

# Situational Awareness

Empower yourself, your sisters and your loved ones

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**W**hat's your idea of a perfect Saturday? For me, it's waking up early—early enough to see the sun start to pour into the windows of my house—to make an iced chai tea latte. It's then heading out to one of the many peaceful, secluded hiking or running trails here in southern Indiana with my dog in tow. It's putting in my earbuds, giving my muscles a light stretch and hitting the pavement for the next hour or two to enjoy a peaceful morning in nature.

If you're like me and you enjoy running, hiking, biking or walking in the great outdoors, you know that alone time can be rejuvenating and tranquil, but it can also make you hyper-aware of your surroundings. It's similar to how you likely feel when you pump gas by yourself, take money out of an ATM or walk to your car alone in the dark. All these situations pose a level of risk that require a high degree of situational awareness.

Having situational awareness means knowing what is always going on around you. It means being aware of your surroundings, being attentive to nearby sounds and sights, and being able to focus and react as necessary. There are varying degrees of situational awareness, from low to extremely high: (1) Tuned Out, (2) Relaxed Awareness, (3) Focused Awareness, (4) High Alert and (5) Paralysis.

Situational awareness helps you recognize helps you recognize safety and security dangers that may be present in your environment and guides your response as a bad situation evolves. High degrees of situational awareness increase your reaction time; a fast reaction time corresponds to an improved chance of survival. When our reality is that violent crimes occur every day in residence homes, trails and sidewalks, parking lots, convenience stores, gas stations, etc., it is abundantly clear that being situationally aware matters.

How can you improve your situational awareness? Here are several recommended strategies that you can begin to implement in your daily routines:

- Eliminate distractions as much as possible, especially the use of cellphones and earbuds when you are in public spaces.
- Scan objects, people, activities and the surrounding area that you are in. Staying vigilant helps you to identify potential issues.
- Identify entry/exit routes when you enter a new environment so that you can be proactive if something were to arise.
- Practice predicting the actions of others so you can more readily choose an appropriate response if a problem occurs.
- Trust yourself. If your intuition says something is off, it's better to remove yourself from a

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"The perception of environmental elements and events with respect to time or space, the comprehension of their meaning, and the projection of their future status."

— SCN Community Active Threat Training, 2022.

questionable situation than second-guess and end up in danger.

Knowing the "why" behind practicing situational

awareness can help us to navigate and hopefully avoid bad situations more effectively.

However, knowing "what" to do in an emergency is also an important part of being prepared. It may make all the difference when seconds count.

It is easy to adopt an "it will never happen here" mindset, but unfortunately as we've seen through the countless active threat situations in our country over the past few years alone, tragedies can and do happen anywhere. Statistics show that 45% of active threat incidents take place in commerce locations; 21% take place in education; 14% take place in an open space; 4% take

place in houses of worship. We may not have control over where or when an active threat incident occurs, but we do have control over how we train ourselves to react. Having a plan and understanding your surroundings and environment before an emergency occurs allows you to be prepared and committed to act.

Ultimately, situational awareness can save lives. Empower yourself, your sisters and loved ones to become more situationally aware on a daily basis, especially the next time you pick up late night takeout, walk through a parking garage alone or decide to go for a jog on a nearby trail. ❖

**Reference: The information in this article is primarily taken from the Secure Community Network's Countering Active Threat Training (CATT). If interested, you can view a recording of that training on their YouTube channel. The Secure Community Network (SCN) is the official safety and security organization of the Jewish community in North America. More information about the SCN can be found at [securecommunitynetworks.org](https://securecommunitynetworks.org).**

## Run, Hide or Fight.

If you find yourself in a worst-case active threat situation, you have three options:

- ▶ **Run.** Find the nearest exit and get out of there. If you're already outside, then head in the opposite direction from where you are. Leave your possessions and run as fast as you can for as long as you can, especially until you are out of the danger zone. Call 911 when it is safe to do so.
- ▶ **Hide.** If running is not an option, find a hiding spot. If inside, lock and barricade doors with whatever you can. Turn off the lights, silence your devices and stay out of sight.
- ▶ **Fight.** The reality is that most active threat situations are over by the time police reinforcements arrive, so you must protect yourself. Find whatever you can to utilize as a weapon and fight like your life depends on it, because it very well might. You are limited only by your imagination. The goal here is to buy yourself time.

The Run, Hide, Fight model is a nationally recognized model that is easy to remember and has been adopted by most schools and universities. It's important to remember that these actions are not sequential or linear; you must do what makes most sense in the situation you are in.

## Quick Call Emergency Hacks

To quickly call Emergency Services from an iPhone, press and hold the side button and one of the volume buttons; then, drag the Emergency SOS slider to call emergency services. You can also press and hold the power button on your Apple Watch until the Emergency SOS slider appears. On Androids, press the power button five quick times to launch a countdown to call 911.

