RIVALSHOT ACADEMY · COURSE BOOK

Notice, Check, Choose

Situational Awareness Foundations: the companion book

ORIGINAL COURSE · ACADEMY.RIVALSHOT.IO

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Foreword: How to use this book

This book goes with the RivalShot Academy course Notice, Check, Choose: Situational Awareness Foundations. The course lessons are short on purpose, so that you can finish one on a lunch break and try the idea that same afternoon. This book gives each idea more room: more examples, more of the reasoning behind each technique, and questions you can talk through with other people.

It is written for every adult. You might be a new member, a first-time visitor to a range, a parent, a commuter, a retiree, a student or someone who simply wants to feel more settled in public places. You do not need any background. The language is plain on purpose, and every technique can be practiced in a café, a library or a grocery store.

How the book is organized

There are six chapters, one for each lesson in the course. Each chapter develops the lesson's ideas, then offers:

- **In practice:** two short fictional cases showing the ideas in ordinary life.
- **Checklist:** a handful of points you can carry with you.
- **Key terms:** the words the chapter relies on, defined simply.
- **Talk it through:** three questions for a friend, a family member or a group.
- **Journal prompt:** one question to write about, which matches the course journal.

After the chapters you will find a glossary, suggestions for where to go next, and the official sources that support the factual statements in the course.

Ways to use it

You can read a chapter after each lesson, or read the whole book first and take the lessons as a review. You can read it alone or with others; the discussion questions work well for a family, a club or a workplace team. Most of all, use it outside. Each chapter has one technique you can try the same day, and the ideas only become habits when you practice them in real places.

What this book is and is not

This book teaches attention and judgment for everyday places. It is not a guide to tactics, self-defense, weapons, emergency response, first aid, law or medicine, and nothing in it is a certification or qualification. It never asks you to confront anyone. In every situation it describes, continuing, adjusting, asking staff, leaving and calling for help are all valid. It never teaches suspicion based on how someone looks, and it says so plainly wherever the subject comes up.

All people and places in the examples are fictional. Any resemblance to a real person or business is a coincidence.

A note on care

The examples are calm and everyday on purpose. Even so, a book about awareness can bring up memories of times when something went wrong. If that happens, put the book down. Come

back later, or don't. Talking with someone you trust, or with a qualified counselor, is a sensible and strong step, not a sign that you are doing something wrong.

Chapter 1. Learn the baseline: what normal looks like here

Every place has a rhythm

Walk into any place you know well and you could probably describe it with your eyes closed. The hum of the grocery store's coolers. The way the library goes quiet except for the printer. The rush at the bus station when a coach pulls in. That familiar pattern is the place's baseline: what people there are mostly doing, how loud it is, how fast things move and what the staff are busy with.

The baseline matters because awareness is mostly about change, and you cannot notice that something is different until you have some sense of what usual looks like. That is why public-safety trainers tend to start in the same place. The University of Michigan's public-safety department, for example, describes its situational-awareness training as noticing your surroundings, understanding normal baseline conditions and spotting anomalies. CISA's personal-security guide defines situational awareness as being aware of what is happening around you and adjusting your behavior to reduce risk. Both begin with plain noticing.

Baselines belong to a place and a time. A café at 8 a.m. and the same café at 3 p.m. are, for this purpose, two different places. The morning version is fast, loud and transactional: a quick line, the grinder roaring, names called every few seconds, almost everyone leaving with a cup. The afternoon version is slow, quiet and settled: a study group at the long table, a toddler under a

chair with a toy truck, two friends playing cards by the window. Neither is safer or better. They are simply different, and what would be unusual in one is ordinary in the other.

Reading the three channels

You do not need special training to read a baseline. Three channels cover almost everything.

Sound. The overall volume, the mood of voices, the usual machines and music. Is it a murmur or a roar? Are voices relaxed, focused or celebrating? Which noises are part of the furniture: the espresso machine, the door chime, the announcement system?

Pace. How quickly people move, and whether they are passing through or settling in. A train platform at rush hour has a fast, directional pace, with nearly everyone heading the same way. A museum gallery is slow and wandering. A waiting room is mostly still, with a brief stir whenever a name is called.

Focus. Where most people's attention goes. In a café it is the counter, screens and companions. At a concert it is the stage. In a range lobby on a busy morning it is the check-in counter and the notices on the wall. When most attention suddenly moves somewhere else, and people turn toward the same corner at once, that is one of the clearest signs that something has changed.

The staff layer

Add one more layer to the three channels: the people who work there. Staff see the baseline every day. They know which noises are normal, when the rush comes and what the closing routine looks like. That makes them the best living reference you have.

You do not need to watch staff closely. Just notice where they usually are and roughly what they are doing: a barista moving steadily between the machine and the counter, a desk attendant answering questions, a manager walking the floor. If staff suddenly stop what they are doing, gather together or hurry in one direction, give it a moment of your attention. They may be responding to something ordinary, such as a spill, a delivery or a regular's birthday, but they are usually the first to know.

The ten-second read

The technique from the lesson is the ten-second read. When you arrive, step just inside and to one side, so you are not blocking the doorway. Then ask three quiet questions:

1. What does it sound like?
2. How fast is it moving?
3. Where is everyone's attention?

Answer in one short sentence. "Busy, quick, everyone focused on the counter." "Quiet, slow, people reading." "Loud, cheerful, everyone watching the game." That sentence is your baseline. It is deliberately rough. You are not memorizing faces, counting people or studying anyone. You are taking the temperature of the room.

Practice where the stakes are low: a grocery store, a pharmacy line, a library, a bus. The first few times may feel a little awkward. With practice it can become the kind of thing you do without thinking, like glancing at the sky before you leave the house.

When the baseline shifts

Baselines change all the time, and almost every change is ordinary. A train arrives and the platform floods. A class lets out and the lobby fills. A game ends and the sports bar erupts. Someone drops a tray and the whole café flinches, then laughs.

The habit is simple: notice the shift, then look for its cause. If there is a plain explanation, update your sentence and carry on. "Busy, quick, everyone focused on the counter" becomes "busier and louder; a school group just arrived." You are not raising an alarm. You are keeping your picture of the room current. When you cannot see an ordinary cause for a change, the next chapters take over: checking fairly what you actually observed, and choosing a sensible next step.

