



**Personal Safety and Self-Defense Training**



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# Assailants Need These Two Things

## Target:

Assailants target potential victims. They most often do a “test” to ascertain if this target would make a good victim. The “test” is usually some sort of boundary violation. They want to see if you not only recognize that your boundaries were tested but if you’re ready, willing and able to take action. They are looking for an intimidated, silent, and compliant victim. This is one “test” you want to fail.

## Opportunity:

- ✦ **Isolation.** The assailant will use various ploys and manipulations to lure you into isolation.
  - ☞ Physical
  - ☞ Social
  - ☞ Financial
  
- ✦ **Handicap the target** – tactics that compel you to go along with the assailant’s plan.
  - ☞ Alcohol/drugs
  - ☞ Intimidation or threats
  - ☞ Physical attack
  - ☞ Eroding self-worth
  - ☞ Ploys and manipulations

# Your Self-Defense Needs These Four Things

- ✦ **Recognizing Red Flags:** the ploys, manipulations and “tests” used by assailants.
- ✦ **Exit Strategy,** or tactics to interrupt this process. This includes verbal, body language, evasion, and other ways to make you a hard target.
- ✦ Simple and effective **physical self-defense skills.** These are the skills of last resort, but if you need them there is no substitute. Also, knowing you have that “Plan B” will give you more confidence in deploying your interruption and evasion skills. Your one and only aim is to disable the attacker long enough to escape. In less than 10 seconds.
- ✦ **Self-care.** Any assault, regardless of outcome, is a traumatic event. What coping skills do you want to help ameliorate the harm?

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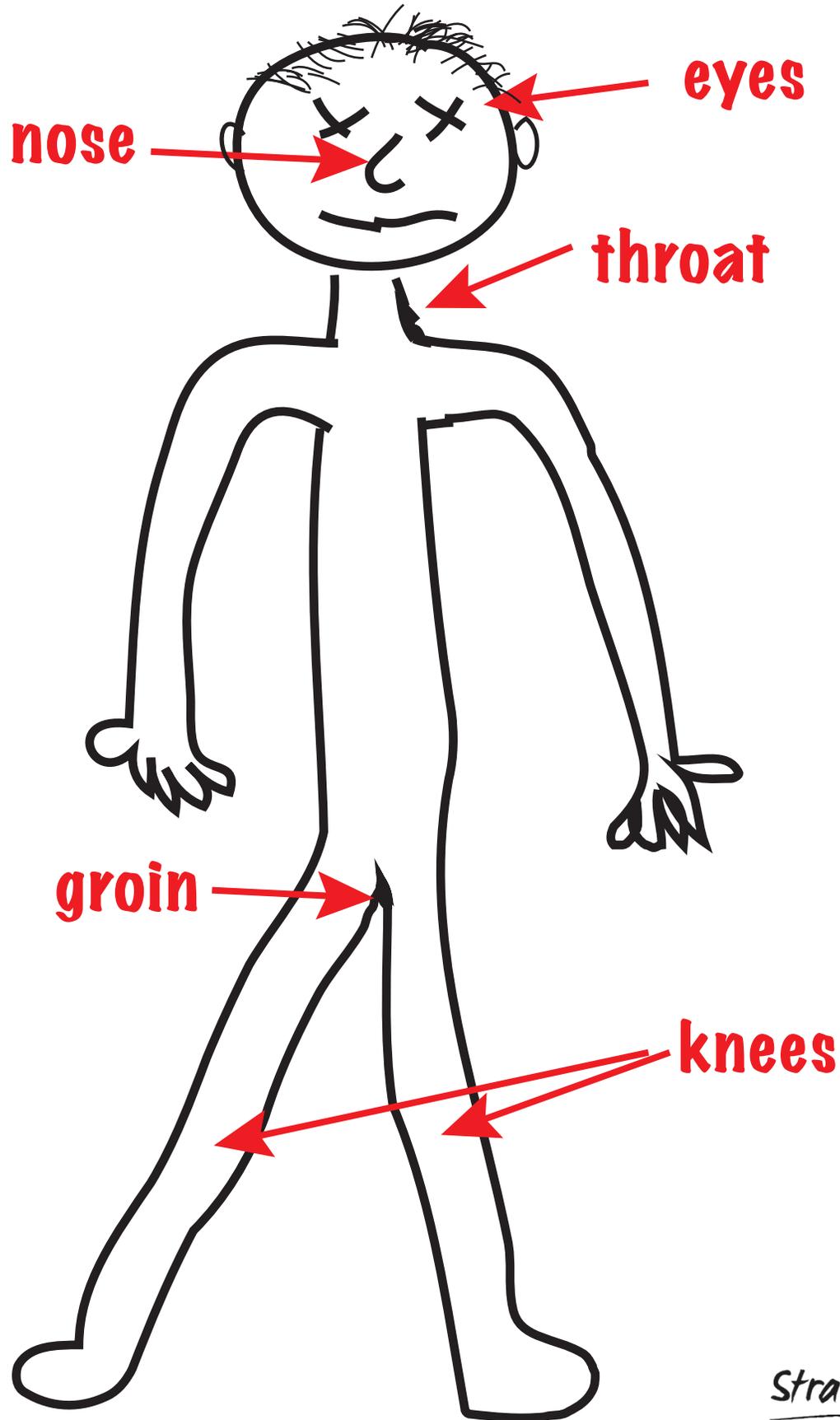
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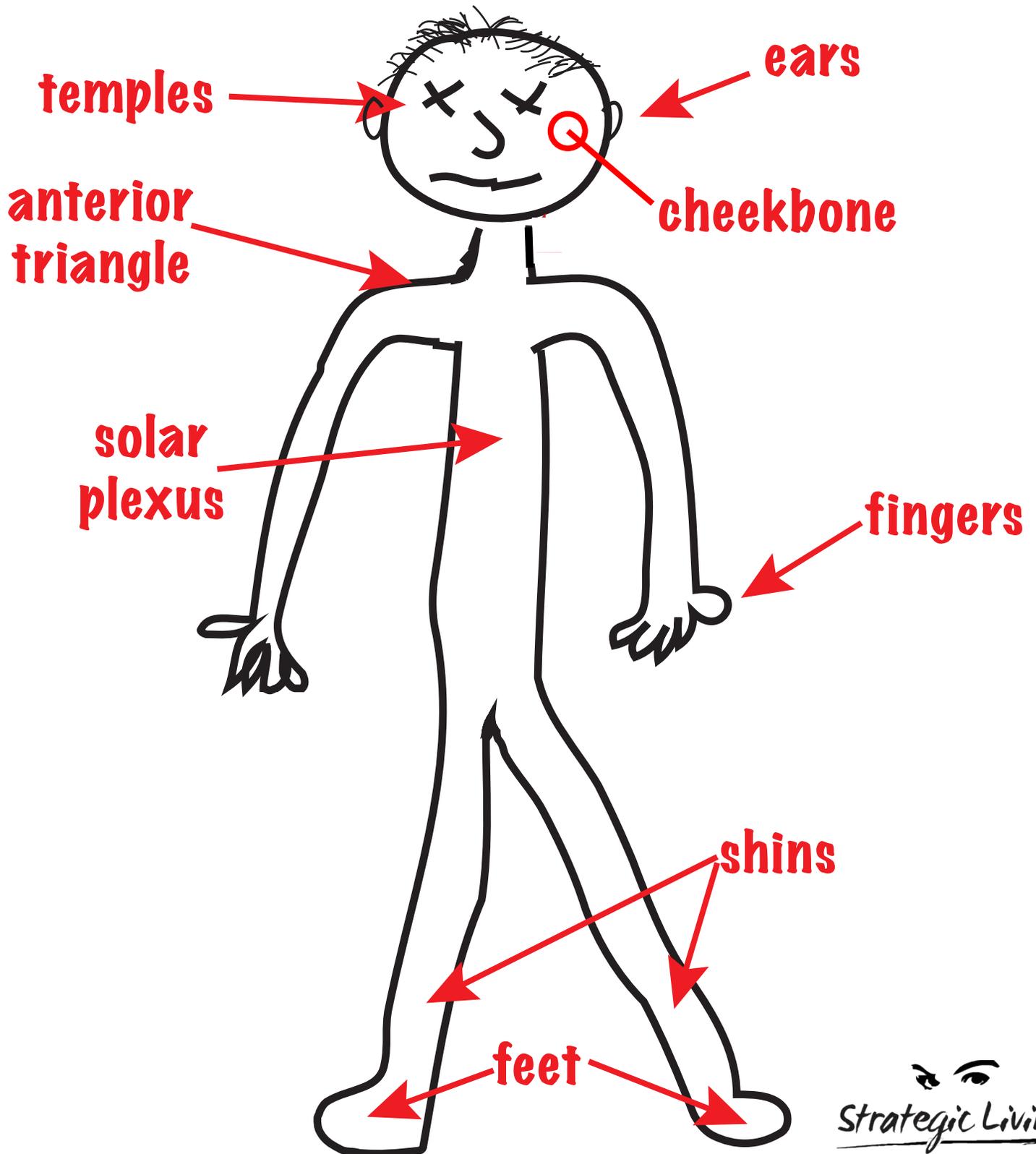
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# Decisive Targets



