

# Defensive Strategies



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There are a lot of ideas, habits, and little choices we make all through our lives that can put us in unnecessary danger, and may even facilitate our demise at the hands of some determined criminal. Some of these won't kill you physically, but might kill you in court. How many of these apply to you, to someone you love, or to someone you know?

*"It will never happen to me."* This is one of the big reasons why people who might have a gun with them, because they are trained, licensed, and capable, but don't carry on a regular basis. You must overcome this. Turn this thought into "It might happen to me." Think of it as essential life insurance.

*"It will never happen here."* Churches, malls, schools, military bases, hospitals, expensive suburbs, Wal-Mart parking lots, family restaurants...all of these places have been the scene of horrific gun violence, the kind that can be stopped quickly only by another

## Ideas That Can Kill You

gun. There is no such thing as a place guaranteed to be safe from crime. You might be the first person on the scene or in the middle of a mass shooting, or you might be the individual victim of a violent criminal—anywhere, any time. If you aren't carrying your gun, you won't be able to react appropriately. You, and others, might die.

*"It won't happen today."* Tell me, when *do* you expect something horrible to happen? Today might be a birthday party, neighborhood barbeque, church service or any ordinary activity. Today might be the day a crazy or drug addled person decided to disrupt things. How will you respond if you don't have your gun? Wouldn't it be a good idea to carry, even on the most ordinary of days?

*"I have my gun with me, so I'll be safe."* Are you? Really? This seems a bit arrogant to me. Having a gun doesn't make you safe, just as having a piano doesn't make you a musician. You need training, practice, mindset, and, especially, awareness. You need tools and training for less lethal options, too.

*"I'm carrying a gun to scare the bad guys away, not to shoot them."* Then why bother to carry a loaded gun? Would you feel comfortable carrying an unloaded weapon? I didn't think so. Why not? If you are prepared to shoot, you might not have to. Many criminals are happy to run away when given

the chance, but they will be afraid enough to run only if you project the willingness to shoot. One of my first instructors, a cop with many years of experience, stated flatly that many criminals aren't afraid of a gun. They are afraid, however, of a determined person behind that gun. If you can't project confidence and competence with that gun in your hand, don't expect it to have the desired effect.

*"I'm a very good shot on the range, so I know I would do well in a real confrontation."* Alas, real life isn't like the range. At the range, you have good light and you can stand still while facing your stationary target directly in front of you. In a real confrontation, it will likely be dark; your attacker will probably be moving and can be anywhere. Moving off the line of force, taking cover, checking behind you, and shooting at a moving target usually aren't practiced on the range, yet you need to practice them in order to be really proficient. Find a good defensive handgun class, and take it to learn these skills.

*"I'm well trained, so I don't need to practice."* Practice is essential to keeping skills sharp. They can degrade with alarming rapidity. You can do a lot of practice at home, if you can't get to the range, by dry firing an unloaded gun pointing at a safe object. You can also practice holstering and unholstering your gun every day that

you carry it, if you have a safe direction for that activity. Practice as if your life depended on it, because it does.

*"I'm fully trained, so I will be able to take care of any situation properly."* Hubris. No training can cover every kind of situation. Expect real life to be quite different from your training. There is no perfectly good response to any real situation, nor is there any perfectly bad one. Remember that one OK plan executed immediately is far better than a perfect plan executed a little too late. Know that you won't perform as well as you would like. Then in the aftermath, you might be kinder to yourself, and experience less post-shooting trauma.

*"If I have to shoot someone, I'll aim for the legs, because I don't want to kill anyone."* When you shoot someone in self-defense, you don't get to choose whether they live or die. You could hit the femoral artery in his leg, and he could bleed out before an ambulance arrives. You could shoot him in the chest, and he might have an easily survivable wound. If your assailant is running, or even moving, his arms and legs will be in motion, making them very hard to hit. If you try to shoot an arm or leg, you are likely to miss or have the shot go through and through; at best that keeps you in danger longer, at worst your round could hit a bystander. The best place to aim is the center of the largest part of his body that you can see. Usually that is the torso. Your intention, in a confrontation like this, should be to stop him, not to kill him, not to wound him. The best way to stop him is one or more well-placed hits in the center of his body. Most handgun wounds are survivable, so he will probably survive even if you hit him squarely in the center of

mass. Shots placed there will stop his violent actions more effectively than peripheral hits in an arm or leg.

*"When I've hit someone and he falls down, I'll stop shooting."* Falling down doesn't mean being out. Someone on the ground might still be conscious, might still have his weapon in hand, and might very well still be capable of continuing to attack you. Keep your gun trained on him. Back as far away from him as you can, taking cover if there is cover to be had. Tell him not to move, and watch like a hawk in case he continues to fight. If he still has a gun and tries to use it, you might have to shoot again.

*"I'll be safe because I'm with other people."* There is often some safety in numbers, but nothing is guaranteed. Plenty of attacks have

happened in well-populated places. Plenty of attacks have happened to groups of two or more friends together. Don't drop your guard just because you aren't alone.

*"The safest thing to do is call 911 first, to get the police on the way, and then deal with the situation."* Sometimes that is practical, but not always. For example, if someone is breaking into your home at night, your first action should be to get your home defense gun in hand. If someone else can call 911 while you do this, that's great, but if you are alone, get your gun first, then dial 911. This is because you might need your gun in seconds, while police will take some number of minutes to arrive.

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