

Safety, Awareness, and Confidence: The Power of Self-Defense

01/30/2026

Violence is a significant public health concern that can impact individuals across the lifespan and lead to a lifetime of emotional, physical, and economic problems. Its effects often extend well beyond the incident itself, influencing personal safety, health, and overall well-being. Although the topic can be difficult to discuss, the frequency and lasting impact of violence make it important to talk about how to recognize, prevent, and respond to conflict.

Research shows:

- Assault is the most common violent crime in the United States. Assault is an unlawful physical attack or threat of attack that may result in injury or death.
- An average of 64% of females and 40% of males report knowing their attacker.
- Approximately 28% of individuals report that they or someone in their household was a victim of crime in the past year.

Research also suggests that learning self-defense can be effective in avoiding and responding to conflict. Self-defense education has been shown to increase assertiveness, confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, perceived control, and physical competence, while also helping to reduce anxiety, helplessness, and fear.

To be better prepared to respond to conflict and reduce risk follow these helpful tips:

- Look confident
- Remain alert and aware of your surroundings
- Avoid situations that feel unsafe or risky
- Be aware of possible dangers and trust your instincts
- Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return
- Limit distractions such as wearing headphones or earbuds, talking on the phone, or looking at an electronic device
- Know where you are and where you are going
- Plan the safest route to your destination
- Avoid unpopulated areas such as vacant lots, alleys, and parks

- Walk in well-lit areas
- Walk with one or more individuals when possible
- Avoid being out and alone at night
- Use de-escalation strategies whenever possible before choosing to make physical contact with an aggressor
- Leave a compromising situation if possible

Being prepared does not mean living in fear, it means building awareness, confidence, and skills to make safer choices and respond effectively when faced with potential conflict.

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