

REDUCE THE RISK

a guide to

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING PERSONAL SAFETY AND AVOIDING ASSAULT

by

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and*

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(W.E.S.T.)

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WENLIDO

developed by women for women and their children

ACCESS

Your own strengths and abilities

ACKNOWLEDGE

The assault is really happening to you

learn and apply

AWARENESS

*Who the attacker really is,
Why they attack, & What really happens in attacks*

ASSESSMENT

Your decision about what you will say and do

AVOIDANCE

Ways to make your environment as safe as possible

ASSERTIVENESS

Act and speak positively to state what you want

ACTION

*What you CAN do to release holds & fend off physical attacks
You choose to change and act as you believe is necessary*

TO DEAL WITH ASSAULTS

by

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REDUCE THE RISK

Practical Strategies for Enhancing Personal Safety and Avoiding Assault

While this booklet is specifically directed towards adult women and their children, it contains advice that is useful for anyone. We believe “Safer for Women” means “Safer for Everyone”.

As women, we have been told what **not** to do since we were babies. Even if it were possible to follow all this advice, these “Don’ts” will not stop a determined assaulter. In addition, if you feel that you are not doing the “right thing” and are somehow “wrong” this may inhibit or stop you from trying to escape or doing anything active to defend yourself. If you want to know what you are doing wrong, most people will be glad to share their opinion and tell you.

What is critical for each of us is to identify what we do *RIGHT*. If we are alive, we know that we are doing lots of things right. It is genuinely important to discover the things that you *CAN DO*, and to apply them to your own life in a positive way. The following tips give a brief look at some areas of concern, and at how we can reduce our risks and enhance our personal safety.

Use Awareness & Avoidance

When you are aware of what is happening around you, you have better odds of seeing a developing problem and getting away before it becomes a personal threat. Listen to, and act on, your own feelings about situations; they are proven, valid evidence that something may be happening around you and to you.

We want to be aware of and to avoid potentially dangerous situations whenever possible. One place is not necessarily more dangerous to be than another place. No place is a problem unless it has an attacker in it. If you walk past a dark park and you are nervous, it may be because of fear of the dark or it may be because there is someone there. When we do not know it is better to avoid or to research from a safe distance.

Use Your Intuition

What if nothing is happening but you don't *feel* right? You are hearing your intuition (gut feelings, hunches) and you need to *listen and respond* to this feeling. Unless you are nervous all of the time, about everything in your life, you will find these feelings a valuable early warning device. For the majority of people and situations they are the most reliable indicator that something is about to happen.

Trust yourself and your feelings, and then Act on these intuitions to reduce the risk and stay safe.

You Have Strategies

Your thinking capability is your best defense. You already have a large store of strategies that you use automatically and have been practising all your life. Add to these skills as you learn more strategies that feel comfortable to you. Your best techniques are the ones that you are willing to actually use and carry out.

Basic Assertiveness

If you are confronted, we recommend looking someone in the eyes for three seconds (count: 1001, 1002, 1003) then look away. This acknowledges the other person, and indicates that you are unafraid. By looking away, you further show that you are not interested.

Communicate your limits clearly. If someone starts to offend you, tell them so firmly and explicitly – immediately. Respond as soon as you can. Remove yourself from the situation as soon as possible.

Be assertive and tell a confronter to “Go Away” or “Leave Me Alone” or “I’m Not Interested”. If the other person claims to misunderstand you, repeat yourself. Speak louder and insist that the other person hear you. Keep saying what you want.

Not all harassers or assaulters are male. Although the majority are male, you may be targeted by a female. It is their negative behaviour that indicates whether or not there is a danger.

Out Shopping

Wear comfortable clothes and shoes. Take the money and cards that you need to use, instead of every piece of identification you have. Plan your shopping to carry the least amount of stuff around with you. Arrange for delivery, or plan to pick up parcels later when you are on your way home or with someone else who can help.

Devise an alternative to carrying a purse, particularly when you are going grocery or clothes shopping. It's hard to hold on to a bag firmly while you are active. Another option is to wear clothing with inside pockets or sew secure pockets into clothing that you already have and use these to carry your valuables. Only count money when you are in a private place and keep the amount of cash that you carry appropriate for your needs on that outing.

In Public or Out on the Town

Should you be approached by a person in a public place, you need only talk to them if YOU want to. Should they start politely and then become rude you can turn away. If they bother you, report this to the police, security guard or transit driver.

Whether you are out alone or out to party with friends, you deserve to be treated with respect. Some assaulters are looking for a victim who appears to be inebriated or not in control. Think about this and adjust your consumption accordingly.

Be clear and assertive with anyone who tries to push into a group where they are not wanted. Be aware that some people may listen in to conversations to try and find out more about you or to find out where you are going next.

When you enter into a conversation with any person, avoid giving out your name, address, or place of employment. Better still, ask them for their number and you can call them if you do want contact. Should you meet a person that you would like to contact further, arrange to meet in a public place or where you have other friends present.

If someone is insistent that you tell them something that you do not want to, just say NO. If you want to distract them you can give them the wrong information (such as the number to Dial-a-Joke or Prayer – check the phone book). If you decide to lie, KISS (Keep It Simple Sister!).

Canine Friends

Women with dogs are rarely attacked. Any dog, even a small one is an inhibiting factor in an incident. People are never sure how the dog will react. Only get a dog if you like them, have space, and enough time to take care of them and train them properly.