# Effective and Pain Targets



# Assessing Your Risk for Assault

**In distinguishing between infinite possibilities and imminent reality, the essentials to consider are:**

**1. If you were Peter Parker, would your “spider sense” be tingling?**

You needn't have been bitten by a radioactive spider to recognize the sensation. What is your survival instinct/intuition/gift of fear telling you? Become aware of any sort of physical sensation that you associate with a warning. And you needn't be an action adventure superhero to do something about it.

**2. Is someone violating your boundaries?**

Boundary violations can begin small, as a test to see if you recognize it, display discomfort, yet say/do nothing. In the case of a stranger assault, the test may take only a minute, or even seconds. In cases of domestic violence, you may be groomed to tolerate such intrusions for months or years. Boundary violations can be visual and verbal, as well as physical.

Most women are assaulted by someone they know. The perpetrator abuses familiarity to take the benefit of doubt. Many women simply assume that because they and their assailant know people in common, they won't be assaulted. That's exactly what the assailant wants you to feel, and small testing boundary violations escalate until you can no longer deny that an assault is in progress. Assailants understand that you'll be reluctant to tell people you both know. In most cases that ends up being the case.

**3. Is someone using ploys and manipulations?**

Is someone trying to get you to do something, but you doubt their motives or agenda? Are they insisting that you owe them this favor, or trying to distract you? Do you feel they're stretching the truth, or outright lying? What is the real relationship between you and this person? Is their persuasion appropriate, given the relationship?

**4. Is someone trying to isolate you?**

Assailants do not want to be caught. Assailants require not only a compliant victim but also an opportunity. Boundary violations and ploys work on the former, and isolation works on the latter. You can be isolated physically, socially and financially.

