

# SURVIVAL PAPER

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*All self defense options are predicated on the fact that you are in a bad place to begin with. Things have already gone to hell in a hand basket. Self defense is not the goal. not the ultimate answer, nor is it going to "make things better. " If is damage control, pure and simple. Self defenses is making sure the situation doesn't get any worse — ergo damage control. However, no damage control is EVER as good as preventing the problem from happening in the first place.*  
Marc MacYoung

## Five Stages of Violent Crime

*or Recognizing when you are being set up*

NOTE: The *Five Stages of Violent Crime* is an internationally recognized system to identify if — and determine when — you are being set up for a crime. It has been tested in court as an easily explainable standard by which individuals determined if they were legally justified to use self-defense tactics. The video, *Safe in The Streets* is used by police and military around the world as a training and teaching tool and the system is taught around the world in self defense and crime prevention courses\*.

### Nature of crime and violence

There is a common maxim among safety experts: What you think you know will kill you.

That saying applies in spades to avoiding crime and violence. It is often the very normalcy and familiarity of our surrounding that blinds us to significance of signals that pending danger broadcasts. To the victim, it just seems like the violence "came out of nowhere." In fact, there was plenty of warning, plenty of opportunity to recognize danger signals, dangerous circumstances, but the victim either ignored them, didn't see them or didn't recognize their significance. This is where what you "think" you know about crime and violence will blind you to these danger signals. With this in mind you must remember one critical rule:

Crime is a process. It has both a goal and easily identifiable stages.

Once you know about these stages, developing crime and violence are as obvious as a flare on a dark night. The analogy we use to explain this process is: Imagine you are driving to a friend's house. At first you have a wide choice of options to take to the general area. The closer you come to your destination, the more you ""have\* to turn here and w straight there. If you don't, you won't arrive at your destination.

In the same vein, if a criminal intends to commit a crime his actions will become more predictable and more recognizable to someone who is aware of the process. There are things he \*has\* to do. If they are

present, you are in danger.

If these elements are \*not\* present, then there is no possibility of committing a crime. Therefore, you are not in danger.

This is the beauty of the Five Stages system; it gives you an external set of standards to check against someone's behavior. If the collective behavior is present, you are, indeed, in danger and need to take steps to ensure your safety. And you need to do this no matter \*what\* the person is saying — since his actions speak louder than his words.

There is no *one* thing that will tell you that you are in danger. This is why the collective checklist is so reliable. A single element might be misconstrued or explained away. However, you will never get the collective presence accidentally. If they are all, there, it is intentional.

Once you are aware of these stages they are easily countered by the Pyramid of Personal Safety.

**Important legal note:**

Most law enforcement and judicial systems have veered away from the word "intent" and instead prefer the more legally provable term of "jeopardy." That in essence means: Was the person acting in a manner consistent with a known threat?

It is a fact that we are not mind readers. We cannot truly know another person's intent. Jeopardy is — in a legal sense — a better term because it denotes "acting in a way that is known to be criminal." You are not reading his mind and trying to guess his intent. You are, instead- making decisions based on his actions in comparison to known dangers.

This is an important and accurate distinction in regards to legally sanctioned use offered in self-defense. However, since NNSD's primary goal is safety through avoidance of violence, we choose to stick with the older term "intent." We do this because we feel "jeopardy" is what the "collective of behaviors" define. Intent, interview, positioning, ability and opportunity are all parts of jeopardy.

Another reason we retain the use of the word "intent" is because we are not just using it in a legal sense, but also with psychological and physiological connotations. Human beings are not normally capable of immediately becoming violent. Few people can shift from calm and reasonable one second to an enraged killing machine the next. We just don't go from zero to sixty that fast- Even the most violent person usually needs time to go through recognizable psychological and physiological changes in order to physically attack. Although subtle, the ensuing changes are often visually identifiable.

