



# PARTNERS IN CRIME PREVENTION

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## PERSONAL SAFETY— INTRO

Deputy Erin McIntyre trains other deputies on personal safety. This is obviously important for a deputy who never knows who might attack him or her in the course of their duties. Her recommendations for the public follow in this issue.

Personal safety is one of those things that you probably take for granted. After all, you assume that you live in a safe neighborhood. You choose where you live based on how safe the neighborhood is or seems to be. And if the neighborhood is safe, then you do not have to have our guard up all of the time, you can relax.

If you live in a neighborhood with a lot of crime- robberies, assaults, etc. then you might have a tendency to stay at home, not to expose yourself. You raise your fear level, so you stay away from places where you think you will be hurt. But, no matter where you live, you should be prepared whenever you are out of your house with a plan in case a situation arises that places you in jeopardy.

**Mind set.** Your mind set should be that you will do anything to survive. Ultimately, you need to be ready to handle any situation that you encounter. You don't have to be an expert in judo, boxing, shooting a gun or any number of weapons. You just have to know that you will not allow yourself to be victimized. You need to know that no matter how bad of an attack against you, you will take

whatever action you need to, to be intact when it is over.

It all depends on the situation. The actions that you need to take can be as simple as shoving an assailant and running away. It can be as drastic as kicking, punching, biting, gouging eyes out to protect yourself. You have to make up your mind ahead of time that you will survive.

**Play "What If".** The best way to survive is to be mentally prepared for what can happen to you. If you are not prepared, the assailant has control. If you are prepared, you can regain control.

Visualizing what we would do can help you in stressful situations. When you are under stress, your mind do not work well. But with some practice, you can go into auto-pilot to be able to handle a stressful, often fast moving situation. It is because of the brain's difficulty in working well under stress that airline pilots constantly train in simulators to handle dangerous situations.

You do not need an expensive simulator to train yourself. While you are walking down the street think about what you would do if someone tried to assault or rob you. Make sure that you are the winner. When you think about these things, your brain remembers what you were thinking, and is more prepared if it happens for real.



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## SELF DEFENSE FOR TEENS

*Sometimes teens find themselves in dangerous situations where they can be attacked.*

*The Nemours Center for Children's Health Media's KidsHealth.org makes some very good suggestions on how teens can avoid assault (in fact many of these suggestions can be used by adults as well) at:*

[http://kidshealth.org/teen/safety/safebasics/self\\_defense.html#](http://kidshealth.org/teen/safety/safebasics/self_defense.html#)

*Among their majors points:*

- Use your head
- De-escalate a bad situation
- Trust your instincts
- Reduce your risks
- Take your dog with you
- Yell and get attention if you need help
- Take a self defense class

*For the specifics, go to the link above.*

## PERSONAL SAFETY- AWARENESS

Awareness of your surroundings is the key to survival. Without being aware of what is going on around you, you cannot react to or avoid dangers that might develop.

Americans are incredibly unaware of their surroundings. When walking down the street we talk on our cell phones. We send text messages. We stick earphones in our ears listening to music. We can't hear and we don't look at our surroundings to see potential threats.

**States of awareness.** As you go through your day, be aware of your state of awareness:

**White-** You are completely unaware. You can do this only in your own home. Predators are adept at spotting someone in this state. In white, you are preoccupied, walking with your head down and never look around. After being assaulted, people in white will say that "they never saw it coming."

**Yellow-** This is a healthy level. You are aware of what is going on around you. You are relaxed but alert to your surroundings. This is the state that you should be in.

While you are in yellow, you can play "what if." For example, think about what you would do if you noticed someone following you. As you go on your way, think of other possible threatening situations and what you would do to get out of the situation or protect yourself. This visualization can help you if you are faced with a real life threat by preparing your brain to act.

And go with your gut! Sometimes you may have a funny feeling that things are not right with your surroundings. You may not be able to express why at the moment, but you might feel like you should not be

where you are. Follow that gut feeling and leave the area. Its better to find out later that you might have been a little foolish than to have been robbed, assaulted, sexually attacked or killed.

You may fear that if you try to maintain your awareness at yellow that your friends would accuse you of being paranoid. But maintaining awareness of your surroundings is not being paranoid.

A big part of being in yellow is updating your brain on what is going on around you. You do not have a preconceived idea that everyone is out to get you. But you are alert to your surroundings so that if you see someone take an action, or has placed themselves in a threatening position you can quickly go to the next level.

**Orange-** You are in orange when you detect a potential threat to you. You should start making a plan to protect yourself.

You maintain a heightened state of awareness. Your adrenalin will elevate your heart rate and blood pressure increases, your pupils dilate , preparing you for action.

You will remain in this mode until the threat is gone, has been dealt with, or you have removed yourself from the threat.

**Red-** In red, you are actively protecting yourself. This is when you are in a "fight or flight" mode.

**Black-** You are so overwhelmed that you become a complete victim. This is the culmination of not being aware of your surroundings, not being mentally prepared for a conflict, and you have not prepared a plan to protect yourself.

