



Smithsonian Institution

TIPS FOR PERSONAL SAFETY

MAKE YOURSELF A TOUGHER TARGET

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Remember:

- ✓ Crime can happen to you!
- ✓ Nothing will make you safe in every situation.
- ✓ "Bad guys" don't always look like bad guys.

When you're out:

- Be alert to your surroundings and walk with your head up.
- When wearing an iPod/earphones keep the volume at a low level so you are still alert to your surroundings.
- Carry your purse with the strap over your head and purse flat against your body.
- Don't flash large amounts of money when you shop.
- If you see anything that makes you uncomfortable, cross the street or turn around – get out of the situation. Don't be afraid to offend!
- Don't get into an elevator if you feel uncomfortable.
- If you become the victim of a crime on an elevator, push all the buttons except the red button!
- Park in a well-lit area close to your destination.
- Try to walk to your car in a group.
- Always look in your car before getting in.
- Do not leave items visible in your car – not even bags or inexpensive items! If applicable, use the trunk.
- Don't let your guard down even on public transportation – you could be a victim on the Metro or in a taxi.

When you're driving:

- Use caution when selecting a vanity tag.
- Keep your doors locked and the windows up.
- Don't leave your purse on the seat.
- Make sure your car is in good repair and has plenty of gas.
- Whenever possible, don't travel alone.
- Let someone know your plans and estimated arrival time.
- If your car breaks down, stay in the car and put your flashers on.
- Be suspicious of an unmarked police car or an officer in plain clothes – always ask to see identification. If you are still not sure, don't be afraid to request that a uniformed officer respond as well.

When you're at home:

- Keep your windows and doors locked at all times.
- Do not open the door to anyone you are not expecting and cannot positively identify.
- Use your peephole.
- Use caution when recording your answering machine message.
- Have a dog – even a small dog barking can deter a criminal because it draws attention.
- If you return home and something does not seem right, leave and call the police – do not go into your house!
- Have a light on a timer so you will never have to return to a dark house.
- Don't leave purses, money, etc. near a window.
- Stop your mail and your newspaper when you go on vacation.
- Give a neighbor you trust a key to your house and ask him/her to watch your house when you go on vacation.
- Always call the police regarding any suspicious activity.

When you're at work:

- Keep your purse locked up.
- Protect your keys.
- Report suspicious persons to security. Keep the phone number of your building's security unit by your phone.
- It's okay to ask "Can I help you?" but if you suspect anything, call security.
- If you are working late, walk to your car or Metro with a co-worker or ask security to escort you.

If you become a victim:

- If the attacker demands your car keys or wallet – Give it up – it's not worth your life!
- Throw the keys or wallet and RUN!
- Yell, scream and fight! Women generally lack upper body strength, so KICK.
- Yell "FIRE!" A fire affects everyone and people will listen.
- Remember that any weapon you carry can be used against you.
- If you want to carry a weapon, pepper spray is your best option – you can spray from a distance and run.
- Never get into a car, even if the attacker threatens you with a gun! Your chances of survival are greatly reduced when you are taken to a secondary site.
- If you are threatened with a gun, RUN! The chances that the shooter will hit a moving target are less than 5%. The chances that you will be shot seriously are less than 2%.
- Report all crimes! Sometimes people are reluctant to report a crime because they think it was not serious or they are embarrassed because they feel it was their fault. Reporting crime helps to prevent the criminal from victimizing another person.

Do not go anywhere, do anything, or talk to anyone that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Finally ... Trust your instincts ... you have them for a reason.