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# Assessing Personal Risk:

## Distinguishing between infinite possibilities and imminent reality

The vast majority of perpetrators “test” potential victims. The test can last a few seconds, or in the case of grooming, months. This is one test you wish to fail! Most often the perpetrator will commit a boundary violation, gauge your response, and if they sense weakness, commit a more egregious violation. Here is a partial list of behaviors blatantly associated with boundary violations:

***Physical and visual intrusions into personal space:*** staring, indecent exposure, standing or sitting too close, offensive or threatening gestures, reading your personal papers or computer files, breaking your things.

***Verbal messages:*** ploys & manipulations, threats, insults, name-calling, patronizing or sarcastic tone of voice, belittling, blaming, teasing, shaming, undermining, intimidation.

***Unwanted physical contact:*** caresses where you are uncomfortable, slapping, punching, poking, pinching, patting, wrestling and pinning, grabbing, activities associated with affectionate familiarity (i.e., hugging, kissing), cruelty to animals.

***What others can you think of?***

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**Many of these behaviors also occur daily in non-threatening situations. How do we distinguish a potential perpetrator from the rest of us?**

A perpetrator needs an opportunity, most often created by isolating the victim. Types of isolation include *physical* (getting you alone), *social* (removing you from your social support, i.e., family and friends), and *financial* (removing your means of independence). A perpetrator feels an immense sense of entitlement, as if they are owed a lot. A perpetrator has decided that their wants are way more important than yours, and in fact they are entitled to harm you to get what they want.

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# Why Voice?

**Your voice is your single most important weapon. You can deter half your potential assailants with voice alone. Combined with other aspects of body language, you can evade or deter about 95% of imminent threats.**

## **Your voice:**

- Startles the assailant
- Draws attention to the situation
- Engages your core strength
- Ensures you are BREATHING
- Helps you remain GROUNDED and PRESENT
- Increases your adrenaline and makes you more powerful

What to yell? Direct commands. Here's my short list:

- NO!
- STOP!
- BACK OFF!
- LEAVE ME ALONE!

What other words can you think of?

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# INTUITION:

## Trusting your brain's innate survival mechanisms

Imagine a zebra herd, grazing on the African plains. One strolls over to the water hole, looks around, and lowers her head. Almost immediately there's a rustle in the grass just yards away. Which of these thoughts are going through the zebra's brain:

- a) Oh, it's just the wind! No need to be paranoid.
- b) Uh-oh, looks like it may be a lion . . . I better not be rude, or he'll eat me!
- c) If I don't make eye contact with the lion, he won't notice me!
- d) If I run and it's not a lion, the other zebras will make fun of me.

The correct answer is (e) none of the above. Any zebra having such thoughts would have been deleted from the gene pool at a very young age.

The human brain, however, is far more complex than a zebra's. All those thoughts, and more, may run through a person's head when confronted with a human predator.

Fortunately, portions of our brains still operate on survival mode. Our senses are constantly taking in data and processing it, without our conscious thought having anything to do with it. When the senses note



something amiss, those portions of the brain send signals to the body. You have a gut feeling, the hair on the back of your neck stands up, you're nervous or uneasy, but cannot pin down exactly why. We call this intuition. Your senses told your body that there may be that lioness out there, so watch it! That portion of your brain is getting your body ready to respond to an imminent threat. Some of these readiness measures are increasing your adrenaline and other exciting chemicals, redirecting your blood flow, and altering your sense of time and space.

The human predator give off his own version of that rustle in the grass. These are those ploys, manipulations, and boundary tests.

The vast majority of women who were assaulted recognized that something was amiss, yet they ignored their intuition. Some didn't want to be unladylike, or rude, or embarrassed, or wrong. They wanted to give someone the benefit of the doubt. So they let the predator come too close, and they were left with fewer choices to keep themselves safe.

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# Physical Self-Defense

## Rules of Engagement

1. **There are no rules.** Rules are for sports and other forms of civil conduct. Self-defense is most definitely uncivil. Self-defense strategies and tactics are used when you fear imminent physical harm.
2. **Go for decisive targets first.** Your aim in using physical skills is to disable the assailant long enough to escape. Sometimes this is referred to as “dirty” fighting. I call it “self-defense” (and prefer to reserve “dirty” fighting for those who cheat at sports).
3. **Once you begin fighting back physically, keep going until you’ve cleared your escape.** You can think of this as fighting until your assailant is either on the ground, stunned, or running away (do NOT run after them). In most cases, this is 1 or 2, up to about 5, good techniques. Do NOT pause in the middle – you would be giving your assailant the time they need to recoup and remount their own attack. Stay in motion. Keep at least one of your weapons (hands/feet/elbows/knees) on the assailant at all times.
4. **Constant forward pressure.** Most likely you will want to get FAR AWAY from the creep. Delay that for just the amount of time needed to disable your assailant long enough so that you can SAFELY get FAR AWAY. You want to move IN to keep the attacker stumbling backwards.
5. **You will be too close for your comfort.** You will very likely be in hugging distance. Yes, that is where you want to be, and it will be unsettling. This proximity will give you your best position to fight back effectively.



6. **Take their balance.** If the assailant is off-balance, they will have difficulty continuing their attack. Remember to find where their “kangaroo tail” or “third leg” should be. Use your hip check.

7. **Use your voice.** This is your single most critical weapon. Use it early and often. Yell direct commands at the assailant. Afterwards, find supportive people to tell – this can include family and friends, the Crisis Clinic or sexual assault advocates, and law enforcement.