Why a baseline makes you calmer

You might expect that paying attention to your surroundings would make you more anxious. Knowing the baseline usually does the opposite. If you have noticed that the espresso machine shrieks every few minutes, the next shriek does not make you jump. If you know the fire door near the restrooms bangs every time someone uses it, the bang is just the door. People who have not read the room startle at these ordinary noises, and each startle costs a little calm.

So a baseline is not about looking for trouble. It is about knowing a place well enough that ordinary things stay ordinary. That frees your attention for what you came to do, and for the rare moment that is genuinely different.

What a baseline is not

A baseline describes activity, not people. It is not a list of who usually comes to a place, and it never makes someone "out of place" because they are new, a tourist, younger or older than the usual crowd, or dressed, speaking or moving differently. Everyone is new somewhere. The first time you walk into a café, a gym or a range lobby, you are not part of anyone's idea of the regulars, and you are not a problem either.

It is also not a surveillance job. The ten-second read takes ten seconds. After that, enjoy your coffee, your class or your visit. Awareness that never switches off is the subject of Chapter 6, and it is not the goal.

In practice

The pharmacy line

A retired bus driver waits in a long pharmacy line on a Monday morning. He tries the ten-second read for the first time: "Quiet, slow, everyone looking at their phones or the counter." Two pharmacists work steadily, and a third keeps disappearing into the back. A few minutes later the line grows suddenly and voices get sharper. He looks for a cause and finds it at once: the pharmacy's computer system has gone down, and a pharmacist has just announced a delay. He updates his sentence ("slower and more

frustrated; everyone is waiting on the system"), decides he does not need to wait and comes back in the afternoon. The change asked nothing of him except an update.

The new gym

A graduate student joins a gym and feels self-conscious on her first visit. She uses the ten-second read partly to settle her own nerves: "Loud music, steady pace, everyone focused on their own workout." She notices the front desk, a staff member wiping down machines and the door to the locker rooms. Halfway through her workout, the music cuts out and the room goes quiet. She glances toward the desk and sees a staff member fiddling with the sound system; a moment later the music returns. Because she had a baseline, the silence registered. Because she looked for a cause, it passed in a few seconds without worry. She also realizes that on her first day she was the newcomer, and nobody treated her as unusual. She resolves to return the favor.

Checklist

- Take a ten-second read when you arrive: sound, pace, focus.
- Stand to one side of the doorway while you do it.
- Sum up the baseline in one short sentence.
- Notice where staff usually are and what they are doing.
- When the rhythm changes, look for a plain cause and update your sentence.
- Remember that a baseline belongs to a place and a time.
- Keep the read about activity, never about who "belongs."
- Then put it down and enjoy where you are.

Key terms

- **Baseline:** the normal rhythm of a place at a given time: what people are doing, how loud it is, how fast things move and what staff are busy with.
- **Ten-second read:** a quick check on arrival using three questions about sound, pace and focus, summed up in one sentence.
- **Staff layer:** the people who work in a place, whose routines are the best living reference for its baseline.
- **Ordinary change:** a shift in the baseline that has a plain, visible cause.

Talk it through

1. Choose a place you all know. How does its baseline differ between morning and evening, or between a weekday and a weekend?
2. Which everyday noises or events used to startle you until you got used to them? What changed?
3. How might a group of regulars make a newcomer feel out of place without meaning to, and how does thinking in terms of a baseline help avoid that?

Journal prompt

Pick a kind of place you visit often. Describe its baseline at one specific time of day in a single sentence, then list two ordinary events that shift it. What did you notice for the first time while doing this?

Chapter 2. Observation or assumption: what you saw versus the story

The fast storyteller

Your mind is extremely good at explaining things. Within a second of seeing something, it offers a story about what is going on, and the story usually feels like part of what you saw. That speed is useful most of the time. It lets you cross a busy street, read a friend's face and find your way through a crowded room without thinking about every detail.

The same speed causes trouble when the story is wrong and you act on it as if it were fact. This chapter is about pulling the two apart for a moment so you can see what you actually know.

Three layers

It helps to think of three layers stacked on top of each other.

- **Observation:** what a camera and a microphone would have recorded. "A person walked past the entrance three times in ten minutes."
- **Interpretation:** what you think it means. "They are looking for something."
- **Story:** what you think will happen, or what kind of person this is. "They are up to no good."

Each layer moves further from what you can check. Observations can be confirmed, corrected or added to. Interpretations can be tested against more observation. Stories are hardest to test, because they tend to absorb new information rather than be changed by it. Once you have decided someone is "up to something," almost anything they do can look like proof.

The camera sentence

The core technique in this chapter is the camera sentence. Describe what happened in one sentence that a camera could have recorded: what was done, where and when. Leave out labels such as "sketchy," "crazy," "aggressive" or "dangerous." Labels are interpretations and stories wearing the clothes of facts.

Compare these:

- "There's a suspicious guy in the garage." (A label, and the gender is a guess.)
- "Someone on the second level of the garage has pulled on the door handles of four cars in the last few minutes." (A camera sentence.)

The second sentence is more useful in every way. It tells you, and anyone you might tell, exactly what to look at. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's guidance on reporting suspicious activity asks people to describe specifically what they observed: who or what they saw, when, where and why it is concerning. The camera sentence is the same habit in miniature, used first on yourself.

Words that smuggle in stories

Assumptions often hide inside single words. Watch for these in your own head:

- "Loitering" may describe someone waiting for a ride, resting their feet, or simply with nowhere warm to sit.
- "Agitated" may describe someone who is late, in pain, grieving, overwhelmed by noise or communicating in a way that is different from yours.
- "Lurking" may describe someone standing still in a place you did not expect.
- "Out of place" often means only "not like me" or "not like the people I expected."

When you catch one of these words, swap it for what you actually saw: "standing by the door for twenty minutes," "talking loudly on the phone," "walking slowly between the shelves." The swap takes a second. Surprisingly often, the worry dissolves along with the word.

Three ordinary explanations

The second technique is to think of three ordinary explanations before treating anything as a concern. Picture the garage under a busy medical building. Someone walks slowly along a row of cars, looking into windows. Ordinary explanations come easily: they have forgotten where they parked, which is easy to do in garages whose levels all look alike; they work there and are checking permits; they are looking for a friend's car to drop something off.

If three ordinary explanations come easily and nothing you can see contradicts them, you can usually return to what you were doing. If the behavior keeps adding up beyond every ordinary ex-

planation (they pull on handles, they move on quickly when a car alarm sounds), that is a reason for a closer look from where you are, or a word with staff.

