

## **The Situational Awareness Mindset:**

What is self defence? When this question is asked, the usual answer is "physical techniques which defend one against a physical attack". Although this is a common belief amongst many self defence and martial arts schools, self defence starts way before the actual physical assault.. The first and probably the most important component in self defence is "AWARENESS" of you, your attacker, and your surroundings.

Self defence is a system of awareness strategies combined with physical and mental techniques. Through the awareness mindset, many physical altercations which are commonplace on the street, can most likely be avoided

It is a common strategy that the street predator will look for targets that are totally unaware of their surroundings

The tactic of the "ambush" or the "sucker punch" is what the street predator relies upon and uses to his full advantage. People who are unaware of their surroundings are prime candidates (victims) for this street strategy. If the street predator can catch you by surprise, then it allows him to strike first. Face it, on the street the first person to strike a good stopping blow, will usually,, not always, but in most cases, win the fight

It has been said that a street fight is a war in microcosm, the best prepared for battle will probably win the war. In war, if you can take your enemy by surprise, you will usually have a tactical advantage. Again, this is a tactic that the street predator lives by.

To counter the ambush tactics, an army in time of war sets perimeters. These perimeters are usually manned with some kind of early warning system. Their sole purpose is to advise the main body that if there is an aggressive act initiated against it, there will be time to counter attack.

Just like the army in time of war, you have to be aware of your surroundings at all times. By having this awareness mindset, you will have the insight, knowledge, and time to recognize what is going on around you, and thus have time to deal with any potential problem more effectively.

Through the awareness mindset, you have taken the advantage of the sucker punch, which is the primary tactics of most attackers, from the street predator. By being aware of what is going on around you, two clear messages are being sent to a potential street predator who may be out hunting:

- 1) I recognize you are there. Because of this fact, their primary tactic of "surprise" is defeated, and
- 2) To beat me is going to cost you physically because I am no easy target

These two points are important to understand because the street predator is a lazy animal. Street predators like to pick the easiest targets. Why? , Because the easier the target, the lower the risks of being seen, heard, or caught, and the higher the gains for getting what it is I want from you. If through the awareness mindset you can portray a "force presence" which says "I am not a victim", most street predators (not all) will leave you alone and find easier prey.

The awareness mindset tries to give you the insight and knowledge to recognize what is going on around you, so that you can either deal with the problem effectively, or get out of its way.

Although I am a police officer that has learned the color codes of awareness, I still find it difficult to remember what each color means. This is also very true for students who do not have either a military or law enforcement background. Because of this fact, I have borrowed the levels of awareness that the US/Canadian military use during times of war, which are; "Defence Conditions" commonly known as "Def Cons"

DEFCON #1: (low risk)

Defcon #1 is that state of awareness when you are by yourself or with a group of people that you know in a friendly environment. Here a physical attack is highly unlikely, but you still have a relaxed awareness of your surroundings

DEFON #2: (medium risk)

Defcon #2 is that state of awareness when you find yourself in an unfamiliar or potentially hostile environment. Here, the potential for physical confrontation is always likely, so you want to have your awareness mindsets "switched on". You need to constantly be scanning your surroundings in an attempt to pick up and recognize those danger signs, ritualized combat, which may alert you to a potential problem. The more time and distance you have between yourself and a potential threat through awareness, the more capable you will be to deal with the problem at hand effectively

DEFCON #3: (high risk)

Defcon #3 is that state of awareness where you know the shit is going to hit the fan. You have formed a reasonable belief, based upon the totality of the circumstances, that the predator(s) is going to attack you physically. It is at this point in time that you should take the tactical advantage and strike first, exploiting the element of surprise to your advantage instead of his.

Defence conditions are the street strategy of awareness which provide you with important informational input prior to a hostile encounter. In the movie the "Terminator", Arnie wore a set of glasses that would constantly be scanning his surroundings. These glasses would constantly be sending the Terminator information on his surroundings. These "awareness" glasses gave the Terminator the ability to know who and what was around him at all times. Just like those glasses, you need to constantly be scanning your surroundings, using the Defcon model to ascertain things like:

- Who is my potential attacker
- How can he likely attack me
- Can he hit me
- Where can he hit me
- What kind of real or improvised weapon does he have in his reach
- What is going to be my "offensive" action to his possible attack
- What are my possible escape routes

By asking yourself these questions, you have cognitively thought about what your potential attacker might do. In doing so, you are going to be more prepared for his attack, if any should erupt. If you are more prepared for an attack, you are more likely to act. Remember the 7 "P" principal of personal safety

- 1) Proper
- 2) Pre
- 3) Planning
- 4) Prevents
- 5) Piss
- 6) Poor
- 7) Performance

So how can we increase our situational awareness:

## **PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR SURROUNDINGS:**

Awareness of your surroundings is the key to personal safety.

## **SCAN:**

Learn to be in the habit of constantly scanning your surroundings ó side, front, and behind; close to you and farther away. Practice will make scanning automatic.

## **DON'T GET DISTRACTED:**

It is difficult, if not impossible, to be aware of your surroundings if you are distracted by a, cell phones, headphones, diskmans.

## **KNOW WHO IS AROUND YOU:**

Part of being alert to your surroundings is to beware of people around you. When scanning make brief eye contact (not a prolonged stare which is seen to be a challenge) with people. By doing this, you send a clear message that you know the person is there, thus taking away their primary tactic of surprise.

## **WALK STRONG AND CONFIDENT:**

By carrying yourself in a confident, purposeful, and self assured manner ó described as force presence ó you immediately convey to a potential attacker that you are not a victim. One must be very careful however, not to be seen as cocky which can be a challenge

## **USE YOUR SIXTH SENSE:**

õsixth senseö, õgut Instinctö whatever you call it, your intuition is a powerful subconscious insight into situations and people, We all have this gift, but many do not listen to its warning. Remember that your intuition is a million years of evolution that the good Lord has given you to stay safe. But far to often it is just denied or trivialized.

## **KNOW WHERE YOU ARE:**

Always know or plan your route beforehand, especially in areas which are not familiar. A õlostö appearance indicates weakness ó a sure target

## **LIMIT YOUR LOAD:**

Do not burden yourself with packages, shopping bags, etc. this marks you as a target, and more importantly, restricts the use of your hands and arms if needed for protection.

These are but a few ideas ( I know there are many more) that one can incorporate into their everyday life to increase one's situational awareness mindset

Strength and Honor

Darren Laur