

# AWARENESS, AVOIDANCE & ACTION

## NOTES & TAKEAWAYS

### Awareness – Situational and Intuition

#### 1. Situational:

- Notice your surroundings. Don't focus on the "gorilla" and be aware. Look up from your phone and pay attention to your environment, the people, the area, etc.
- Basically, STAY IN THE GAME.
- Pay attention on a micro level to things around you while maintaining a larger awareness of your environment.
- Use all of your senses – ask, is there anything that could cause me harm? What are the warning signs and solutions? Is something or someone out of place?
- Practice checking your "color" level of awareness. Why are/were you in a certain level? What can you do to practice staying out of the "white" level?

#### 2. Intuition:

- Trust your gut instincts, body language is the number one cause of "bad or gut feelings." You may not realize you "saw" something such as a shadow, a micro expression, etc. but your brain recognizes it therefore it comes across as a "feeling" from your subconscious mind. Better safe than sorry.
- Remember Shannon's employee story (encounter with the serial rapist/killer she refused to be alone at work with- without understanding or knowing why she felt that way.)
- Your snap judgments are better than the longer story you go through in your head about why someone is offering you help, and you don't like it, why you don't want to be alone with someone, why a brand new person gave you a bad, creepy, or uneasy feeling etc. It's a collection of your entire life experiences that aid these judgments. Trust them and figure out why later.

### Avoidance

- Practice! You might think you are going to be a superhero in a bad situation, but the reality is you will fall to the level of your training and the scenarios you have practiced.
- Remember we will all get "squirrel" brain under high stress scenarios! Practice to increase a good reaction. Instinct isn't always your friend – especially without training!
- Locate alternate exits at home and at work, or in social environments (movies, concerts, stadiums, etc.) When everyone is running to the same exit or direction – how will you be safer?
- Verbal and physical boundaries – you're not a VICTIM. Verbal commands such as STOP, BACK OFF, or NO (BECAUSE NO IS A COMPLETE SENTENCE) accompany physical boundary.
- Practice being aware of body language indicators.
- Maintain a good reactionary gap between you and a would-be assailant if it gets to that point or you are feeling uncomfortable – start looking for your "exit" strategy

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Shannon Lukeman-Hiromasa

slukemanhiromasa@northglenn.org

C: (970) 567-0028

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## Action:

- Have a plan for your personal and work life and DRILL “what if’s” and scenarios
- Review Action list
- FFF response -Fight, Flight, or Freeze
- Practice to decrease the 4 second perceptual lag and avoid “Freezing” during the FFF response
- If you haven’t done it before, don’t expect to do it under stress
- Physical protection: find somewhere to train that is reality-based self-defense – You must practice scenario training in different environments, training with tools, initial reaction must coincide with instinctive reaction, defend and counterattack immediately
- If it comes down to it – TRIUMPH is the only option (Israeli Defense Force motto)

## Basic Body Language Indicators:

### Observable Manifestations of Autonomic Response

#### Reduced Digestive Functions can manifest as:

- Cotton mouth, causing lip licking, teeth licking and sucking
- Touching the corners of the mouth often
- Excessive throat clearing
- “Trauma Water”, an attempt to provide relief from the above symptoms

#### Pupil Dilation and Tearing can manifest as:

- Rapid Blinking
- Forceful Blinking using much of the face
- Visible Tears or rubbing the eyes
- Tears running internally causing an audible sniff

## Observable Manifestations of Psychological / Physiological Stress (Stress Indicators)

#### Eye Movement and Facial Clues might include:

- Exit and Target glances
- Gaze Aversion, particularly away from authority
- Tracking moving objects out of context
- Numb Face
- Grooming, subconscious effort to calm yourself down and make you more believable

#### Vocal or Verbal Cues:

- Raspy voice due to dry throat and vocal cord muscle tension
- Elevated amplitude and modulation
- Repeating questions or saying “what” could be formulating lies or loss of cognitive ability
- Too much information. The silence must be filled
- Repetitive speech

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