

Fight or Flight?

Escape Is the Best Self-Defense

It is not a pleasant topic to think about, but even with the most diligent use of safe work habits, you may find yourself confronted by a dangerous person. While every REALTOR® should take a basic self-defense course, the primary goal in any incident is to escape from the danger and call for help.

When faced with potentially menacing behavior, you should first try to find a discrete way of removing yourself from the situation. Try to avoid triggering the emotion a predator might use to justify an attack. For example, you can say that you need to step outside to make a phone call and then don't come back inside.

If an attack does occur, trust yourself and stay as calm as possible. Think rationally and evaluate your options. There is no one right way to respond to a confrontation, because each situation is different. Your response will depend on the circumstances: location of the attack, your personal resources, the characteristics of the assailant, and the presence of weapons. There are many strategies that are effective, but you must rely on your own judgement to choose the best one:

- **No resistance**—Not resisting may be the proper choice in some situations. If an attacker threatens you with a gun or knife it might be safer to do what he or she says. If someone tries to rob you—give up your property—don't give up your life.
- **Stalling for time**—Appear to go along with the attacker and take some time to assess the situation. When his/her guard is down, try to escape.
- **Distraction and then flight**—Obviously you should try to get away—but whether you can get away depends on your shoes, your clothing, your physical stamina, the terrain, and how close your attacker is to you.

- **Verbal assertiveness**—If someone is coming toward you, hold out your hands in front of you and yell, “Stop” or “Stay back!” When interviewed, criminals have said they would be more likely to leave someone alone if he or she yelled and showed a willingness to fight back.
- **Physical resistance**—As a last resort, if the attack warrants a physical response, remember that your first priority is still to get away. Act quickly and decisively to throw the attacker off guard while you escape. A kick, a foot stomp, a hold release, or an elbow strike might give you just enough time to escape to the nearest exit.

Remember, self-defense techniques should be learned from a professional and practiced regularly. The intent of this course is not to teach you how to use these maneuvers but to raise your awareness of the strategies available to you.

Regardless of the strategy you choose, make a conscious effort to get an accurate description of your attacker. Even the smallest, seemingly insignificant details may give authorities a clue to finding the suspect.

Sources: Real Estate Safety Council and New York State Association of REALTORS®.

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