## PERSONAL SAFETY– SELF DEFENSE

The law allows you to use force when it is necessary to protect yourself, or someone else, when there is no other reasonable alternative.

But this begs an obvious question, what is reasonable? To be reasonable, you need to base your action on what you know at the time of the incident. And your actions need to be sufficient to get you out of trouble or to deter a person who is threatening you, no more. So, you need to be alert to what is going on around you and respond to it as a “reasonable” person would.

You have a right to protect yourself or someone else from the harm of another person. The key is to ensure that you take “reasonable” actions to keep within the law.

For example, if you encounter an aggressive panhandler, the best action might be to cross the street rather than beat up the panhandler. The idea is to stop the threat or to remove yourself from the threat. Once this is done, any more violence on the perpetrator may not be considered self defense.

**Use of weapons.** When many people think of self defense they often think of using some sort of weapon. But, your own weapon can be used against you.

If you carry a gun, in an altercation, that gun can be taken from you and you could be shot with it by the bad guy.

You can be harmed by other weapons even if they are not taken from you. If you use a knife to defend yourself you can expect to be cut in addition to the perpetrator.

If you use pepper spray against an assailant you probably will feel the spray on yourself.

So if you are considering taking some sort of weapon for your own protection, think about how that weapon can be used against you.

**Personal Boundaries.** Part of self defense is knowing your boundaries. Boundaries are limits that you set between yourself and other people. Boundaries can be expressed in thoughts, activities or possessions. They are

restrictions on what others can do to you or with you. You set boundaries to protect yourself physically, mentally and emotionally.

By knowing your boundaries and being confident in your boundaries you can sense where you should be (or should not be), you can evaluate your interactions with other people, strangers and friends.

If someone gets into your "zone" or crosses your boundaries, protect yourself. Protection does not have to mean you pull out your gun, you can protect yourself verbally, with movement or with a gesture. You don't have to be rude.

**Carrying Yourself.** As you go about your day, your body language can project confidence or a victim ready to be exploited.

Your body language should project confidence. Criminals sense those who lack confidence and they attack them. They stay away from people who seem confident.

As you walk on the street, walk with purpose. Act like you know where you are going. Don't be distracted with your smartphone or music player. Look at people as you go down the street. Anyone who might want to rob someone will pass you by.

## KNOCK ON THE DOOR

*You may hear a knock at your door. You do not know who it is. It could be a friend or neighbor, a solicitor or a burglar checking your house to see if anyone is home.*

*You do not have to open the door.*

*Look through a side window or a peep hole to see if you recognize who is outside.*

*Talk through the door. Make the person on the other side of the door aware that someone is in the house. If they are acting suspicious or you do not want them on your property you can politely tell them you are not interested or that they should leave.*

*If they don't go away, tell them that you will call 911.*

## PERSONAL SAFETY– SEXUAL ASSAULT

If you are a victim of sexual assault, or want more information about preventing sexual assault call the Providence Intervention Center for Assault and Abuse at (425) 252-4800 or (800) 656-4673.

It provides emotional and physical healing for victims of sexual assault that includes:

- 24-hour crisis line service
- medical and legal advocacy
- medical examinations
- support group services
- community education and referrals

Their advocacy services are provided free of charge. Interpretive services are available on request.

The Providence Intervention Center for Assault and Abuse is a member of The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) a national non-profit organization that is the nation's leading anti-sexual assault organization. Working through over 1,000 local affiliates, RAINN provides assistance to sexual assault victims, friends and family to recover from rape and to prevent sexual assault.

RAINN maintains a web site at [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org) that provides information on prevention, background information on rape drugs, campus rape, how friends and family can help rape victims, etc. RAINN also provides a recommended reading list as well as web links to other sites that provide help and information for sexual

assault victims.

According to RAINN, sexual assault is a crime of opportunity. Often the victim feels guilty or is led to feel guilty for letting it happen. RAINN suggests some tips to avoid dangerous situations:

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Try to avoid isolated areas. It is more difficult to get help if no one is around.
- Walk with purpose. Even if you don't know where you are going, act like you do.
- Trust your instincts. If a situation or location feels unsafe or uncomfortable, it probably isn't the best place to be.
- Try not to load yourself down with packages or bags.
- Make sure your cell phone is with you and charged and that you have cash money.
- Don't allow yourself to be isolated with someone you don't trust or someone you don't know.
- Avoid putting music headphones in both ears.

For more information about prevention go to:

<http://www.rainn.org/get-information/sexual-assault-prevention>

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### NEWSLETTER INFO

#### EDITOR

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If you have questions regarding this newsletter or any articles that appear in it, please contact the editor at [neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org](mailto:neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org)

### TIP LINES



Snohomish County Sheriff's Office: 425-388-3845

<http://www.snoco.org/app/ssh/anonymoustips/>

Crime Stoppers of Puget Sound: 1-800-222-8477