On The Move

Start with a plan. Be aware of where you are going, where you are at any given time, how you are travelling, and think of ways you can make it safer. Where possible, use information phone numbers, maps, timetables in advance to plan your routes.

Take as few valuables as possible to minimize the hazard. Carry your ID, money, credit cards, etc., in an inside pocket rather than in your purse. Purse snatchers tend to grab any bag that's not being watched or firmly gripped (from shopping carts, in restaurants, etc.). Sort your money or valuables in a private place to avoid a theft attempt by an opportunist.

Have strategies ready. Know places that are relatively "safe" such as stores that are open late, neighbours that are likely to be up, friends, police and fire stations, phone booths. Lights and people inhibit the attacker, but attacks still happen in well lit, well-populated areas.

When Walking

As you walk, attempt to stay near lights from street lamps or buildings and away from dark building corners or shrubbery that may provide hiding places for others. This may be difficult so it is also helpful to be aware of how far you can see (line of sight) into or out of an area and watch for movement.

Walk with or near others whenever possible. Even if you do not know them, you can still walk along with a crowd on the street and you will look as if you are with them.

If you think you are being followed, Find Out by looking back, changing your pace, or crossing the street. Go to a public or open area, preferably well lit. Look for places where there are people. Go up to an occupied house and ask for (insist on) assistance.

If you are being followed by a person in a vehicle, turn and walk in the opposite direction to get away from them. It will take them time to turn around, time that you can use to head for safety. Walk opposite to the flow of traffic. Write down or memorize the license plate or vehicle description.

When waiting for transport, lean against a wall so that you can see the area. Try to work transportation out with others. Get a lift with a friend. Ask someone to call and check that you are home and safe.

While Running

Carry your keys, quarters for the phone, and some identification so that you always have resources with you.

Keep your eyes open and watch the people and spaces around you. If something does not look or feel right, change your route immediately.

Listen for sounds around you and try to identify them. Keep your ears clear so that you can hear if someone is coming up behind you. A radio or tape player will distract you.

Be aware of places on your route where you could seek help if you needed it. Run with others (or a dog) if you can. Make the last part of your route through the “safest” (easiest to get help) area since you will probably be the most physically tired then.

On Transit

Whenever possible, sit near the driver or the conductor on transit if there is one, or near the emergency control.

If you are being harassed, stand up and tell them to stop, move away, push past them if necessary. Report them to the driver or pull the emergency signal.

Stay on the bus, as your harasser will probably get off. Even if it is your stop, the bus with people is safer when there is an incident in progress. Tell the driver and insist on a response.

Around Your Vehicle

Always keep your bike or car securely locked. Have your keys in your hand and ready to use before you arrive at the vehicle so you are not fumbling. Look around and under the vehicle to see if anyone is lurking or hiding. When you leave your car (two door models), tilt the driver’s seat forward. This way, when returning, you can see if someone is hiding behind the front seat while still at a safe distance from the car. It is easy to enter a car (or other place) without keys for those who know. Park your vehicle under lights, when possible, so that it is easier for you to find and less of a temptation for someone else to break into. Place parcels and objects out of sight in the trunk to further limit temptation.

Maintain your vehicle with regular servicing so that it will keep running and be reliable. Keep the gas tank at least half full at all times. Check your lights and brakes every time you go for a drive. Should your car break down in a deserted area, raise the hood or put a **Help Police** sign in the window and stay in the locked car on the passenger side while you wait. If someone comes offers to help, roll the window down a small amount to talk to them. Give them change for the phone and ask them to call a friend of yours, a tow truck or whomever you have decided is the best person to contact. Consider membership in the Automobile Association or other group that provides emergency services.

Keep your windows mostly up and doors locked when driving, since people could jump in at stop signs and red lights. If someone tries to flag you down, keep going and notify the police. To respond to a threat from outside the vehicle, stay in with the doors locked and windows closed. If you have a cellular phone, call 911. Honk your horn to alert others. Drive away to a safer area.

Be observant of any vehicles that pull away at the same time as you do. If you notice this type of situation, note the license plate number. If a vehicle runs into you in an isolated situation, consider staying in your vehicle as it may be an opening for a physical assault. Drive to a police station if you fear for your safety. Police impostors have been

known to pull women drivers over. Real police officers will either be in a properly identified uniform or show proper police identification.

Choose who you let into your car carefully. Knowing them previously does not guarantee their good intent. Giving a ride to an unknown person also includes an unknown risk. If there is someone in your vehicle who is trying to force you to drive somewhere, you can still drive to a safer place (fire or police station, gas station, area with people, etc.), park in the middle of, or jump out of the car at an intersection, or honk loudly at a police patrol vehicle.

On a bicycle, be aware of what you are approaching. If threatened when riding your bike, ride away to a safer area as quickly as possible. If it appears that you are being followed, stay on populated streets and head for a police station or open business where there are other people.

Taxi!

When taking a taxi, watch where you are going and ask questions about the route if it seems strange. Insist that the driver go the way you want to go. Take down their number and make a complaint if necessary.

Ask them to wait until you are inside your door before they drive away.

If you use one company regularly you can request a specific driver with whom you feel comfortable.

Riding with Others

If you are accepting a ride in a car with someone else, this may be the circumstance that a potential assaulter wants. You may be offered a ride home from work, after a party, or you may be hitchhiking. A female hitchhiker is often seen as being “vulnerable” or “available”.

