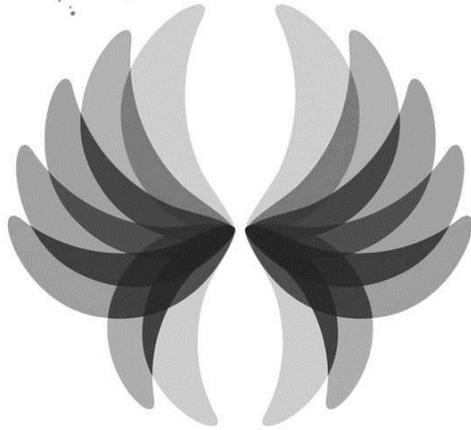


# designing a safer woman



a runhers imagination project



**runhers/walkhers/bikehers**  
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## ABOUT THE DESIGNING A SAFER WOMAN PROJECT

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The purpose of this imagination project is to be a catalyst in our communities and to encourage women, their male allies, and organizations nationwide to address and share safety concerns and create empowering safety solutions for women.

Statistics show that sexual assault, verbal assault and other violence against women occurs at an alarming rate ([www.rainn.org/statistics](http://www.rainn.org/statistics)). What the statistics don't always show is the lifelong psychological effects these attacks have on the individual woman and on her nucleus of friends/family/community. Each woman is an individual and the way the assault is processed over time is highly personal. For some women, the attack impacts their whole life.

We want to educate women and communities to help prevent, to the extent we can, that attack from happening in the first place.

## INTRODUCTION

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From a young age, women and girls are taught that public places are unsafe for them, that they should be wary of male strangers, and that they should watch their drink on a date. Why? Because gender violence like sexual harassment, stalking, sexual assault, and rape is perpetrated by men and is very common.

Ultimately, the solution for making girls and women safe is addressing men's violence. Community leaders, educators, media makers, and the general public need to address this problem because too often, gender violence starts as early as elementary school as sexual harassment and escalates as male perpetrators age. Ideally, we collectively must focus on designing a less violent man. Fortunately, male-led organizations are starting to come together to address these issues, which is a good start, however, much more work needs to be done. Collective action from all us is what is needed to create the culture we desire.

So in the meantime, how can girls and women be safe? While there is no fool-proof answer, we've consulted a number of experts on a range of gender violence issues and together we've created the "Designing a Safer Woman" project. It is full of safety tips, "know your rights" facts, and empowering ways you can act in threatening situations. Our goal is to help girls and women feel safe and empowered.

Please remember, you do have the right to fight back. Statistics clearly show that your odds of survival are far greater if you do fight back during an attack. Learn some basic moves. Remember to use the element of surprise to your advantage—strike quickly, and mean business.

As our project moves forward we will be designing a focused website, video shorts, live performances, forums and other self-defense tips to help you gain more confidence and educate communities of women. This project guide addresses the violence that occurs in various settings,

including at home, on campus, on the road, on public transportation, and in town. It also covers topics like safety products, street harassment, running/walking, and self-defense courses.

After you've read through the materials, we encourage you to take three steps:

1. Use the pages in the back of the booklet to write down your own personal protection plan that works for your lifestyle and then follow it.
2. Share the information you learn with your friends and loved ones. Share the tips on social media and with your networks. Knowledge is power and we want to spread it and help make our communities safer.
3. Practice what you learn because if you ever are in a threatening situation, your body may want to freeze up and your brain may draw a blank. If you've practiced empowering responses, you're more likely to break through your body's reaction and react how YOU want to react. Role play your responses with a friend. Visualize a few possibly threatening scenarios and visualize yourself successfully leaving them safely.

***Please Note: Even though we are providing safety tips and information on how to design a "safer you," we want you to know that you are never to blame for any harassment or violence you experience. The person who chose to violate you is to blame and is 100% responsible. It's not your fault.***

## BASIC TIPS

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These tips are applicable in all situations. Many may seem common sense or are ones you've heard before, but they are worth repeating. Most agree that three things need to be present for an attack to occur – the predator, the target and the opportunity.

We want to eliminate being the target and/or being in any situation where we present ourselves as an opportunity to a predator. Of course, it is easier said than done. We can't eliminate all risks or we would never be out in public.

However, by understanding where these risks are highest and designing a personal protection plan based on the information here, you can use your "smarter self" to understand the risks associated with your lifestyle, as well as to stay safer while helping to educate other women on these issues. We are all in this together, and we need to look out for one another.

## GENERAL PREVENTION

- Give respect and expect respect back; get away and keep away from people who don't show you respect.
- Send the message that you're calm, confident, and know where you're going.

