



Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC

Not Here—Not Today—Not Like This: Avoid Becoming A Victim¹

By

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Physical safety is an important concern for individuals and families. The concern for physical safety requires effective threat management to avoid becoming a victim. Understanding and implementing threat management strategies and tactics can greatly enhance one's ability to predict, prepare for, and respond to potential and actual dangers. Preparedness and prevention are critically important. In this article, you will read about how to use threat management concepts to protect yourself and your family. These concepts include threat management, the attack cycle, informed situational awareness, preemptive defense, and the OODA loop, among others.

Threat Management

“Threat management is a professional’s tool used to apply the right protective concepts and measures to avoid and/or reduce the impact of an actual attack” (Tarani, 2016, p. 34). Threat management is rooted in proactive measures rather than reactive responses.

Executive protection professionals know that threats to personal safety always follow a progression. That progression is called the attack cycle. The attack cycle is discussed below and displayed in Figure 1. All predators—human and animal—

must follow that cycle to be successful in their attack. If the attack cycle is broken before it leads to an actual attack, a person is more likely to avoid, evade, or survive an attack.

Threat Development

Threats develop along a predictable path. They evolve from potential to actual.

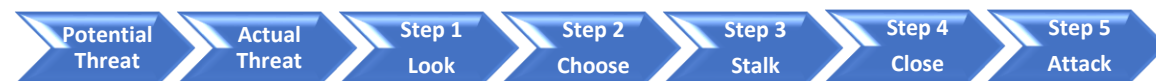
Potential Threat

You see a group of young men walking on the sidewalk toward you. You know that groups of

young men are potentially dangerous. That knowledge alerts you to a potential attack. Potential attacks are discerned using principles of informed situational awareness (discussed below).

Informed situational awareness. Basic situational awareness is inadequate for paying attention to what’s happening around you. You must apply principles of “informed situational awareness.” An important source of information about informed situational awareness is found in a book titled “*Left of Bang*”³ (Van Horne & Riley, 2014). The *Spartan Firearms*

Figure 1: Attack Cycle (Tarani, 2016)



¹ Author’s Note: Several years ago, I became a certified executive protection specialist through the Executive Protection Institute. The knowledge and skills learned in that training informed this article.

² Legal disclaimer. I am not a lawyer. Nothing in this article should be thought of as legal advice. You are personally responsible for knowing your state’s self-defense laws.

³ The Left of Bang methodology is substantial. A limited amount of the methodology is discussed in the article. See the book for in-depth details.

Training Group, LLC, introduces our customers to *Left of Bang* principles in our wear and carry courses. *Left of Bang* means identifying a threatening person or situation before you become a victim. Getting left of bang requires two things:

- Actively searching your surroundings
- Developing the knowledge to recognize a threat

potentially dangerous if you don't know what's normal.

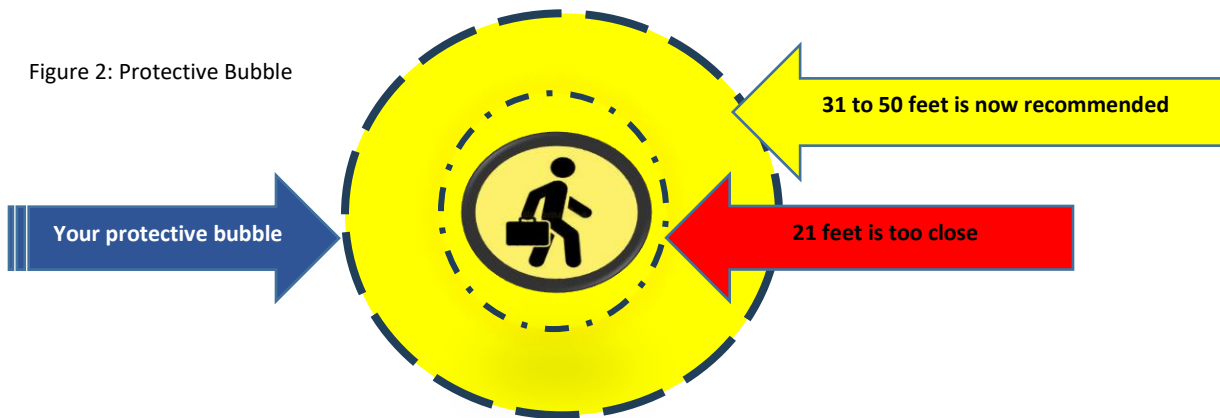
Practicing *Left of Bang* principles benefits from creating a 31-foot protective bubble around yourself (see Figure 2, below). Twenty-one feet was the former rule of thumb for creating distance between yourself and a potential attacker. It is now recognized that 21-feet is too close. An attacker can close that distance faster than you can react.