No matter what the situation, try to take precautions before you get in the vehicle. If you do accept any ride, go in pairs if possible. Check the colour, make and license of the car before you get into any vehicle.

Ask the driver where and how far they are going **before** you tell them where you are headed. If you do not like the looks, comments or attitude of the driver, **DON'T** get in. You are never obligated to accept any ride – walk away.

Avoid taking lifts in a vehicle with more than one person in it when you are alone. Avoid getting into cars with doors with no inner handles or those with automatic locks controlled by the driver. Look and refuse if necessary.

Once in a vehicle, talk – about almost anything (the more general, the better). It makes you seem more real to them. It is important to be seen as a genuine human being instead of an object upon which they can easily project their negative fantasies.

Sit next to the door. If the driver or other passengers appear unwilling to let you sit there, mention that, "I get car sick very easily and it would be best if I sit somewhere with easy access to fresh air." Fake throwing up if you need to get out.

When You Travel away from Home

Use all of your safety strategies from home. Most of them work well around the world.

Look as inconspicuous and casual as possible. Even though you will stick out as a tourist, you can appear to be of moderate means. In some cultures your skin colour may be assumed to indicate your social and/or economic status.

Avoid wearing obviously expensive clothes or jewellery in most situations as they are an attractant for muggers and thieves.

Avoid talking about your destination when others are around to overhear. If you are asked for your destination by casual acquaintances, keep any information that you choose to share with them brief and somewhat vague to avoid being targeted by opportunistic theft or assault.

Keep traveller's cheques and travel document close to your skin instead of in purses or suitcases that could be easily stolen. Watch your luggage at all times or consign it to secure storage.

Ensure that trusted persons are aware of your itinerary and that you contact them regularly to let them know of any changes and that you are safe.

At Home

If you live in an apartment and the intercom is activated by someone claiming to be from the fire department or something similar, this should be directed to the building manager's apartment. It may be legitimate or it may be a scam to gain entry to the building.

When someone rings or knocks, inspect who is at the door before you open. Get a 360° viewing device installed in the door. Insist on official ID from service or sales people who wish entry and then call their office if still unsure or uncomfortable. If you are uncomfortable, ask them to return later. Indicate that you are busy, or your husband is asleep and wakens easily, (rather than alone, nervous, etc.). Arrange a time when you are able to have another person, whom you trust, with you.

When someone comes to your door and requests to use your phone, you may choose to place an emergency call for them while leaving them waiting outside rather than allow entry. A person may use the request as a ploy and may have bad intentions and possibly an accomplice waiting just out of sight.

Meet and make friends with your neighbours. If you feel comfortable with them and have a friendly connection, they are a good safeguard.

Residence Security

Carry your keys in a separate place from your personal identification. If keys are lost or stolen and identifiable, change your locks or have them re-keyed immediately. Licensed locksmiths are available 24 hours a day. A good friend may have similar locks. Check this now, and then you could change with them if needed in an emergency. When you move in, change the locks. If a key is lost, change the lock. Should you need to have a key outside your premises, leave it with a trustworthy friend or neighbour. Burglars know all the hiding places.

Have good locks and use them. Lock your doors, windows and the garage when you are home and when you are going out for even “just a minute”. Locks, deadbolts, and chains are only as good as the door or window jamb that they are bolted to. Have it checked by someone who knows. Secure your windows and patio doors with any of a number of thumbscrews, bolts and other simple hardware that will make entry more difficult. Bars on basement and first floor windows may be indicated, but make sure that you can get out in the event of a fire.

Leave your outside lights on during the hours of darkness – a lit doorway makes it hard to hide. Infrared sensors can be used to turn a light on when someone enters their field and can be used at the sides of buildings or areas that you would not normally have lit.

Inside the Home

Keep curtains and blinds arranged so it is difficult to peer in. Keep expensive items, such as sound equipment, cameras, purses, etc., out of sight from windows. Mark and itemize your possessions so that if an object is stolen the police are able to identify it. Inside, lights on a timer help indicate occupancy. A radio or TV on makes it sound if someone is home or only away temporarily.

A variety of home alarms at reasonable prices are available. There are many inexpensive motion detectors that will give a loud warning. Your municipality may require that alarms are monitored to prevent “false” alarms.

When You are Away

When you go away, have someone stay in your home. When that is not possible, timers can be used to operate electrical devices. Better still, have a friend pick up your mail and papers, mow the lawn or shovel the snow, move the curtains, turn the radio on and off, change the light patterns, etc. Notify the police and have them check periodically while you are away.

Join Block Watch or a similar police sanctioned group. This is one way that neighbours can look out for each other.

Phone Smarts

Keep a list of current emergency numbers in a prominent place on or next to each of your phones. (Do you know the emergency number(s) in your area? It is not always

911.) Update it as necessary, and ensure your household members know where it is and how to use it.

A person who calls you should identify themselves first. If there is a problem, ask them what number they dialled rather than giving your number. Avoid giving your name or number to people you do not want to have active contact with. People who call have no right to any information, including whether you are home alone. Refuse to tell them.

If you get obscene calls, hang up – they are looking for a reaction. These calls rarely lead to a physical situation but can be annoying. Threatening ones are frightening. This is the intention of the caller who wants you to respond by being upset or scared. They are illegal and should be reported to the Telephone Company. Jot down the time of each one if they do reoccur. If you have call display, note the number. In some areas you can dial *69 and the last number that called in will be repeated to you. Check with your local phone representative for more information.