- Trust your instincts. If you feel that a person is not trustworthy or any situation is unsafe, leave as quickly as possible. Get to a public area if you are not already. When in doubt, call 911 and let the police handle it.
- Make sure your cell phone is with you and charged.
- Wherever you are - on the street, in an office building or shopping mall, driving, waiting for a bus or subway - stay alert and attuned to your surroundings.
- Avoid putting music headphones in both ears so that you can be more aware of your surroundings, especially if you are walking alone.
- Know the neighborhoods where you live and work. Check out the locations of police and fire stations, public telephones, hospitals, and restaurants, or stores that are open late.
- Have to work late? Make sure others are in the building, and ask a colleague or security guard to walk you to your car or transit stop. If you're a college student, don't hesitate to use your campus escort service.
- Learn some basic self-defense techniques. You don't have to spend hours learning; however, learning how to break free from an attacker to get help is time well spent.
- Have a plan rehearsed in your head of what you will do in the event of an attack.

**Safety Check:**

If someone was following you in the downtown area of your community, where could you go to feel safe?

**IF YOU'RE BEING THREATENED**

- If you think someone is following you, switch directions or cross the street. Walk toward an open store, restaurant, or lighted house. If you're scared, yell for help.
- If the assailant is after your purse, necklace, or car, give it to him. No material object is worth risking your life.
- If you are in a public place and a predator attempts to abduct you with a weapon, don't go. If he's willing to kill you in public, then he's certainly willing to kill you in isolation.
- If someone says or does something that makes you feel threatened or uncomfortable, don't be afraid to speak your mind and make a scene if necessary. Don't worry about being "polite" or trying to not hurt their feelings. Do whatever you must to feel safe.
- Never hesitate to call 911 anytime you feel like your safety is in danger.

## REMAINING SAFE IN PUBLIC PLACES FROM POTENTIAL ATTACKERS - KNOWN AND UNKNOWN

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### TIPS ON DEALING WITH STREET HARASSMENT

Street harassment is defined as: “unwelcome words and actions by unknown persons in public which are motivated by gender and invade a person’s physical and emotional space in a disrespectful, creepy, startling, scary, or insulting way.”

There is no overall “best” way to respond to every harasser in every circumstance, and women are the only ones who can determine what the best way is for them to respond in any given incident so they will feel both safe and empowered. The more informed they are about options for responding, the better they can be at making that decision

Here are a range of ideas for responses women can use that hold harassers accountable for their behavior. Since a street harassment incident can be startling and throw women off balance, practicing these responses aloud and role playing scenarios can help women feel more able to actually use them.

#### SIX SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO TALK TO A HARASSER

- Use strong body language. Look the harasser in the eyes and speak in a strong, clear voice. Using your voice, facial expressions, and body language together, without mixed signals, shows assertiveness and strength.
- Project confidence and calm. Even if you do not feel that way, it is important to appear calm, serious, and confident.
- Do not apologize, make an excuse, or ask a question. You do not need to say sorry for how you feel or what you want. Be firm.
- You do not need to respond to diversions, questions, threats, blaming, or guilt-tripping. Stay on your own agenda. Stick to your point. Repeat your statement or leave.
- Do not swear or lose your temper: This type of reaction is the most likely to make the harasser respond with anger and violence.
- Decide when you’re done. Success is how you define it. If you said what you needed to say and you’re ready to leave, do so.

#### IDEAS FOR WHAT YOU CAN SAY TO A HARASSER

- Name the behavior and state that it is wrong. For example say, “Do not whistle at me, that is harassment,” or “Do not touch my butt, that is sexual harassment.”
- Tell them exactly what you want. Say, for example, “move away from me,” “stop touching me,” or “go stand over there.”

- Ask them if they would want their mother, sister, daughter, girlfriend, wife treated like they are treating you.
- Make an all-purpose anti-harassment statement, such as: “Stop harassing women. I don’t like it. No one likes it. Show some respect.” Speak it in a neutral but assertive tone.
- Use an A-B-C statement (and be very concrete about A and C): Tell the harasser what the problem is, state the effect and say what you want. Here is an example: “When you make kissing noises at me it makes me feel uncomfortable. I want you to say, ‘Hello, ma’am,’ from now on if you want to talk to me.”
- Identify the perpetrator: “Man in the yellow shirt, stop touching me.” (This is especially useful if other people are nearby, like on a bus).
- Attack the behavior, not the person. Tell them what they are doing that you do not like (“You are standing too close”) rather than blaming them as a person (“You are such a jerk”).
- Use the “Miss Manners’ Approach” and ask the harasser something like, “I beg your pardon!” or “I can’t believe you said that,” or “You must have me confused with someone to whom you think you can speak that way,” combined with facial expressions of shock, dismay, or disgust.
- Ask a Socratic question such as, “That’s so interesting. Can you explain why you think you can put your hand on my leg?”
- If the harasser is in a car, write down the license plate of the car. Even if you can’t see it, pretending to write it down can scare the perpetrator into stopping. If the harassers are aggressive or threatening and you do write down the license plate number, you can report them to the police.

