

## Personal Safety

Midwest Collaborative for Library Services (MCLS)



Michigan State Police

## Objectives

- Enhance your communication skills, focusing on personal safety and de-escalation techniques
- Increase your knowledge of basic safety skills
- Increase your mental awareness when dealing with potentially dangerous individuals
- Better protect the welfare of the people you serve



## What Is Safety?

*“Safety is not the absence of danger but the presence of protection.”*

(Author Unknown)



## Identifying/Handling Dangerous Situations And People

- Mental awareness
- Characteristics of suspicious/armed individuals
- Positioning when dealing with people
- Best course of action/tools available to you



## Approach

- Heightened awareness
  - Observes subjects and environment
- Tactical positioning
  - Reactionary gap
- Readiness to respond
  - Stance



## State Of Mental Awareness

- a) **CONDITION WHITE.**  
 State of “Environmental Unawareness” daydreaming, tired, preoccupied with distractions, assuming there is no possibility of trouble and thus no cause for alarm. **“You are transmitting O.K. but your receiver is out.”** This is the condition of the majority of the public as they go about their daily tasks.

Is this a healthy condition to be in?



## Condition White Example



## Awareness Spectrum

- b) **CONDITION YELLOW**  
 Relaxed but alert, cautious but not tense, not specifically expecting a hostile act. **Constantly perceiving and evaluating your ever changing environment.**



## Condition Yellow Example



## Awareness Spectrum

- c) **CONDITION ORANGE**  
 State of Alarm. You know there is trouble. Concentration is focused on evaluating and resolving it. Developing a tactical plan in your mind, considering use of police, use of cover, and identity of adversary. Reason to believe a confrontation is likely.



## Awareness Spectrum

- d) **CONDITION RED**  
 What looks wrong--is wrong (e.g., focusing on threat and acting to control it, taking cover, verbal commands, totally committed to defense of self/others).



## Condition White to Red



## Awareness Spectrum

- e) **CONDITION BLACK**  
Lethal assault (fight or flight) panic, misdirected frenzy, and paralysis.



## Images Of September 11, 2001



- **“Awareness without knowledge is paranoia. Awareness with knowledge is preparation!”**



## Awareness Of YOUR Body Language

- How you walk
- How you move or gesture (never point your finger!)
- Your appearance
- Sunglasses (never wear mirrored sunglasses)
- Your facial expressions
- Your tone of voice/inflexion



## Characteristics Of Suspicious/Armed Individuals

- Your ability to recognize suspicious or armed individuals relates directly to your observation and perception skills



## Observation Vs. Perception



## Observation Skills Are Based On...

- a. PERSONAL DRIVES
- b. PERSONAL INTEREST
- c. CONDITIONING
  - 1) This is the most important to you as it can be developed through practice.
  - 2) Observation is an ability nearly everyone has, however, it is not equally developed for a number of reasons. A five-year patrol officer will have better observation and perception skills than a new officer with no prior experience.



## Suspicion Vs. Rationalization

1. Suspicion
  - A. Suspicion (e.g., hunch, sixth sense) is a highly valued trait among people. Every person possesses it, but in varying degrees.
  - B. REASONABLE suspicion-based on EXPLAINABLE CRITERIA can often mean the difference between a safe and dangerous situation.
2. Rationalization
  - A. The opposite end of the spectrum from suspicion is rationalization.
  - B. This is simply thinking of excuses which can explain away suspicious behavior.



## Reading People “Danger Signs”

- Repetitive aggressive questions
- Bladed stance
- Pacing
- Grooming
- Thousand mile stare
- Looking around the area/at your car
- Spitting
- Bouncing or skipping
- Clenching of the fist



## Danger Signs

### Characteristics of Armed Individuals

- 88 percent of people are right handed
- How do you know if they are right or left handed?
- Security feel--consciously and unconsciously
- Uneven jacket? Bulges?
- Movement
- Palming



## Positioning When Dealing With People

- Scene Size Up  
Before entering or approaching any scene ask yourself several questions:
  - Where is my nearest escape route?
  - Are there any other citizens/residences that may help in a crisis?
  - Does a co-worker/anyone know where you are at?
  - Should I have a safety partner or law enforcement officer with me?



## Using Cars For Safety



## Cover Vs. Concealment

- Cover - An object placed between you and the suspect which will stop a projectile.
- Concealment - Any object that will hide your presence.



## Sitting At Tables

- Sit on the edges of chairs
- Do not scoot into the table
- Do not allow both of your legs to bend less than 90 degrees



## Proximity

- Field interview stance
- Area of movement for your safety
- Use of Safety Phrases:
  - **WORK WITH ME SIR.....**
  - **YOU DON'T NEED THIS TYPE OF TROUBLE TONIGHT.**



## Best Courses Of Action

- Always attempt to de-escalate any dangerous situation.
- This can be accomplished through words and body language.
  - Self defense should only be used as a last resort.



## How To Handle Verbal Abuse

Natural Reaction - **CONFRONTATION**

versus

Studied Response - **DEFLECTION & REDIRECTION**



Source: Dr. George Thompson, Verbal Judo Institute

## Deflection Techniques

- Springboard - Focus Technique:
  - I appreciate that...but...
  - I'm sorry that you feel that way...but...
  - I understand...but...
  - That may be true...however...



Source: Dr. George Thompson, Verbal Judo Institute

- Your language must be professional:
  - It sounds good!
  - Dis-empowers the individual--maintains control
  - Feels good to use it tactically

\*\*\* Never Use Profanity. Profanity is a sign of weakness that lowers you to the level of the individual your are dealing with! It can also be a precursor to "setting off" an individual!



Source: Dr. George Thompson, Verbal Judo Institute

## Readiness To Respond

- Calming posture
- Relative position of your hands
- Hands in pockets?
- Object in hands?



## Natural Reaction



## De-Escalation Techniques: The Three C's

1. Confident
2. Calm
3. Create space



## De-Escalation (Cont'd.)

- Speak slowly
- Lower your voice
- Avoid staring
- Avoid arguing and confrontation
- Show concern through non-verbal and verbal responses
- Be prepared to react!



## De-escalating Conflicts (The Four "R" Method)

Receive the other person's comments without interruption and do not get defensive.

Repeat the other person's comments as objectively as possible.

Request the other person's proposed ways of dealing with the problem.

Review the options and decide on the best approach.



## Questions?



## Contact Information:

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