Dominant vs. submissive behaviors. Behavioral indicators of dominant behavior include

- Exhibiting assertive body language
- Actions impacting others
- Aggressive posturing
- Shouting

The implications of dominant behavior for threat management suggest that individuals displaying

Figure 2: Protective Bubble



There are too many things to pay attention to in your environment. So, you need to know what to ignore and what to pay attention to. The left of bang strategy provides guidance on how to do that.

First, you must know what the baseline is. The baseline is "what's normal"; for example, when you show up for work, what's normal? Next you pay attention to people or events that don't fit in with what's normal; in other words, ask yourself, "what's wrong here?" "what's missing?" or "why is he standing there?"

The baseline is the most important part of your effort to scan your environment. You won't be able to recognize people that stand out as

Scan for anomalies while inside your protective bubble. This scanning should not be a fearful, frantic scan; rather a casual, but focused 360° look-around.

An anomaly is anything that conflicts with your baseline. Anomalies can be added to a situation (you see something that was not there before) or absent from a situation (something that should be there, but isn't).

Do an initial scan to observe for pre-event threat indicators. Specifically, you are looking for behaviors that fit into three sets: Dominant vs. submissive, uncomfortable vs. comfortable, and interested vs. uninterested.

dominant behavior may be leading or influencing an agenda within a group, which could be potentially threatening depending on the context.

Behavioral indicators of submissive behavior include

- Deferring to others
- Displaying body language that communicates passivity

The implications of submissive behavior in the context of threat management suggest that submissive behavior might draw less attention and allow someone to remain inconspicuous, which could be strategic for a potential attacker.

Uncomfortable vs. comfortable behaviors. The behavioral indicators of uncomfortable behavior include

- Nervousness
- Avoiding eye contact
- Overly scanning the environment

The implications of uncomfortable behaviors within the context of threat management suggest that the person is uncertain or fearful that his intentions may be revealed.

The behavioral indicators of comfortable behaviors include

- Confident body language
- Absence of nervous habits
- Moving with familiarity through the environment

The implications of comfortable behavior within the context of threat management suggest that the person is familiar with his environment and feels secure within it. In some contexts, if someone is too comfortable in an otherwise tense or controlled environment, it may suggest undue familiarity with the environment.

Interested vs. uninterested behaviors. In the context of *Left of Bang*, identifying whether someone is interested or uninterested provides insights into their intentions and potential threat level. Behaviors typically indicative of interested behavior include:

- Scanning the environment
- Prolonged staring
- Following/stalking

The implications of interested behavior within the context of threat management suggest that a person is gathering information about a potential victim.

Behavioral indicators of uninterested behaviors within the context of threat management suggest that a person exhibits behaviors such as

- Minimal scanning of the area
- Using a cell phone while walking
- Appearing disengaged from their surroundings.

The implications of uninterested behavior within the context of threat management suggest that a person is not prepared to act. Disinterest can also be a tactic to blend in or avoid drawing attention.

Contextual Implications of the three sets of behaviors. In assessing behaviors for threat detection, it's crucial to consider the above behaviors, in addition to others, in relation to the baseline; that is, in relation to what's normal. Observing shifts or inconsistencies in these behaviors relative to a known baseline can also provide valuable information. However, really pay attention to the dominant cluster if what you are observing doesn't fit the baseline. Dominant behaviors that don't fit the baseline are the most dangerous.

Threat Detection Methods

There are two threat detection methods you can use to identify potential attackers using the "*Left of Bang*" behavioral indicators. The

first is the OODA Loop (observe, orient, decide, act) and the second is Cooper's Color Code.

OODA Loop. The OODA loop was developed by Col. John Boyd (Coram, 2004). The letters represent observe, orient, decide, and act. The observation phase is when you pay attention to your environment. Orient means you identify and verify a potential threat. Decide means you determine if the person is an actual threat and you devise a plan to deal with that threat. Act means you implement your plan and take action.