DHS notes that some activities can be innocent and that it is trained officials who determine whether behavior warrants further action. That is a helpful division of labor. Your job is not to work out what someone intends. Your job is to decide your own next step.

Gut feelings: respect them, but do not convict anyone with them

What about the feeling that something is wrong, even when you cannot say why? Unease deserves respect. Sometimes your brain notices a pattern before you can put it into words, and a sense of discomfort is worth listening to.

But feelings are shaped by many things besides what is in front of you: tiredness, hunger, past experiences, recent news stories, other people's anxiety, and biases you did not choose. So treat a feeling as information about you. It is enough to justify a second look or a change of position. It is not proof about another person.

Two different bars

This leads to a useful distinction between acting for yourself and acting about someone else.

To act for yourself, the bar is low. You can change seats, step out of a line, move along a platform or leave a café because you feel uneasy, and you never need to justify it to anyone.

To report someone, the bar is higher. CISA's Power of Hello guidance says behavior should be reported only when there are articulable facts to support a rational conclusion that it is suspicious. Articulable facts are exactly what a camera sentence gives you. If you cannot form one, that is a sign to look after yourself rather than to point at someone else.

Keeping these two bars separate protects you, because you never have to talk yourself out of moving. It protects other people too, because they are not reported on the strength of a feeling.

When someone else hands you their story

Sometimes the story arrives ready-made from someone else. A friend whispers, "Don't look now, but that guy is shady." A neighborhood message group posts a photo of a stranger with the caption "Anyone know who this is? Looks suspicious." Stories like these spread quickly, and they can feel more convincing because more than one person seems to believe them.

The same tools work here. Ask, gently, what was actually seen: "What did they do?" Try to turn the claim into a camera sentence. If no one can, the claim is a label, not an observation. You do not have to repeat it, share it or act on it, and you can decline to add a stranger's photo to a conversation about "suspicious" people.

Checking is not investigating

When this course says "check," it means something small: looking again with fresh eyes from where you already are, waiting a moment for more information, or asking someone whose job it is to know. It never means following someone, filming them, questioning them or blocking their way to "make sure." Those actions can

escalate a situation, frighten an innocent person and put you at risk. If something is plainly an emergency, skip the analysis altogether and get help.

In practice

The open-house hallway

A couple tours an open house on a Saturday. In the upstairs hallway, a man is opening closet doors one after another and peering inside. One partner whispers, "That's weird. What's he doing?" The other tries a camera sentence: "A visitor is opening each closet and looking in." Three ordinary explanations follow: he is checking storage space, which is exactly what people do at open houses; he is measuring for furniture; he is an inspector or a relative of the buyer. Nothing they can see contradicts those explanations. They laugh at themselves a little, then open a closet too. The point is not that their first reaction was foolish. It was fast, and the check took ten seconds.

The transit platform

A nursing student waits on a train platform late in the evening. A person a few yards away is talking loudly, apparently to no one, and pacing in short lines. The student feels uneasy. She tries a camera sentence ("someone is talking loudly to themselves and pacing") and notices that she had been about to use a label that was really a diagnosis. Ordinary explanations come to mind: a phone call on an earpiece she cannot see, someone rehearsing a speech, someone who talks to themselves to cope. None of it is her business to solve. Her unease is still real, so she acts for herself, using the low bar: she moves down the platform to stand near a group of other passengers, where she can still see the train coming. She has not labeled anyone, and she feels better.

Checklist

- Notice when your mind hands you a story, and pause.
- Write or say a camera sentence: what happened, where, when.
- Swap loaded words for plain descriptions of behavior.
- Think of three ordinary explanations.
- Respect your unease as information about you.
- Remember the two bars: low for acting for yourself, higher for reporting someone.
- Check by looking again, waiting or asking staff, never by investigating.

Key terms

- **Observation:** what a camera and microphone would have recorded.
- **Interpretation:** the meaning you add to an observation.
- **Story:** a prediction or judgment about what will happen or what kind of person someone is.
- **Camera sentence:** a one-sentence description of what happened, where and when, without labels.
- **Articulable facts:** specific, describable observations that support a reasonable conclusion, as opposed to a feeling or a label.

Talk it through

1. Share a time when your first story about a situation turned out to be wrong. What would a camera sentence have said?

2. Which loaded words do you hear most often in conversations about public places? What plain descriptions could replace them?
3. Why might it matter, for you and for others, to keep a low bar for moving away and a higher bar for reporting someone?

Journal prompt

Recall a quick judgment you made recently in a public place. Write one camera sentence describing only what you observed, then list three ordinary explanations. Which word in your first reaction was a story rather than an observation?

Chapter 3. Cues worth a second look: behavior and context, never appearance

A second look, defined

Most of what you notice in a public place needs nothing from you. People come and go, voices rise and fall, someone drops their keys, a child cries and is comforted. A small number of things deserve a second look: a brief, deliberate re-check from where you already are, before you decide whether to do anything at all.

This chapter is about which cues earn that second look. It rests on one firm rule.

The rule: behavior and context, never appearance

A cue is something a person does, in a particular place, at a particular time. It is never how a person looks.

Official guidance is clear on this. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security states that factors such as race, ethnicity, sex, national origin, religion or disability are not suspicious, and it asks the public to report behavior and situations rather than appearance. CISA's Power of Hello guidance says that no one should be reported based solely on protected activities, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation, or on a combination of only such factors.

Going further than the minimum

This course goes further than that minimum, because appearance-based suspicion causes harm far beyond the protected categories. None of the following tells you anything about what a person will do:

- age, height, weight or build;
- clothing, including heavy coats, hoods, uniforms, religious dress or clothing that seems out of season;
- hairstyles, tattoos, piercings or makeup;
- accent, or the language someone speaks;
- a wheelchair, cane, guide dog or other mobility aid, or a visible disability;
- the look of someone who may be unhoused, or someone carrying many bags.

Neither do behaviors that are simply different from your own: talking to oneself, rocking, flapping hands, avoiding eye contact, praying, wearing headphones, sitting for a long time without buying anything, or comforting a child in the middle of a meltdown.

Treating any of these as warning signs singles out people who have done nothing, and it makes public places less welcoming for everyone. It also has a practical cost for you. Attention is limited. Every second spent watching someone because of how they look is a second not spent noticing what is actually happening.

Four families of cues

So what does earn a second look? It helps to think in four families.