via [www.stopstreetharrassment.org](http://www.stopstreetharrassment.org)

### **TIPS FOR PARKING LOTS**

- Walk confidently, with a purpose and observe those around you. Assertive body language can help prevent an attack. Keep your head up.
- As always, be sure and trust your instincts. If you see or feel anything suspicious, there is a reason to pay attention to those feelings.
- If you are unfamiliar with the parking lot, drive through it and check it first. If you don’t feel safe, go elsewhere and wait for someone else to arrive.
- Always have your car key in hand when approaching your vehicle and when you are close, look inside before you open the door.
- Have your cell phone handy to use in case of emergency – but do not let your cell phone cause any distraction while you are moving to and from the parking areas.

- Be wary of anyone approaching you in the parking lot either to hand you something or to ask questions.
- If you are carrying bags out of a store, carry them in such a way that they can be easily dropped to the ground.
- Keep your doors locked and windows rolled up if you are sitting and waiting to pick someone up.
- Park in well-lit high traffic areas. Avoid parking near anything that might limit your visibility.
- Do not let anyone you don't know or trust get into your car and never allow yourself to be forced into anyone else's vehicle.
- If you are alarmed or frightened, do anything you can to draw attention. Don't be embarrassed. Scream, yell or blow your whistle. Honk the car horn.

#### **TIPS FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

- Research ahead and know the route, departure times, pick up locations, and how much money and change you will need to pay. Predators are looking for someone who is distracted. Sit near the aisle so you can get up quickly if someone bothers you.
- If you use public transportation, keep to times when there are plenty of people present. Always stay alert when using public transportation.
- Again, trust your instincts and watch carefully to see if anyone suspicious gets on or off the transportation system with you. If you feel you are being followed, go directly to a public place or where other people are.
- Don't engage in unnecessary conversation with strangers. Never give out any personal information. The person you're talking to may be fine, but others can overhear.
- Travel/commute light. Try not to carry too many items with you. It can reduce your risk as a target.
- If someone sits too close, makes unwanted conversation or anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, make sure you speak up and say directly what you want them to do.
- Try to avoid wearing flashy or expensive jewelry and/or other signs that may lead an attacker to select you as a profitable target.

#### **Safety Check:**

Someone is sitting too close to you on the bus, smells of alcohol and starts making suggestive remarks. What will you do?

## TIPS FOR HOME OR APARTMENT

- Don't be distracted or fumbling with your key as you approach your entryway or door.
- Make sure you have good lighting outside the premises.
- Shrubbery and trees close to the apartment building, parking lot(s) and walkways should be well trimmed so they do not block out light or serve as a hiding place. If you live in an apartment, dorm, etc. don't let anyone inside the building you don't know.
- Have a peephole viewer on your doors.
- Don't give away any information about yourself. List only your last name and first initial on your mailbox.
- Always be aware of usual and unusual activities in your neighborhood; immediately report suspicious behavior.
- Ask for identification from service and delivery people before letting them into your home.
- Secure all windows and doors that are accessible from the outside, including those upstairs.
- Know your neighborhood. Learn where the locations of the police and fire stations, public telephones, hospitals, and restaurants, or stores that are open late.
- If you can afford it, look into a home security system with a panic alarm. Some newer systems use video both outside and inside the residence. Use trusted brands and research different security systems/pricing plans before signing any contract.

### Safety Check:

You are heading to your apartment late and you notice someone just hanging out not far from your entrance. What are you going to do to get yourself inside safely?

## TIPS FOR OUT ON THE TOWN

- Try not to go to bars or clubs alone. Arrange a buddy system with a friend or friends and always help and watch after each other.
- Be aware of your area surroundings, such as what streets and cross streets the club is located and what other businesses or public spaces are nearby that would be a safe area.
- When entering a bar or club, scan the room, always know where emergency exits are located in case of a fire or other emergencies.
- Do not accept drinks from anyone if you did not see the drink prepared and never leave your drink unattended for any period of time.
- Always inform a family member or friend of your whereabouts.

- Do not drink and drive or accept a ride from anyone who has been drinking. Designate a driver who will not drink. Never leave a bar or club with a stranger.
- Do not leave your purse, wallet or handbag unattended.
- Always carry a cell phone. If you are harassed or feel threatened, do not hesitate to contact club management and let them know. If they are not helpful, call 911.
- Always carry enough money for a taxi.
- Don't hang out in places that keep you isolated from others. Although you may feel you can take care of yourself, it is always wise to be careful. Always have a back-up plan.
- It is important to understand that consuming alcohol decreases the amount of alertness. Knowing your limits could save your life.