It's important to know that attackers also use an OODA loop. Their OODA loop is what powers their attack cycle; that is, they scan (observe), select and verify (orient), approach (decide), and attack (act). Your goal is to make your OODA loop cycle faster than his. You do that by paying attention to threat indicators in your environment and then deciding and acting quickly. Some examples of threat indicators are:

- Hidden Hands—weapons need hands. If the hands are in pockets or behind backs, pay attention.
- Inexplicable Presence—a person is someplace where he shouldn't be.
- Target Glancing—a potential attacker is sizing you up with quick glances.

Cooper's Color Code (Cooper, 2020). Cooper's color codes (see Table 1) represent five levels of alertness. At the lowest level,

people are at level “white.” You should never be in condition white. “Yellow” is the next level of awareness. At this level, you are paying attention to your environment in a relaxed manner looking for events or people that conflict with your baseline information (discussed above). The “Orange” level is where

about how prepared you are to protect yourself.

In the context of personal protection, primary and secondary soft target indicators refer to different levels of vulnerability that can make an individual more open to attack. Here’s how they differ:

- Exhibiting signs of anxiety or fear
- Looking confused
- Searching for a car in a parking lot
- Walking slowly with head looking down

Table 1: Cooper’s Color Codes

COOPER’S COLOR CODE	
WHITE	Unprepared and unready to take action.
YELLOW	Prepared, alert, and relaxed. Good situational awareness.
ORANGE	Alert to probable danger. Ready to take action.
RED	Action mode. Focused on the emergency at hand.
BLACK	Panic. Breakdown of physical and mental performance.

you identify a person or event as a potential threat and you start assessing the level of danger you face and devise a plan to avoid, mitigate, or defend against the threat. Level “Red” is when you implement your plan of action to protect yourself. You don’t want to be at level “Black,” which is the condition of freaking out or freezing in place.

What Makes You A Likely Target. People are often unaware of what behaviors make them a likely soft target. Predators and executive protection specialists know there are two categories of soft target indicators (STIs): Primary and secondary. Primary STIs give a potential attacker clues as to whether or not you are paying attention. Secondary STIs give the attacker clues

Primary Soft Target Indicators (state of unawareness). These are the most obvious indicators of vulnerability. They often relate to your behavior that can attract attention from potential threats. Examples include:

- Talking on a cell phone while walking across a parking lot.
- Walking or jogging alone, especially in isolated or poorly lit areas.
- Failing to create a 31-foot protective bubble

Secondary Soft Target Indicators (state of preparedness). These indicators are less obvious and often relate to an individual’s overall demeanor. Examples include:

Your goal is to avoid becoming a victim by eliminating your STIs to deny the attacker the opportunity to hurt you, thereby breaking the attack cycle.

Assessing your vulnerability. It is important to adopt an executive protection mindset for you and your family to assess your vulnerability. Start thinking like a protector by answering the following questions:

Why: Why would someone want to attack you?

- Are you a successful business owner?
- Do you have a valuable coin collection?
- Are you a well-known community member?

What: If someone attacks you or your family, what would they want?

- Money?
- Firearm collection?
- Kidnapping ransom?

How: How would they attack?

- One-on-one attack?
- Group attack?
- Blocking your car?
- Home invasion?

When: When would they attack?

- During the day?
- While you are home?
- As you arrive home?
- On your way to work?
- As your kids leave school?

Where: Executive protection specialists know that attacks sometimes happen in transition spaces. A transition space is where you are moving from one location to another; for example, exiting through your garage into your driveway or getting into or out of your vehicle.

Actual Threat

You paid attention to people entering your 31-foot protective bubble. One person, in particular, displayed

The options are envisioning, pre-emptive tactics, active tactics, and reactive tactics.