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## Signs to Look for in Someone Who Batters:

If you are uncertain whether your partner is abusive or if you want to be able to tell at the beginning of the relationship if the other person has the potential to become abusive, there are behaviors you can look for, including the following:

1. **JEALOUSY:** An abuser will always say that jealousy is a sign of love. Jealousy has nothing to do with love; it's a sign of possessiveness and lack of trust. In a healthy relationship, the partners trust each other unless one of them has legitimately done something to break that trust.
2. **CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR:** At first, the batterer will say this behavior is because they are concerned for your safety, a need for you to use time well or to make good decisions. Abusers will be angry if you are "late" coming back from the store or an appointment; you will be questioned closely about where you went, who you talked to. At this behavior gets worse, the abuser may not let you make personal decisions about the house, your clothing, or going to church. They may keep all the money; or may make you ask permission to leave the house or room.
3. **QUICK INVOLVEMENT:** Many domestic violence survivors only knew their abuser for a few months before they were living together. The abuser may come on like a whirlwind, claiming "you're the only person I could ever talk to" and "I've never felt loved like this by anyone". Abusers are generally very charming at the beginning of the relationship. You will be pressured to commit in such a way that later you may feel very guilty if you want to slow down involvement or break up. If you are newly out, be careful; abusers often target those they know are new to the GLBT community because it is a time when you are vulnerable and may not know very many people in the community.
4. **UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS:** Abusive people will expect their partner to meet all their needs: the perfect partner, lover, and friend. They say things like "if you love me, I'm all you need and you're all I need". You are supposed to take care of everything for them; emotionally, physically, and sometimes economically.
5. **ISOLATION:** The abusive person tries to cut the partner off from all resources. If you have same-sex friends, you are a "whore", a "slut" or "cheating". If you are close to family, you're "tied to the apron strings". The abuser will accuse people who are supportive of causing trouble, and may restrict use of the phone. They will gradually isolate you from all of your friends. They may not let you use a car (or have one that is reliable), and may try to keep you from working or going to school. Some abusers will try to get you into legal trouble so that you are afraid to drive or go out.
6. **BLAMES OTHERS FOR PROBLEMS:** If your partner is chronically unemployed, someone is always doing them wrong or is out to get them. They may make mistakes and then blame you for upsetting them so that they can't concentrate on their work. They will tell you that you are at fault for almost anything that goes wrong.
7. **BLAMES OTHERS FOR FEELINGS:** Abusive people will tell you, "you made me mad" and "I can't help being angry". Although they actually make the decision about how they think

or feel, they will use feelings to manipulate you. Abusers see themselves as the "victim" in the relationship, and do not take responsibility for their own feelings or behaviors.

8. **HYPERSENSITIVITY:** Abusers are easily insulted, and may take the slightest setback as a personal attack. They will rant and rave about the injustice of things that are really just a part of living, such as having to get up for work, getting a traffic ticket, or being asked to help with chores.

9. **CRUELTY TO ANIMALS OR CHILDREN:** This is a person who punishes animals brutally or is insensitive to their pain. They may expect children to be capable of things beyond their ability. They may tease children and younger brothers and sisters until they cry. They may be very critical of other people's children or any children you bring into the relationship. Your partner may threaten to prevent you from seeing children you have no biological rights to, or punish children to get even with you. About 60% of people who beat their partner also beat their children.

10. **"PLAYFUL" USE OF FORCE IN SEX:** This kind of person may like to act out fantasies where the partner is helpless. They let you know that the idea of rape is exciting. They may show little concern about whether you want to have sex, and use sulking or anger to manipulate you. They may start having sex with you while you are sleeping, or demand sex when you are ill or tired. They may want to "make up" by having sex after they have just been physically or verbally abusive to you.

11. **VERBAL ABUSE:** In addition to saying things that are meant to be cruel, this can be seen when the abuser degrades or curses you, belittling any of your accomplishments. They may say accuse you of not being a "real" lesbian or gay man. If you aren't out, they may threaten to out you to family members or your employer. The abuser will tell you that you are stupid and unable to function without them. They may wake you up to verbally abuse you, or not let you go to sleep.

12. **RIGID SEX ROLES:** Abusers expect the partner to play the "female" role; to serve them, and insists that you obey them in all things. The abuser sees you as unintelligent, inferior, responsible for menial tasks, and less than whole without the relationship. They will often tell you that no one else would want you or that you are nothing without them. They will remind you of everything they have done for you.

13. **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE:** Many survivors of abuse are confused by their abuser's sudden changes in mood, and may think it indicates a special mental problem. Abusers may be nice one minute, and explode the next. Explosiveness and moodiness are typical of people who beat their partners. Many survivors feel if their partner would just quit drinking or using drugs, the violence would stop. This is usually not the case. Abusive people continue the abuse, even after they stop using alcohol or drugs, unless they also seek help for their abusive behavior.

14. **PAST BATTERING:** These people say they have hit a partner in the past, but the previous partner made them do it. You may hear from relatives or ex partners that the person has been abusive. A batterer will beat any person they are with if they are with that person long enough for violence to begin; situational circumstances do not make a person an abusive personality.

15. **THREATS OF VIOLENCE:** This could include any threat of physical force meant to control you: "I'll slap your mouth off", "I'll kill you", "I'll break your neck". Most people do not threaten their mates, but a batterer will say "everyone talks like that", or "it didn't mean anything".