### **TIPS FOR TRAVELING/HOTEL**

- Always act confident, as if you know where you are going and what you are doing. Airports, shuttles, hotels, etc. If you have questions, ask those who represent the airline, shuttle or hotels.
- Don't answer the door in your hotel room without verifying who it is. If a person claims to be a hotel employee, call the front desk and ask if someone is supposed to have access to your room and for what purpose.
- When returning to the hotel late in the evening, use the main entrance to the hotel. Be observant and look around before entering parking lots.
- Close the door securely whenever you are in the room, and use all of the locking devices provided.
- Don't needlessly display guest room keys in public or carelessly leave them on restaurant tables, at the swimming pool, or other places where they can easily be stolen.
- Do not draw attention to yourself by displaying large amounts of cash or expensive jewelry.
- Don't invite strangers to your room.
- Place any and all valuables you have in the hotel's safe deposit box.
- Do not leave any valuables in your vehicle. Park in the safest, most lighted place as possible.
- Check to make sure connecting doors in your hotel room are locked.
- If you see any suspicious activity, please report your observations to the management of the hotel. As well, do not hesitate to call 911 if you feel threatened or see any other real dangers.

## WOMEN'S OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES - RUNNING AND WALKING

- Make sure your cell phone is with you and charged.
- Don't run with your music/ iPod. If you must however, avoid putting music headphones in both ears so that you can be more aware of your surroundings, especially if you are running or walking alone.
- Run with friends or in areas where other runners, walkers and bikers frequent.
- Make sure you run against traffic when possible and follow general traffic safety rules while staying alert.
- Consider joining a running club. Many running clubs offer connections, and they know the safer areas, roads and trails in the local community. If you are traveling, contact the local running club for advice for that town.
- Let loved ones or other people know your running route and how long you will be gone. Check back in with them when you're done.
- If you are being followed while running, run to any public area, if possible, and call 911. Never be afraid to call 911 to report suspicious activity. It could save your life.
- Run with your dog – they are known to be effective deterrents.
- If possible, change running routes often enough. Stalking is a serious issue, so change it up.

### **Safety Check:**

If you are out on your run or walk and someone in street clothes starts running at you, how will you respond?

## STALKING AND CYBER-STALKING FACTS AND PREVENTION

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Stalking is a crime of power and control. It is usually defined as a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear.

Stalking behaviors also may include repeated actions, such as leaving or sending the victim unwanted items or presents, following or laying in wait for the victim, defaming the victim's character, damaging or threatening to damage the victim's property, or harassing the victim via the Internet by posting personal information or spreading rumors about the victim.

Stalkers often use various forms of technology, such as Global Positioning Systems and cell phones, to track and harass their victims.

### GENERAL SAFETY STRATEGIES

- Stop all contact and communication with the person stalking or harassing you. Keep any evidence of the stalking (such as voicemails, texts, emails, etc.) for future court cases or criminal actions. Responding to the stalker's actions may reinforce and/or encourage his/her behavior.
- Carry a cell phone with you. Keep handy or memorize emergency phone numbers that you can use in case of an emergency, e.g., the number of the local police station. If you ever feel you are in immediate danger, call 911. You may also be eligible for a free phone with free minutes from the Assurance Wireless Program, sponsored by Virgin Mobile.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, you may want to reach out for help, even if nothing immediately dangerous is happening.
- Have a safe place in mind to go to in an emergency. You might go to a police station, place of worship, public area, the home of a family member or friend (unknown to the stalker), or a domestic violence shelter. If someone is following you, it is generally not a good idea to go home.
- Try not to travel alone. Always vary your routes to and from work or school, the grocery store, and any other places regularly visited. Changing your daily routes makes it more difficult for someone to learn your routine. If you run or walk for exercise, get an exercise buddy to go with you.
- Be aware of how much identifying information you are posting on the Internet through social networking sites and online purchases. You may want to select the highest security settings on any social networking accounts and think carefully before giving out your personal information through online purchases.

## **CYBER OR DIGITAL STALKING**

It is no secret now that you need to be alert and aware in your digital world and on the internet. Staying vigilant offline is important too. Your cell phone, iPhone, your home call display can all be manipulated by technology.

Here are some tips that can prevent you from becoming a victim of cyber-stalking. They may take a few hours to implement, but the payoff is protection from the hundreds of hours it takes to undo the damage of a cyber-stalker.