This is how we can tell at a glance that someone is angry — even if we are not conscious of what we saw that convinced us of this conclusion. We see enough subtle "signals" that our subconscious recognizes and we "know" the person is angry. These signals too are a collective. Where one signal might not mean much by itself, the sum is important. We unconsciously "read" signals like muscle tension, body posture, movement, breathing patterns, skin flush/paling, speech cadence, and tone and word choice to tell if someone is angry. You may not consciously know you are doing this, but it is estimated that 80% of all communication is non-verbal — we are constantly reading intent from these visual cues. It will be your ability to "read body language" that will often be the determining factor whether or not to take evasive action. But before you can "read" it you have to know about it.

It is not uncommon for a criminal or cunningly violent person to attempt to attempt to hide his intent in other, seemingly safe actions. He deceives you about his real intentions by hiding them in other, seemingly innocent actions and behaviors.

However, person who is prepared to engage in physical violence will give off certain physiological signals. Literally his body will betray that fact. No matter how his words or behavior attempt to cover it. Often this collective set of signals is referred to as "vibes." And yes, someone who is prepared to commit violence gives off "bad" vibes. There is nothing esoteric or "woo-woo" about this. It is a collection of small signals that we unconsciously recognize. They range from physiological (Skin flush/pale, muscle tension, breathing, etc.) to motion (how someone moves while under the influence of adrenaline) and to speech (cadence, tone, pitch).

This is why so many people who are assaulted know something is wrong before, but just can't "put their

finger on it" in time. They are confused by the conflicting messages. One part of them senses trouble, but because of the deception in the criminal's obvious behavior, they cannot clearly identify what is wrong.

This is why it is important to use an established checklist to compare his behavior against. His words say one thing, but his actions and vibes say quite another. And that is what YOU base your course of action on, not what he is saying.

Even if we are misreading someone's intent, we can use commonsense and remove ourselves from the presence of a person whose behavior we find disturbing - even if we cannot exactly define why. Common sense doesn't need a sanctioned legal precedence to be used.

API (Short-hand version)

What follows is a shorthand version of the Five Stages of Violent Crime. API stands for Ability, Opportunity and Intent. Although not as complete as the Five Stages, it will give YOU a quick-rule-of-thumb set of standards to determine whether or not you are in danger. For people who are not particularly interested in self-defense, it is a nice set of guidelines that can be to prevent yourself from being assaulted. There is a concept called the triangle among firefighters. Along each side is an element that a fire needs in order to burn. *If you* take away one of these elements, the triangle collapses and the fire goes out. Crime is the same: In order for it to occur, there must be three basic elements. This is easily remembered as A.O.I. (.Ability, Opportunity and Intent). Take away any one of these elements and the triangle collapses. In other words, the crime does not have what it needs to occur.

**Ability:** Does the person have the ability to attack you? Could this person successfully assault YOU, whether through physical prowess, a weapon or numerical superiority? Many women underestimate male upper body strength and how vulnerable they are to being **physically** overwhelmed.

**Opportunity:** Does this person have the opportunity to attack you? Are you alone with him or even in an area beyond immediate help? Could anyone come to your assistance within twenty seconds or less? As many victims have found, you can be robbed in plain view or raped with people in the next room.

**Intent:** Is he in a mental place where using violence to get what he wants makes sense to him"?

Of the three, intent is die most nebulous, yet it is vital for determining who is a threat. It is the literally the difference between going off with someone to talk and being raped. Skip down to the intent section of this page and to the **profile** of a rapist. Acquainting yourself with the **criminal** mindset is also highly recommended.

The fastest way to figure out if you are in potential danger is to look for these three elements. If you see one, look for the others. If you see two out of three stop whatever else you are doing and pay close attention for a moment. If you see him trying to develop the third, withdraw from the **situation** to a safer area. This is easier than using physical violence. As you will soon see, opportunity often means staving in an area where someone could effectively use physical violence against you. If you do not see these elements then odds are you are safe. There is no triangle.

If you wish to adhere to a more legally sanctioned idea, you can exchange the I of Intent For a K of Known, (for known dangerous behavior = jeopardy). This turns it into the acronym A-OK. Which might be easier for someone to remember.

The Five Stages of Violent Crime:

Crime and violence are processes that take time to develop. The attack is not the first step.

