



VICTIM...To Be or Not to Be?

By Jennifer Johnson

Who makes a good victim to an attacker? Why are some women targeted over others? How can a woman protect herself from becoming a target? The answer is more basic than you might imagine.

We make judgments everyday about people we encounter in our daily lives; our friends, co-workers, business associates, and importantly, complete strangers. Our impressions are made in a matter of seconds. We notice the way someone dresses, how they carry themselves, how they speak and what they say. The same judgments are made by someone who is looking for a potential victim.

The way a woman walks and carries herself can say a lot to an attacker. The woman who walks with her head down, shoulders slumped and without purpose appears very meek and timid. This appearance leads the attacker to assume she is less likely to resist. It is important to carry yourself with purpose and in a manner that exudes confidence. Walk with your head up and be observant of your surroundings. The first and best defense is not appearing to be a potential victim.

Being aware of your surroundings at all times is crucial to prevent an attack. Too often I see women walking to their car while talking on their cell phone and rifling through their purse for car keys. They are unaware of any activity going on around them. This is the best time for an attacker to make his move because the intended victim is preoccupied and can be easily caught off guard.

Make a habit of having your keys in your hand before walking to your car. You can be on your cell phone, but do have your head up and keep your eyes scanning for anything or anyone that looks out of place. If you are talking with a friend or family member on your cell phone, it is always a good idea to let them know where you are. In the event that you are attacked, someone will know your location and help can reach you sooner.

What if you do observe someone hiding in the bushes or lurking around a vehicle in the parking lot? What if you feel like you are being followed on the street or in your vehicle? Your initial reaction may be to look away or avoid them by ignoring their presence. This gives the impression that you are

intimidated or unaware. Do make eye contact with people and let them know you see them. Acknowledge them with your voice by saying, "Can I help you with something?" or "Back off!" if appropriate. Your assertiveness makes you an unappealing target for an assault.

If you feel you are being followed in your vehicle, drive to a well lit public place like a supermarket or your nearest police station. DO NOT drive home! You do not want a dangerous person knowing where you live. Call someone and let them know where you are or call the police. Technology can be your best friend in an emergency-use cell phone or GPS (Global Positioning System). Current technology allows for the police dispatchers to track the location of cell phones so you can be found-even if you don't know where you are.

Another good habit is to always lock your doors both when you are at home and when you leave your house. Even if you only go down the street to get the mail, over to a neighbor's house, or to take a short walk, remember to lock your doors. It takes less than a minute for someone to enter your home. It may seem like the chances of it happening are slim, but it does happen.

You don't need to be paranoid, but don't be careless either. Awareness and avoidance is 90 percent of self defense. The other ten percent is physical self defense technique. Having been a police officer, I saw firsthand the violence that women encounter; I have become an advocate for women empowering themselves through physical and mental self defense training.

I recently started a women's self defense business called H.E.A.T. (Health, Empowerment, Awareness, and Tactical self defense). I believe these are all fundamental elements to women's self defense. I encourage everyone to find a self defense course in their area that best suits them and get involved. You will be amazed at the power and confidence you feel just by taking your protection into your own hands.

Visit Jennifer's website at www.heatselfdefense.com or email her at info@heatselfdefense.com for more information