1. A change with no obvious cause. The room goes quiet all at once. People stop and turn the same way. Staff suddenly hurry, gather or leave their posts. People start moving away from one spot. These shifts in the baseline can be useful early signals, precisely because they reflect many people's attention at once.

2. Behavior that does not fit the purpose of the place, and keeps happening. Someone repeatedly tests a staff-only door whenever no one is watching. Someone's attention stays fixed for a long time on entrances, cash drawers or other people's belongings rather than on whatever the place is for. DHS gives a related example: a prolonged or unusual interest in a building or facility that goes beyond casual or professional interest. Notice the words "prolonged" and "beyond." A single glance at a door means nothing.

3. Escalation. Voices rise and keep rising. One person moves toward another who is backing away. Someone makes a threat out loud. CISA's personal-security guide lists verbal or written threats among the warning signs worth reporting promptly.

4. The environment. A bag that no one comes back for. A smell of smoke. An exit that is blocked, or a door that is normally closed propped open. A sound that does not belong.

Context changes meaning

The same behavior can mean different things in different places. Running is normal in a gym and notable in a quiet museum. A raised voice is ordinary at a sports bar during a game and more striking in a library. Photographing a building is ordinary at a landmark, and less ordinary when the camera keeps returning to

a loading dock or a staff entrance. Someone sitting for an hour without ordering is normal in a library and usually normal in a café too.

So always ask what the place is for, and what time it is. Context is not a loophole for suspicion. It is the frame that tells you whether a behavior fits.

Unattended items: a small, clear role

Bags, coats and packages are left behind all the time. Most are simply forgotten. CISA publishes guidance on telling an item that is just unattended from one that is suspicious, and that judgment belongs to trained staff and responders, not to visitors.

Your role is small and clear. Leave the item alone: do not touch it, open it or move it. Tell a staff member exactly where it is and how long it seems to have been there. Then let them decide. If staff are not available and you are uneasy, you can move away. That is all.

Change, fit, direction

When something catches your eye, run a three-question check:

1. **Change:** is this a change from the baseline?
2. **Fit:** does it fit the purpose of this place at this time?
3. **Direction:** which way is it heading, settling down or building up?

One “yes” to change is usually just life. Something that does not fit, but is settling, rarely needs anything from you. A change that does not fit and keeps building is a good reason to act on your own behalf, which is the subject of Chapter 4.

Picture two people at a café table arguing about rent. Change: yes, that corner got louder. Fit: arguments happen in cafés. Direction: if they lower their voices a minute later, it is settling. If one of them stands, a chair clatters to the floor and staff look over, it is building.

The filter test

Everyone carries assumptions they did not choose. They come from upbringing, media, past experiences and the people around us. The goal is not to pretend you have none. It is to catch them before they steer your attention.

Here is the filter test. Ask yourself: if this person looked different (older or younger, another race, dressed another way, with or without a disability) would I still be paying attention to what is happening? If the honest answer is no, the cue was appearance, not behavior, so let it go. If you would notice the same behavior whoever was doing it, it may deserve a second look.

The test protects other people from being singled out, and it protects you from staring at the wrong thing while missing what matters.

Describing someone is different from suspecting them

One nuance is worth stating clearly. If you ever need to tell staff where a person is, or to help find someone, a neutral detail such as “the person in the red jacket by the window” is for locating, not for suspicion. The concern itself must still be about behavior: “the person in the red jacket by the window has been shouting at the

cashier and just slammed the counter." Appearance can help someone find the right place. It can never be the reason for concern.

What a second look is not

A second look is not a verdict or an accusation. It is not permission to follow, film or confront anyone. It does not require a label: you can change seats for any reason or for none. It does not make you responsible for watching the whole room; staff and venue managers have that role. And if a cue points to immediate danger, such as a threat, a fire or someone hurt, skip the checklist and get help.

In practice

The bench at the visitor center

A father and his ten-year-old are browsing the gift shop at a regional visitor center. The child points out a small backpack under a bench nearby. Nobody seems to be with it. The father notices it too, and they carry on browsing. Twenty minutes later it is still there. Change: it has been there a while. Fit: forgotten bags are common in places like this. Direction: nobody has come back for it. He does not touch it. At the desk he says, "There's a small blue backpack under the bench by the gift shop. It's been there at least twenty minutes and nobody's come back for it." The attendant thanks him, checks the lost-and-found log and walks over. Father and child go on to the next exhibit, and he explains to his son that telling staff was the whole job.

The library computers

In a public library, a man in his sixties is muttering to himself at a computer terminal and rocking slightly. A woman at the next terminal feels uncomfortable and glances over several times. She tries the filter test and realizes that what she has noticed is simply different behavior, not a cue; it does not affect anyone, and it fits a place where people sit at screens. A few minutes later a different patron, a younger man, starts shouting at the librarian about a fine, leaning over the desk as she steps back. The woman notices the difference at once: this is a change, it does not fit the place, and it is building. She does not intervene. She moves to a table nearer the entrance and watches as a second staff member comes over. The difference between the two moments was never about who they were. It was about what was happening.

Checklist

- Most things need nothing from you; a second look is a brief re-check from where you are.
- Cues are behavior and context, never appearance.
- Think in four families: change, behavior that does not fit and keeps happening, escalation, environment.
- Ask what the place is for and what time it is.
- Leave unattended items alone and tell staff where they are.
- Run change, fit, direction.
- Apply the filter test honestly.
- If there is immediate danger, skip the checklist and get help.

Key terms

- **Second look:** a brief, deliberate re-check from where you are before deciding whether to do anything.
- **Cue:** something a person does, or something in the environment, that may matter in this place at this time.
- **Escalation:** a situation that is building, such as voices rising or one person moving toward another who is backing away.
- **Change, fit, direction:** three questions for judging whether a cue deserves action.
- **Filter test:** asking whether you would still notice the behavior if the person looked different.

Talk it through

1. Why do you think appearance-based suspicion is so common, even among people who would never call themselves biased?
2. Pick a behavior that would be ordinary in one place and notable in another. What makes the difference?
3. How would you explain the filter test to a teenager, a coworker or an older relative?

Journal prompt

Recall a moment when something caught your attention in public. Apply the filter test honestly: was it behavior or appearance? If it was behavior, which of the four families did it fit, and what would a fair second look have involved?

