



OVERVIEW: DANGER SIGNALS

DANGER SIGNALS = HEIGHTENED RISK

An early and important component of self-defense competence is recognizing risk. Research shows that the earlier we perceive a threat, the more likely we are to escape from it. Recognizing Danger Signals (and knowing how to respond) are key elements of any personal safety program.

PRIMARY PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR ALL FEMALES:

- 1) CONFRONTATION AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY**
- 2) REPEATED DEFENSE ACTIONS**

"Danger signals" are specific behaviors indicating a potential for harm, in verbal, non-verbal, and physical expression. A danger signal behavior is a red flag warning for caution. It is an underlying message about a heightened *potential for violence*.

In most assault situations, physical attack is preceded by a series of warning signals. In 80% or more of sexual assault situations, behavior cues indicate danger well before physical contact occurs. It may be more common to recognize danger when there is unwanted physical contact; yet, when we are well-informed, red-flag behavior is recognizable with non-verbal and verbal behavior.

The earlier we perceive a danger, the easier and more effective our response can be.

SO, WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE?

Self-defense education and skills-training are important for most of us to recognize and become confident with assertive de-escalation responses. Social conditioning and rape myths encourage passive/aggressive reactions, often ineffective in a self-defense encounter. In fact, passive or aggressive reactions have a high potential to escalate a predator and contribute to our danger. Get informed about de-escalation response, but first, recognize the danger signals – the signals that protective action is needed.

PERSONAL SAFETY DE-ESCALATION STRATEGY

De-escalation choices inhibit aggression and can discourage abusers, at all levels of threat. De-escalation is the simplest response known to effectively prevent assault and create options for further defense actions. When you observe danger signals, use personal safety assertion, boundary-setting, physical boundary skills, or any other defense techniques which de-escalate and inhibit the situation or aggressor.

Appearance, physical threat, and circumstantial factors are not always useful predictors of dangerous people or of dangerous situations. *Rely on your early observations and know that determined and repeated responses have been a successful defense strategy for many.* Practice and promote self-defense education! Danger signal detection is a key skill set for successful conflict resolution in many daily-life situations.