Your answering machine or voice mail message can be very neutral. Have an ambiguous message since you owe no explanations to anyone. There are tapes of humorous generic messages available or you might ask a friend to do your message if you would prefer not to use your own voice.

Out Celebrating

Using any of the safe strategies mentioned under On The Move will reduce the risk when you go out and return home from celebrations.

Food and Drink

A person adding a substance to your food or drink is a possibility. Ensure that your drink is attended by a trusted companion if you must leave to attend to other business. Knowing your personal limit and avoiding impairment is an important way to avoid becoming a target of assault.

Keep Track of Your Possessions

Keep your money and identification on your person rather than in a purse or coat pocket. You may choose to keep your coat with you rather than use a coat check.

Dealing with People Who are Impaired

Choose your celebration companions carefully. People can become irrational and unpredictable when they are impaired. If you are with people who are becoming impaired or in a physical space where others are getting rowdy, you may choose to leave. You are not required to stay in any situation that makes you uncomfortable.

At Work, School or in Public Buildings

Apply the same safety measures here as you would in any other situation. Walk out to the parking lot with a group after work or classes whenever possible. Ask for an escort if they are available. Get to know the people around you. Ask for help if you need it.

When you are in a public rest room ensure that the cubicle that you are using is locked. Leave if you feel uncomfortable with the situation.

If you are handling cash and doing night deposits vary your routine. If you are required to wear an ID badge, only put your first name on it. You do not need to give out any personal information to clients. Keep it professional.

If you must challenge a person, imply that there are other people around even if you are alone. Ensure that others know where you are if you are working late or alone.

At the end of your work shift check to see if all of the doors are locked and the rest rooms are empty with another co-worker. If someone is lurking (inside or outside) call the police. If you feel someone is in the building when no one should be there, go to a lockable room and phone for help.

Using Elevators

Should you be nervous at any time about getting into an elevator with one or more persons, wait for the next one. Consider using stairs if it feels more comfortable.

If you do choose to get on, let them push their floor number first or just push for the next floor and be prepared to get off.

Stay near the control panel and identify the emergency button. This sets off bells or buzzers and stops the elevator at the next floor so you can get off.

Building Safety

Whether it is an office or apartment building, similar strategies can be adapted to fit your situation. In locked buildings, only unlock the access doors for yourself, rather than for other people. If they have their own key they can get in. If they do not, then you do not want them in. If you are working in any office or building after hours, keep the doors locked.

Ask for good lighting and locks from the building owner. For support, make the request with neighbours. Keep your identification on mailboxes or intercoms gender neutral or use a male name.

In underground parking, cruise the garage and watch for other people before you park and get out of your vehicle. Look for lights that are burned out as it may have been done deliberately to create a hiding place. Avoid that area. Drive out if you feel uncomfortable.

If confronted in a building, yell “Fire” rather than “Help”. Get others around you involved by making noise and demanding assistance.

Reduce the Risk – Personal Safety Strategies

Do building chores, such as laundry or photocopying, with others when possible to avoid being alone in any isolated area. Be aware regardless of how safe or secure that you think the environment is.

Request and expect a safe work and education environment from the management and administration. WCB in B.C. now recognizes violence as a workplace hazard and has set guidelines and regulations. Form a safety committee to assess the location, and to suggest physical measures to improve safety and security. Ask for “panic” buttons to be installed for security. Re-assess the environment at regular intervals and in different seasons. Make personal safety part of your regular work place routine.

Safety for Children

Ensure that your children have general safety strategies and practise them.

Who Targets Children?

Child assaults are predominantly perpetrated by people who are familiar to the child, such as relatives, friends of the family, and those who are normally in authority over them such as educators, baby-sitters, group workers. Strange or changed behaviour by the child should be followed up.

Protecting Children

Educate children about safety by talking to them at their level of comprehension and reviewing strategies with them regularly. Make a (serious) game so that it becomes second nature for them (What will or can you do if ...? Where will you go? How can you get help?).

Break the myth that All strangers are dangerous or you may “police proof” children so they cannot get help. Identify strangers who Do Help (Police, Fire, etc.) and how to find them and what to tell them.

Practise with them the skills of how to use a telephone, how to get help, remembering their own phone number, your name (rather than “mommy”), and how to contact you. Sew quarters into clothes or have a “secret bank” for emergencies.

Every child should know their full name and the full name of their parents so that they can identify themselves if necessary. Have a family word or phrase. If it is not used the child will refuse to go with another person. Change it every couple of months and practise it at home.

Teach them when to say NO, to be Loud, to Run, to Get Away and Get Help. Practise both verbal and physical techniques for getting away and getting help.

Communications with Children

Support them and show your trust of them in the areas that they have shown responsibility. Trust starts with the small things. Be available for all of your child's problems, the little and the big ones. You can not solve all problems, but you can help them learn how to work out solutions, or to find other sources of information and get help when they need it.

Encourage your children to trust their feelings and to speak up. Say: "we feel" "it's okay" "you have rights" "it's your body."

Encourage communications between you and your child by asking open questions, rather than telling them answers. Ask: "How do/did you feel? What did you do? What do you want to do now?" Provide support for their choices and feelings.

Give your children support to tell someone and to know that they can ask for help if something happens. Encourage them to keep trying to tell, even if the first person will not listen. Help them identify the adults in and outside your family whom it would be the most appropriate to talk to.

