

Discover the Keys to Personal Safety

Here is a list of suggestions to help you protect yourself.

Think about how you usually react to crisis situations. Do you flee, freeze or fight? Think of a few past examples to see if there is a pattern. You can change how you react by practicing a different response if needed.

Talk to others about ways to handle confrontations and rehearse alternatives.

There is no right or wrong way to react. Every situation is different. The best response depends on a combination of factors, such as location, the assailant, presence of weapons, your personal responses, etc.

Walking

- Plan and use the safest and most direct route.
- Choose well-lighted streets at night
- Stay alert to your surroundings; look confident and purposeful.
- Become familiar with businesses that are open late.
- If you feel uneasy, go directly to a place where there are other people.

If you are being followed by someone in a car: Turn around and walk quickly in the opposite direction. Try to obtain the license plate number and a description of the car and call the police.

If you are being followed by someone on foot: Turn around to let the person know you see them, immediately cross the street and walk or run toward place where there is likely to be other people. Call the police or get someone else to call for you.

In cases involving verbal harassment: Ignore it and walk away. If you are alone at a bus stop, proceed to the next stop if there are other people there.

Your car

- Drive with car doors locked and windows closed. If possible, carry a cell phone.
- Keep your wallet, purse and valuables out of view while driving. Do not leave them next to you on the seat.
- If you see another motorist in trouble, do not stop. Call the police for assistance.
- Park in well-lighted areas. Look around before you get out of your car.
- Put valuables and packages in the trunk or out of sight before parking.
- Always lock the doors, no matter how soon you plan to return.
- When returning to your car, have your key in hand, look inside before unlocking and entering the car.
- If someone is following you, go to the nearest police station and honk your horn, or go to a gas station or business. Do not go home or pull over or get out.

At Home

- If there is a stranger at the door, never indicate that you are home alone.
- Do not open the door to anyone you don't know without verifying their identity.
- If someone wants to use your telephone, offer to make the call yourself while the person waits outside.
- Never let a stranger through an apartment security entrance.
- Do not give information to "wrong number" callers. Ask, "What number are you calling?"
- Never tell an unknown caller that you are at home alone.
- Verify the intent and identity of any person calling for information about you by calling the person's agency or workplace.
- Hang up immediately if you receive threatening or harassing phone calls. Do not say anything. If the calls continue, keep a record of the date, time and content of each call. Notify the police and phone company.

Face to Face Confrontations

When faced with danger, trust yourself. Your single most effective weapon is your judgment. Rely on it to choose what you think is the best response at the time, whether it is to:

- Run
- Stall
- Not resist
- Negotiate
- Verbally assert yourself
- Scream to attract attention
- Distract or divert attention
- Physically resist—fight off the assailant

Always evaluate your resources and options. Continue to assess the situation while it is occurring. If the first strategy chosen is not working, try something else.