

General Awareness and Personal Safety

presented by:

Michael Nottoli
Crime Prevention and Volunteer Coordinator
Rocklin Police Department
(916) 625-5416
michael.nottoli@rocklin.ca.us

Important Rocklin Police Department Phone Numbers:

9-1-1 – Emergencies (Police, Fire, Medical)

625-5400 – Non-Emergency Number

Goals of this Presentation

1. Learn to reduce your chances of becoming a victim through awareness, avoidance, and prevention.
 2. Learn about criminal behavior, psychology, and typical methods of operation used by criminals.
 3. Understand the definition of Self Defense, and the three basic Self Defense Principles.
 4. Develop some realistic mental plans and physical strategies to deal with common physical attacks. This also includes learning to assess yourself, your environment, and your attacker(s).
 5. Improve your self-control and self-confidence when faced with a stressful and/or dangerous situation.
 6. Recognize the importance your current level of physical fitness, endurance, and flexibility.
 7. Develop an understanding of the potential civil, criminal, and vicarious liability associated with self defense techniques.
 8. Develop an understanding of using force that is reasonable and appropriate for the situation.
- A. Recognize the typical elements of criminal activity.
- a. Criminal Motivation: Money, control, revenge, thrill seeking, anger, mental illness, alcohol/drugs, etc.

- b. **Risk Assessment: Successful criminals usually consider the odds of getting caught before they commit a crime.**
- c. **Opportunity/Victim: Are you an easy target?**
 - 1. **You can't control the criminal's mind, but you can control your own environment and how a potential criminal perceives you, your home, your vehicle, or your property. Don't create an "attractive opportunity" for a criminal.**
 - 2. **Criminals are like animals; they typically hunt for the easiest targets.**
 - 3. **Burglary Example: The majority involve no forced entry!**

B. The Principle of Awareness

- a. **Always be aware of your environment and learn to recognize, anticipate, and avoid dangerous people, places, and situations.**
- b. **Don't be caught off guard.**
- c. **When you are being approached by someone or when you are entering an area where people are present, be aware of these six rules:**
 - 1. **Hands - Watch other people's hands and try to keep your hands free to use, if necessary. Be aware of people who conceal their hands. If you are stopped by the police, keep your hands in plain view.**
 - 2. **Weapons - Be aware of potential weapons carried by or available to others. Remember that anything you carry can be taken away and used against you. If you do carry items such as pepper spray or a sound alarm, they need to be immediately accessible (not buried in your purse). You also need to consider the civil and criminal liability of carrying and/or using weapons. Be aware of traditional and non-traditional weapons that someone could pick up and use against you (example: pen, pencil, stapler, letter opener, bottle, coffee mug, etc.). Minimize your risk by limiting other people's access to potential weapons.**
 - 3. **Friends / Accomplices / Associates – Criminals often work in pairs or teams, so be aware of multiple suspects. Don't get "tunnel vision" concentrating on one person and get jumped from behind by another. One person may act as a distraction while another commits the**

crime. (Example: a victim carrying her purse in a shopping cart is distracted by one person, and while she is not looking, is victimized by a second individual). Also, be aware of where your closest help might be if something happens. Use escorts and other people to assist you (taking groceries to your car, walking to your car after a college class, etc.).

4. **Escape Routes** - Be thinking of how, where, and when you can escape if you need to. Be honest with your own physical ability to run or get away quickly. Where is the nearest exit? Does your office layout allow you to escape if a confrontation occurs, or could someone easily block your path? Have you parked your car in a position that allows for an easy exit?
5. **Footing /Terrain /Environment** - Consider where the confrontation is taking place. Is there space to move? Are you in an elevator, parking lot, car, bedroom, open field, on the side of the road, etc.? What kind of footing do you have? Will anyone hear you if you make a commotion? Try to use the environment to your advantage.
6. **Cover and Concealment** - In an extreme case when an attacker has a gun and is likely to use it, try to get behind cover that will stop a bullet. You may also seek concealment as a safety factor if you are trying to hide from an attacker (tall grass, dark areas, etc.).

d. Awareness Rules To Consider When You Are Standing "Face to Face" With Someone:

