

The Fight or Flight Affirmation Exercise by Colin Wee

Ever wondered how different people react to crisis differently? Some are galvanised into action, and others are paralysed by fear. Intense fear is a very real phenomenon that most people have not been trained to handle. Here we discuss this fear barrier and how one can hope to overcome it by understanding, visualization, and affirmation.

Introduction

Chances are you don't usually face aggression and aren't prepared to deal with another person intent on inflicting harm on you. The reality is that only a select few individuals; soldiers, the police, bodyguards, bouncers, etc. are employed to professionally deal with real violence and real situations where lives are lost.

... not every victim of rape has signs of physical abuse. Just because her clothes are not shredded, or her bones aren't broken, doesn't mean she didn't resist or that she wasn't raped. The threat of force is, in many cases, just as intimidating as actual violence for the victim. (Lindquist 3)

If you are an untrained and unprepared person, faced with a serious situation such as a sexual or violent assault, there are several things that may go through your mind.

- **Confusion:** "What is happening to me?"
- **Denial:** "This can't be happening to me."
- **Fear:** "Please don't hurt me."
- **Decision making:** risk/benefit analysis of the flight-or-flight instinct

Such mental processes are normal in our day-to-day world. But they are inappropriate during times of crisis, since "precious seconds and minutes are lost while the intended victim is going through denial." (Lindquist 22) Juxtapose this with professional fighters who aim to get reaction times and muscle memory honed to millimetres and milliseconds.

So what about you? Well, our job is to get your fight-or-flight reaction time down. According to Prof Bryan Robbins, one time Olympic coach and a martial arts instructor for over 20 years with the American Karate and Taekwondo Federation, he has "already made the decision to send [his] fingers into the attacker's eyes or throat if either [his] family or [he] was at risk." In the same way, you need to make *your* decision to fight-or-flight before something like that happens to you.

The following exercise is to be used in combination with some introspection and good visualization skills. Don't blow it off – answering it is not so straightforward. Spend some time and recreate some scenarios where you could possibly test your decision.

Self Defence Affirmation Multiple Choice Test

Question 1. Are you prepared to engage in self-defence? (✓ - Tick where appropriate)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes. I have made the decision that I am prepared to engage in physical self-defence to fight off an attacker. I will fight unfairly and have no problems in attempting to cause serious harm to an attacker.
<input type="checkbox"/>	No. I am not prepared to fight, or cannot engage in self-defence. Physical self-defence is difficult to pull off successfully, and I recognize that it is all right to submit and try to survive the attack.

In our Choices 101 course, we talk about Mark Mac Young's Risk Triangle to discuss the factors relating to the risks you face. To sum it up without going through the lecture, *don't ignore gut feel*. If you're in trouble, immediately engage verbal self-defence.

The Verbal-Defence Checklist

Step	Action	You Say
One	Establish eye contact	Say, "Listen. Look at me."
Two	Be forceful	Say, "Don't do that."
Three	Communicate clearly	Say, "If you continue, you'll be branded a rapist."

Keep the verbal defence short and sharp, and if it fails, make sure you escalate your response to physical self-defence tactics immediately. **DO NOT DELAY THIS. YOUR LIFE AND SURVIVAL MAY DEPEND ON IMMEDIACY.** According to Susan Jeffers, author of 'Feel the Fear ... and Beyond,' you need to cross that mental barrier, and do what you have to. Everyone will "experience the same fears and feelings of resistance" and it is up to you to ignore this 'wall'. (Jeffers 27)

Personal Self-Defence Affirmation – to be constantly repeated

I am ready *here and now* to put words and thoughts into the right action during a time of personal life-threatening crisis. I know that the self-defence objective is to survive an attack on my person. I am prepared to make the right set of decisions immediately and follow through to achieve this objective.

Signature _____

Date _____

Self-Defence Tactics

Scott Lindquist says, "your only goal is to incapacitate him long enough for you to escape." (93) How long is that? In my opinion, any attack that will hurt a person for *at least* 15 minutes will ensure you can escape successfully. The following are some attacks that may help you understand what will work and what will not work.

Gauging Effectiveness of Physical Self-Defence	
Lasting 2 – 5 minutes, or WHAT MAY NOT WORK	Lasting 15 – 30 minutes, or WHAT MAY WORK BETTER
Knee to the groin	Grabbing and squeezing scrotal sac directly, hard, and not letting go.
Punch to the face region	Digging thumbs into the eye orbital, and popping the eyeball.
Jabbing keys into attacker's ribs or midsection	Stabbing a pen to the attacker's side and penetrating through skin.
Scratching his face	Biting the attacker's ear lobes or nose till you draw blood.
Kicking attacker's shins.	Stomping the top of the foot, using your heel to break bones.
Shoving the person.	Wrenching the little finger back quickly, snapping/dislocating it.

Last Words

Surprised that a knee to the groin has been suggested as a tactic that may not work? Effective self-defence requires you to face these sorts of preconceptions; you must break free from such self-imposed barriers.

Good luck with the Fight or Flight Affirmation Exercise ...
... and stay safe.

References

Lindquist, Scott The Date Rape Prevention Book Sourcebook, Inc
Jeffers, Susan Feel the Fear ... and Beyond Rider Books

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