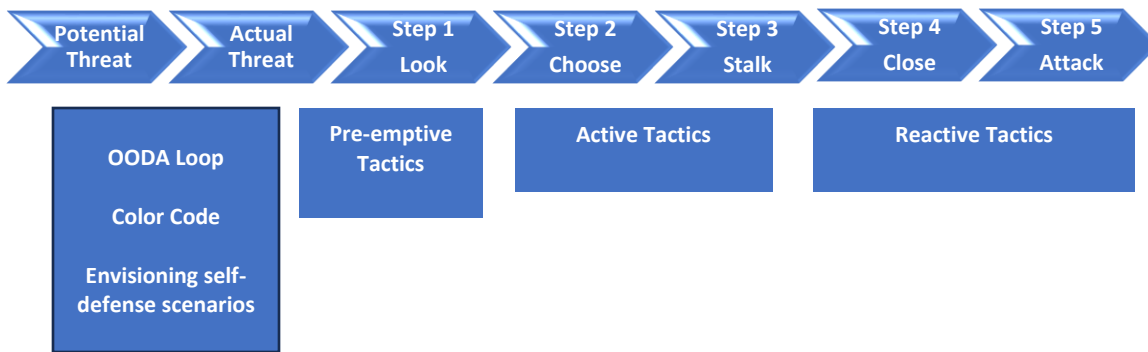
Envisioning. Develop the habit of envisioning yourself in different defensive scenarios and imagining how you will respond. You can actively envision differing scenarios and possible responses while walking across a parking lot inside a 31-foot protective bubble or while driving. You will be able to have a faster OODA loop if you have these scenarios and possible responses engrained in your brain. Remember, your OODA loop has to be faster than the attacker’s if you want to successfully avoid becoming a victim.

escalating, diverting, defusing, or deterring the attacker. Your focus is on anticipation and early intervention to neutralize threats as early as possible. The sooner you identify a threat and the quicker you act, the more likely you will be able to avoid, mitigate, or defend against the threat.

Remember, the farther along you are in the attack cycle the fewer options you have for responding, the less time you will have, and the more effort you will need to exert to protect yourself.

Reactive Tactics. These are used for Steps 4 and 5 of the attack cycle. The attacker is almost upon you. You have three choices: run, hide, or fight. Each option requires maxi-

Figure 3: Attack Cycle with Cycle-Breaking Options



behaviors that suggested he was someone who was a potential threat. He is now quickly and aggressively approaching you which moves you into condition “Red.” What will you do? You are way behind the curve if the first time you realize he is moving in for an attack is when he is almost upon you.

Figure 3 displays the attack cycle with options for breaking the cycle.

Pre-emptive Tactics. These tactics are used for Steps 1 and 2 of the attack cycle. If you see a potential threat, slow down, speed up, change direction, or move away. Once you perceive something different, then you need to quickly identify possible options.

Active Tactics. These tactics are used for Steps 2-3 of the attack cycle and include: mitigating, de-

maximum effort on your part if you want to stop or avoid the attack successfully. The most important reactive tactic you can use is to move off the “X.” In the armed self-defense world, the X is the spot where you are standing. If you are standing still, you become an easier target. Get off the “X.”

The fourth possible response to an attack is not a choice. It is a

spontaneous, autonomic stress-related reaction: Freeze.

Use of Force

If you make the decision to fight the attacker, you must be prepared to do that because you will not learn how to fight in a fight. Learn a proven self-defense martial art like Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, Muay Thai, or boxing. If you carry a sidearm for self-protection, you must train to use it effectively and in ways that are legally justified in your state.

The *Spartan Firearms Training Group* teaches customers about the use of force concept using figure 5 shown below. The use of force progresses from paying attention to avoid a threat to the use of deadly force. If you use deadly force when a lesser defensive action would have worked, you will be in serious legal trouble. The double-headed arrow suggests escalation and de-escalation. If you can de-escalate the threat, you must.

States have laws governing the use of force. As an example, Maryland’s legal requirements for using force for self-defense are found in *State v. Faulkner*, 301 Md. 482, A.2d 759 (1984). The paraphrased criteria are:

- Innocence—the person using self-defense must not be the aggressor.
- Imminence—the person must believe the threat is going to happen—right now!
- Reasonableness—the person must believe self-defense was reasonable (under the legal concept of the "reasonable

person," legal systems decide whether a person's feelings and experience of imminent danger justify the use of force as a response to a threat)

- Avoidance—the person must retreat as long as it is safe do so; but it is not necessary to retreat in one’s house.
- Proportionality—the person must use only enough force to stop the threat.