1. **Distance** - Leave a "space cushion" between yourself and the other person to give yourself time to respond to a physical attack. If you are too close, you can easily be punched, kicked, pushed, stabbed, knocked down, etc., before you can respond. You will never see it coming, or if you do, it will be too late. Two arm's length away is a good general distance guideline.
2. **Balance** - Maintain a good balanced stance. This includes:
 - a. body bladed sideways
 - b. feet about shoulder width apart
 - c. "weak" leg forward, "strong" leg back (so a right handed person should normally stand

- with their left leg forward and right leg back)
- d. knees unlocked
- e. weight evenly distributed over both feet
- f. weight shifted slightly toward the balls of the feet
- g. this is a stance of mobility

3. **Awareness** - Be aware of why you are standing that way, what is going on around you, and what your response will be if an attack should occur.

e. **Awareness Rules For Recognizing an Impending Attack:**

1. Verbal hostility
2. Physical agitation
3. The person physically sets himself/herself
4. The shoulders will telegraph the movement

C. Reducing Your Opportunity of Becoming a Victim

1. Make Your Home Environment As Safe As You Can

- a. address should be large and visible
- b. landscaping trimmed properly (up from ground level, away from doors, below window levels)
- c. lighting – the outside of your home should be very visible
- d. doors - solid wood with no windows in or near the door
- e. locks - deadbolts (key on the outside, latch on the inside)
- f. strike plates secured with 4 screws that are at least 3" long
- g. peep holes
- h. key control
- i. window locks to prevent sliding
- j. anti-lift shims to prevent sliding doors and windows from being lifted
- k. consider replacing glass with polycarbonate (in vulnerable places)
- l. keep doors and windows locked at all times
- m. install a security alarm system and post signs to advertise that you have one
- n. barking dog alarms
- o. real dogs
- p. side gates should be locked
- q. practice telephone and computer security
- r. identity theft security (shred personal papers, secure your mail, don't put anything in the garbage with your name, address, important numbers on it, etc.)
- s. door security - don't answer the door if it's a stranger
- t. your home should have an occupied appearance (deters burglars)
- u. place interior lights and a radio on a timer
- v. garage entry and security is important
- w. start a neighborhood crime watch program
- x. look at your home as if you were a criminal and take the proper steps to make it more secure

2. Vehicle

- a. have your keys ready when approaching
- b. look out your home or office window before approaching your car
- c. check around and under your car as you approach
- d. be aware of occupied vehicles, especially vans, parked nearby
- e. be aware of pedestrians
- f. get an escort to your car
- g. check inside your car before entering
- h. when arriving at a new location, look around and choose a safe place to park
- i. lock doors and windows when leaving and entering your car
- j. park in well-lighted and populated areas
- k. don't pick up hitch-hikers
- l. pick safe and well-traveled roads
- m. tell someone your normal route and estimated time of arrival
- n. be very careful when loading/unloading items and kids
- o. do not sit in a parked car for long periods of time
- p. avoid reading, eating or sleeping in your vehicle because you may become a target for a carjacker
- q. don't get into altercations with other motorists (avoid "road rage")
- r. if followed, don't drive home
- s. drive to a police station, fire station, open business, etc., and sound your horn if necessary to attract attention
- t. keep your vehicle in good working order
- u. If you break down on an isolated road, raise the hood, turn on emergency flashers, set out flares if necessary to create a safety zone. Use a cell phone to call for assistance. Stay inside your car and lock the doors and windows. If you are in the car and a stranger stops to help you, don't get out of the car. Roll down your window just a crack and ask the person to call the police or road service for you. Don't accept a ride from a stranger. In certain cases, you might also consider leaving your vehicle and hiding somewhere else off the roadway until help arrives.

3. On The Streets

- a. walk confidently with good posture
- b. make eye contact with others, but don't stare
- c. let others know you are aware of their presence
- d. be aware of others around you
- e. plan a safe route
- f. avoid high risk areas or short cuts through dangerous places
- g. don't be afraid to turn around and return to your destination if you sense danger ahead
- h. cross the street to avoid problems
- i. walk in the opposite direction of vehicular traffic so you can see what's approaching
- j. don't walk close to bushes, alleys or entrances to buildings
- k. use an escort to and from work or classes
- l. walk or jog with a friend

- m. make sure your friends/family know your normal route and your estimated time of arrival
- n. wear shoes and clothing that provide mobility
- o. if you are wearing shoes that prevent you from running, take them off
- p. don't wear flashy expensive jewelry
- q. if you carry a purse, consider what you will lose if it is stolen
- r. don't keep valuables in your purse
- s. when carrying a purse, don't wrap the strap around your neck
- t. it is better to keep your valuables in a wallet in your pocket or in a fanny pack
- u. men should not place their wallet where it can be easily pick-pocketed