16. **BREAKING OR STRIKING OBJECTS:** This behavior is used as a punishment (breaking loved possessions), but is used mostly to terrorize you into submission. The abuser may beat on the table with their fist or throw objects around. This is not only a sign of extreme emotional immaturity, but indicates great danger when someone thinks they have the "right" to punish or frighten their partner.

17. **ANY FORCE DURING AN ARGUMENT:** A batterer may hold you down, restrain you from leaving the room, push you, or shove you. They may pin you to the wall, saying, "You're going to listen to me!".

Adapted from original work by Lydia Walker.

# Big Red Flags: Warning Signs of Power and Control

Everything listed below can be used as part of a pattern of controlling your behavior. The most important things to remember are how many does the person do, and how often.

**People who are abusive tend to begin with more subtle forms of controlling behavior.**

All the statements below fall on a “power and control” continuum. On a scale of -2 to 10, where where would you place each of these?

- 1 means “creepy,” “annoying,” or “something feels wrong, but I can’t put my finger on exactly what;”
  - 5 means “dangerous,” “this is wrong, and I know why;”
  - and 10 means “this will negatively impact the rest of my life” or “life-threatening;”
- 
- Called me “bitch”
  - Always asks me to stay late at work/school when others have gone
  - Hits and slaps me
  - Makes me feel stupid
  - Force me to kiss him/her
  - Forced me to have sex
  - Controls all our money
  - Is always calling and checking up on me
  - Kicked my dog/cat
  - Always keeps a hand on me
  - Grabbed my rear outside the conference room or classroom
  - Told others I had slept with him/her
  - Makes me feel bad about myself
  - Won’t let me see my old friends
  - Threatens to take the kids
  - Makes me feel afraid
  - Refuses to wear protection when we’re having sex
  - Stares at me



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- Stands too close
- Follows me to my car
- Gets angry if things aren't "just right"
- Keeps asking me out after I've said "no"
- Leaves notes for me on my desk, car, door
- Makes me lie and cover for them
- Insists on paying for a date
- Pushes me to drink/do drugs
- Backs me into the school lockers and insists on kissing
- Puts me down in front of my friends
- Says I don't have a sense of humor when I object to his/her cutting comments
- Insists on ordering for me when we go out to eat
- Says his/her jealousy is because he/she loves me so much
- Gets upset if I want to spend the afternoon with family or friends
- Says they will kill themselves if I ever leave
- He/she broke some of my stuff when angry
- Wanted to move in with me after we'd been dating 3 months
- Gets angry if I don't respond to their texts or voice messages right away, even if I'm at work or it's 2:00 am.



**Most of us are not perfect.** Every so often anyone can do one or two of these flags. Abusers use them constantly, and many of them. Be careful setting your boundaries with people who consistently want to violate them. Over the years I've taught self-defense, students who had been in abusive relationships said these were among the techniques and tactics used by their abuser. Please watch for them.

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# Trust Accounts

We all have a trust account in our heads for each person we meet. A trust account is simply how much we believe we can trust any individual. Interactions all have the potential to make “deposits” and “withdrawals” from these accounts. Some of these transactions are noted consciously, but most operate below the level of thought.

This list of factors is one often used, unconsciously, to grant trust. *However, those factors have no bearing on whether or not that person is trustworthy.*

- Does that person make eye contact and smile
- Are they clean and well-groomed
- Are they well-dressed
- Is he male
- Is he a college-educated male
- Is he a college-educated male with a professional, even supervisory, job
- Is he white
- If not white, is he of my race

There are many other factors that go into such deposits. Some will be formed during a first impression, others are revealed only over time.

**Trust should be earned.** When first meeting someone, their account is at zero. You don't automatically distrust, but you don't have to give it away.

Earning trust is done by behavior. How does a person deal with differing opinions, negotiating compromise, a possible setback, disappointment? Do they treat others like people or like objects, especially when they don't get their way?

Think of some occasions when you had to decide how much to trust another person. How did you think about that? What went into your judgment?

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# Finding Support

Self-care is a crucial part of your safety planning. Should something traumatic happen to you, who would you tell? You want to find a supportive, trusted person. That person should, by words or body language, convey these three critical messages:

1. ***I'm glad you're telling me.*** Sometimes those who've been targeted for abuse are intimidated, bribed, or shamed into silence. Sometimes they're told by an abuser "don't be a tattletale." Telling someone else is an act of courage!
2. ***I believe you.*** Before you say a word, your body language will give it away. As soon as you realize your friend or cousin or colleague may be telling you something scary, take a deep breath and give them your FULL attention. Body language and all. Many complaints, especially from women or children, are dismissed as exaggerations or lies told to get someone else in trouble.
3. ***It wasn't your fault.*** Especially if the abuser is someone known, it's often challenging to believe that such a nice person could do something so bad. People who otherwise may be supportive struggle with this, and really want to be fair and balanced and not "jump to conclusions."

Reasons for not talking about assault change little from childhood through old age. Embarrassment, shame, getting blamed, internalizing fault, being re-victimized, accused of making it up, or trying to get revenge. The details may change over the years, but the real barriers do not.

Even if you are never assaulted, you are very likely to know someone who was targeted for abuse. By considering these three principles for listening to and responding when someone confides in you, you are helping that person heal.

