

## Situational Awareness and the Eight Point Path to Self Defense

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### Contents

1. Working Definition
2. Situational Awareness in Self Defense
3. Threat Assessment Matrix
4. REAL State of Awareness
5. Eight Point Path to Self Defense
6. Concluding Remarks

Mindfulness is not just something reserved for spiritual practice. It is critical in the development of Situation Awareness (SA) which is broadly recognized as a foundation for successful decision making skills across a broad range of situations, many of which involve the protection of human life, including law enforcement, aviation, military command, and interpersonal self defense. Today's article is dedicated to exploring the concept of Situation Awareness and its intimate relation to the Eight Point Path to Self Defense.

In part one of today's article I will introduce a working definition and theoretical framework on SA. In part two I will introduce the fundamentals of practical SA for self defense. In part three I will introduce the Threat Assessment Matrix and demonstrate its role in threat detection. In part four I will introduce the REAL State of Awareness and SA model (REAL SASA) intimately related to threat assessment and the decision making process. And lastly, in part five I will introduce the Eight Point Path of Self Defense which ties everything together. As always it is my wish that you find the information both informative, relevant and most importantly practical in your journey of martial practice and self defense.

### 1. Working Definition

#### Situational Awareness

Situational Awareness (SA) in the simplest of terms is about being mindful of your surroundings. Although the term is relatively young recognized only within the last 50 years, the concept has its roots going far back in organized military warfare and



Nathan A. Wright  
Chief Instructor

#### ONE FAMILY

Wang Lang  
王朝

Sheng Xiao Dao Ren  
生肖道人

Li San Jian  
李三箭 (c.1821)

Wang Rong Sheng  
王荣生 (c.1854)

Fan Xu Dong  
范旭东 (c.1841)

Luo Guang Yu  
罗光玉 (1888-1944)

Lin Bo Yan  
林伯炎 (1903-1990)

Zhao Zhi Min  
赵志民 (1901-2002)

Xu Jin Ge  
徐金阁 (1949-)

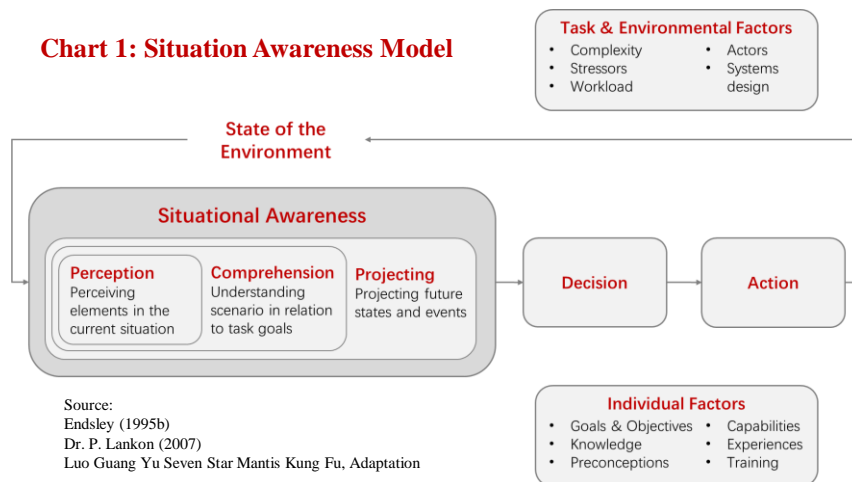
Li Jin Rong  
李锦荣 (1947-)

Kai Uwe Pel  
凯尤佩 (1964-)



Master Luo Guang Yu  
罗光玉 1888-1944

**Chart 1: Situation Awareness Model**



theory, most notably recognized in Sun Zi's The Art of War for example. In more modern times SA has been recognized as a critical foundation for successful decision making across a broad range of situations, many of which involve the protection of human life, including law enforcement, aviation, air traffic control, ship navigation, military command, etc.

The model most widely cited and accepted in SA was developed by Mica Endsley in 1988 with a particular focus in aviation at the time (see Chart 1 above). SA is defined as the perception of elements in the environment within a given volume of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning, and the projection of their status in the near future to enable decision superiority.” (1)

Endsley's model describes the cognitive processes and mechanisms that people use to assess situations to develop SA, and the task and environmental factors that affect their ability to achieve SA. In Level 1 (Perception), the first step in achieving SA is to perceive the status, attributes, and dynamics of the relevant elements in the environment. At this most basic level it involves the processes of monitoring, cue detection and simple recognition which leads to an awareness of multiple situational elements (objects, events, people, systems, environmental factors) and their current states (locations, conditions, modes, actions) (2).

In Level 2 (Comprehension), SA formation involves a synthesis of the elements from Level 1 through the processes of pattern recognition, interpretation, and evaluation. It requires integrating this information to understand how it will impact upon the individual's goals and objectives (2). This includes developing a comprehensive picture of the world, or of that portion of the world that concerns the individual.