The preliminary triangle must be built. There are five distinct stages that are easily identified:

- 1) Intent
- 2) Interview
- 3) Positioning

- 4) Attack
- 5) Reaction

During the first three, you can prevent an attack without the use of violence. These are where the criminal (or violent person) decides whether or not he can get away with it. He may want to (intent), but if he doesn't have the opportunity (position) he cannot succeed.

In the same vein, he's going to make sure he can successfully use violence against you (interview and positioning) before he commits himself to act. Once he is sure of his ability to succeed and has put you in a position where he can quickly overwhelm you, he will attack.

### **Intent**

This is where the person crosses a normal mental boundary. From this point, the person is mentally prepared to commit violence in order to get what he wants - whatever that may be. Often a person who has decided to commit a physical assault is either looking for an excuse to attack or is trying to hide his intentions until he is in position. The individual comes to a situation with the agenda of using violence to achieve his ends.

In other words, he's ready, willing and able to become violent. If you are willing to spend the time to learn the body's cues such a person is incredibly easy to spot. They will literally stand out like lighthouse on a dark night - and once identified, you don't want to stay around.

Intent can be a preplanned decision or an emotional reaction to the circumstances. Which is to say that it can either be a calculated act (as in a criminal assault) or something else. It is the something else that is the most confusing to the untrained person. However, even then it does follow a predictable pattern. The trick is to not get caught up in the current yourself so you don't realize what is happening until too late.

Violence is both a psychological and physiological extreme. Before someone is ready to commit it he has to have moved into this mental or emotional state. Violence doesn't "just happen out of nowhere." Even a habitually violent person will have to mentally prepare himself. It may happen very quickly, but it is not instantaneous. Only in cases of severe mental instability will a person be able to instantly "flash" into violence and such a person would almost certainly be locked up in a mental ward.

If you don't see this buildup, it will appear that the violence suddenly has come from nowhere, but that is not the case. It did come from somewhere. It was just a matter of you *not* recognizing the danger signals. This can be far easier to do than you might think. especially if you are emotionally upset yourself.

How long did this buildup take? It is arguable that, from the very beginning when the person made a conscious decision to put a weapon in his pocket, violence was his intention all along. Whereas consumption of alcohol is often used by angry people to remove inhibitions against violence. In other words, drinking can be – and often is – used as an excuse to become violent. They set up the circumstances where they could do what they wanted to do. Opponents to this idea claim that this is too simplistic an answer and that human motivation is not always that clear or conscious.

We admit that. We also would like to point out however, that unconscious motivators can direct one's actions: and in such a way that what the person wants to happen happens "accidentally." At least it appears accidental to them. However, for such an "accident" to occur a long series of specific circumstance have to have been put in place. And when they are in place, violence occurs. As stated, acts such as getting drunk or angry are used as an "excuse" for committing violence. In truth though, he was 90 percent there already. His ensuing actions may very well have been motivated by these emotional urges and, by the same mechanics, himself blinded towards their significance.

Knowing about these mental processes serves as an early warning system. Just because he is fooling himself, doesn't mean you have to be fooled too. If someone shows up in the wrong place, the wrong time and in the wrong state of mind, something is amiss. It is suspect, right off the bat. If a normal situation begins to spin out of control start looking for the danger signs.

A person has to undergo certain physiological changes for the body to be ready to attack or defend.

These are reflected in the person's body language. While they are subtle, they are recognizable to an observer, either consciously or unconsciously.

His own body will tell you he's about to attack - even if his words are deceptively calm and normal.

Fortunately, despite the surface appearances many times there is enough "nonverbal leakage" coming from an attacker to warn you that something is amiss. Learn to trust your feelings. Often it is your subconscious recognizing the physiological danger signals he displays. When your alarms go off, even if the situation looks normal, start looking for the next two stages to develop.

A book that I highly recommend to acquaint yourself with various non-verbal cues is Dr Desmond Morris' *Manwatching*. Interview. This is where the criminal decides if you are safe to attack.

