

4-Steps To Personal Safety

This is a civilian-based force continuum similar in concept to that taught to law enforcement personnel. Just like the steps or rungs on a ladder, you can move up or down these steps depending on the seriousness of the threat. By adhering to these steps and applying them accordingly you can greatly reduce your chances of being victimized. The proper application of these steps will also help you to determine when physical force is both necessary and appropriate to the situation.

STEP #1) AWARENESS / AVOIDANCE

-Awareness and avoidance skills form the foundation to proper personal security. This includes observing and being aware of internal feelings and emotions, your environment, the people in your environment, and how those people and places make you feel. Essentially, awareness is seeing potentially threatening situations before they occur and avoiding them altogether.

STEP #2) DE-ESCALATION

-While on duty you have an obligation to maintain a certain level of security for both staff and patrons. This means you may be required to verbally de-escalate an agitated patron (Primal Aggression) from time to time. This is accomplished with the use of simple conflict resolution skills. If the situation should escalate to the point that you fear imminent attack you would simply move on to Step #3- Escape. However, should you find yourself facing a Cognitive Aggressor, you would immediately jump to Step #3 and attempt to get out of the situation as quickly and safely as possible without wasting valuable time trying to de-escalate. If Escape is not an immediate option you would then use basic Verbal Self-Defense to let the aggressor know that you will not be an easy target.

STEP #3) ESCAPE

-Even when you have the time and opportunity to attempt de-escalation things can quickly turn bad. In such a situation your primary option should be to escape as quickly and efficiently as possible.

STEP #4) PHYSICAL DEFENSE

-Physical self-defense skills represent the last-ditch, last effort, final option. It should not be considered until all other options have been exhausted or you find yourself in an immediate life-threatening situation.

***NOTE-** When dealing with potential violence outside the library setting, you will change the order of steps #2 and #3. There is no obligation to de-escalate and escape should be a priority.

Categories of Aggression

1) Primal Aggression (escalating anger, hurtful language, etc.)

Physical Signs	Behavioral Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -shaking -erratic eye movements / target glancing -erratic head movements -facial color- flushed or pale -erratic or increased breathing -bulging veins -agitation / fidgeting -vocal changes- pitch volume, rate of speech -defensive postures (preparing to run) -offensive postures (preparing to fight) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -poor judgment -threatening and/or abusive language -nervous confusion- false starts, darting eyes, -forgetful, unrelated speech -paranoia / defensiveness -extreme pessimism - "I knew this would happen" -withdrawal- arms crossed, looking down, unresponsive

2) Cognitive Aggression (verbal threats, criminal behavior, physical conflict and assaults)

Physical Signs	Behavioral Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -similar to Primal Aggression -triggering intuition -erratic head and eye movements (looking around) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -contradictions between words and body language -talking too much -persistence- won't take NO for an answer -overly friendly -verbal abuse or threats (Direct, Indirect, Veiled) -use of the word "we" to build rapport -anything out of context -use of compelling statements -eager to help -position themselves between you and the exit -use of the statement "I promise" -use of too many details -weapons in plain sight -sexually related comments, jokes, or statements -acting suspicious -invading your boundaries (personal space)

De-Escalation for Primal Aggression

De-escalation requires the ability to understand the warning signs and the willingness to recognize the danger in the situation without wishful thinking or avoidance!

***Rule of Thumb:** If talking....not attacking!

LISTEN	EMPATHY	OPTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Make an effort to listen -Focus on persons words -Observe body language -Don't fear silence -Ask open-ended questions -Offer responses that encourage talking -"Is there anything else?" -Give them space, NEVER touch. -Don't judge, be objective. -No premature solutions, let them finish -Emulate good listeners -Avoid Red Flag words -Avoid sarcasm or dry humor -Avoid "you" statements -Avoid library terminology 	<p>Restate the person's problem back to them and ask for confirmation...</p> <p>-recount person's thoughts and feelings</p> <p>-define the problem</p> <p>-confirmation</p> <p><i>"You think / feel _____ because _____, Is that correct?"</i></p> <p><i>Pre-fix</i> the above with...</p> <p><i>"Tell me if I've got this right..."</i></p> <p><i>"Tell me if I understand you correctly..."</i></p> <p><i>"Let me make sure I heard you correctly..."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reflect feelings -Keep clinical detachment -Model desired behavioral -Avoid Red Flag words -Appropriate eye contact & body language 	<p><u>Start with the phrase</u> - <i>"I see some options here, would you like to hear them?"</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provide small realistic options, NOT unrealistic ones -If you receive a negative response continue to provide options until you receive a positive response -If they escalate again, move back to empathy and repeat.

