticipation before they make their move.

Are they uncomfortably close to you or slowly moving in your direction unnecessarily? They could be testing your response.

Are they clenching their fists, rubbing their hands or got a strained jaw?

Can you see their hands? Are they hidden in their pocket or behind their back?

There is a natural flow of movement in any environment, **are you noticing someone who seems to be going against the flow or doesn't quite fit?** Go with your gut instinct



EYE CONTACT

A tactic that some attackers use is making contact with you, **have they asked you a question or tried to create a conversation that feels unnecessary?**

Sometimes it can be more subtle, **are they asking you about the time, directions or even the weather?**

Does it feel like they are forcing a conversation and asking you a lot of interview-style questions and not really talking about themselves? They could be assessing your response or seeing if you fit their profile.



MOST IMPORTANTLY... TRUST YOUR GUT INSTINCT

Does something feel off or is making you uncomfortable but you can't quite put your finger on it? Don't underestimate your natural instincts, your subconscious could be picking up subtle indicators. Even if it isn't right it's better to be safe than sorry. There is no harm in being careful and removing yourself from a situation that is making you uncomfortable or nervous.



Primal responses to fear: fight, flight or freeze

We tend to respond in one of three ways to moments of stress and fear. Our bodies have pre-programmed defence mechanisms, designed to keep us safe. However, attackers often know this, and are banking on you responding predictably. Here are some tips to try and stay on top of a dangerous situation.

AVOID 'VICTIM BEHAVIOUR'

Our body's primal response to moments of fear is to flood our bloodstream with adrenaline, which impairs our cognitive processing. This surge of adrenaline causes us to react in three different ways: fight, flight, or freeze

We need to act confidently, decisively, and calmly in order to stay on top of the situation

WE DO THIS BY:

1

Reprogramming your responses

When adrenaline takes over, we have to go against our natural instincts and behaviours. This is not an easy thing to do, without practice. That way you will have muscle memory of how to react in certain situations, so when your cognitive processing is affected by fear, part of your mind will already know what to do.

By controlling your emotions and practising reprogramming your responses, you are training your mind to react with a learned response. Your attacker will likely be anticipating a victim response, so by acting unpredictably you may deter your attacker.

2

Using your voice

When people think of self-defence, they often think they need physical strength and skill on their side to prevail- but they're forgetting an incredibly important tool on their side: their voice.

Remember, we're trying to act unpredictably and challenge the presumption that we'll be a passive victim.

Be loud, shout, and scream as quickly as possible to attract attention. It may be enough to put them off.



7 tips for personal safety

1 BE A HARD TARGET

People looking for a victim want to be sure they can get what they want as quickly and quietly as possible- and they'll identify their victims accordingly. Avoid keeping your head down on your phone or listening to music; walk confidently with your head up

2 USE COMMON SENSE

Avoiding vulnerability is a recurring theme of personal safety. Use your common sense to mitigate risk, for instance avoiding walking alone at night.

3 MAKE YOUR WHEREABOUTS KNOWN TO OTHERS

Try to make a habit of ensuring that someone knows where you are at all times. If your plans change at the last minute, ensure someone is aware. If the worst is to happen, you need someone to know what your movements were to have the best chance of finding you safe.

4 SAY NO

Sometimes, our reluctance to be unkind or unhelpful means we hesitate in higher-risk situations. If your instinct tells you something is off when someone approaches you, or asks for help, simply say calmly and firmly that you can't stop right now and walk away with purpose.

5 DON'T ADVERTISE YOURSELF TO THIEVES

When out in public, particularly in higher-risk environments like parks, or public transport, take care not to advertise your personal belongings to opportunists. Keep your phone and valuables out of sight and stay alert to your surroundings.

6 NOTHING IS MORE VALUABLE THAN YOUR SAFETY

If someone confronts you demanding you hand over valuables, then do so. Let them know that you will be lowering the item to the floor and sliding it in their direction (do not hand them over by getting close to them) and run straight away from them.

7 FOR HELP

If a situation becomes uncomfortable, raise your voice to alert those within earshot and shout for help if things escalate. Most smartphones have an SOS function, familiarise yourself with that and use it in an emergency.

