

A global pandemic, civil unrest, and the fear of crime have left many people feeling isolated and uncertain about their personal safety. As much as we try to maintain a sense of safety and security through our normal routines, inevitably we will encounter something out of the ordinary or have to leave our comfort zone. While there is little any of us can do to make the world more predictable or seem less dangerous, each of us can take steps to better manage this uncertain world. The foundation for better management of uncertainty is a concept called situational awareness. Kelly Sayre, the Founder & President of The Diamond Arrow Group, is a local expert on situational awareness who teaches this concept to others. Sayre defines situational awareness as “using your senses and intuition to notice something is off in your environment, understanding what that means to you and your safety, and taking action to preserve your safety.” Increasing your situational awareness comes down to three simple steps, mental preparedness, observing, and acting.

Few of us truly like uncertainty. Our minds are conditioned to seek out familiarity and alert us to things that are unfamiliar. Situational awareness is about removing uncertainty by identifying potential hazards and having a plan in place to address those hazards. Situational awareness starts with being observant of your surroundings, especially when you are in unfamiliar environments. If you allow your mind to work at this task, you will find it comes naturally to most people. Situational awareness requires you to be curious about your environment. Look around your surroundings with the purpose of finding potential hazards. As you practice situational awareness you may notice everyday hazards like a rug that is bunched up creating a tripping hazard. You may also notice hazards that indicate a potential for danger such as a suspicious vehicle that is parked across the street from your home or a person who may be watching you a little too intently. Trust your intuition to alert you to potential danger. Sayre teaches that “your intuition is key in two very important ways. It’s always in response to something and it always has your best interest in mind.”

After scanning your environment, you can move into the next phase of situational awareness, considering your options and taking action. By observing potential hazards before something unwanted happens, you give yourself the time to formulate a plan to address the problem. Your response to the hazard you identified will depend upon what kind of hazard is present. It might be as simple as fixing that bunched up rug. Your response might be to call 911 or ask for help. Your response might also be to let a suspicious person know through a look or body language that you see them and are prepared to act. Coming up with your options before you find yourself in the situation, is key in mental preparedness. If you can make yourself appear less vulnerable, you increase the odds a criminal will decide not to act on their criminal intent. Use distance, barriers, and other people to keep you from having contact with anyone who makes you feel uneasy. There is no such thing as a perfect plan, but any plan is better than no plan at all.

Situational awareness is all about maximizing your own personal safety through observation and planning. According to Sayre, each of us already possesses situational awareness life skills. Sayre says “every day you look at your surroundings or read another person’s body language, you mentally go through your daily tasks in order to make efficient use of your time, and you take action to accomplish those tasks. Start looking at those same skills through the lens of your personal safety.” Applying the concept of situational awareness will provide you with an increased sense of security in an uncertain world and may well keep you from becoming the victim of a crime.

If you’d like to learn more about situational awareness from Sayre, you can visit her website at thediamondarrowgroup.com or contact her via email at kelly@thediamondarrowgroup.com. For more crime prevention and safety information visit the Benton County Sheriff’s Office website at: <https://www.co.benton.mn.us/211/Crime-Prevention>. You can also like and follow us on Facebook and Twitter at @BentonMNSheriff for regular updates and crime prevention messages