Education and Support for Children and Families

Explain about the possibility of sexual assault at their level. Borrow or purchase "Feeling Yes, Feeling No" from the National Film Board and Use All Of It! This four film set encourages discussions, questions, and assertiveness techniques. Good Touch/Bad Touch and Yes Feelings/No Feelings are understandable at a very young age and allow them to express what is happening to them, to seek help and to stand up for their rights. Inform your children early that they have the right to choose who may touch them and who may not.

Many schools also use the c.a.r.e. kit to explain about personal safety to children in the K-8 system. Use material from the Child Abuse Research and Education Society (c.a.r.e.) (now housed with the Canadian Red Cross) at home if it is not being used in the school.

Form a group in your neighbourhood. Join Block Parents and Neighbourhood Watch programs and support your local police force. Report people who are seen cruising through your area over and over. Be active.

Childcare

Do a careful reference check of all baby-sitters, daycare centres, etc. that you plan to use for your child. If you are not comfortable with a person or place, go somewhere else.

When you have chosen someone, give them a detailed rundown of all your safety precautions. Go over the house layout carefully with them and your child, so that escape routes are planned and known. Emergency numbers should be available, reviewed, and posted by each phone so there can be no confusion. This includes a number where you can be reached, updated for each situation.

The caregiver should be the one to answer the door and phone. Any strange or suspicious callers should be noted and followed up on immediately.

If anything unusual occurs, the police should be called as well as other backups that are available in your area such as the Ministry for Children and Family in B.C.

But, What If ...?

You can follow all these suggestions to make your environment as safe as possible. However, if despite all your precautions, you are harassed or physically assaulted, it is **not** because you are doing “something wrong”. It is **not** “justified” and it is **not** your fault!

We know clearly from experience and research that what you do, where you are, or what you wear, does **not** cause attacks to happen.

You cannot make someone attack you against their will!

Attacks are caused by the thoughts in your attacker’s mind. These are tied to their anger, frustrations, fear, and are an attempt to dominate you. There are any number of external places that these thoughts may come from. It is the attacker’s acting out of these thoughts that causes the attack.

The assaulter wanted to attack you and decided that this was their chance. They have actively planned to harm you. Most assaults include premeditated violence. Assaulters will lie and say that they won’t hurt you. The assaulter also believes that they can get away with their actions. In fact, most of them do.

In Canada, the Criminal Code states that it is illegal for anyone to attack another person for any reason.

What’s Legal?

You Have the Right to Defend Yourself!

Sections 34-37 of the Canadian Criminal Code has been interpreted to mean that you can use any reasonable force to defend yourself against attack and assault.

“Reasonable force” has been defined by precedents in the law courts as whatever actions that you think are necessary at the time of the attack and which are intended to allow you to get away from the assault.

We know of no case in Canada, where a woman who said she was defending herself with her body (no external weapon) has been convicted of assault.

It is legal to defend yourself.

Should I Defend Myself?

Women are often told that they should not fight back since the attacker is bigger and stronger than they are. Do you feel this way? What would you do? What if someone was attacking your small child? What do you feel that the difference is?

There is another myth that you are “making him angry” if you fight back. Remember that he is already angry and does not like you. Perhaps you represent something that he hates. This may be why he attacks you. You have no way of knowing his emotional state unless he chooses to tell you honestly.

The adrenalin that comes to you in any fearful situation can make you up to ten times stronger and three times faster than you normally are. This is a tool that you have to increase your chances of escape.

You can be a positive statistic. You are capable and can be powerful when you focus. No one else has the right to dictate whether you cannot or must defend yourself. What you do will be right for you.

YOU CHOOSE!

What Actions Can I Take?

Generally, the earlier you begin to deal with a situation and the more strategies you try, the more likely you are to get away and survive.

Anything that you can do to break out of the role of victim that they are projecting on you will help you to escape. Acting crazy, faking a seizure, being bold, saying or doing something unexpected, can be used to shock them and break their concentration and can give you an escape opening.

Try negotiating with them, if only to gain time. Be as outwardly calm as you can and keep talking. Adopt a “take charge” attitude. Lie to them. Promises made under pressure are not binding.

When it is a choice between people (you/your child) and property, consider surrendering the property. Your car, purse, jewelry, or money can be replaced – give up the object and look for a way out. Remember that this may not stop the violence, but it might buy you some time.

Use Surprise

An assaulter does not know what you will do and they cannot read your mind, no matter how experienced they are at attacks. Your attacker does not expect you to fight back effectively. He may expect you to cry, cringe and plead with him, or to scream and struggle. However, attackers tend to pick on smaller and weaker people and believe

that no woman is a match for them. In a fair fight, he may be right. An assault is not a fair fight.

When you use physical defense effectively, perhaps by kicking him in the knee to dislocate the joint or some other quick physical technique, he will be the one who is surprised, and incapacitated. **Then, you make your escape.**

Confrontation Strategies

1. REMOVE YOURSELF
(leave as soon as possible)
2. RESPOND Verbally
(be Assertive, no means No)
3. RELEASE any holds as necessary
4. RESPOND Physically **by counter attacking**
(if you can't leave, when you need to)
5. REMOVE YOURSELF!!!

You Can Survive

In your mind you already have a large store of knowledge and information under the heading:

“What will I do if I (or my child) is attacked?”

You can decide what now goes into that file and what you want to do in any emergency to enhance your survival.

We encourage you to take positive responsibility for yourself and expand your strategies with positive actions that you have chosen to use.

