Forensic Education
Series Topic Area III

STRANGER VIOLENCE

Presented by Brian Vasseur

Learning Objectives

• Crime in Calgary.
• Understanding personal safety – Don’t be victim!
• Be able to better determine if your clients are at risk.
• What to do if attacked.

What is “Stranger Violence”?

• Except for Road Rage, Street Robberies or Sexual Assaults; or someone who is drunk, stoned, or has serious mental problems, I found very few incidents where a total stranger walked up to someone and physically assaulted him or her for no reason.
• If you are walking alone and someone jumps out from hiding and confronts you, the culprit’s motive is probably either Robbery or Sexual assault.
Scenario one

- You are out for an evening of social drinking and a stranger bumps into you or one of your friends. You swear at or insult the individual. He responds with his own verbal insults. This escalates into a physical altercation and someone gets hurt. The loser leaves but then returns with a weapon, and it ends in death or serious injury.

Scenario two

- You are driving at the speed limit and another vehicle pulls right up behind you and follows you way too close. You slow down, which upsets the other driver, who passes you then stops and threatens or assaults you.

Crime Stats for Calgary 05-07

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Understanding Personal Safety

Have you ever (or do you);
• Left/leave your front door unlocked while working in the back yard?
• Left your car running while quickly going into your home or a store, or to mail a letter?
• Left the garage door open and gone into the house for something?

...cont’d

It was only for a few seconds…

It only takes seconds for a thief;
• To jump into your car and drive away,
• To walk into your home, garage, or office and steal your possessions, or
• To pick up your wallet from the screening point basket and if caught claim it was a mistake.
• If you leave the garage door remote in your vehicle, and someone breaks into the vehicle, the thief who broke into your car now has access to your home through the garage. In addition, if the thief steals your vehicle he has transportation to your home and a method of transporting your property away.

• But, you say, the thief does not know where I live. Yes he/she does, because your address is on your vehicle registration and insurance card, which you also left in your vehicle.

Don’t be an easy target

1. Criminals, unless they are after a specific person or property, generally look for easy targets. The easier the target is, the less time the criminal needs to commit the offence, and thus the risk of being caught is greatly reduced.

2. To avoid being victimized you need to make your home, vehicle, and yourself a less inviting target, which will make most criminals look elsewhere to ply their criminal activity.

What To Do If Attacked

That depends on a lot of things such as;
1. who and how many attacked you
2. where you were attacked, and
3. your confidence in your own skills, strengths, abilities.
• When you get home from work or shopping and it looks like your home was broken into, DO NOT GO IN, the culprit may still be inside. Call the police from someplace safe, a neighbor’s or your car if you have a cell phone.

• There have been house break-ins where a butcher knife was taken from the kitchen and dropped by the culprit at the ‘point of exit’. The culprit was not intending on stealing the knife but had armed himself in case he was caught inside.

Remember…

The most important things to REMEMBER and DO are:

• Be ALERT and AWARE of Your Surroundings. If an unknown vehicle is following you, DO NOT stop, try to “out run” the vehicle, or drive to your home. Drive to the nearest police station or a busy store or gas station and call the police.

• Avoid places and situations that could put you at risk.

• Unless you are looking for trouble do not go into a ‘Biker Bar’ and insult “bikers”.

• DO NOT project the demeanor and appearance of an easy target. Instead, you should project an ‘Air of Confidence’ and ‘Walk with a Purpose’.
Home

When a criminal is about to break into a house he/she looks for a combination or some of the following:

- Hidden or secluded entrance (so he/she will not be seen by neighbours, or people walking or driving by).
- Unlocked or open doors and windows,
- Inefficient or cheap locks,
- A good escape route if they are discovered.

In other words, “an easy target.”

Make your home a ‘Hard Target’

- good locks on all exterior doors and windows,
- doors and windows need to be good and sturdy,
- if you just moved into a house, condo, or apartment, CHANGE the locks,
- remove, or move, (if possible) obstructions that hide the entrances to your home from view,
- install motion sensors or timers on the exterior lights,
- your neighbours, and the best are those pesky, sometimes annoying ‘nosy’ neighbours, who seem to be always watching,
- make a written note of strange activity in the neighbourhood, such as people or vehicles that seem to be “out of place”.

Travel

- Do not place any valuable property in your ‘Checked’ luggage.
- Most thefts ‘of’ luggage are thefts of opportunity.
- Most thefts ‘from’ suitcases are committed when the luggage is either being loaded or unloaded from the aircraft or being handled in the baggage make-up area.
**Vehicle**

Do not leave Insurance or Registration, or other documents with your address and other personal information in your vehicle. Carry them in your wallet or purse.

This serves two purposes;

1. If your vehicle is broken into, the culprit will not have access to your address or other personal information, and
2. If your vehicle is stolen and subsequently stopped by the police, before it has been reported as stolen, for speeding, red light, etc., the culprit will not be able to produce the documents when asked, which should trigger the officer to check the occupants and their right to have the vehicle.

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**Vehicle**

- Park your vehicle in well-lit areas close to high traffic (pedestrian and vehicle) routes. Remember that thieves do not want to be seen and prefer secluded targets.
- Have your keys in your hand well before you get to your vehicle. If needed, you can use the keys to defend yourself if attacked.
- Visually check your vehicle, both the exterior and interior (by looking through the windows for signs of intruders), before getting in.

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**Be Able To Better Determine If Your Clients Are At Risk**

Who is your client:

- Where do they live?
- How do they live?
- Does their lifestyle lend to higher risks?
- What are their coping mechanisms?
Questions/Concerns

What if I have questions or concerns about my clients’ safety in the future?

- CPS Victim Services: (403) 266-1234
- District Liaison Officer: Local CPS district office.
- RCMP: Detachments will be an excellent resource.

Questions/Discussion

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Thank you for participating

For information about Telemental Health education sessions:
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