

**Verbal boundary enforcement:** is communication. It is letting a would-be assailant know that you are aware of what is occurring and that you are committed to doing whatever it takes to protect yourself.

This is not threatening nor bravado, it is a clear cut message for them to "backoff", and that failure to do so will have unpleasant results. This is being assertive, not aggressive. You are doing what it takes to get them out of your boundaries, not chasing them down the street. **Before you vocalise: know how far you are willing to go.**

**Physical self-defense:** is the last ditch effort. If it gets to this point through all the other levels, it has been compromised. You are justified to do what it takes to stop them. While some people choose not to participate in violence in order to defend themselves, others have no such qualms. Either choice carries responsibilities. Physical self-defenses is not about fighting, it's about not being hurt by violence. Nor is it about being fearless. It is not necessarily studying the martial arts nor buying a gun, it is doing what you have to do to keep from being hurt, raped, robbed or killed.



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### Self Defence: Understanding Your Personal Safety

There is no reason to live in fear of crime and violence. There is, however, reason to take practical precautions. In doing so, you will have deterred most criminals from choosing YOU as their victim. The reason is simple, there are thousands of people around who are easier and safer targets. You won't have stopped the criminal from being a criminal, but you will have stopped them from choosing YOU as their victim.

Personal safety can be viewed as a pyramid. Each level not only increases your safety, but builds upon the level beneath to create a more reliable whole. As you climb the pyramid you can see further and are more aware of the surroundings, and any danger on the horizon. When your life could be at risk you don't want a non-cohesive "do this for this situation and that for another". Such a fragmented approach requires excessive work, inconvenience and, often, drastically altering your lifestyle. What is worse is that it still leaves opportunities and openings for you to be attacked.

Start from the bottom and work your way up. Each level takes you higher and keeps you safer. It does this by creating a consistent network that works simultaneously on several fronts. What will stop a burglar will also foil a stalker or a break-in rapist. What works to stop a mugger will also foil a serial rapist or hijacker/carjacker. This consistency closes the gaps left by a fragmented approach -- gaps that crime and violence can come through to distress your life.

Understanding this system is simple and easy. Once it is in place, it requires no more than a minute from your daily routine to ensure your personal safety. Using the first four levels will serve to keep you safe from the majority of crime. The top three levels are for more overt confrontation, in situations where levels one to four have been compromised.



**The foundation** that the pyramid stands upon is knowledge and understanding. This means knowing how criminal and violent people think and what they need to succeed. Without this fundamental understanding, there can be no cohesiveness in what you do to protect yourself (or your property).

**Walk-aways:** are things that you do once and just walk away from. These are security measures that, once in place, serve as both deterrents and safeguards. Generally, these are things you can do around your home or business to discourage and foil break-ins.

When done correctly, walk-aways are like an iceberg -- what is apparent above the surface serves to warn away most would-be burglars -- but the bulk is under the surface. Criminals do not like the unexpected. Walk-aways are unexpected snags. Often this unexpected resistance is enough to scare the criminal away. However, for the more determined criminal it is a hindrance that will serve to slow them down and increase the chances of them getting caught.

Walk-aways not only keep your home safe from burglary when you are not there, but serve as an early warning system against break-in when you are at home. This becomes a critical element if you are in a stalker situation, as home security walk-aways are your first line of defence. **IDEAS: LOCKS, DOGS, ROSEBUSHES UNDER WINDOWS, NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH, HEAVY CURTAINS, FILM ON WINDOWS, GET A SAFE, ALARM SYSTEM ETC.**

**Habits:** are those repetitive actions taken daily to ensure your safety. They are simple acts you train yourself to do that will significantly decrease the chances of a criminal choosing you, or your property, as their target.

They can range from remembering to enable your "walk-away" security measures i.e. locking doors, windows and closing your curtains and setting alarms when you leave, never leaving your car running and unattended, to not leaving valuables in plain sight, to looking around when you enter a fringe area or before you reach your car. Such habits are not difficult to maintain and within a week or two become automatic.

The reason they are effective is that they either remove items of value from sight, deny easy access or complicate things for the criminal. Moreover, they give you early warning that something is wrong. This is essential for frustrating the criminal's attempt to develop their plans unnoticed.

**Awareness:** is born of a blend of habits and knowledge. One part would be knowing where a mugger would lurk in a carpark in order not to be seen by security personnel or potential victims. Having the habit of looking around and seeing if anyone is loitering in that spot when you enter the parking structure is another. If you see known danger signs, turn around and go back -- don't walk into the lion's jaws. Don't be petty with your life, holding the thought that you will not let these people stop you walking where and when you like. These are criminals, drunks or drug users with a criminal mind-set.

"Awareness without knowledge is paranoia." The blending of knowledge of what is really involved in a crime, what certain things mean, and the forewarning that your good habits will give you, instill a calm confidence. It's like driving a car, if you pay attention and remember to do what you know about driving, you can avoid most accidents

and problems. It is however, when you forget to do those things that problems arise.

**Manoeuvring and positioning:** is knowing where you don't want to be. There are positions from where an assailant can (and probably will) successfully attack you. If they can achieve these positions, your chances of effectively defending yourself are slim to none. The violence will be swift, intense and aimed at your weak spots. Unless you are willing to commit extreme physical violence in self-defence, do not allow this situation to develop. Positioning is a strategy game. It is the criminal trying to put you where they want you and you moving so they can't.

This 'game' is very real and very dangerous. It is, however, not apparent on the surface. There is a term that is used to describe this condition: 'shadowdance'. It means something is going on that everybody knows is occurring, but nobody talks about it openly. Foreign embassies are prime examples of shadowdancing. On the surface, they are for diplomatic relations, commerce and to assist nationals travelling between countries. However, integral to their very foundation is espionage, both the committing and prevention of.

Criminals trying to set you up for a robbery are most often engaged in this sort of shadow dance. If they blatantly display their intentions too early their "prey" will either elude them or successfully defend themselves. Therefore, the criminal most often tries to hide his intent until it is too late. This need for subterfuge can be turned against them however.

As they quietly try to jockey you into position, you just as quietly slip away. What are they going to say, "Hold still so I can rob you?" Criminals most often rely on their victims not knowing the "shadowdance has begun" and long before a weapon is displayed (by then it is too late). By you knowing what the criminal needs and not letting them develop it, you non-violently protect yourself from crime and violence. Prevention is better than cure.

**Knowledge of self-worth and boundaries:** are essential to avoid becoming the victim of crime and violence. Even if you have decided that you are not willing to use physical violence to defend yourself, until this point the pyramid still works. It is however, important to realise that no matter what your decision about using physical self-defence to protect yourself, that you have now come to a crossroads. Aside from the obvious implications, when we use the terms knowledge of self-worth and boundaries, we also are including knowing how you think and how you are coming across.

Regarding self-worth: it is a commitment to yourself. It is the knowledge that neither you nor your loved ones can afford you to be victimised. It is also knowing when you are justified in telling someone to "back off" and, just as importantly, when to stop!

When you are dealing with a potential assailant, you must remember you are being confronted by a totally self-absorbed person, who is not afraid to use violence to get their way. The last thing you want to do is insult them or invade their space! If you do they are more likely to become violent. If you don't know where to stop, you can provoke a situation that could have ended without violence.

In the same vein, you cannot hide behind avowed pacifism while still being verbally violent.