



MINDSET Situational Awareness

Being aware of your surroundings and practicing good situational awareness gives you the chance to spot early warning signs and avoid dangerous situations.

Practice Situational Awareness

- Look for exits and familiarize yourself with the space.
- Watch for out of place people, vehicles, or behaviors.
- Stay alert and aware of your surroundings.
- Avoid electronic distractions. Use your device only when it is safe and keep headphone volume low.
- Scan any new environment for barriers, suspicious people or objects, or anything unique or unusual.
- Scan familiar environments for anything unusual or out of place.
- Be aware of your biases
- Have an exit strategy and consider a plan b. Don't forget windows or exits that may be behind you.
- Maintain your calm and engage your senses
- Trust your gut - better to be wrong and safe
- Visualize possible scenarios and plan for what you would do in each case.

With good situational awareness, we look for things in our environment that are “off baseline.” This is anything that appears out of the ordinary around you. The trick to baseline is understanding that what might be normal changes depending the situation you are in.

Depending on the seriousness of the behaviors, danger, or threat, it's helpful to see situational awareness through five different levels: 1) tuned out, 2) relaxed awareness, 3) focused awareness, 4) high alert, and 5) paralysis. These levels of awareness are general states that we should pay attention to when we are in a new location, a place where there may be increased crime, or out at night. For example, being tuned out or having a relaxed awareness in a new city that we are unfamiliar with isn't a good decision. Having a focused awareness is a better approach. Check out the video above for a good example of these levels.

One way to practice SA is to play a game of prediction. Look around your everyday environment for examples of behaviors that connect to each other in a meaningful progression. Try to anticipate what might happen next in each scenario. For example, look around your yard and think about what would happen if a storm came up suddenly. What would need to be quickly secured? When at a restaurant, are there glasses close the edge of the table that might fall if someone bumps into it? These are low stakes examples but they get us in the habit of paying attention to what is happening around us. Playing a game of anticipating what might happen next at school or work helps hone your skills of prediction and being aware of your surroundings.