Consider what you can do. Be as safe as possible always. Learn and practise practical mental and physical self-defense techniques and be prepared to use them as necessary.

It's Your Choice!

*This book has been written and compiled by Alice Macpherson for the not-for-profit Society **Women Educating in Self-defense Training** of Vancouver, BC, Canada.*

We are a group of women who believe that it is possible to live in a positive and safe way in our society. We have been teaching Wendlido at Basic, Continuing, Advanced, Senior, and Instructor Levels in British Columbia since 1975. Classes are available to any women and their children who wish to learn more about personal safety and practical survival techniques. Instructor training is offered periodically to women who wish to train so that they can pass on their knowledge effectively.

Reduce the Risk – Personal Safety Strategies

We also publish a quarterly newsletter,



Please contact us for further information.

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Wenlido Statement of Intent

The intent of Wenlido is to provide information on practical personal safety strategies and techniques for women and their children based on the types of attacks that women and children will most probably encounter and to make this available to all women and children regardless of race, age, or personal belief.

Ideally, Women Educating in Self-defense Training will provide personal safety and self-defense instruction to any woman who wishes to learn Wenlido as a method to increase her safety levels. We will provide moral support and encouragement to such women as they work to attain proficiency. While we aspire to reach all women, we wish neither to change their views nor to impede a changing of views by these individuals on any subject other than that of women's personal safety and self-defense.

W.E.S.T. is a non-political organization concerned only with instructing women in practical safety and self-defense techniques. It is not, and will not be at this or any other time, affiliated with any other organization, group, or philosophy.

Organizations, groups, individuals, or corporations contracting with W.E.S.T. or individual Certified Wenlido Instructors for the purpose of arranging lectures, demonstrations, or classes at any level of Wenlido have no rights or controls over content at these functions.

All persons attending any group gathered for the purpose of learning or practising Wenlido techniques or philosophy are expected to remain reasonably within the material designated and taught as Wenlido.

All Certified Wenlido Instructors, Wenlido Apprentices, Wenlido Probationary Instructors, and their assistants are expected to remain reasonably within the instructional material designated as Wenlido techniques and ethics while instructing or assisting at any Wenlido lecture, demonstration, or class as well as while they are representing themselves as part of W.E.S.T., regardless of their memberships, affiliations, or alignments outside of Wenlido and W.E.S.T. functions.

Alice Macpherson / Jennifer Kirkey
Senior Instructors

Specific Situations

Somebody's There!

If you hear a noise outside that you cannot identify, call the police. You might call out "George, I think there is someone outside." even if there are no males present.

If you return home and the door (window, etc.) has been broken or tampered with or you suspect that someone is inside, go to the neighbours or a public phone. Have the police come and enter first. If you surprise someone in your home, stay out of their way, get out as soon as you can and get help. They may become very dangerous if they feel trapped.

Do I Know this Person?

The majority of assaults are by people that you know, such as a co-worker, friend, or family member. They may change from their normal roles and become abusive. Often it is a situation of trust that is broken by the attacker, such as in date rape or spousal abuse.

Your Intuition is correct. Trust yourself. If you feel uncomfortable, something is happening. Verbal demands, abuse and threats usually precede physical violence and the other person may use them to try to wear down your resistance.

Should a non-threatening situation change to threatening, you will need to change with it to maximize your safety. Use your Assertive skills to indicate your wants, since it is believed by others that passivity is agreement or acceptance. Ask the other person to leave, or get out yourself as soon as you can.

Drugs or alcohol are used as an excuse to be abusive. They are not an excuse! (But they have been used in court.) Violence rarely stops without an active response. After they have been physical once, they most likely will do so again and it will probably escalate. When asked why they used violence against women, the most common replies from batterers were: "It works." and "I can get away with it."

Get Out as Soon as You Can!

90% of the women murdered in Canada are killed by men that they knew well or were related to. These included relatives, boyfriends, current spouses, and ex-spouses.

Workplace Harassment

Harassment on the job and in the workplace is any gender or other based aggression that negatively treats one person differently from the next. There is Human Rights legislation concerning this that makes it illegal.

Should it happen, react as soon as you can. State clearly why you find the remark or behaviour objectionable and inappropriate and that you want the person to stop the negative comments and behaviour. This will usually stop the behaviour.

If harassment continues, document the situation and report it to management or administration. Use union and company structures that are available to pursue and correct the situation. No one deserves harassment and any harassment that is condoned implies that all harassment is permitted.

If you see harassment happening to someone else – speak up! Refuse to laugh at harassment disguised as “humour”. It’s not funny to put another person down or laugh at their pain. It is aggressive, destructive, and just plain nasty. Talk to others in your work environment and get their support. Be supportive to those who are or have been harassed. Clearly state that you do not like harassment in any form, to anyone.

If nothing is said, it will continue. Harassment doesn’t go away by itself. It poisons the working environment, damages individuals, and impairs teamwork.

Get It Out in the Open and Get Help.

Criminal Harassment

Section 264 of the Criminal Code of Canada states that someone engaging knowingly in behaviour which causes a reasonable degree of fear in another person is guilty of the crime of Criminal Harassment.