Chapter 4. Choose your step: continue, adjust, ask staff or leave

Four doors, all open

Noticing and checking lead to a choice. In everyday places there are four, and every one of them is legitimate:

1. **Continue.**
2. **Adjust.**
3. **Ask staff.**
4. **Leave.**

There is also a fifth that sits outside the everyday. If someone is in danger or you face an immediate threat, get to safety and call emergency services (9-1-1 in the United States) when it is safe to do so. DHS and CISA both give that instruction. This chapter is about the much more common middle ground, when something seems a little off and you want a proportionate step. Emergency response is a separate topic.

Continue

Continue is the most common outcome, and it counts as success. Your check found an ordinary explanation (the noise was a dropped tray, the person in the garage found their car), so you turn your attention back to what you came for.

Some people feel that continuing means they "did nothing." The opposite is true. You noticed, you checked fairly, and you reached a sensible conclusion. Most of the time, that is exactly what awareness looks like.

Adjust

Adjusting means a small change in your own position or attention. It costs almost nothing and requires no judgment about anyone else. Some examples:

- Move to a seat where you can see the door, or nearer the counter.
- Put your phone away for a minute, or take out one earbud.
- Step out of a crowded line and rejoin it later.
- Move along a platform to stand near other people.
- Wait inside the lobby rather than at the curb for your ride.
- Walk on the busier side of the street.

CISA's personal-security guide suggests that if you become worried or start to feel unsafe in a public area, you move closer to a group of people. That is an adjustment in its simplest form.

Adjustments are especially useful when your unease is real but you have nothing you could put into a camera sentence. You do not have to decide whether anyone is doing anything wrong. You just make yourself more comfortable.

Ask staff

Ask staff when you would like someone who knows the place to take a look. Staff know the baseline far better than you do. They have managers, procedures and often radios. They may already know about the thing you noticed, and if they do not, they are in a better position than you to deal with it.

CISA's Power of Hello program is built mainly for employees, and its last step is to obtain help from management or authorities. For a visitor, asking staff is the natural equivalent.

A useful message has three parts: what you saw (your camera sentence), where, and roughly when or for how long.

- "Hi, this may be nothing, but there's a backpack under the bench by the gift shop and nobody's been near it for about twenty minutes."
- "Two people at the corner table have been shouting for a few minutes, and one just knocked a chair over."
- "Someone has been trying the staff-only door by the restrooms whenever the desk is busy."

Keep your voice calm and your message short. Avoid labels and diagnoses. Then let staff handle it. You do not need to stay, watch, follow up or find out what happened.

Leave

Leave whenever you want to. You owe no one an explanation. Leaving an optional place such as a café, an open house, a waiting area or a shop costs very little; you can come back another day.

When you leave, go out the way you came in or through the second exit you noticed on arrival (Chapter 5). Head somewhere with people and staff, and decide your next step from there. If what you saw still concerns you, you can tell staff on the way out, or contact local law enforcement from a safe place. DHS asks the public to report suspicious activity to local law enforcement or a person of authority, and to call 9-1-1 if there is an emergency.

Leaving is sometimes the hardest choice emotionally, because it can feel like overreacting, or like giving up something you wanted. It is neither. It is a decision about your own time and comfort, and you are entitled to make it.

The smallest step that settles it

How do you choose among the four? The guiding technique is the smallest step that settles it. Choose the least disruptive step that answers your question or eases your unease, knowing you can always step up.

Picture a nurse walking to their car after a late shift. In the hospital garage, someone is sitting in the car parked beside theirs, engine running, watching the elevator doors. There are ordinary explanations; many people idling in a hospital garage are waiting for a patient or a ride. Still, the nurse feels uneasy. Continuing alone is one option. A slightly bigger step, and the one that settles it for them, is to walk back to the staffed lobby and ask the security desk whether someone could walk them out, or simply to wait a few minutes. If the scene had been clearly dangerous, they would skip straight to leaving and calling for help.

The point of "smallest" is not to minimize your concern. It is to avoid creating new problems, such as confronting an innocent person, when a simpler step will do.

Combining and reversing steps

The four steps are not a one-way ladder. You can combine them: adjust and ask staff at the same time, or leave and call the venue later. You can reverse them: ask staff, hear a plain explanation and happily continue.

If you go out with family or friends, agree on a simple phrase that means "let's go now, no discussion," such as "I'm ready to head out." It saves awkward negotiation in the moment. Children can learn the four steps as a game: Is it fine? Should we move? Should we ask someone who works here? Should we go?

After you have chosen

It is normal to replay a moment afterwards and wonder whether you chose well. Maybe you left and later felt a little silly, or stayed and later wished you had moved. Remember that you chose with the information you had at the time, and that any of the four steps was legitimate. You will often never find out what was really going on, and that is fine. The habit is not about being right about other people. It is about making reasonable choices for yourself, quickly and calmly, and then letting the moment go.

If something you saw stays with you and keeps replaying, it can help to talk it through with a friend. That is often enough to put it down.

What you never have to do

None of these choices requires confronting anyone. You never have to approach, question, greet, photograph or block a person to make sure. Some programs teach staff to offer a friendly hello as part of their role; that is a job choice made with training and

backup, not a visitor's duty. Choosing to leave is not overreacting, and choosing to continue is not naive. None of these steps is a verdict on another person.

In practice

The open house

A young couple is touring an open house when another visitor begins arguing loudly with the agent in the kitchen about a parking ticket on the street outside. The couple run a quick check. Change: yes. Fit: an argument with an agent is unusual but not alarming. Direction: unclear. They choose the smallest step and adjust, heading upstairs to look at the bedrooms. Ten minutes later the voices are louder and a door slams. They decide the house will still be for sale next week, thank the second agent at the front door ("We'll come back another time") and leave. Neither of them felt they needed to explain more than that.

The late bus stop

An older man waits for the last bus at a quiet stop after an evening class. A car slows as it passes, then circles the block and slows again. He has no idea why; it could be someone looking for an address. He feels uneasy, so he adjusts: he walks twenty yards to the lit doorway of a convenience store where he can still see the bus stop. When the car passes a third time, he steps inside and tells the clerk, "A car has slowed down by the bus stop three times in the last ten minutes. I'm going to wait in here for the bus, if that's all right." The clerk says it's fine and keeps an eye out. The bus arrives, and he goes home. He never found out what the car was doing, and he did not need to.

Checklist

- Remember the four everyday choices: continue, adjust, ask staff, leave.
- Treat continuing after a fair check as success.
- Use adjustments freely; they need no judgment about anyone.
- Give staff a short message: what, where, how long.
- Leave whenever you want, without explanation.
- Choose the smallest step that settles it, and step up if needed.
- In an emergency, get to safety and call for help.
- Never feel obliged to confront anyone.