If you are having trouble immediately finding a trusted, supportive person, there are support phone lines you can call and talk with a trained advocate:

## **Sexual Assault**

King County Sexual Assault Resource Center 1-888-998-6423  
Harborview Sexual Assault and Trauma 206-521-1800

## **Domestic Violence**

New Beginnings (Seattle) 206-522-9472  
DAWN (South King County) 425-656-7867  
LifeWire (East Side) 425-746-1940  
NW Network of Bi, Trans, Lesbians and  
Gay Survivors of Abuse 206-568-7777  
ADWAS (Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing) 206-236-3134 (TTY)  
Asian Pacific Island Chaya 206-467-9976  
Consejo (for Latina women) 206-461-4880  
E. Cherry YWCA (for African American Women) 206-568-7845  
Jewish Family Services, Project DVORAH 206-461-3240  
Refugee Women's Alliance 206-721-0243  
Seattle Indian Health Board 206-324-8590 x9360  
Youth Eastside Services (for teens) 425-747-4937  
WA State DV Hotline 1-800-562-6025

## **King County Crisis Line**

206-461-3210

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# Finding EmPOWERment In 5 Questions

Self-defense should be emPOWERing. Unfortunately, there's a lot of "advice" or "tips" in circulation that serve more as victim-blaming or disempowering. I use these five questions to decide if any specific piece of information is emPOWERing or not.

1. ***Is it based in reality?*** Is this piece of advice based on work that has been demonstrated to reduce violence and harm? Does it address real threats? Or is it a "thought experiment" (which is most often a marketing tool)?
2. ***Does it give you tools?*** Do you come away with strategies and tactics to deal with real threats, or does it simply scare you?
3. ***Does it make your life bigger?*** Does this information expand your choices? Or does it say, "don't go there" or "don't do that?"

A related point: does that information encourage you to make someone else's life smaller, based on their race/gender/ethnicity/sexual orientation/etc, to keep you "safer?" If the answer is yes, it is neither useful nor empowering.

4. ***Is it victim-blaming?*** Empowerment Self-Defense gives you tools to keep yourself safer, while simultaneously placing responsibility for any assault squarely where it belongs – with the perpetrator. Nobody asks to be attacked. Ever.
5. ***Does it prioritize self-determination?*** Or are you placed on a box, a virtual prison that you're persuaded to enter? Do you get to make your own safety choices?

The **Subject/Object** analogy: The the sentence "Alice threw the ball." *Alice* is the Subject because she is doing the acting. *The ball* is the Object because it is being acted upon. Objects do not act, do not make their own choices – they do not have "agency." Empowerment Self-Defense puts you always as the Subject, as an active agent making your choices and decisions. In an unhealthy or abusive relationship, one party reserves for themselves the right to be the Subject and tries to make their partner an Object to serve their needs.

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# Some Verbal Safety Strategies

These are some of the verbal techniques you can use to keep yourself safer. Write down one or two examples of each. Note that some are meant to de-escalate a situation, others will almost certainly escalate. You will need to assess and pick your best strategy.

- Broken record/"Just Say NO"
- Confrontation: naming behavior and stating alternative
- De-escalation
- Negotiation
- Distraction
- Humor
- Lying
- Threats ("stop or I'll tell")
- Playing Along
- Give an out
- Making a Scene
- Submission

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# Confrontation Statements

Sometime in your life you'll want to say no. And it will be awkward. And you may be concerned that you'll lose friends, or won't be liked as much, and you'll hesitate even if you know your quality of life and friends will improve. Here are some NO statements to have handy. To build up your resolve, try reading all of them out loud.

- I don't like your behavior (or comment).
- Leave me alone!
- It's time for you to leave.
- I don't know you—I'm not going to trust you (in response to "I won't hurt you," or, "You can trust me.")
- Your behavior is unacceptable. Stop!
- NO!
- You're too close; move back.
- You have given me absolutely no reason to trust you.
- I don't know you. Leave me alone.
- Take your hands off of me!
- Your remark degrades both of us.
- Your comment was/is inappropriate.
- I am not interested.
- I'm not comfortable with that.
- Stop bothering me.
- I do not want to have sex with you.
- What you said is not flattering—it's offensive.
- Your sexual comments are inappropriate.
- I do not want to go out with you. I want you to stop asking me.
- My friend already told you to leave her alone; now go away.
- If you touch me again, I'll make sure Human Resources hears about it.
- I deserve more respect than you're giving me.
- No, I don't feel like hanging out tonight. I need some time to myself.
- I'm not flattered; that was rude.
- The answer is still no, so stop asking. I will not change my mind.

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# Safety Planning

My personal long-term goals include:

I will defend myself because:

Because I have a future in mind with goals and plans, and because I assume the right to live free from violence, I am willing to defend and keep myself safe in these ways:

I know at least these three ways to keep myself safe while doing routine activities (such as dating, walking, doing laundry, taking the bus, etc.):

These are some of the ploys that an assailant may use to get access to me:

These actions can be used to test my boundaries:

These are some forms of isolation:

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**Congratulations on completing a *Strategic Living* self-defense class! The skills you learned and practiced will enhance your experiences and enjoyment of life for, yes, the rest of your life.**

## **Refresher Program**

In the future, you may decide you want to refresh what you've learned. Maybe you took a short afternoon/evening class, and are now ready for a longer course. Or your environment may have changed and you'd like additional tools. Maybe even you're considering new adventures you feel may expose you to unknown risks (but the rewards would be wonderful) and you'd like to learn extra precautions.

**You can.**

**You can attend select\* *Strategic Living* classes at half price.**

\*Classes eligible in this offer are any of those delivered directly by Strategic Living at Phinney Neighborhood Center or University Heights Center, or the ASUW Experimental College. Classes not included are those offered through Bellevue College, Seattle Central College, South Seattle College, and North Kirkland Community Center -- I do not administer those partner programs.