4. Workplace

- a. work with your employer to make your work environment safer
- b. be especially aware of parking safety considerations and going to and from your vehicle
- c. be sensitive and aware of workplace violence issues and report any suspicious behavior
- d. always be thinking of maintaining an escape route
- e. arrange your office to allow for a quick escape
- f. create physical barriers between employees and customers
- g. if you work around money and might be the target of a robbery, be sure your company has a robbery response policy and training
- h. never argue with a robber; give up the money
- i. do not make furtive movements or try to activate a robbery alarm while the robber(s) is/are still present.

5. Dating Situations

- a. be very selective about who you date
- b. select a safe location in a busy public place
- c. meet your date somewhere instead of having your date pick you up
- d. do not give out your home or work phone number or address to someone you just met
- e. if you must give out a phone number, give your pager or cell phone number
- f. be aware of date-rape drugs (Rohypnol and GHB - gamma-hydroxybutyric acid)
- g. never allow a stranger to bring you a drink
- h. if you leave a drink unattended, do not consume any more of it
- i. be clear with your verbal and physical body language
- j. dress appropriately
- k. stop unwanted physical advances firmly and quickly

D. Developing Mental Strategies and Physical Techniques for Avoiding and Responding to Common Physical Confrontations and Attacks

PAR: P = Prevention A = Assessment R = Response

1. **Prevention** is the most important element of self-defense. As you go about your daily activities, develop safe habits and learn to recognize, anticipate, and avoid potential hazards and dangers. Control your environment and actions, and make them as safe as possible.
2. **Assessment**
 - a. **Assessment of Yourself**
 1. **know yourself**
 2. **recognize your mental and physical strengths and weaknesses**
 3. **prepare yourself mentally and physically for confrontations**
 - a. **If you have never trained your mind and body to respond to a certain situation, the chances of you responding correctly are very slim. If you have trained to deal with a particular attack, you will have a "mental picture" stored in your brain to tell the body what to do and how to do it.**
 4. **Go over imaginary scenarios and formulate escape plans. Learn to respond, not to react. A response is an action based upon prior thought and training. A reaction is an action without thought or planning.**
 5. **You must be able to control yourself before you can deal with dangerous people or situations. Knowledge, skill, and ability leads to self-confidence and self-control.**
 6. **When you have "no mental picture" of what to do and you are not in control of yourself, you are likely to experience:**
 - a. **panic and extreme fear**
 - b. **frozen syndrome (can't move)**
 - c. **an improper reaction**
 - d. **you are so afraid you convince yourself that if you do as you are told by the attacker, you won't be hurt**
 7. **Stay in reasonable physical condition**
 - a. **Your brain tells your body to respond (run, kick, fight, etc.). If your body can't respond because it's in poor condition, you greatly minimize your chance of escaping.**
 - b. **Balanced fitness program (aerobic, strength, endurance, flexibility)**
 - c. **Fitness should be enjoyable. If it's not, you won't do it!**
 - d. **If you are "out of shape" or have not exercised for a long time, have a medical examination first and then start a gradual fitness program.**
 8. **Don't "advertise" or look for trouble**
 - a. **Your attitude is important**

- b. Be polite and courteous in your normal demeanor
- c. There is a time and place for physical action, but don't walk around with a "chip on your shoulder".
- d. Don't antagonize other people ("road rage" example)
- e. Don't frequent known trouble spots (bars, dangerous streets, etc.)
- f. Don't hang around with people who are likely to get you into trouble
- g. Don't abuse drugs and/or alcohol, and don't hang around those who do. Many "fights" involve alcohol and/or drugs.

b. Assessment of the Attacker(s):

1. Is the attacker alone or are there multiple attackers?
2. What is the physical size and strength of the attacker?
3. What is the intent of the attacker? (bothering, robbery, rape, battery)
4. What is the mental state of the attacker? (calm, controlled, agitated, nervous, "on the edge", etc.).
5. Is the attacker a stranger or an acquaintance?
6. What is the attacker's ability to chase you?
7. Is the attacker armed?
8. What type of weapon does he/she have? (gun, club, knife, etc.)
9. Is the weapon already pointed at you or will the person have to remove it from a pocket, waistband, sheath, etc., before he/she can use it?
10. Does the attacker have a grip on you, or are you still free to move?
11. How far away is the attacker and weapon?
12. Is the attacker on foot or in a vehicle?
13. Never underestimate an attacker (size, sex, age, appearance, etc).

