

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Personal Security: A Practical Approach

According to psychologists, we need to feel safe and secure in our surroundings before we can feel a sense of happiness and well-being.

It was Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist, who believed that human beings have different kinds of needs that are ordered in a hierarchy. In other words, our basic needs such as hunger and thirst must be met before we can begin to satisfy our higher needs. Included in a list of succeeding levels are: the need for safety and security; love and belonging; self-esteem and esteem from others; and self-actualization. According to Maslow, self-actualization is the fulfillment of one's unique potential, and is the ultimate goal of each of us.

If our need for safety and security is this important, what are we doing about it? Interestingly, the organizational world is beginning to see personal safety as a personnel issue. In fact, some organizations are offering personal safety workshops for their employees. Increasingly, women are enrolling in self-defense courses offered by community groups and martial arts organizations.

Perhaps the most important insight to emerge out of this focus on personal safety is that learning how to fight back physically is not enough. The experts point out that the best self-defense programs also teach avoidance and awareness.

With this in mind, here's a roundup of safety tips from experts in crime prevention and self-defense:

- Keep windows and doors secure. Have a door viewer, deadbolt lock and safety chain installed and be sure to use them. Police point out that good locks can be an effective deterrent to intruders. In other words, the more difficult the premises are to enter, the less likely a burglar is to try or to succeed.
- Don't automatically open the door—use your door viewer. Ask for identification before allowing delivery and service people or even police officers to enter your home.
- Don't be timid to verify his or her identity, by telephoning the company, utility or police department while having that person stay outside your home (obtain the phone number from your own phone book).
- Change locks if keys have been lost or stolen. When moving into a new residence, have all locks changed.
- Give your home an "occupied" appearance when you are out at night by leaving some time-activated lights on a staggered schedule.
- Don't advertise the fact that you are out by leaving a "back at 4:30" note on your door, and never hide keys outside.
- Keep all entrances and garages well lit and trim shrubbery away from doorways and entrances.
- Train your children to call you before opening the door when someone calls. Bear in mind that children are more trusting of strangers and may let them in.
- Never let a stranger into your home to use the telephone. Instead, offer to make the call for the person or direct him or her to a public telephone.

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- Don't enter your home or call out if you arrive home and suspect there has been a break-in. Go immediately to a neighbor and call the police.
- Don't remain alone in an apartment laundry room, mailroom or parking garage.
- Use initials rather than first names on mailboxes, in building and telephone directories. Don't unwittingly advertise the fact that you are a woman living alone by using your first name.
- Never admit on the telephone or at the door that you are alone.
- Discourage obscene and nuisance phone calls by hanging up immediately. If the caller persists, call the police.

Playing It Safe at Work

- Let someone know if you work late.
- Make sure that you have the telephone numbers for building security and police at your fingertips.
- Don't confront strangers who look or act suspicious. Instead, call the building security or police.
- If possible, use the elevator with people you know. Stand by the door near the controls and keep your back to the side wall. Trust your instincts. If someone makes you feel uneasy, wait for the next elevator.
- Avoid stairwells and dead-end corridors.
- If you are a female who is working late, and it is necessary to sign the lobby security register, sign your first initial and last name.

Playing It Safe When Driving
Playing It Safe in Public Places

We must learn to accept the fact that we can't completely eliminate risk from our lives. But we must also realize that taking steps to protect ourselves, our families and our property, will contribute to our safety, peace of mind and enjoyment of life.

- Always lock the car and take your keys. Get into the habit of checking inside the car, particularly the floor and rear seats before you get in. Because crimes sometimes occur when people force their way into a car, drive with the doors locked and windows up.
- Have your car keys in your hand so that you can get in the car immediately.
- Park in areas that will be populated and well lit when you return.
- Remove all keys to your home from the key ring when leaving car keys to have your car parked or serviced. And never keep your name, address or license number on a key ring!
- If you are driving alone, don't stop to help a motorist who appears to be in distress. Instead, stop at the next telephone booth and call for help.
- Never pick up a hitchhiker.
- If you have car trouble on a highway or while in an isolated area, engage the four-way flashers, raise the hood, then wait inside your car with the doors locked. If a stranger offers to help, stay inside your car and ask him or her to phone for help.
- If you suspect you are being followed by another car, drive to the nearest police station, service station or restaurant. If you feel it is unsafe to get out of your car, stay inside and blow the horn.
- Use safe routes while walking. Avoid shortcuts through lonely or poorly lit places such as parks or vacant lots. Stay in the well lit areas and walk on the curbside, away from alleys, doorways, and bushes. Statistics show that late night and early morning are times of greatest risk.
- Don't hitchhike or accept rides with casual acquaintances or strangers. If a driver stops to ask directions, avoid getting too close to the car. Remember that you could be pulled inside.
- Use caution in conversation with strangers. Avoid giving out personal information such as your name, address or place of employment.
- Never wear headphones when walking in isolated areas. Bear in mind that you could become unaware of dangers around you.
- Don't wrap a purse or document case around your neck, shoulder or wrist. If someone grabs your case, let it go.
- Be alert and observant. If you suspect you are being followed, police suggest the following course of action: cross the street and go directly to the nearest well lit or populated area. If you still feel you are being followed, turn and in a loud voice say "Stop following me." Go to an occupied building or flag down a taxi and ask the driver to call the police.
- Plan ahead so that you do not have to use automatic banking machines at night. If it's part of your job to make night deposits, never go to an ATM alone. It's also a good idea to stagger your deposit hours so that a pattern is not established. If you are suspicious of persons loitering, leave the area immediately and notify the police.
- Find out how to use the "Passenger Assistance Alarm" located on subway cars. Note the locations of telephones on the platform and at the station in case you need to get help.
- Sit near the driver when using buses or streetcars at night. When using the subway, try to sit in the front car from which the operator controls the train or the car where the guard rides.

- Avoid waiting at isolated bus stops when you are traveling alone at night or early morning. If possible, arrange for someone to drive you to the bus stop and meet you at your destination.
- Think ahead—have your house keys ready in your hand when you arrive home.