

Seven Keys To Personal Safety *Key points that can help you stay safe most of the time*

By Christine Schlattner

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Personal safety includes many skills, and many of those skills relate to a much smaller number of basic principles. As I was thinking about what concrete safety ideas to write about for this article, it occurred to me to put a summary of "the whole thing".

When Michael Linehan and I were writing our book *Real World Safety for Women*, we researched many others. We really did find that they mostly fell into two groups — either they contained huge numbers of points in many bulleted lists, or they were written like novels leaving the reader to pick out what exactly to do.

Until we saw this, we really didn't have a clear idea of the shape of our own book. Then it became obvious - to design the book as an effective learning tool and to condense our knowledge into personal safety **principles** that would be easy to remember and simple to apply to every area of one's life.

Here they are — a review for our Seven Keys to personal safety for those who already know them, a mini, super-condensed personal safety course for those who don't.

1. Nurture Your Belief in Yourself: When you believe in yourself, you'll trust your wisdom and your strength. You'll trust your perceptions and you'll believe you have the right to your emotional and physical well-being. You're much more likely to do what you need to protect yourself.

2. Understand Reality --- and FACE IT: When I first wrote this, I wrote just "understand reality". Then it occurred to me, almost like a blinding flash, that many folks understand reality, but don't really face it full on. Completely see and accept reality and you'll be miles closer to being safe and being in charge of your life.

3. Stay Aware: We might almost say, "Stay awake." We're all often daydreaming, I think. Stay aware, wherever you are, whatever you are doing. This is really just the same as the idea of "being present" - leading not only to being safer, but potentially to greater enjoyment of the moment by moment experience

of being alive.

4. **Trust Your Intuition:** I say in classes, "If you ignore or forget everything else I say today, remember this one thing... If your intuition is warning you, there IS something wrong. Trust it, and act to increase your personal safety." That's how strongly I believe in the importance of intuition. (Anyone who hasn't read Gavin de Becker's book *The Gift of Fear* on this really should.)

5. **Develop Your Body's Language of Strength:** Looking strong and confident makes you MUCH less likely to be targeted.

6. **Set Boundaries:** One woman, after doing our class, ended literally years of office harassment with a couple of sentences. I don't remember exactly the words she told us, but it was something along the lines of, "That is degrading and offensive. It's harassment. I don't like it and no woman does. You - will - never - speak - to - me - like - that - again." (All spoken with 100% congruence and the eyes of cold fire.) We have heard so many times that just a few words spoken with conviction was all that was necessary to end a situation, be it harassment or potential attack.

7. **Fight Back:** Applying all your wisdom and the personal safety ideas above makes the possibility of attack much less likely. But it still might happen. And if it does, fight with 100% conviction in your right and ability to protect yourself. And remember, at that point you are not "defending" as such (in the sense of reacting to each of his attacking moves), you are now "counter-attacking"; completely taking control with a force of energy like a cross between a pit-bull mother defending her young, a grizzly bear, a tiger and a Klingon.

Don't hold back.

Don't hold back your caring and belief in yourself.

Don't hold back the wisdom of your awareness and intuition.

Don't hold back your strength and courage in your body, voice and fighting spirit.

Personal safety grows from your commitment to use your strengths, skills, and full power to keep yourself safe. If you let yourself use what you have, you can take care of just about anything.