- Never reveal your home address. This rule is especially important for women who are business professionals and very visible. You can use your work address or rent a private mailbox. Just don't have your home address readily available.
- Password protect all accounts including cell phones, land lines, e-mails, banking and credit cards with a secure password that would be difficult for anyone to guess. Change it every year. Your secret questions should not be easily answered either.
- Conduct an internet search using your name and phone number to be sure that there is nothing out there that you are not aware of. A cyber-stalker may have created a Craigslist account, web page or blog about you. Only you can stay on top of how your name is being used online.
- Be suspicious of any incoming emails, telephone calls or texts that ask you for your identifying information. The "Caller ID Spoof" can mimic your bank's caller ID. It is very easy for a cyber-stalker posing as a banking representative, utility, credit card representative or your cell phone provider to obtain your personal private information. If you are suspicious, hang up and call the institution directly to be sure that you were not a target of a cyber-stalker.
- Never give out your Social Security Number unless you are absolutely sure of who is asking for it and why. With your "social," a cyber-stalker now has access to every part of your life.
- Utilize stat counters or other free registry counters that will record all incoming traffic to your blogs and web sites. With a stat counter you can identify who is viewing your site or blog easily because the registry records the IP address, date, time, city, state and internet service provider. It is useful for marketing and it also provides a very valuable safeguard in the event that your website or blog is targeted.
- Check your credit report status regularly, especially if you're a business professional or individual who is in the public eye. Do this at least two times per year, especially if you feel that you may have a reason to be concerned. You can request a free copy of your credit once a year directly from the credit bureaus.
- If you are leaving a partner, spouse or boyfriend or girlfriend – especially if they are abusive, troubled, angry or difficult – reset every single password on all of your accounts to something they cannot guess. Inform your bank and credit companies that this person is not allowed to

### **Safety Check:**

What are three simple things you can do now to help lessen the risk of being the victim of cyber-stalking?

make any changes to your accounts no matter what the reason. Even if you are reasonably certain that your former partner is "okay," this is a good practice for moving forward on your own. It is also a good idea to get a new cell phone and credit card that the ex doesn't know about. Make these changes before you leave if you can.

- If you encounter something suspicious – a weird phone call or an emptied account that can't be explained by your bank – it could be a cyber-stalker, so act accordingly. Change all your accounts, and ideally change banks. Check your credit report. Note anything else that appears strange. If you have more than one or two "strange" incidents per month, it's possible you are a target.
- If you think you're a target, have your PC checked by a professional. If you are already experiencing cyber-stalking incidents, your computer may already be compromised. Have a professional check it for spyware and other viruses.
- If you think you have a cyber-stalker, move fast. Lots of people don't take action because they think they're "crazy" or imagining things. Record incidents – time, place, event. Victims of repeated attacks tend to become paralyzed with fear. Meanwhile, cyber-stalkers often get such a rush off the first "attack" that it encourages them to keep going. The faster you take action and block their ability to hurt or harass you, the sooner they lose interest in their project.
- Get lots of emotional support to handle the cyber-stalking period and to deal with the aftermath. It is normal to feel high levels of distrust and paranoia after a cyber-stalking encounter. Find support with a trusted family member, friend or a group who is also working through these issues.

via [www.SurvivorsInAction.org](http://www.SurvivorsInAction.org)

## DOMESTIC ABUSE/UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP/DATING VIOLENCE

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*One in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.* Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior perpetrated by an intimate partner against another. It is an epidemic affecting individuals in every community, regardless of age, economic status, race, religion, nationality or educational background.

Violence against women is often accompanied by emotionally abusive and controlling behavior, and thus is part of a systematic pattern of dominance and control. What might have begun as an intense show of affection can quickly turn ugly if boundaries are intentionally crossed and you see the signs of abuse listed.

### BEHAVIORS THAT MAY INDICATE A PROBLEM

- Checking your cell phone or email without your permission
- Constantly putting you down and making unflattering comments
- The presence of extreme jealousy and insecurity
- Anger control issues and explosive temper
- The process of isolating you from your family and friends
- Making false assumptions and accusations
- Wild mood swings and acting emotionally imbalanced
- Any physical abuse whatsoever
- Possessiveness and intimidation
- Telling you what to do, where to be, how to act, etc.

#### Safety Check:

If you see that your current relationship is giving you very uncomfortable feelings and warning signs, what steps will you take to ensure that you are no longer at risk? Where is your safe place/friends?

### POTENTIAL ABUSER STRATEGIES TO BE AWARE OF

- They might use an Intrusion Test where the perpetrator subtly checks out your boundaries by physical proximity, comments or demands on your time and attention.
- They might use Desensitization Tactics. You become accustomed to these intrusion tests, and no longer notice when your physical/social/emotional boundaries are crossed.
- They might use Isolation Tactic. The perpetrator isolates you, or waits for a situation where you're isolated, to provide an opportunity for an assault/rape/attack.
- They may have frequent angry outbursts. These outbursts are meant and intended to intimidate or control you.

- They ignore you or don't believe you. They keep testing and discounting your "NO."
- They intrude or continue to intrude your personal space and are almost always too close or try inappropriate touching or other body contact.
- They frequently interrupt you and/or make intrusive or insensitive remarks, such as about your body, other women, etc.
- They use Forced Teaming which is making it seem like you have a mutual problem that you jointly have to resolve.
- They use Loan Sharking, which is doing you favors so you may feel like you owe him something or give him the benefit of the doubt.
- They use Typecasting which is calling you a name (snob/racist/lesbian, etc.) which they want you to try to disprove.

