

Seven survival signs for women

By ATHENA THOMPSON *Times Guest Columnist*

AN important aspect of awareness training is understanding some of the manipulation strategies males use to approach and build rapport with us females, when their intentions are bad.

In his excellent book *The Gift of Fear*, Gavin de Becker lists what he calls the “seven survival signals”, the topic of this column.

Again, to labour the point made in previous columns, it’s vital we learn to trust our intuition and take immediate action to ensure our safety when it tells us that something’s wrong.

The seven survival signs are as follows:

■ **Forced teaming:** This manipulation is often used in conjunction with the word “we”.

It is where the potential attacker attempts to strike up a rapport with you, by assuming/creating a shared position.

For example, you’re waiting at a bus stop and a man is sitting next to you. He asks what bus you’re catching. He then says something such as, “the bus is late, what are we going to do?”

If you’re not aware of what’s happening, he has now established a common ground, which he’ll use to further manipulate the situation to his advantage.

■ **Too much information (too many details):** This is when someone is lying. They put in too many details to make it more believable. The intended attacker will throw so many details at whatever the topic of discussion is that you’ll lose track of what’s happening.

■ **Unsolicited promise:** An example of this manipulation strategy is: “Can I use your phone?” “No.”



ATHENA THOMPSON: A person who ignores the word “no” is trying to manipulate and control.

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“Please, it’ll only be a minute, I promise.”

This is defending something that’s not being attacked. The promise is out of context and should serve as a danger signal. Another example: “Give me your money.” “OK, now drop your pants, I won’t hurt you, I promise!”

Let’s face it, if he’s a potential mugger or criminal, there’s a chance that he’s probably also a liar!

■ **Charm:** It’s important to remember that charm is an ability.

Consciously tell yourself that this person’s trying to charm rather than he’s charming. You’ll be able to see around it.

Obviously, this needs to be kept in context. He may well be a nice guy. Again, trust your intuition. As long as you can recognise the strategy, you can choose what level of caution to treat it with depending on the situation.

■ **Loan sharking:** This when the person has done something for you and now wants something in return.

For example, he offers to help carry your groceries to your apartment. Once there, he now asks to be let in for a drink.

You may feel that because he has done you a favour you at least owe him that. But now he’s inside and you’re in potential danger.

If you decline to let him in he may say something such as “I carried your groceries, the least you could do is let me in for a drink”.

Stay strong and focused on what’s happening. It’s a deliberate and calculated manipulation.

■ **Discounting the word “no”:** No is a complete sentence. The person who ignores it is trying to manipulate and control. Never ever relinquish the word no. If you do, you’re basically telling the person that they’re in charge.

■ **Type casting:** This is when somebody will use a small insult to get you to respond and engage in conversation. For example, you decline their attempt to talk with you and they say something like “What’s the matter? I’m not good enough for you?”

Keep your awareness high and ignore the temptation to respond. Remove yourself from the situation as fast as possible.

These are just a few of the manipulations that could be used against us, but are certainly some of the most common.

Awareness is a major part of self defence. If you’re aware of the danger before it happens half the battle is already won.

Athena and Phil Thompson from Protect - Reality Based Self Defence (www.protectselfdefence.co.nz) have been guest columnists for the *Times*, writing on self defence issues.