- What if you want to get a group of friends together for your own custom class? You personally get that 50% discount (sorry, not the whole group).
- What if the eligible classes don't fit your schedule and you really want more training? You can also get that 50% discount on up to 4 hours of private lessons per year.
- What if you want annual refresher classes, can this discount apply every year? Yes. There is NO expiration date.

## **Referral Program**

Self-defense is an essential set of life skills. **Please refer these classes to your friends.** And to thank you, for each person you refer who signs up for a class I'll send a donation of 10% of their tuition to King County Sexual Assault Resource Center ([kcsarc.org](http://kcsarc.org)), the King County Coalition Against Domestic Violence ([kccadv.org](http://kccadv.org)), or Rain City Rock Camp for Girls ([raincityrockcamp.org](http://raincityrockcamp.org)). You pick.

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# Following Up

## Learning about and practicing self-defense doesn't end with this class!

You can continuously receive safety tips you can use and share, news and opinion, updates on classes, yummy barbeque recipes, and more!

1. **Sign up for *News & Views***, Strategic Living's e-newsletter (published 4-6 times per year). Visit <http://www.StrategicLiving.org> to subscribe (and check out the archives so you can see examples of what you'll be getting).
2. **Revisit the Strategic Living website.** I have been adding more instructional content, so you will be able to find refreshing reviews on what you learned in class (and maybe even some new material). Visit [www.StrategicLiving.org/safety-education.php](http://www.StrategicLiving.org/safety-education.php)
3. **Read *Safety in Seattle News* blog.** You can subscribe to receive updates via email or RSS feed. <http://blog.strategicliving.org>.
4. **“Like” Strategic Living on Facebook** at <http://www.Facebook.com/StrategicLiving>.
5. **Follow Strategic Living on Twitter.** @strategicliving.
6. **Connect with Joanne Factor on LinkedIn.**
7. **Check us out on Yelp and CitySearch.** See what others have said. Post your review.
8. **Sharing is caring. Tell your friends.** Recommend self-defense classes to your friends. Please forward, “like,” “share,” “tweet”, “retweet,” or otherwise redistribute any social media posts you find particularly useful.

**We take privacy seriously** – your contact information remains confidential. It is not sold, lent, or given to anyone.

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# Suggested Readings

## These three are my favorites:

De Becker, Gavin. *The Gift of Fear: Survival Signals that Protect Us from Violence*. NY: Little, Brown and Company, 1997. Best chapters are those on using and developing intuition. Domestic violence chapter, though, is controversial.

Del Tufo, Alisa. *Domestic Violence for Beginners*. NY: Writers and Readers Publishing Inc., 1995. Excellent summary in an easy-to-read format for a difficult topic.

Leung, Debbie. *Self-Defense: The Womanly Art of Self-Care, Intuition and Choice*. Tacoma WA: R & M Press, 1991. If you read only one self-defense book, this is it.

## These are also excellent:

Bart, Pauline B. and Patricia H. O'Brien. *Stopping Rape: Successful Survival Strategies*. NY: Pergamon Press, 1985. Seminal studies--a classic.

Caignon, Denise and Gail Groves, eds. *Her Wits About Her: Self-Defense Success Stories by Women*. NY: HarperCollins Perennial Library, 1987. Unfortunately, out of print.

Canada, Geoffrey. *Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence in America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

Cardoza, Monica McCabe. *A Woman's Guide to Martial Arts: How to Choose a Discipline and Get Started*. Woodstock NY: The Overlook Press, 1996.

Dobson, Terry and Victor Miller. *Aikido in Everyday Life: Giving In to Get Your Way*, 2nd ed. Berkeley CA: North Atlantic Books, 1993

Giggans, Patricia Occhiuzzo and Barrie Levy. *50 Ways to a Safer World: Everyday Actions You Can Take to Prevent Violence in Neighborhoods, Schools, and Communities*. Seattle WA: Seal Press, 1997.

Gladwell, Malcomb. *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005.

Glassner, Barry. *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans are Afraid of the Wrong Things*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

Mattingly, Katy. *Self-Defense: Steps to Survival*. Champaign IL: Human Kinetics, 2007.

Nelson, Joan. *Self-Defense: Steps to Success*. Champaign IL: Leisure Press, 1991.

NiCarthy, Gina, Naomi Gottlieb and Sandra Coffman. *You Don't Have to Take It! A Woman's Guide to Confronting Emotional Abuse at Work*. Seattle WA: Seal Press, 1993.

Pennell, Elizabeth. *Self-Defense for Women: Techniques to Get You Home Safely*. Holbrook MA: Adams Media Corporation, 2000.

Rafkin, Louise. *Street Smarts: A Personal Safety Guide for Women*. NY: Harper Collins, 1995.

Snortland, Ellen. *Beauty Bites Beast: Awakening the Warrior Within Women and Girls*. Pasadena CA: Trilogy Books, 1998.

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# BEST FEMINIST BUTT-KICKER

**O**n my way to interview women's **SELF-DEFENSE TEACHER JOANNE FACTOR**, I noticed a creepy, middle-aged man trailing me with puppy-dog eyes. "Where do you go to school?" asked the man, confirming this reporter's consternation at being the apparent object of a stranger's jailbait fantasies. He followed me for the next several blocks, emitting a drool of lascivious comments about my body and what he'd like to do with it.

It was a first for me, but not, I presume, for many women walking this city's sidewalks.

schools back then had a policy of 'benign neglect' in training women," says Factor, who's 48. Teachers just wouldn't teach their female students how to practice properly. "It was thought strenuous exercise would harm their reproductive capacity."