The behaviour of a stalker or harasser often includes:

- ? Harassing a person at home and work on the phone
- ? Telling *untruths* about a person to their friends or employer
- ? Showing up at a person’s house unwanted and uninvited
- ? Leaving threatening notes on a person’s car or in their mail or under their door
- ? Vandalism towards a person’s car, home or other possessions
- ? Stealing, hurting, or killing a family pet
- ? Breaking into a person’s house and disrupting or damaging items

If you fear for your safety, or that of your friends, family or pets because of statements made by another person, this is reasonable grounds for suspecting there is criminal harassment. If you are being stalked, harassed or threatened, remember, it is not your fault. Report all vandalism and incidents to the police. The police will not be able to give you twenty-four-hour protection. Consider obtaining a *restraining order* (with enforcement clause), or a *peace bond* if appropriate.

If the harasser continues their threatening behaviour, you need to continue to keep the police informed and keep a journal of what is going on as well. (The journal is a detailed written record of the incidents that occurred, their dates and times, and your feelings and thoughts at the time.) Keep written notes or letters that you receive. It is preferable that they handle such communications as little as possible, and place such material in a plastic bag to be retained for investigative purposes.

Reduce the Risk – Personal Safety Strategies

If you are receiving harassing phone calls, tape them on the answering machine, or buy a special recording device to do so, noting the date and time of each recording. It is not illegal in Canada to tape your own conversations, even without the other person's consent. However, you need the consent of at least one of the parties involved before you can tape a conversation in which you are not participating.

Use an answering machine and/or call display, if it is available, to screen your calls. Change your phone number and make it unlisted. Once you have a new phone number, be very cautious about who you give it to.

If the situation escalates, consider staying at a friend or relative's place for a while or moving to a different residence. Inform friends, family and, if necessary, co-workers and office security staff of the situation to enlist their support and to prevent them from providing sensitive information to the harasser. Try to vary your schedule and have others accompany you when departing and arriving at your residence or elsewhere. If you believe that you are being followed and feel threatened, drive to the police station.

Install an alarm system, get a dog, or install extra security. Contact a personal security company, depending on the level of danger that you feel. Attempt to avoid a hostile confrontation with the individual who is stalking you. Stalkers and their reactions are highly unpredictable. They may respond violently to a confrontation.

Weapons

Under Canadian law, this can include any object that is intended to be used to harm another person – guns, knives, bats, bottles, rope, wrenches, etc. It is reasonable to assume that a person with a weapon is capable and willing to use it against you. If they do not do so immediately, then it is likely that the weapon is being used as a threat to obtain something from you. This could be your car, money, identification, entry to a building or any other physical object that they think you have or have access to. They may be targeting you or another person that you have care of (children, elder) specifically for abduction, sexual assault or other violence.

Where guns are concerned, statistically, the persons most likely to be injured by a gun is the owner or a member of their immediate family. Some occupations, such as court or corrections workers, are at a higher risk to be confronted by persons with weapons. The best strategy is to not be around people who own firearms, unless they have training, follow adequate safety precautions and you feel comfortable with the situation.

If you see a person with an object that they appear to be using to threaten someone, the best thing to do is to get away from the situation and call for help.

Home Invasions

The phenomena of home invasions, where people are deliberately targeted in their homes is of increasing concern. When confronted by a person with a weapon, the expectation is that they want our money or property and will then leave. In the situation of a home invasion, the criminals may also assault the residents, restrain children

and/or sexually assault women, despite having possession of whatever they initially came for. This is a fundamental part of the means of controlling the victims through terror. It reduces resistance and can increase the time it takes to have the crime reported, making it more difficult to catch and convict the criminals.

The invasion style robbery appears to be well planned in advance with the perpetrators being familiar with the household routine. In order to ensure victim compliance and eliminate resistance criminals will sometimes target a business person's home when the whole family is present.

Car Jacking

If you believe that you are being targeted while you are in your vehicle and have a cellular phone, call the police and tell them where you are. Maintain contact. Keep the car moving as long as possible. Try to stay with the vehicle as long as possible.

If you are forced out by the threat of a weapon, Cooperate! Hopefully they only want the car. Try to take your purse with you.. If they demand it give it up. Be aware that they now have your identification and keys.

Note what they looked like, which direction they went in, and license plate numbers of other vehicle(s) used while stealing your car. When you get home have your residence locks changed or re-keyed, inform others who need to know about the loss of keys and cancel any credit cards that may have been taken.

Child Abuse

Believe your child if they disclose an incident to you. It is rare that children make this up. Ensure that they are now safe. Check the facts as well.

If it is a family member, we can tell them in the presence of this person that if **ANYONE** touches them and they do not like it, we will support them and help to **MAKE IT STOP**. We can report the abuse to the police.

If someone confides in you that they have experienced abuse as a child or an incestuous attack, the first step is to BELIEVE THEM, and let them know that you are willing to listen. Ask them if they are in danger now, or if anyone else is in danger from this man. Ask them how they feel now, and if they have been able to talk about the attack, or read material. Tell them that they are not alone! Many people are assaulted.

EXPOSE THE MOLESTER! – His anonymity is his protection. If you have been sexually molested by a family member, you may want to confront them yourself, or you may want help. Tell family, co-workers, neighbours and other people who may be in danger from this person. Identify your allies.

Talking to others can ease the emotional reactions. Information and support may be available through your local rape crisis centre, sympathetic friends and/or some social workers.

Sexual Assault

At least one in four girls and one in ten boys are sexually assaulted before the age of 18. There are more sexual assault victims in the 18-20 age group than any other age category. Most are female. People who are sexually assaulted are representative of a random sample of the general population (apart from age) – they may be any age, culture, size, dress, etc. 78% of sexual assaults on women are by a male who is known to her. (Statistics Canada, 1993).