## COLLEGE CONCERNS

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The college experience is by all counts meant to be one of the most fulfilling experiences of a lifetime. With the new freedoms and environments – you'll find many different behaviors in campus life, with sometimes even some of the more popular behaviors being incredibly unsafe.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) estimate that 20 to 25 percent of college women in the United States experience attempted or completed rape while in college. One in four college-aged women report experiences that meet the legal definitions of rape or attempted rape. One in five college women are raped during their college years. Finally, 80-90% of sexual assaults are perpetrated by individuals known to the survivor.

### HELP WITH CAMPUS LIFE

- Check and become familiar with the general safety prevention tips at the beginning of this guide.
- Freshman and sophomore are targeted more often, but all women on campus are at risk. Classmates and friends present the highest risks, so trust very carefully. Don't let your guard down.
- Don't ever be afraid to call the campus police to escort you back to your apartment or dorm room. Same with calling 911, if you think you are in danger, make the call.
- Read the guide provided by the college where it explains campus safety and student behavior expectations. If the college offers a free safety or self-defense experience, participate.
- Become familiar with your environment/campus. Know where the safest, most lighted and highly traveled walkways and public spaces are. Know where the designated safe places and phones are.
- Make sure someone with some safety experience or a good checklist checks out your dorm or apartment for possible safety issues. Resolve them to your satisfaction.
- Make friends, and enjoy life, but trust your instincts. If someone makes you uncomfortable, there is most likely a reason.
- The strongest boundaries are those that you've established over your lifetime. Before fully entering the college life and campus, think about and decide what you will and won't tolerate from the various people in your college life. This makes decision making much easier and strengthens your ability to tell someone when they are attempting to cross your boundary.
- Be exceedingly cautious with inviting anyone over to your dorm or apartment, even for study sessions. If you have a roommate, have a frank discussion about safety and expectations of each other early on. Establish boundaries you both agree on – it is far better to have an understanding up front than to have a bad experience or worse later.

- If you are going on a date, tell someone you trust your date's name, destination and planned time of return. Make sure you have your phone with you at all times.

### **ALCOHOL AND DRUGS IN THE COLLEGE LIFE**

With the high rate of alcohol and drug consumption on college campuses, it is not surprising that a majority of sexual assaults of college women involve alcohol or drug consumption, by either or both the victims and perpetrators. Alcohol is the number one date rape drug.

If a student is physically and mentally impaired by consumption, they are less likely to assess and respond to potentially dangerous situations. A few tips:

- Don't drink alcohol or consume safely around campus.
- Never take drinks from other people and don't leave your drink unattended. Drugs, like Rohypnol, can be easy to slip into a drink. It causes drowsiness, a loss of coordination, dizziness and memory loss.
- Do not allow yourself to be isolated from the crowd or your friend(s).
- Be very careful about who you give personal information to, if at all.

### **GENERAL CAMPUS GUIDELINES**

Remember that popular behavior isn't always the safest behavior. The odds are that someone will test your boundaries at some point during your time at college; the sooner you define the line, the more quickly you will be able to detect and respond to inappropriate behavior. Remember, too, that true friends will respect your boundaries.

### **ESTABLISH BOUNDARIES**

The strongest boundaries are those that you establish long before they are tested. Decide now what you will and won't tolerate from the various people in your life (friends, classmates, acquaintances, etc.) so that it will be much easier to speak out when someone crosses the line. This is a very important conversation to have with yourself before you enter into the college environment.

### **DEFENDING YOURSELF**

Do not hesitate to defend yourself using verbal assertiveness strategies and your physical self-defense techniques if someone violates your boundaries. Don't let the familiarity of a fellow college student cause you to second-guess your actions. Regardless of what you permit, overlook, or dismiss in the early stages of a relationship, you always have the right to prevent further advances or intrusion. If trapped against your will, use any means to escape.

## SELF DEFENSE, WEAPONS & SAFETY PRODUCTS

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### **WEAPONS, SAFETY PRODUCTS AND MOBILE PHONE SAFETY APPS**

We want to begin with a statement about carrying/using weapons, pepper spray and other technologies like iPhone apps. Attacks can happen very quickly, violently, and without notice, leaving weapons no chance of actually being used, even if you have one. If you are thinking about carrying pepper spray (most common) or any other weapon; you should be thoroughly and properly trained in the use of that weapon and/or self-defense product. Don't buy it and assume you are prepared to defend yourself without trying it out and training first. Be advised that the weapon could be taken away and used against you during an attack, or is simply ineffective in a real attack. Always use your buyer-beware brain before making a purchase of a self-defense product.

