

Stand your ground



SMART MOVES: Get his number with mobile phone... or grab his ear... or a head-butt on the nose will bring tears to his eyes

CLOSE your eyes and picture the scene. It's a dark, autumn evening and you're walking home alone. You hear footsteps behind you and your heart starts to beat faster. You sneak a quick look over your shoulder and see the shadowy figure of a man behind you. What do you do? Walk faster? Start to run?

Well, what you should do, insists personal safety trainer Robert Kaiser, is stop, turn around and face him.

"Tell him you feel uncomfortable and ask if he could walk in front of you," advises Robert. "By doing this he knows that you have seen him, and if he was planning to attack you, it's much harder to do from the front than behind."

And of course, adds Robert, the chances are he will be just an ordinary bloke who will totally understand your fear and your request.

Robert, a former bodyguard and martial arts expert, now runs courses across the country teaching women how to protect themselves.

Inevitably this involves tuition in how best to attack an assailant, but two-thirds of his teaching centres on helping women fine tune their antennae so they can prevent becoming victims of crime.

"Soldiers going into a war zone learn that awareness and avoidance are more important than bullets in the gun," says Robert, to emphasise this point.

Robert, 32, who lives in Pateley Bridge, began teaching personal safe-

MAXINE GORDON finds that personal safety for women is as much about avoiding risky situations as knowing how to hurt an attacker

ty advice to prostitutes while working as a doorman in the red light district of Hamburg, Germany.

"I heard of many dreadful things which men did to prostitutes and thought I should do something about it," he says. In the end, he trained more than 200 call girls how to look after themselves.

Today, his organisation - CSPA, Complete Self Protection Association - works with women from all walks of life including students, social workers and groups such as Rape Crisis.

Tomorrow night, he is beginning a six-week course at York St John College, which is open to female students and non-students alike.

The first four weeks will concentrate on raising women's awareness of the dangers they face and how to avoid them, while the final two weeks will teach combat techniques.

Robert insists the last thing he wants to do is make women paranoid. He wants to provide them with what he calls "an environmental seatbelt" to prevent them coming to harm.

He firmly believes confrontation is the best form of defence.

"If you are in a multi-storey car park and see a man trying to open his car door who you have to pass to get to your car you should stay where you are. Wait ten seconds to see if he gets in the car and drives off. If not, you could get out your mobile and ask him if he's having trouble with his car and does he want you to call secu-

rity or the police. This way, he is aware that you have seen him."

Women who appear confident and unafraid are less likely to be attacked, believes Robert.

"Rape isn't about wanting sex - it's about power," he says. "A rapist doesn't want a woman who will give him a physical confrontation. Why should he take the risk?"

Robert also advises women about the dangers of drug-rape. He tells them never to accept a drink from a man in a pub or bar, unless they can collect it directly from the bar tender. And if they go to the toilet, they should take their drink with them.

"Drug-rape is the fastest growing crime in Britain and I still believe most women don't know about the dangers. I recently dealt with a woman who was drug-raped and all she remembers is waking up the next morning with 11 condoms next to the bed.

"If you are out at a party, in a nightclub or pub and suddenly feel dizzy and think it's unusual because you're not usually drunk on just one pint, you have to accept there is a reason for it and that somebody might have spiked your drink."

Robert's advice is to go home, either with a close friend or arrange for a close friend to collect you. If that's not possible let the landlord or barstaff know how you feel and get the police involved.

Robert has also published a book

full of easy-to-follow advice: Don't Be The Victim, which is available via the CSPA website.

He says: "Women who read the book, go on the course or attend a seminar reduce the risk of becoming a victim of crime by 90 per cent. Their heightened state of awareness makes it almost impossible for a man to attack them."

But should the worse-case scenario happen, Robert teaches women some fail-safe moves which would disable an assailant. They include thrusting two fingers into his throat, banging your mobile phone on the bridge of his nose and biting his ear, cheek or nose.

It's all serious stuff and Robert says all would be acceptable within the eyes of the law if the woman was acting in self defence because she truly believed she was about to be attacked or raped. "The law is very clear. It allows you to use reasonable force to prevent a crime," he says.

The other thing he makes clear is that women will often have just one chance to deal their devastating blow to an attacker - so it is important they know the right manoeuvre to use. Robert says: "I don't want to scare women but sometimes the world is bad. All I do is try to teach them how to survive in it and deal with it."

◆ Tomorrow night's CSPA course starts at 7pm at Temple Hall, York St John College and costs £18 for students or £24 for others. For more information, visit the website: www.cspa.tv or telephone Robert Kaiser on 07967 023166.



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