Key terms

- **Continue:** returning to relaxed attention after a check finds an ordinary explanation.
- **Adjust:** a small change in your own position or attention that needs no judgment about anyone.
- **Ask staff:** a short, factual message to the people whose job it is to manage the place.
- **Leave:** going out of an optional situation, always valid and owed to no one.
- **Smallest step that settles it:** choosing the least disruptive step that answers your question or eases your unease.

Talk it through

1. Which of the four choices do you find hardest to make, and why?

2. What makes a message to staff easy for them to act on? Practice one aloud with a partner.
3. Why can choosing the smallest step be kinder to other people as well as easier for you?

Journal prompt

For a place you go regularly, write what continue, adjust, ask staff and leave would each look like there, and draft the one-sentence message you would give staff about a concern.

Chapter 5. The arrival habit: exits, staff and help points

The restroom test

Many of us find the restrooms soon after arriving somewhere new. Fewer could point to a second way out. That gap is understandable: restrooms meet a need we feel, while exits only matter on the rare day when the usual route is closed.

Ready.gov, the federal preparedness site, advises knowing where the closest emergency exit is and knowing another way out in case your first choice is blocked. It also suggests finding out what plans exist for the places you go regularly, which often means asking the building's or organization's managers. The arrival habit turns that advice into something you can do in under a minute, anywhere.

The arrival minute

As you settle in, note four things.

1. **Two ways out.** The door you came through, and one more. Look for illuminated exit signs, a back door, a patio door or a second staircase.
2. **Staff.** Who works here and where they usually are: behind a counter, at a desk, wearing a lanyard, a name badge, a vest or a uniform.
3. **Help points.** An information desk, a help phone, a first-aid or AED sign, a security office or a staffed entrance.

4. **A meeting spot**, if you are with others. “If we get separated, we meet by the big map in the lobby.”

Then add two quick checks drawn from CISA’s personal-security guidance:

- Keep your phone where you could make an emergency call, rather than buried at the bottom of a bag.
- Know your exact location: the venue’s name, the floor you are on and a nearby landmark. If you ever do need to call for help, this is the first thing you will be asked.

Exits

You do not need to inspect exits. Just notice them. Many buildings mark exits with illuminated signs, and the route to them is often signposted too. If you cannot see a second way out, ask: “Is there another way out of this room besides the front?” Staff answer that question all the time.

Never push on doors marked “alarm will sound” or “emergency exit only” to test them, and never block one. If a marked exit looks blocked or locked, mention it to staff; that is useful information for them.

Staff

Recognizing who works in a place is a big part of the value of the arrival minute. In a crowd, under stress, it is far easier to find a person you have already spotted than to search for one. Notice what makes staff recognizable here: a vest color, a lanyard, a desk.

Help points

Help points are anything designed to connect you with assistance: an information desk, a help phone, a staffed entrance, a security office, a first-aid or AED sign. You do not need to know how to use any equipment. You just need to know where help can be found.

Meeting spots

A meeting spot is a very simple plan, and a useful one. Pick something fixed, visible and easy to describe: the big wall map, the front desk, the fountain by the main doors. Point at it together so there is no confusion about which one you mean. Agree whether you will also text. Phones are great when they work, and a meeting spot covers the times they do not, such as basements, crowded events and dead batteries.

Including everyone

Build the people you are with into the habit, and include any access needs from the start. If you or a companion uses a wheelchair, walker or cane, has low vision, is hard of hearing or tires easily, ask staff:

- Which exits are step-free?
- Where are the ramps and elevators for everyday step-free access?
- Separately, what is the building's accessible emergency evacuation plan, and how does it help people who cannot use stairs?
- How would you let everyone know about a problem, and is there a visual or text alert?

An elevator used for everyday access is not automatically a fire escape route. The U.S. Fire Administration advises using exit stairs during a fire and not using an elevator unless directed by the fire department. If stairs are not usable for you, ask in advance about the building's emergency assistance plan and follow emergency personnel's instructions. Asking early means you will not have to work it out in a hurry.

With children, keep it simple. Show them the meeting spot. Point out who works there: "If you lose me, go to the person behind this desk." Practicing this in calm moments makes it something they will remember.

Why it is worth it when nothing is wrong

Why bother when everything is fine? Because under stress it is harder to take in new information, and many of us default to the route we already know. Noticing a second way out while you are calm gives your future self an option that would be hard to find in a hurry. It also works for small, everyday disruptions, such as a staircase closed for cleaning, a crowded elevator or a door locked early, not just for emergencies.

Making it automatic

Tie the arrival minute to something you already do: taking off your coat, getting your ticket, sitting down. Say it quietly to yourself or out loud with family: "Doors: the front, and the green sign past the restrooms. Desk by the stairs. Meet at the map." Practice in easy, familiar places so the habit is ready in places that feel new. Repeating this short check in familiar places can make it easier to remember in a new place; there is no fixed timetable.

Places you go every week

For the places you visit regularly, such as your workplace, a child's school, a gym, a club or a place of worship, you can go one step further than the arrival minute. Ready.gov suggests finding out what plans are available for the locations you go to regularly, and getting information about the building or organization managers' plans. In practice, that can be as simple as asking at the front desk: "If the building ever had to be evacuated, what should visitors do, and where would everyone gather?"

Many organizations post this information near entrances or share it with members. Asking about it is not strange; it tells the people who run the place that members care. The answer adds something useful to your arrival minute: not only where the exits are, but where people are expected to go once they are outside, and who will be looking for them there.

What the arrival habit is not

The arrival minute is not a security sweep or a prediction that something will go wrong. It is not a reason to sit with your back to the wall all evening, or to choose a seat by the door so you can watch everyone who comes in. You do not need to memorize floor plans or walk the exits. And it is not a full emergency plan; personal safety planning and emergency preparedness go further.

In practice

The range lobby

A woman in her forties arrives for her first visit to a range, a little nervous about everything. While she waits at the check-in counter, she runs the arrival minute, partly to settle herself. Ways out: the front door, and a second door marked exit beside the classroom. Staff: two people behind the counter, and a door with a sign for the manager's office. Help points: a first-aid sign on the wall near the restrooms and a posted notice asking visitors to come to the counter with any questions. Meeting spot: she and her friend agree to meet at the counter if they end up in different rooms. It takes less time than reading the price board. The range's own rules come from its staff; her arrival minute is simply her own orientation, and it helps her feel less like a stranger.