Yes, with all violence; the assailant's safety is a critical factor in deciding whether or not to attack. If a criminal was truly mentally ill, he would **feel** compelled to act, even if there was no chance whatsoever of success. If someone is so emotionally outraged that he was truly "out of control" he would not hesitate to physically assault ten Hells Angels. The fact that he doesn't indicates that there is still a part of them that is calculating risk to themselves.

"Can I get away with it?" is a major motivation for what people decide to do — or not do. Hence, the interview. This is one interview you want to fail. If you fail, the assailant decides that he cannot successfully, or easily, attack you. Then if he is a criminal he will proceed to seek easier prey. In the case of an emotionally upset individual, he will change tactics. For example instead of physically assaulting you he will proceed to stand back and proceed to verbally abuse you. This allows him to 'win' without putting himself at physical risk.

There are five basic types of interviews. The one a criminal uses depends more on his personal style than anything else.

- *Regular* - This is the most common form of interview for muggers. The criminal will approach you under the guise of normalcy, (i.e.. needing information or small item (e.g. matches). This is a distraction. While he is talking, he is not only getting in position to attack, but a), checking your awareness about what he is doing and b) your commitment to defending yourself.

This is why you should always be careful when someone approaches you in a fringe area and asks for something. Your answer should always be "no" and insist on him keeping his distance. Both muggers and stranger rapists often use this technique.

- *Hot* - Hot interviews are sudden and unexpected emotional blitzkriegs against you. They just "pop out of nowhere." You are minding your own business one minute, and the next you have a threatening, obscenity-spouting, screaming person charging down on you. The success of this strategy relies on you not being accustomed to dealing with extreme emotional violence and reacting in a stunned and confused manner. You must be willing to immediately shift into gear) extreme of physical violence to fail such interviews. Paradoxically, if you can immediately display this commitment, the attacker will often abort.

- *Escalating* - Unlike a hot interview, which starts out immediately hostile, an escalating interview starts out normally but it rapidly turns hostile. The person or people test(s) your boundaries by escalating outrageous behavior. Even-<sup>1</sup> time he is not slapped down (i.e.. he is successful), his behavior becomes more and more extreme until finally he attacks. This is very common interview for date rapists. It is also common when you walk into the middle of a group of loitering young thugs, what "supposedly" starts out with them "just messin' witcha" escalates into a robbery or assault. Sometimes both.

- *Silent*- A silent interview is when a criminal puts himself in a position to observe you. He may never speak until the attack, but he has been watching all along. He may position himself out of sight in a parking structure and follow you. Or he may make his presence known and decide to attack if you show fear of his presence

- *Prolonged*- An interview can take anywhere from mere moments (hot) to weeks (prolonged).

Prolonged interviews are often combined with other types. Being stalked is prolonged escalation. A serial rapist can silently watch a victim for days. Whereas a bunco scam would be prolonged regular interview while the con artist attempts to win your trust. With prolonged interviews, the intent is seldom obvious from the beginning, therefore having the first four levels of the Pyramid of Personal Safety in place becomes of critical importance.