c. Assessment of the Environment

1. Always make your environment as safe as you can.
2. You have control of your home, car, workplace, and where you travel and spend your time. A simple thing like locking a door can make a big difference.
3. Try to manipulate your environment to your advantage and to the disadvantage of the attacker.
4. Can the attacker commit the offense at your immediate location, or will he/she have to take you somewhere else?
5. How close is help?
6. What are your escape routes?
7. How can you summon assistance?
8. Will people come to help you if you alert them?
9. Will anyone hear you if you scream or use an alarm?
10. Will other family members be endangered by your actions or the actions of the other person?
11. If you are able to temporarily distract the attacker, can you realistically get somewhere for help, or is help a long distance away?
12. How does your footing, terrain, surroundings, etc., influence your ability to fight or flee? (furniture, elevator, staircase, sand, steep terrain, vehicular traffic, etc.).

3. Response To An Actual Situation: Your Goal Is To Escape and Survive

- a. You have several options.
- b. It's up to you to decide. No friend, husband, instructor, etc., can tell you what to do and how to respond to a specific situation. It is your choice. Every potential victim, criminal, and situation is different. For example, screaming may scare off one attacker, but may cause another to react violently to "shut the victim up". Every victim is also different. One victim may not be mentally or physically capable of fighting someone off, while another can.
- c. When to respond is extremely important.
 1. For example, if an attacker puts his arm around your neck restricting your movement and sticks a gun in your side, that may not be the best time to try something. When the attacker lets you go to do something else, that may be a better time.
 2. You need to decide whether you will allow yourself to be forced into a vehicle and taken somewhere else, or whether you will fight during the initial confrontation to avoid being taken. In this situation, you might be better off fighting at the original location rather than allowing yourself to enter an attacker's vehicle and environment. Once you get into a vehicle with someone, you have less control, less freedom, less visibility, and you have no idea where the criminal intends to take you.
 3. If you perceive an attack is about to happen, don't wait until it does to respond. For example, it might be wise to run and scream as someone is approaching, rather than to wait until he/she attacks you.
 4. The right opportunity to respond might be when another person walks by or drives by your location.
- d. Response Options:
 1. Passive Resistance
 - a. Talking - Something you say might change the attacker's mind or divert his attention away from his initial intent long enough for you to escape
 - b. Do Something To Disrupt The Desire - For example, during an attempted sexual assault, women have actually vomited, urinated, or defecated to "distract" the attacker.
 2. Active Resistance
 - a. Screaming or Making Noise With an Alarm - Assessment is critical. Will it help to summon assistance and/or cause the attacker to flee, or will it cause the attacker to shoot, stab, or beat you to "shut you up?"
 - b. Fleeing - Depending on the circumstances, running away or getting to

a safe location may be your best response. Be honest with your ability to run (25 year old athlete vs. 65 year old with bad knees). How far away is help?

- c. **Fighting** - Deciding how and when to physically defend yourself and which area(s) of the body to attack, is a personal decision. You have to assess the situation and determine the appropriate response and level of force.

Certain techniques can cause death or serious permanent injury, while others may only distract or temporarily incapacitate someone long enough for you to escape. You will need to make that decision depending on many circumstances. Your decision may be based upon the intent of the attacker, the number of attackers, whether or not the attacker is armed, the size and strength of the attacker, the proximity of help, etc.

Remember that your goal is to escape, not to injure or punish the attacker. If you continue to purposely injure an attacker once he/she gives up or is no longer a threat, you could incur criminal and/or civil liability. On the other hand, if escaping from a dangerous/violent confrontation requires you to seriously injure someone, your actions would most likely be reasonable, appropriate, and legally justifiable.

If you are faced with a dangerous attacker and find it necessary to strike, kick, or take the attacker to the ground to defend yourself, don't "hold back" or do something "half way". This is likely to be ineffective and may only serve to anger the attacker more. Instead, deliver the most powerful and effective technique(s) you can. After escaping and getting to a safe place, report the incident to your local law enforcement agency.