The concert hall

A father takes his fourteen-year-old to her first big concert. In the lobby, he suggests they try the arrival minute together, and she rolls her eyes, then plays along. They find the doors they came in through and an exit sign at the end of their row. They spot ushers in black shirts with lanyards, and a guest-services desk near the stairs. They agree to meet at the guest-services desk if they get separated, and to text if possible. At the interval, the crowd surges toward the bar and they lose each other for a few minutes. Her phone has no signal. She goes to the guest-services desk, and he is already walking toward it. Later she admits it was "kind of useful."

Checklist

- Run the arrival minute as you settle in.

- Note two ways out: the door you came in, plus one more.
- Spot the staff and what makes them recognizable.
- Find the help points.
- Agree a meeting spot if you are with others, and point at it together.
- Keep your phone reachable and know your exact location.
- Ask staff about step-free routes and alerts if anyone needs them.
- Never test alarmed doors; report blocked exits to staff.

Key terms

- **Arrival minute:** a quick orientation on arrival covering two ways out, staff, help points and a meeting spot.
- **Second way out:** an exit other than the one you came in through.
- **Help point:** anything designed to connect you with assistance, such as a desk, help phone or first-aid sign.
- **Meeting spot:** a fixed, visible place agreed in advance where companions regroup if separated.
- **Step-free route:** a way in or out without stairs for everyday access, using ramps, level paths or elevators; in an emergency, follow the building's evacuation plan and staff instructions.

Talk it through

1. Think of a place you go often. Can you name a second way out right now? If not, why do you think that is?
2. How would you explain the arrival minute to a child, or to an older relative, without making it sound frightening?

3. What access needs in your family or friendship group should be part of the habit?

Journal prompt

Run the arrival minute the next time you go out. Write down, in general terms, the two ways out, the staff, the help points and any meeting spot. What was hardest to find, and who could you ask about it next time?

Chapter 6. Calm awareness: alert, not alarmed

A dial, not a switch

Awareness works well as a dial, not a switch. Most of the time it sits low: relaxed attention, enjoying where you are, with a loose sense of what is around you. When something changes, it turns up briefly for a second look. Then it turns back down.

The skill is moving smoothly between those settings, not living at the top of the dial. CISA's personal-security guidance describes this as a balanced approach: precautions should be appropriate to the perceived threat, because excessive security actions cause unnecessary stress and inconvenience, while insufficient effort can leave you at risk. Both ends of the dial have costs. The goal is the middle, most of the time.

Why high alert backfires

It is tempting to think that more vigilance must mean more safety. In practice, constant high alert can backfire in several ways.

- **It tires you out.** Attention is a limited resource. Tired attention misses things, including the ones that matter.
- **It produces false alarms.** If everything looks like a threat, you will be wrong most of the time. A steady stream of false alarms teaches you to distrust your own judgment, so a real signal becomes easier to dismiss.

- **It treats people as suspects.** Scanning every face for danger is unfair to the people around you, and it makes shared spaces colder for everyone, including you.
- **It crowds out the reason you went out.** The coffee, the class, the exhibit, the conversation with a friend: these are the point. Awareness should protect them, not replace them.

Headlines and your own eyes

News and social media can make rare events feel constant. A single frightening story, repeated and shared, can change how safe a whole city feels, even when nothing about daily life there has changed. That is not a reason to ignore the news. It is a reason to give your own observations their proper weight. Your calm, repeated noticing of the places you actually go (their baselines, their staff, their exits) is a better guide to those places than any headline.

You are not on your own

It also helps to remember that you are not responsible for everything. Many public places have staff, managers, procedures and people whose job includes noticing problems. Your role as a visitor is small and specific: notice for yourself, act for yourself, and pass anything important to the people whose job it is. That division of labor is part of what lets you relax.

The transition check

The technique for this chapter is the transition check. Save your deliberate looks for transitions, the moments when your situation changes:

- arriving somewhere and entering;
- sitting down and standing up;
- stepping into a garage, an elevator or onto a platform;
- getting off a bus or train;
- leaving.

Transitions are when your baseline is out of date, when you are moving through unfamiliar space, and when your attention is most likely to be on something else, such as your phone, your bags or your ticket. CISA's guidance lists limiting phone calls, headphones and long texts while walking in public among simple precautions. You do not need to give these up. Just set them aside for the few seconds a transition takes, then pick them up again.

Between transitions, relax. Read the book. Enjoy the show. Talk to your friend.

The reset

The second technique is the reset. After any second look that turns out to be ordinary, take one slow breath, name what it was ("ordinary: just the espresso machine," "ordinary: someone looking for their car") and turn the dial back down.

The reset matters as much as the look. Without it, each second look leaves a little residue of tension, and a day full of them can leave you drained. With it, you teach your mind that noticing does not have to mean worrying. With practice, the looks can get quicker and the resets easier.

Practicing without pressure

Like any habit, calm awareness grows through low-stakes practice. A few ideas:

- **A weekly baseline walk.** On a familiar route, such as the walk to the shop or a lap of the park, notice the baseline at two or three points along the way. What sounds, paces and kinds of attention belong here on a Tuesday evening?
- **"What's normal here?" with children.** Turn the ten-second read into a game on outings: who can describe the room in one sentence? Who can spot two ways out? Keep it light and curious, never scary.
- **A transition of the day.** Pick one transition, such as leaving work or getting off the bus, and make it your deliberate look for a week. Then pick another.

Practice in places that feel comfortable. The aim is not to find anything. It is to make noticing and resetting feel ordinary, so that the habit is relaxed and quick when you need it somewhere new.

Putting the cycle together

Put the whole course together and you have one small cycle:

1. **Notice** the baseline of where you are.
2. **Check** what you actually observed, focusing on behavior and context, never appearance.

3. **Choose** a proportionate step: continue, adjust, ask staff or leave.

You will run that cycle many times, and it will usually end with "continue." That is exactly the point. A habit practiced in calm, ordinary moments is the one you will have ready in a rare difficult one.

When awareness tips into worry

Sometimes people who start practicing awareness find that it grows into something less helpful: scanning every room, sitting facing the door everywhere, feeling unable to relax in public. This can happen after a frightening experience, during a stressful period, or after a run of bad news.

