

STRANGERS

I often hear of people teaching 'Stranger Danger'. I have a big problem with this. This says to me that all strangers are dangerous. It says I have to be suspicious of everyone. It means I have to live in constant fear every time I step outside the house.

Worse still if I consider everyone to be a dangerous stranger, I'm overloading my intuition. My 'little voice' can't be heard for the screaming. My intuition is very important in keeping me safe. I have to make sure I can listen to it.

Strangers are everywhere. Look around. Do you know every single person you see every day? I seriously doubt it. This means that you need to work out a way to keep yourself safe. Let's call it 'Stranger awareness' or 'Stranger safety'.

Most people you meet will be good and nice. Your job is to make sure that you know the difference and what to do if you meet one of the less nice ones. If someone comes up to you and asks the time, they may just want to know the time. If you are switched on; thinking and feeling, your intuition will help you to decide. You'll tell them the time and watch as they walk off.

But what happens if you meet one of the less nice strangers? Someone who wants to steal from you or take you somewhere you don't want to go?

Firstly, if you are switched on, walking purposefully and aware of what's going on around you, they will find it very difficult to approach you. You'll be giving off an unmistakable 'don't mess with me' vibe. In my article in the third edition we looked at ways that you can use your body language to be a hard target. That works just as well here.

However, if you aren't aware, you are a target. You could be reading an important text that's just come in, listening to your MP3 player, while walking slowly home so you don't have to

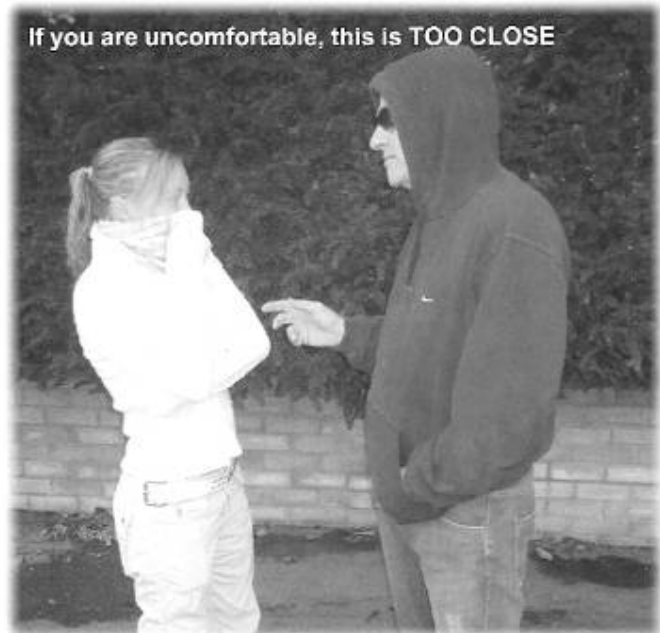
help your sister clean out the rabbit hutch. All your concentration is elsewhere. You are easy to approach.

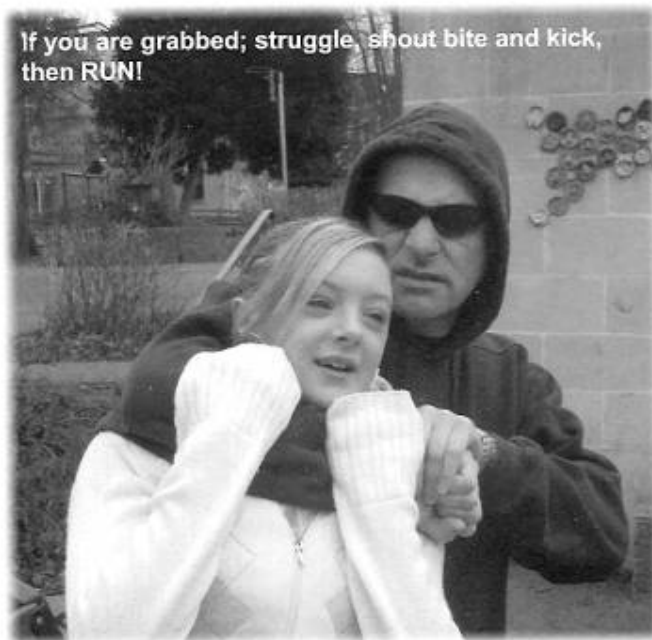
When I teach the FAST Defence course for P.U.M.A., I often hear children and young adults saying things like 'well I'd just kick you where it hurts'. Often our martial art training gives you a false sense of what you can do physically to adults. Unfortunately most children would make absolutely **NO** impact on an adult intent on hurting them. It's a size thing. A mini will never beat an articulated lorry. I'm sorry if you think otherwise but you need to wake up. Also, fear can make you freeze.