With mobile devices, safety apps and tracking apps please use common sense in understanding the benefits and drawbacks of the product manufacturer's claims. Products like Road ID and safety apps that text or show your location to family are not really useful when you are under attack. They may be used to find/identify you after the fact, and for emergency responders to use any medical information you have supplied. Your best weapon is your knowledge on how to get away and get help.

### **OUR RESEARCH AND OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE MARTIAL ARTS AND/OR SELF-DEFENSE INDUSTRY**

In our individual interviews with women, we learned that most women do not want to participate in long term training programs of self-defense, or learn a martial art. Many women were intimidated by the thought of going into a martial arts studio/academy. Most stated they wanted to learn "how to get away and get help" as the goal in a program. Additionally, the majority of women could not state the difference between any of the martial arts. Some mothers only had some basic knowledge, based on a search for their child's enrollment in self-defense. Most of those decisions were made by word of mouth from a friend or family member in the community.

We have looked broadly across the USA to find any associations or industry statistics and standards to use in helping women to better understand the industry and find the most beneficial programs for their self-defense needs. The martial arts industry does not have a strong national association and/or voice; like other industry's associations. We were not able to obtain a clear, universal definition of what a self-defense expert is or what qualifications they should have. The state of the martial arts industry is in a steep decline, according to the research provided by the Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association with their 2012 SGMA Participation Topline Report, which shows participation in martial arts plummeting 16.1% from 2011 to 2012 and 24.2% overall in the past two years.

This can be directly attributed to industry fragmentation, as well as the many different types/variations of martial arts. This causes overall consumer confusion in the marketplace. The bulk of participation is children from 6 – 12 years of age, and with adults, only approximately 5% of

women participate among all martial arts participants. It is a male driven and dominated market. Visiting academies and dojos reflects and supports the claim. They are simply not women friendly businesses.

It appears that mixed martial arts, which are hybrids of several martial arts forms, are gaining in popularity and may be in the best creative place to design more helpful programs for women. Environmentally and program wise, the industry could use a complete redesign with women consumers in mind.

We discovered the following work on selecting a self-defense class with frequently asked questions while searching for 'violence against women' websites. It is very helpful.

### **GUIDELINDS FOR CHOOSING A SELF DEFENSE COURSE**

Whatever a woman's decision in a given self-defense situation, whatever the action she does or does not take, she is not at fault. A person's decision to survive the best way they can must be respected. Self-defense classes should not be used as judgment against a victim/survivor.

Good self-defense programs do not "tell" an individual what she "should" or "should not" do. A program should offer prevention options, techniques, and a way of analyzing situations. A program may point out what usually works best in many circumstances, but each situation is unique and the final decision rests with the person actually confronted.

Empowerment is the goal of a good self-defense program. The individual's right to make decisions about his or her participation must be respected. Pressure should not be brought to bear in any way to get a person to participate in an activity if that person is hesitant or unwilling.

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

#### ***What Is Self-Defense?***

Self-defense is a set of awareness, assertiveness, verbal confrontation skills with safety strategies and physical techniques that enable someone to successfully escape, resist and survive violent attacks. A good self-defense course provides psychological awareness and verbal skills, not just physical training.

#### ***Does Self-Defense Work?***

Yes, self-defense training can increase your options and help you prepare responses to slow down, de-escalate, or interrupt an attack. Like any tool, the more you know about it, the more informed you are to make a decision and to use it.

#### ***Is Self-Defense a Guarantee?***

No. There are no guarantees when it comes to self-protection. However, self-defense training can increase your choices/options and your preparedness.

### ***Is There a Standard Self-Defense Course?***

No. There are many formats for training. They may be as short as two hours or as long as 8 weeks or a semester. Whatever the length of the program, it should be based on maximizing options, simple techniques, and respect for people's experience.

### ***Who's Better? A Male or Female Instructor?***

There is an advantage for women to having a female instructor as a role model. She may have had similar experiences surviving as a woman. All-women classes tend to provide an easier atmosphere in which to discuss sensitive issues. On the other hand, some women feel having male partners to practice with can add to their experience. The quality of a class depends on the knowledge, attitude and philosophy of the instructor, male or female, not necessarily on gender. The most important aspect is that the instructor, male or female, conducts the training for the students geared to their individual strengths and abilities. Feeling safe and building trust comes before learning.

### ***Must I Train for Years to Learn to Defend Myself?***

No. A basic course can offer enough concepts and skills to help you develop self-protection strategies that you can continue to build upon. Self-defense is not karate or martial arts training. It does not require years of study to perfect.

### ***If I Use Physical Self-Defense, Could I Get Hurt Worse?***

The question to answer first is what does "hurt worse" mean? Studies show a physical self-defense response does not increase the level of physical injury, and sometimes decreases the likelihood. The point of using self-defense is to de-escalate a situation and get away as soon as possible. Knowing some physical techniques increases the range of possible self-defense options, but the decision to choose a physical option must remain with the person in the situation.