- d. **Weapons and Self-Defense Devices** - Any weapon or device you carry or have within your control can potentially be taken away from you and be used against you. (Example: police officer's gun).
1. Any weapon or device you carry for your protection must be accessible when you need it (i.e., carrying pepper spray or a sound alarm in your hand versus at the bottom of a purse).
 2. Any weapon or device you carry should be legal (i.e., although you may keep a firearm in your home, you cannot carry a loaded firearm on your person or in your vehicle – 12031 P.C.)
 3. If someone has a firearm pointed at you, you may be mistaken if you think you can pull out a weapon of your own before the other person can use his.
 4. If someone has a firearm pointed at you, trying to use a sound alarm, pepper spray, stun gun, etc., at that time may

startle or antagonize the person and cause him/her to use the weapon against you.

5. If someone has a weapon and intends to rob you, cooperate with the robber and give him/her your property. Avoid trying to use a weapon against a robber because that may cause the robber to use force against you. Although there are exceptions, most robbery victims are not injured if they comply with the robber's request and give up their property.

6. Types of Weapons and Self-Defense Devices

a. Pepper Spray

1. no permit necessary
2. can be used at a short distance
3. non-lethal
4. legal to carry
5. inexpensive (\$10.00 to \$25.00)
6. can't bring it into an airport, school, or courtroom
7. can blow back on you in the wind
8. can contaminate you during a struggle
9. typically makes the eyes burn and makes it hard to see
10. works on most people most of the time
11. may not work well on people under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or those who don't feel pain because they are mentally ill
12. has no "stopping power"; it does not knock people down or prevent them from attacking you; it just makes it difficult to see
13. therefore, don't stand there after you have sprayed someone; get away fast!

b. Sound Alarms

1. no permit necessary
2. non-lethal
3. legal to carry and inexpensive (\$5.00 to \$60.00)
4. can scare off an attacker or alert others that you need help
5. can cause ear damage if used too close to an ear (be careful around children)
6. can anger/antagonize someone if used at the wrong time (such as an armed robber pointing a gun at you).

c. Stun Guns

1. legal
2. no permit necessary
3. cost is typically \$50.00 to \$100.00
4. may be carried concealed
5. can't bring it into an airport, school, or courtroom
6. have to get very close to an attacker to use it

7. difficult to use against someone who is attacking you and not standing still
8. most people won't just stand there and let you shock them without fighting back
9. may be easy for an attacker to take it away from you

d. Taser Device

1. legal
2. no permit necessary
3. more expensive (\$400.00 - \$1,000)
4. may be carried concealed
5. can't bring it into an airport, school, or courtroom
6. can be used at a 15' distance
7. can also be used at close range with a drive stun
8. some models have laser sights
9. it requires you to hit the target
10. works well a high percentage of the time
11. but not always; darts can be removed by suspect
12. deaths have also resulted from usage

e. Firearms / Guns

1. legal in your home
2. you can't legally carry a loaded gun around with you in your purse, pocket, car, etc.
3. lethal and expensive
4. you should have proper/adequate/on-going training
5. you should be mentally & physically prepared to use it
6. if you miss, the bullets can keep going
7. higher level of potential criminal and civil liability associated with firearms than with other devices
8. people have shot the wrong person because they were in an extreme state of fear or panic
9. people have shot individuals when they were not justified to use that level of force
10. consider the following points if you plan to have a firearm in your home (Are there small children? Does someone in the home have a bad temper, a mental problem, or a drug or alcohol problem?)
11. firearms should be stored in a locked safe or special gun container to avoid theft by a burglar or access by a child
12. Section 198.5 PC - Any person using force intended or likely to cause death or great bodily injury within his or her residence shall be presumed to have held a reasonable fear of imminent peril of death or great bodily injury to self, family, or a member of the household when that force is used against another person, not a member of the family or household, who unlawfully and forcibly enters or has unlawfully and forcibly entered the residence and the person using the force knew or had reason to believe that an unlawful and forcible entry occurred.

As used in this section, great bodily injury means a significant or substantial physical injury.

f. Submission

- 1. submission is a valid option depending on the situation**
- 2. it does not make you "less of a victim" if you have to submit**
- 3. circumstances that may cause you to submit to an attack such as a sexual assault:**
 - a. the suspect has a weapon and you are not trained to disarm him**
 - b. there is no safe way to escape or overcome the resistance of the suspect(s)**
 - c. you are being badly beaten**
 - d. there are multiple suspects**
 - e. the attackers are threatening another person (child)**

NOT TO BE USED FOR TRANSFER OR RESALE