- *Positioning* - This is the criminal putting himself in a place where he can successfully attack you. A criminal (or even a violent person) doesn't want to fight you: he wants to overwhelm you. To do this, he has to put himself in a position where he can do it quickly and effectively. Positioning is the final proof. Someone trying to position himself to attack removes all doubt that the situation is innocent. A key point of positioning is "fringe areas." You will seldom, if ever, be robbed or raped in the middle of a crowd. A fringe area is where you are close to people, but out of range of immediate help. You won't be mugged in the mall, but will be in the parking lot or bathrooms. ATMs, parking lots, stairwells, public bathrooms and sidewalks should be considered potential danger areas. Even a separate room in a crowded house can, constitute a fringe area, as many women who were raped at parties can attest. Being alone with someone in a fringe area is a major part of the opportunity element of the triangle.
- *Closing* - The most basic form of positioning is simply walking up to the victim. The closer a criminal gets, the greater his ability to overwhelm and control. Five feet is the closest you should allow someone you don't trust to approach in a fringe area - whether you know him or not. If the person insists on coming closer after you have warned him away, he has clearly announced that his intentions are not good.
- *Cornering/trapping* - This is the second most basic form of positioning and, the most common. He approaches you from a direction that traps you between himself and a large object, like a car or wall. This also entails his putting himself between you and an exit.
- *Surprise* -- This is your classic jump-out-of-the-bushes type of position. The criminal puts himself in a place where you don't see him (or if you do, it is at the last minute). From this position, he can easily step out and attack. Once you know these locations, this kind of positioning is easy to foil.
- *Pincer* - Professional criminals often work in packs, so you will not face just one. The most common maneuver for two criminals is the pincer. One criminal circles around while the other distracts you. You should always be aware of individuals splitting up when they approach you. Another trap is when two characters face each other in a narrow walkway in such a way that you must pass between them. A third trick is to spread out along a way, when you pass one he starts following you, while the other waits down the way.
- *Surrounding* - This is the most common ploy of a pack (three or more). Again, one will distract you while the others surround. They can swarm around you, but most often they will casually drift. A serious danger sign is when a group is spaced out along the wall in a walkway. When you are at midpoint, it is simple for the wings to fold in.
- *Attack* - The attack is the criminal/violent person using force, or the threat of force, to get what he wants. The triangle is complete and the assault -- or the threat of assault -- occurs. The first three stages have been achieved, and there is no reason for the criminal "not" to use violence to get what he wants.

Many robberies and rapes are committed with the simple threat of or display of violence. A violent, emotional outburst, won't physically harm the victim, but clearly indicates that unless he/she cooperates with the tantrum thrower, the victim will be hurt. Or weapons can be displayed to convince you to cooperate. Other attacks are indeed outright physical assaults. Such attacks can come both with and without warning. In the most extreme it means the criminal simply walking up to someone, pointing a weapon and pulling the trigger.

Unfortunately, there is no way to determine which one you will encounter. And faster than a snake striking, an attack can turn from one type to another. What was a threat a second before, can explode into deadly violence.

## Reaction

Reaction is how the criminal feels about what he has done. In the aftermath of robbing someone, the criminal decides, on a whim, to shoot the person — despite the fact that the person has cooperated utterly and offered no resistance. This also can be where a robber suddenly decides to rape his victim. Of all the reactions, one of the most consistently dangerous occurs among rapists. If the rapist feels that the rape did not empower him as he thought it would, he often turns violent. Nearly 80 percent of women seriously harmed by rapists are hurt after the actual sexual assault.

In any circumstance, until the criminal is completely out of your sight, you are at risk of his reaction \*even\* if you have totally cooperated. The unpredictability of the criminal's reaction is another reason why it is far easier to avoid violence than it is to try to safely extract yourself from the middle of it.

## Conclusion

Knowing the five stages is a standardized guide by which you can assess the potential threat of a situation. These five stages are inherent within crime and violence. What is important to realize is that, the first three stages might not occur in that particular order. A **violent** and selfish **person** may suddenly find himself with the perfect opportunity/ability to commit a rape, and suddenly the intent appears. There was no conscious initial decision, but the circumstances developed. Due to an intrinsic flaw **in** his **personality**, he can decide to act in a violent manner. This is why you always need to check for ability, opportunity and intent (AOK)

As stated the **Pyramid of Personal Safety** was developed to counter the Five Stages. As the criminal must develop these stages in order to successfully attack you, the pyramid undermines his attempts. By foiling him instead attempting to contest him, you can avoid using violence in all but the most extreme circumstances.

Two major problems exist regarding self-defense. The first is knowing when to use it. How do we know when is the right *time*? How can we be sure we are not overreacting or starting at shadows? We should all have reservations about using force. Much of this confusion is alleviated by having a proven and external set of standards to compare a situation against. If you don't see the triangle, it is not the time to use violence.

The other problem with self-defense is the legal ramifications. In many states, you risk-being prosecuted for "attempted self-defense." both on a criminal and civil front. What was an obvious threat at the time can be later undermined in court by an attorney. When the DA asks how you knew you were in immediate danger you had better have a better answer than "he looked at me mean."

If you end up in court to defend your defending yourself, this system will help you clarify and rationally explain why you thought your actions were warranted.

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