The best weapons to use on someone much, much bigger and stronger than you are distance and speed. By speed, I mean how fast you can run somewhere safe. If you are approached by an adult stranger and it makes you at all

TIPS FOR KIDS

1. Play 'what if' games. (but make sure you answer sensibly).
2. It's OK to say NO.
3. Remember to tell. Don't keep secrets.
4. Don't fib about where you are going (even if you know you aren't allowed to go there).
5. Don't tell people at the door or on the phone that you are home alone.
6. Don't meet people you've met on the internet.
7. Practice the fence and voice skills.
8. Learn to run fast





If you are grabbed; struggle, shout bite and kick, then RUN!



Never let anyone take you somewhere else

uncomfortable, you need to have good distance. At least four big arm lengths away.

Put up your fence, keep a good distance and don't be afraid to be firm but polite. Saying 'Sorry I can't talk right now' while emphasising it with your hands is very polite, but tells the other person that you aren't going to talk. If someone is trying to gain your attention or trust by talking to you, this is a great way to make sure that you win.

Many people get into trouble with strangers because they are unwilling to say **NO**. It's okay for you to say no and you can do it by being polite. If you are firmly polite and the other person allows you to keep the four arms length distance, then you've done a good thing. However, you need to be ready if they don't let you keep the distance and start getting closer.

This is when you need to get really loud and very firm. Shout 'BACK OFF', while making sure you're using your hands too. Be loud even if they tell you to be quiet. Move back to keep the distance. Get ready to run somewhere safe. (Distance and speed, remember?).

If you are grabbed, make more noise. Shout for help. Struggle, kick, bite. Do anything to get free and then run somewhere safe. Remember not to freeze. Whatever someone says, you must never let them take you somewhere else.

I often ask people of the FAST course to list safe places. Usually we go through the list of things like police stations, fire stations, schools etc. These are all great answers except for one thing. It's not very likely that you'll be able to get to any of them. Think about how close the nearest police station is to where you live (it's about 5 miles where I live). Is your school

open when you are out? If it's open, you're probably going to be there anyway.

There are a couple of easy answers that the clever people come up with. A shop with loads of customers is a good one. A mum with children with her is a fantastic answer. A really good game to play is 'what-ifs'. When you are out, ask your friend a what-if question such as 'what if I needed to find somewhere safe – where would I go?' Try to come up with the best sensible answer.

Remember then, being clever and aware is your best weapon. Then distance and speed. If something like this ever happens to you, you can win if you keep your head. Don't forget to tell someone afterwards, even if you think it might get you into trouble (it probably won't anyway). Telling is an important thing.

TIPS FOR PARENTS AND ADULTS

1. Make sure you don't have a STRANGER = DANGER mindset. Instead, try to teach a safety mentality.
2. Encourage 'what if' games when you are out. Think about getting lost, being talked to etc.
3. Have a code word that only the two of you know. This way it can be used if you ever ask anyone else to pick them up.
4. Help the child to become a hard target. Practice skills like the fence and verbal assertiveness with them. Ask us for more information if you are unsure.
5. Bring them to a FAST Defence course.

About the author:

Dik Chance trains under Master Ray Gayle (7th Degree) at Yate Taekwon-Do. He also teaches at his own school at Clifton in Bristol. Like most P.U.M.A. instructors, Dik has a significant number of junior students and is actively involved in anti-bullying training. He is an instructor and bulletman in P.U.M.A.'s F.A.S.T. Defence team. He has a keen interest in reality based self-protection training and combatives, and regularly trains in this area. This training has led him to train with some of the world's most influential instructors such as Geoff Thompson, Peter Consterdine, Bill Kipp and Peyton Quinn.