If LEO isn't working -

- 1) Repeat the steps- if that doesn't work say **"I'd like to think we can find an answer. Is there anything I can do to help?"**
- 2) Set alternatives
- 3) Set limits
- 4) Escape

Additional De-Escalation Tips-

- De-escalation skills will vary from situation to situation
- We can control ourselves and the situation but we can't control the other person
- Appear calm
- Use person's name
- Breathe
- Treat person with respect
- Be polite
- Respond, instead of reacting
- Focus on the problem, not the person
- Focus on what you CAN do for them
- Define the problem and provide alternatives
- Avoid being drawn into a fight
- Apologize if appropriate
- Avoid Red Flag Words

<i>Common library terms</i>	<i>"I am not going to say this again"</i>
<i>"Should"</i>	<i>Absolutes - "Never", "Always"</i>
<i>"Have To"</i>	<i>"Calm down"</i>
<i>"Problem"</i>	<i>"Relax"</i>
<i>Negatives- "I can't"</i>	<i>"Take it easy"</i>
<i>"Don't panic"</i>	<i>"Why don't you be reasonable"</i>
<i>"Because those are the rules"</i>	<i>"Why...?"</i>

- Be assertive
- Don't make idle promises
- Involve a colleague
- Maintain boundaries (body positioning or barriers)
- Don't belittle yourself ("that was stupid of me")
- Maintain friendly eye contact
- Don't challenge, accuse, blame, etc.
- Use Bridging Statements

<i>"Let's see what we can do."</i>	<i>"Here's what we can do."</i>
<i>"Let me help you with that right now."</i>	<i>"Let's find a solution."</i>
<i>"There are few things that we can do."</i>	<i>"I'm glad you brought this to my attention."</i>

- Acknowledge & Validate

<i>"You sound upset about that..."</i>	<i>"I'm sure this is upsetting..."</i>
<i>"I understand how difficult that must be..."</i>	<i>"I'd be irritated, too..."</i>
<i>"It is frustrating to..."</i>	<i>"It is difficult to..."</i>
<i>"I can relate to that..."</i>	

- Listen to your intuition
- Escape is always an option

Verbal Self-Defense for Cognitive Aggression

The goal with Verbal Self-Defense is to interrupt the aggressor's thought process and let him know that you are not going to be an easy target. Used for potential attackers!

General Rules

- Maintain a safe distance & protective positioning
- Maintain visual contact
- Body language and words must be congruent
- Look for exits

Stage 1– (Code Yellow)

This first stage represents a low level of threat. At this stage the person may just be a common annoyance. In order to avoid escalating the situation be sure to state your command in a calm yet assertive manner.

- “Don’t come any closer”
- “It’s time for you to leave”
- “I’m not interested”
- “Stop right there”

Stage 2– (Code Orange)

At this stage the person has not responded to your initial command. To make sure that they have not misunderstood your intent, you will now repeat the command while adding the following prefix-

- “Listen, I said”

Stage 3– (Code Red)

The person has unintentionally or intentionally disregarded your previous 2 statements. In order to clarify your intent you will shorten your statements (to 5 words or less) and use assertive body language.

- “Stay back”
- “Back off”
- “Leave now”
- “Leave me alone”
- “Don’t touch me”

Stage 4– (Code Black)

At this stage the altercation has escalated to a physical assault. You will use the following direct statements-

- “No” or “Stop”, used in conjunction with the separation techniques
- “Fire!, Fire!”, used primarily to draw attention

Further Study

The following titles are recommended as resources for the study of de-escalation, conflict resolution, and general personal safety.

“Defusing the Angry Patron” by Rhea Joyce Rubin

“It Comes with the Territory” by Anne M. Turner

“Dealing with Difficult People in the Library” by Mark R. Willis

“Gentle Art of Verbal Self Defense” by Suzette Haden Elgin

“The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense At Work” by Suzette Haden Elgin

“More on The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense” by Suzette Haden Elgin

“How to Disagree Without Being Disagreeable” by Suzette Haden Elgin

“The Complete Idiot's Guide to Verbal Self-Defense” by Lillian J. Glass

“Tongue Fu!: How to Deflect, Disarm, and Defuse Any Verbal Conflict” by Sam Horn

“Verbal Judo: The Gentle Art of Persuasion” by George Thompson

“The Definitive Book of Body Language” by Barbara Pease and Allan Pease

“Reading People: How to Understand People and Predict Their Behavior- -Anytime, Anyplace” by Jo-Ellan Dimitrius and Mark C. Mazzarella

“Body Language” by Julius Fast

“The Complete Idiot's Guide to Body Language” by Peter Andersen

“The Secret Language of Success” by David Lewis

“Signals: How To Use Body Language For Power, Success, And Love” by Allan Pease

“How to Read a Person Like a Book” by Gerard Nierenberg