

SECTION 2: SAFETY AT WORK

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 discreet 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. The response depends on the circumstances: the location of the attack, your personal resources, the characteristics of your assailant and the presence of weapons. There are many strategies that are effective, but you must rely on your own judgment to choose the best one.

- No resistance: Not resisting might be the proper choice in a given situation. An attacker with a gun or a knife may put you in a situation where you think it is safer to do what he or she says. If someone tries to rob you, give up your property, not your life.
- Stalling for time: Appear to go along with the attacker. This might give you time to assess the situation. When his guard is down, try to escape.
- Distraction and then flight: Obviously you should try to get away, but whether you can depends on many things, including your shoes, clothing, physical stamina, the terrain and your proximity to your attacker.
- Verbal assertiveness: If someone is coming toward you, hold out your hands in front of you and yell "Stop!" or "Stay back!" Criminals have been known to leave a victim alone if he or she yelled or showed that he or she was not afraid to fight back.

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- Physical resistance: If you decide to respond physically, remember that your first response should be to flee the area or the home. Act quickly and decisively to throw the attacker off guard while you get away. Your personal safety is your first priority; property can be replaced, but the value of your life and health is beyond measure. Also, you should familiarize yourself with your state's laws concerning self-defense, including the issue of what is proper or improper use of force to defend yourself during an attack.
- Observation: Be sure to make an effort to get an accurate description of your attacker(s). Even the smallest details may give authorities a clue to finding the suspect(s).

Source: North Carolina Association of REALTORS®