If you notice that in yourself, treat it as a signal to turn the dial down, not up. Go back to transitions and resets. Spend time in places that feel easy. And talk about it, with someone you trust or with a qualified counselor. That is a strong, sensible step. Calm awareness is meant to help you enjoy the places you go, not to keep you away from them.

Responsibility belongs to the person who causes harm

One more thing needs to be said plainly. Awareness does not make you responsible for preventing every bad thing, and it never means that someone who was harmed "should have paid more attention." Responsibility for harm belongs to the person who causes it. This course offers habits that can help you feel more settled and make better choices. It does not, and cannot, guarantee anything, and no one who was hurt failed a test.

In practice

The weekend market

A retired couple love their Saturday farmers' market but have always found the crowds tiring. They decide to try the transition check. As they arrive, they take a ten-second read ("busy, cheerful, everyone browsing") and agree to meet at the fountain if they get separated. Then they relax and shop. They look up deliberately when they step from the street into the market, when they leave the crowded bakery stall, and when they head back to the bus. A dog barks sharply at one point and they both glance over, see a puppy greeting another dog, say "ordinary" to each other with a smile and go back to the tomatoes. They come home less tired than usual, which surprises them.

The anxious week

After a week of upsetting news stories, a young office worker notices that she is scanning every face on the bus and gripping her bag tightly. She feels exhausted before she reaches work. She remembers the dial. For the next few days she does a deliberate look only at transitions, getting on the bus, getting off and walking into her building, and practices the reset after each one. In between, she reads or listens to a podcast with one earbud. She also calls her sister and talks about how the news has been affecting her. By the end of the week her shoulders have come down, and she still notices more than she used to; she just doesn't carry it around.

Checklist

- Think of awareness as a dial, mostly set low.
- Turn it up briefly for a second look, then back down.

- Do deliberate looks at transitions: arriving, entering, sitting, standing, leaving.
- Set phones and headphones aside for the few seconds a transition takes.
- Reset after every ordinary second look: breathe, name it, turn the dial down.
- Trust your own observations of real places over headlines.
- Remember that staff and managers share the job.
- If vigilance won't switch off, pause and talk to someone you trust or a counselor.

Key terms

- **Awareness dial:** a way of thinking about attention as adjustable, mostly low, turned up briefly when something changes.
- **Transition check:** saving deliberate looks for moments when your situation changes.
- **Reset:** a breath and a label after an ordinary second look, used to turn the dial back down.
- **Hypervigilance:** staying on high alert when nothing calls for it, which tires you and produces false alarms.
- **Notice, check, choose:** the course cycle of noticing the baseline, checking what you observed and choosing a proportionate step.

Talk it through

1. Where does your awareness dial usually sit in public? Does it change with the place, the time of day or your mood?

2. Which transitions in your week would most benefit from a deliberate look?
3. How can friends or family support someone whose vigilance has become tiring, without dismissing their feelings?

Journal prompt

Describe where your awareness dial usually sits in public. Name two transitions in your week where you will practice a deliberate look and one way you will reset afterwards. What would tell you the habit is helping rather than adding stress?

Glossary

- **Adjust:** a small change in your own position or attention that needs no judgment about anyone else.
- **Arrival minute:** a quick orientation on arrival covering two ways out, staff, help points and a meeting spot.
- **Articulable facts:** specific, describable observations that support a reasonable conclusion, as opposed to a feeling or a label.
- **Awareness dial:** attention thought of as adjustable, mostly set low and turned up briefly when something changes.
- **Baseline:** the normal rhythm of a place at a given time: what people are doing, how loud it is, how fast things move and what staff are busy with.
- **Camera sentence:** a one-sentence description of what happened, where and when, without labels.
- **Change, fit, direction:** three questions for judging whether a cue deserves action: is it a change, does it fit the place, is it settling or building?
- **Continue:** returning to relaxed attention after a check finds an ordinary explanation.
- **Cue:** something a person does, or something in the environment, that may matter in this place at this time. Never appearance.
- **Escalation:** a situation that is building, such as voices rising or one person moving toward another who keeps backing away.
- **Filter test:** asking whether you would still notice a behavior if the person looked different.

- **Help point:** anything designed to connect you with assistance, such as an information desk, a help phone or a first-aid sign.
- **Interpretation:** the meaning you add to an observation.
- **Meeting spot:** a fixed, visible place agreed in advance where companions regroup if separated.
- **Observation:** what a camera and microphone would have recorded.
- **Reset:** a breath and a label after an ordinary second look, used to turn the awareness dial back down.
- **Second look:** a brief, deliberate re-check from where you are before deciding whether to do anything.
- **Smallest step that settles it:** choosing the least disruptive step that answers your question or eases your unease.
- **Step-free route:** a way in or out without stairs.
- **Ten-second read:** a quick baseline check on arrival using sound, pace and focus.
- **Transition check:** saving deliberate looks for the moments when your situation changes.

Where to go next

Finding qualified hands-on training

Reading builds understanding; practice with a qualified person builds confidence. Many organizations offer in-person awareness sessions for the public, often free or at low cost:

- campus public-safety and police departments, which frequently run personal-safety and awareness presentations for their communities;
- local police departments and community-policing offices;
- workplaces, through human resources, security or safety teams;
- community centers, libraries and faith communities.

Before you sign up, it is reasonable to ask a provider:

- Who teaches the session, and what is their background?
- What does it cover, and what does it leave out?
- Does it focus on behavior and context, and avoid stereotypes about who is “suspicious”?
- Is it trauma-informed? Can participants step out at any time?
- Does it involve physical activity, and can it be adapted for different abilities?

Be cautious about any course that teaches suspicion based on appearance, promises that you will be able to predict danger, or encourages you to confront people.

Official resources

- **U.S. Department of Homeland Security:** guidance on recognizing and reporting suspicious activity based on behavior, not appearance, and on contacting local law enforcement.
- **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA):** public resources on physical and personal security, including its Power of Hello materials and personal-security guidance.
- **Ready.gov:** practical preparedness guidance, including planning for the places you go regularly.
- **Your local emergency management office and police department:** for information specific to where you live. Laws and procedures vary; check the official source for your jurisdiction.

Related topics

- Stepping away from conflict without escalating it.
- Helping other people while keeping yourself and them safe.
- How stress affects attention and decisions.
- What to do in an emergency.
- Building a plan for home, routines and the places you go.
- Awareness and planning when traveling.
- Safety for people who work with the public.

Sources

These sources were re-read on 2026-10-15 and support specific factual statements in the course. All lesson text, examples, techniques and questions are original.

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