Recipients of sexual assault are physically hurt in at least 60% of cases (Ministry of the Solicitor General of Canada, 1985). Incidents most frequently take place in a private home, less frequently in public buildings and less than 10% happen “on the street” as is commonly thought. The manner in which the incident is classified by police is at times influenced by the victim’s background and character e.g. founded vs. unfounded.

Sexual Assault Myths

Even though the law has changed over the years, some of the old, negative and false attitudes persist. We view the concept of rape and sexual assault as violence with or against the sexual organs. Rape is one of the three most frequent violent crimes in our society along with murder and aggravated assault. There are a number of myths that surround rape and sexual assault.

Myth #1 *Rape is a sex crime committed by men with uncontrollable sexual drives.*

REALITY Rape is a crime of aggression committed by men who want to dominate, degrade and compel physical intimacy on unwilling women. Most rapes are not spontaneous but planned ahead of time.

Myth #2 *Rapists are usually mentally sick, perverted and/or sexually unfulfilled.*

REALITY Rapists are no different from the average person; physically, sexually or psychologically, except for the crime of sexual assault. In fact, the majority of offenders look very “average”. Most have a greater tendency to express violence and rage more openly. Many are married and/or have “normal” sexual relationships.

Myth #3 *Rape happens outside in dark isolated places.*

REALITY The majority of rapes happen in a home, the victim’s, a friend’s, or the rapist’s. The next most common location being the rapist’s car.

Myth #4 *Rapist and victim are strangers to each other.*

REALITY In over more that three quarters of the reported cases the rapist is known to the victim in varying degrees of familiarity, from a trusting initial meeting to a close family friend or relative.

Myth #5 *“Nice” women don’t get raped.*

REALITY All females, from children to grandmothers are potential attackees. Following the “correct” standards for a virtuous woman does not provide protection from

possible rape. The most common characteristic among people who have been attacked is vulnerability. Reasons for vulnerability include the inability to defend oneself, physical limitations, fear or environmental circumstances, such as getting off work at 2 am.

Myth #6 Women enjoy being raped, or if inevitable “lie back and enjoy it”.

REALITY The idea that women could enjoy forced sexual intercourse is a fantasy which confuses rape with sex, instead of recognizing it as violence. Comparing rape to sex between consenting people is like suggesting that food is enjoyed whether rammed violently down one’s throat or eaten normally at dinner. As rape is a crime of violence rather than passion, frequently the rapist is after signs such as crying or pleading that prove to them that they are the winner in the confrontation. If you do not respond “properly” then the attacker may use more violence to obtain the desired response. After the rape he may also beat or threaten to kill the attackee to prevent identification to the police or others. As well, in 65% of assaults, there is the threat of violence. There is no guarantee that your attacker will or won’t become violent if you do or don’t fight back. In fact, if you report your attack to the authorities you will be asked “Did you fight back?” If you did fight back then this is taken as evidence that you did not consent and therefore an assault did occur.

Myth #7 Women ask for it.

REALITY Using a gesture or way of dressing to measure provocation on the part of the attacked woman, the Federal Commission on Crimes of Violence found that only 4% of reported rapes involved any “precipitative” behaviour by the woman. Our society expects us to appear sexually attractive but women who are raped are condemned as deserving it.

Myth #8 When a woman says “no” she means “yes”, and is just being coy.

REALITY In the courts, if the accused believes and can present a case that the woman consented, then there is no rape. Society’s attitude is that women do not say what they mean or do not know their own minds. If you say NO, be prepared to back it up physically if necessary. One Constable of the Vancouver Police department has stated that the average male does not hear a woman say “no” until she has said it three times!

Myth #9 If the woman is not of previously chaste character, then consent is implied, since she has shared her sexual favours in the past.

REALITY The law has wavered back and forth but all too often the victim is placed on the stand and cross-examined, and her past conduct is admissible evidence. The raising of the woman’s past sexual history is like taking a mugger to court for stealing your purse and having his lawyer raise the point that since you have given to charities in the past then the implications are that there was no crime in taking your money. The “Rape Shield” law is in place now to prevent this but be aware that it has been struck down before.

Myth #10 No healthy women can be raped because she can prevent it.

REALITY Fear is the rapist's primary weapon. Most rapes carry the implicit, if not the explicit, threat of death or severe harm. In nearly 90% of all reported rapes, a knife, gun, or violent physical force was used. This fear of injury or death terrorizes many women into co-operation or immobilization. Also, over 50% of rapes involved more than one attacker.

Myth #11 *A woman cannot be raped by her husband.*

REALITY Women are forced by their husbands into physical intimacy at times. This is not legal, although many people believe that it is.

Myth #12 *Marital rape isn't offensive. After all, a wife has had sex with her husband before, what is one more time?*

REALITY A woman raped by a stranger has to live with the memory of that experience. A woman raped by her husband has to live with her rapist. Many wife survivors, trapped in a reign of terror, experience repeated sexual assaults over a number of years. What happens to the capacity for intimacy when the person who you are married to commits such a brutal and violent violation?

Myth #13 *The Legal system will protect you.*

REALITY In Canada and the USA, judgements within the legal system have been dismal. Women are faced with the reality that the courts believe that "No may mean yes or wait awhile", and that a three year old female is "sexually provocative". The adult assaulter is innocent until proven guilty, and in a contest of female word against a male, the male is usually considered to be honest (such as: Anita Hill vs. Clarence Thomas, etc.).