Personal Safety In Public Places Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Awareness of personal safety in urban environments is a relatively new phenomenon. The objective of creating safer environments has traditionally been limited to accident prevention and the reduction of property crimes. Personal safety is different in that it focuses on how comfortable or safe an individual feels in any given situation.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

PHYSICAL ASSAULT DANGERS

Increasing numbers of people are expressing concern for their personal safety in urban settings. People feel afraid to use public spaces and public facilities. This fear of violence and the perception that an environment is unsafe is, in effect, a barrier to many people's use and enjoyment of public space.

If you are physically assaulted, know that there is no "right" way to respond. You will need to assess your abilities and the situation, then determine your best course of action. Sometimes, resistance and a shout for help are enough to discourage an attacker. You can try to talk the attacker out of committing the crime or you can submit and try to escape later. You have the right to reasonably defend yourself.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

PERSONAL AWARENESS

The first step to safety in public places is to be aware of what's going on around you. Thieves don't want to be noticed. If they see you've noticed them – or worse, made eye contact – you'll likely

not be targeted. There are plenty of people around you who aren't paying attention who can become the thief's next victim.

PURPOSEFUL MOVEMENTS

Start by taking a quick glance over the crowd. Look for the route you want to take to get to your destination. This is all a practice of being present as you are in a crowd. With practice, you will even develop a sense if something is out of place, even in a big crowd.

STREET WISE PRECAUTIONS

- Be alert to your surroundings and the people around you—especially if you are alone or it is dark.
- Whenever possible, travel with a friend.
- Stay in well-lighted areas as much as possible.
- Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes and alleys where someone could hide.
- Walk confidently at a steady pace.
- Make eye contact with people when walking.
- Do not respond to conversation from strangers on the street—continue walking.
- If you carry a purse, carry it securely between your arm and your body. Although a purse-snatcher's intent is to steal the purse, your personal safety may depend on not clinging to it.
- Do not use or wear anything that will impede your vision or hearing (i.e., iPods).

SAFETY MEASURES IN A PUBLIC PLACE

People shouldn't have to live in fear when then leave the house. If you find yourself feeling anxious when being in a crowded place, take an introductory class in self-defence. The skills you learn, such as how to appear confident in public and how to disable attackers, will be valuable. Even if you never actually use them, you'll still feel more confident and in control. Here are some measures.

- Avoid walking alone and using shortcuts through unfamiliar,

deserted areas.
- Look confident and be aware of your surroundings.
- Travel in well-lit areas and away from bushes, doorways and buildings. Try to take routes that are used by other people.
- Carry emergency cab fare.
- If you must Work late and move your car closer to a building, in a well-lit area.
- Have your keys ready so you can enter your car or residence quickly.
- Check in and under your vehicle before entering.
- Lock your car as soon as you enter or leave it.
- Keep car windows and sunroof closed.

SOME SIMPLE SENSIBLE SAFETY TIPS (SSSST)

- Keep your wallet in your front pants pocket if you are man.
- Women should keep their purses close to them, or between them and a friend.
- Keep a hand free and carry the fewest items as possible.
- Never put your stuff down, and don’t take your eyes from it.
- Try to face people as you are walking – thieves often come up behind you.
- Headphones make it hard to hear people around you.
- When walking next to a busy street, stay as far from the street as possible, to the inside of the sidewalk.
- If someone does grab your purse or bags, let them go – you can provoke serious violence if you try to resist.

PERSONAL SAFETY TAKEAWAYS

- You can’t avoid all risk, but it isn’t wise to act without taking precautions.
- Your best safety tools are your brain and common sense.
- Listen to your intuition and follow your instincts to safety.

FINAL WORD

People want to enjoy all the amenities of life that are avoidable to them in public places in our society. Unfortunately, there are

those who are driven to thwart basic societal dreams of the majority.