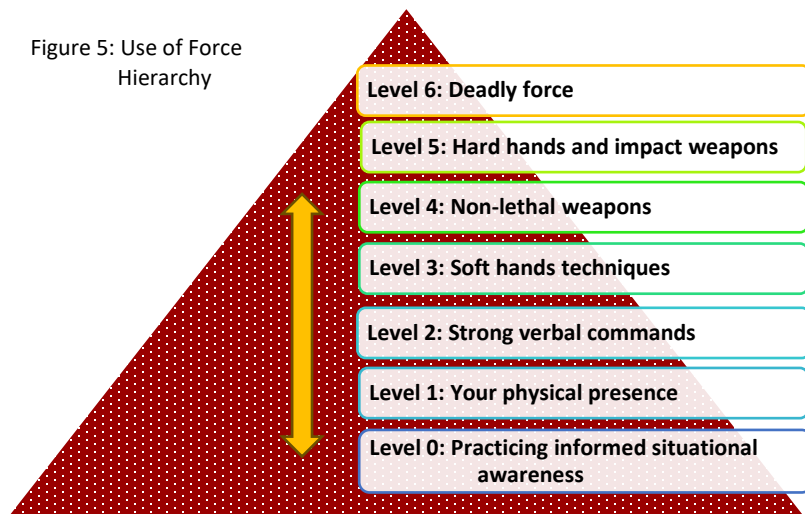
Even if all of these conditions are met, a person could and probably will face legal consequences. (For a comprehensive review of Maryland’s use of force laws please see Harris & Cohen, 2024. We highly recommend this book for Maryland gun owners. It is not limited to self-defense with a handgun).

appear vulnerable to attack from a human predator. Additionally, it is important to know and understand that all predators—human and animal—follow a predictable attack cycle. If you are paying attention to what’s happening around you it is possible to short-circuit an attack cycle focused on you. You don’t want to become a victim.

You should also adopt a self-defense mindset. That mindset rests on four pillars:

- Preparedness: “I knew this could happen one day and I know what to do about it.” You prepare through training.
- Responsibility: you are the only one responsible for your self-defense—not the police, not

Figure 5: Use of Force Hierarchy



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Conclusion

32.4% of the population will become victims of violent crime in their lifetime (Tarani, 2014, p. 7). You must become aware of the behaviors that might make you

your husband or wife, not your friend—YOU!

- Reality: Threats are real. Avoid falling into the “normalcy trap” (that is, “this could never happen to me”). Becoming a victim can happen.

- Trust: Trust your instincts. Trust that gut feeling telling you something is not right.
- Train: train in a proven self-defense martial art. Start legally carrying a firearm and train to use it effectively.

Remember: “Not here—Not today—Not like this.”

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Francis (Frank) Duffy is a veteran of the 6th and 5th U.S. Army Special Forces Groups (the Green Berets), a

graduate of the Army Ranger School, and a Green Beret combat diver. He is also a certified executive protection specialist.

He is a certified instructor for the NRA (rifle and handgun instructor), Maryland State Police, and the United States Concealed Carry Association (USCCA).

He is also a member of the Board of Directors for Maryland Shall Issue, an all-volunteer, non-partisan organization dedicated to the preservation and advancement of gun owners' rights in Maryland.

He is the co-founder and vice president of the Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC. He can be contacted at 443-472-0216 or at frank@spartanftg.com.

Individuals who want to schedule a private, 1-on-1 firearms training session should contact Frank.

ABOUT THE SPARTAN FIREARMS TRAINING GROUP

The Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC, (www.spartanftg.com) is a Special Forces Veteran-Owned business formed in 2015. At the end of March, 2024, we entered into our 10th year of business and we have trained thousands of Maryland residents in a variety of ways:

- Concealed carry training
- Handgun Qualification License (HQL) training
- Emergency Casualty Care training
- Long distance precision

shooting training

- Home Defense training
- Private, 1-on-1 firearms training
- Private group training

Our training calendar is found at [SFTG Training Calendar](#).

Scheduling or training questions should be directed to Paul Duffy. He can be contacted at 410-707-2992 or at Paul@spartanftg.com.

“Not here—Not today—Not like this” is a phrase used by Ryan Thomas, one of our instructors, while teaching our Emergency Casualty Care Course.

YOU WILL FALL TO THE LEVEL OF YOUR TRAINING; NOT RISE TO THE LEVEL OF YOUR EXPECTATIONS WHEN FACING A LIFE-THREATENING EVENT. TRAIN THE WAY YOU FIGHT!