### ***What Does "Realistic" Mean?***

Words like "most realistic," "best," "guaranteed success," etc., are all advertising gimmicks. Choosing a self-defense class is a serious decision and should be based on some research. Responsible self-defense training requires control. It is important that each student in a class is able to control his or her own participation in the class and never feel forced to participate.

### ***What Is the Role of Mace or Other Aggressive "Devices" as Self-Defense Aids in Harming an Attacker?***

Any device is useless to you unless you understand how to use it and have it in your hand ready to use at the time of the attempted assault. There is nothing "guaranteed" about any of these devices. None are foolproof. Realize that anything you can use against an attacker can also be taken away and used against you. While some of these devices have sometimes helped people escape to safety, it is important to be aware of these devices' limitations and liabilities.

### ***How Much Should I Pay?***

Paying a lot of money for a course does not mean you automatically get better instruction. On the other hand, don't assume all programs are the same and just go for the cheapest. It is always beneficial to be an educated consumer. Shop around the same as for anything else you buy that is important to you.

### ***Where Can I Find a Self-Defense Class?***

Check with your local rape crisis center. Some centers provide self-protection classes or can refer you to one. YWCA's and Community Colleges sometimes offer classes. Some martial arts schools provide seminars and workshops. Check the phone book. If there isn't one in your community, get involved and try to organize one.

### ***Am I Too Old? Out of Shape? What If I Have Disabilities?***

You don't have to be an athlete to learn how to defend yourself. A good program is designed to adapt to every age and ability and provide each student with the opportunity to learn. Each individual is unique and students should be able to discuss their own needs. Some programs have specialized classes for specific groups.

### ***How Can I Tell a "Good" Course From a "Bad" One?***

A good course covers critical thinking about self-defense strategies, assertiveness, powerful communication skills, and easy-to-remember physical techniques. The instructor respects and responds to your fears and concerns. Essentially, a good course is based on intelligence and not muscle. It offers tools for enabling a person to connect with her or his own strength and power. Taking a self-defense class is one of the most positive acts people can do for themselves!

*Prepared by: The National Coalition Against Sexual Assault was a non-profit, membership organization of rape crisis centers, associated agencies and individuals, established in 1978. The organization no longer exists.*

## WHAT DOES YOUR PERSONAL PROTECTION PLAN LOOK LIKE

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1. What three things can I immediately add to my personal protection plan that won't cost me anything and will help with my overall personal safety and peace of mind?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

2. When I'm walking down the street, if someone harasses me or acts threatening, these are three things I can visualize myself realistically doing:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

3. If someone starts following me in my neighborhood, these are three things I can do:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. If I want to learn more about a self-defense class in my community, what are 3 questions I can ask that would tell me I would be comfortable in that setting/environment?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

5. I want to help pass on what I've learned to other women in my social circles, what are the top three things I can share with them?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Other

Notes:

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## RESOURCES

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RAINN: The nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. National Sexual Assault Hotline 1.800.656.HOPE (4673) Free/confidential. 24/7.

[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

National Resource Center – Violence Against Women

<http://www.vawnet.org/>

National Center on Women's Health

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/violence-against-women/>

US Department of Justice – Violence Against Women

[www.ovw.usdoj.gov/](http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/)

YWCA – Empowering Women

[www.ywca.org](http://www.ywca.org)

Stop Street Harassment

[www.stopstreetharassment.org](http://www.stopstreetharassment.org)

That's Not Cool

[www.thatsnotcool.com/](http://www.thatsnotcool.com/)

Survivors in Action

[www.survivorsinaction.org](http://www.survivorsinaction.org)

The Gracie Academy

[www.gracieacademy.com/](http://www.gracieacademy.com/)

Designing a Safer Woman – Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Designing-a-Safer-Woman/154089698114733v>

# THANK YOU TO OUR COLLABORATORS

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The hers projects want to extend special thanks to **Sheila Kidder, Holly Kearl, Alexis Moore, Jessica Cargill, Jennifer Gray and Bart Yasso** - as well as the organizations listed on the resources page for allowing us to pick their brains and in some cases, use their material with permissions. Many hours were spent researching, calling, meeting and interviewing women and organizations to put together version 1.0 of this prevention guide. We will continue the designing a safer project as we collaborate with more people and learn more ways to impact our communities. Please email [imagine@runhers.com](mailto:imagine@runhers.com) for any additional information or to help out.

## About the hers projects:

The hers projects are designed to be a creative force that empowers women to discover, design and activate their version of a healthy and happy life. We create partnerships and experiences that engage, entertain and inspire women everywhere.

By eliminating boundaries between cultures, organizations, disciplines and artistic expressions, our passionate people will create programs, products, entertainment and life solutions that engage the imagination and drive a new culture of wellness and health for women.