Factor strives to destroy that notion by beating the crap out of a guy named Bob. He's a rubber golem with an angry man's face and lifelike features. They have to be lifelike, because facial anatomy is what Factor tells her self-defense students to pound on. (The crotch is always important, but Bob's nether



## Joanne Factor's Picks

### BEST AL FRESCO DINING

"That would be the Pink Door."

### BEST MARTIAL-ARTS MOVIE

"Don't make a point of watching them."

### BEST FEMINIST BAR/COFFEE SHOP

"Do they still exist in Seattle? I like Fuel, on 19th."

### BEST GIRL BAND

"Tough choices. Bikini Kill, Le Tigre, L7, 7 Year Bitch, Tribe 8."

### BEST HARDWARE STORE

"McLendon's, of course [10210 16th Ave. SW, and other locations]!"

Factor on the offense: reversing a policy of "benign neglect."

STEVEN MILLER

That's where Factor comes in. A *shodan* black belt who works part-time in administrative support at the University of Washington, Factor has a degree in kicking man-butt. Strategic Living, a company she founded in 2003, teaches women how to recognize when they're being groomed by predators. Failing that, she also teaches how to inflict crippling groin blows.

A short, muscular woman who wears a Sequim Lavender Festival shirt, Factor has taught for a decade at the Central District's Feminist Karate Union. Founded in the early '70s, it's one of the oldest women-oriented dojos in the country. "Many martial-arts

regions are inaccessible; he's basically a rubber head and torso mounted on a black pole.) A fight that goes on for more than 30 seconds is bound to turn in a man's favor, so an eye gouge or palm thrust to the nose that leaves a man writhing on the floor is preferable.

Roughly 200 students attended her classes last year at places such as Lowell Elementary, Seattle Community Colleges, the Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and the UW.

Factor asserts she's never hit anybody in anger. "I've had to yell at people," she says—perhaps at her students after they festooned Bob with wigs, lipstick, and false eyelashes. ("It was really irritating me.") But her confidence in her abilities is great enough that, during a discussion about karate-chopping celebrities, she suggests she could kick the blues-playing butt of Steven Seagal. "Probably," she says, "because he wouldn't be expecting it."—*John Metcalfe*  
[www.strategicliving.org](http://www.strategicliving.org); **Feminist Karate Union**, 1426 South Jackson St., [www.feministkarateunion.org](http://www.feministkarateunion.org).



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# Self-defense classes put students on the path to confidence and skill

Establish boundaries with tools like voice and eye contact, and you are much less likely to be attacked.

By [Nicole Tsong](#)  
Special to *The Seattle Times*

THE BRIGHT side of a self-defense course is you don't need to be in fighting shape to defend yourself. You don't need to be in middling shape, though it helps to have some hand-eye coordination when it's time to gouge the attacker's eyes out. You think I'm kidding.

Taking a self-defense course seemed like a great idea until I had to do it. Suddenly, I was nervous about dropping into the middle of a five-week, self-defense series with Joanne Factor of Strategic Living. I wanted to know the moves required to take down a scary, unknown assailant. In theory.

Then I realized the class was going to be a pretty cool two hours packed with facts. In addition to the moves, Factor shares a lot of information about the psychology of assailants. She stresses that they need both a target and an opportunity. Attackers are not looking for people who fight back, Factor emphasized. She shared many examples of women who have done that and scared attackers away. Establish your boundaries with tools like voice and eye contact, and you are much less likely to be attacked.

I'm well aware that as fit as I think I am, I know I would lose a strength-on-strength situation. Factor emphasized that our voice is one of our most powerful tools.

Then there are the moves.

Factor focuses on tools we all have, regardless of fitness: our body weight, voice and the ability to strike areas of the body that will hurt.

Factor taught us to aim for "decisive targets" — eyes, throat, groin, knees, nose — which debilitate the attacker. Come up with a three-point combo to make it really effective. Karate chop the groin! Kick the knee! Gouge those eyes! And make sure you yell "back off!" "let go!" and "no!"

We partnered up. It was liberating to work with another human being, yelling, taking them off balance, pulling their ears and pretending to knee them in the face.

Releases were a little more intimidating. Even when someone is a nice, sweet girl you just met in self-defense class, it's not totally pleasant to have someone grab you from behind or grab your throat in a chokehold. Factor showed us how to use our weight and other tricks to release from more unpleasant holds. (Factor also is attentive to students who may have been through attacks, offering modifications if certain holds trigger emotions.)

Factor also ventures into more familiar territory — how straight-up awkward people can be. She is an advocate for speaking straight. If someone is being a jerk, a close-talker or overly touchy, Factor coached us to tell someone kindly, and firmly, "You're in my space bubble." If they are a friend, tell them it's not personal. Use the word "and" instead of "but," and tell them they're in your personal space.

Back off, buddy.

What Factor does best is instill confidence. If I am concerned someone is following me, I know to turn around, walk past the person at a decent distance, look at their nose and say "Hi." If they are an assailant, it will be clear I'm not a victim. I'm ready with my three-point combo in case they attack. If they're not an assailant, well, no big deal.

I never felt the need to take a self-defense class before. Factor's class was more than worthwhile to feel prepared, capable and strong. Because we are.

*Nicole Tsong teaches yoga at studios around Seattle. Email: [papercraneyoga@gmail.com](mailto:papercraneyoga@gmail.com). Erika Schultz is a Seattle Times staff photographer.*

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Self-defense expert shares tips for women

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