The third and highest level of SA involves the ability to project the future actions of the elements in the environment. It is achieved through knowledge of the status and dynamics of the elements and comprehension of the situation (Levels 1 and 2), and then extrapolating this information forward in time to determine how it will affect future states of the operational environment (2).

## 2. Situational Awareness in Self Defense

As you go about your life and daily routines you are exposed to a general level of risk just by being out and about in the world. SA is a practice that keeps you safe. It involves observing your environment, determining an environmental baseline, identifying anomalies, detecting threat, applying critical thinking and judgement, discerning predictive patterns in violent behavior, and making best-fit informed decisions (Chart 2).

Chart 2: Decision Making Matrix

		DECISION MAKING Doing the right thing	
		Ineffectively	Effectively
ACTION Doing things right	Efficiency	<b>DIE SLOWLY</b> A poor plan executed perfectly	<b>THRIVE</b> A brilliant plan executed perfectly
	Inefficiency	<b>DIE QUICKLY</b> A poor plan executed poorly	<b>SURVIVE</b> A brilliant plan executed poorly

Source: Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu@2004-2021

Humans tend to follow predictable patterns of behavior and can emit certain conscious and subconscious signals indicating mental states and intent. Continued observation of behaviors and of the surrounding physical environment reveals patterns that can be used to derive further information on the people being observed and their interaction in the environment. Observation and cognitive processing skills should be used to determine the relevance of the information provided to the matter at hand and your goals (3).

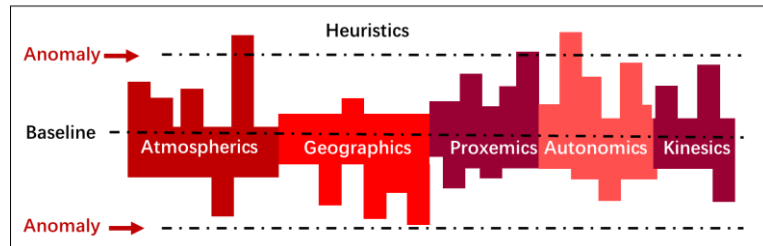
Observation skills are based on your sensory perceptions of the world. Sensory perception is the capacity of an individual to detect stimuli in their environment. The human body has a number of sense faculties *visa-vi* sense organs that can detect stimulus from the outside world and communicate that information to the CNS and brain where extraction and processing occurs (consciously, subconsciously, and unconsciously). Some of these senses includes: 1) Visual (sight), 2) Audial (hearing and sound), 3) Chemical (olfactory – smell, and gustation – taste), 4) Somatosensory - tactile, vibration, temperature of the skin, and pain, and 5) Proprioception (kinesthetic - sense of movement in space).

Environments are contextual. They are the sum of the people and objects interacting with the surroundings and reacting to external stimuli. Although environments are dynamic and constantly changing they do exhibit contextual patterns of normalcy called Baselines. Baselines are determined through the real time observation and analysis of characteristics, cues, events, and interactions (3). This is your first task in SA.

Determining baseline patterns in your environment is critically important to further identifying anomalies that may arise. Anomalies are the contextual degrees of abnormality representing the changes in something that occurs above or below an established environmental baseline. One must be cognizant of anomalies occurring in an environment that are contextually contrary to the norm, as people and objects exhibiting suspicious behaviors or patterns may be a risk to you (3). Every anomaly must be further analyzed to discern if it is a threat (or not), and if so to what degree. This is the principle of threat assessment and is your next task.

Mindfulness is a key catalyst to developing proper SA skills. With proper training this leads to better decision making and execution skills.

Chart 3: Determining Environmental Baseline and Anomalies



Source: United State Army, Field Manual  
Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Mantis Kung Fu Analysis

In the chart above (Chart 3), the baseline represents degrees of normalcy in a given environment and is denoted by the mid-line. Anomalies are the events that fall outside of the baseline (above or below). Indicators that fall above the baseline represent the addition/perception of something new to the environment that could be a risk or a direct threat to you. Indicators that fall below the baseline represent a lesser amount or the absence of something in an environment and a possible risk and/or threat.

Once a baseline has been determined and a threat has been identified, you must focus your cognitive resources increasingly on the perceived threat with the purpose of further identifying additional informational cues so as to more accurately ascertain the level of the threat and then make a best fit decision to act (3). A single anomaly does not provide sufficient evidence to make a decision, and so the 'rule of threes' comes into play called clusters. Identifying a cluster of threats provides greater context and sufficient information to make a more rational best-fit decision to act.

Further analysis and evaluation of the cluster threat should yield predictive value (projection) with regards to determining MLCOA and MDCOA (3). MLCOA is the most likely course of action the VO is mostly likely to perform, and MDCOA is the most dangerous course of action. Based on real-time situational analysis and further evaluation of the unfolding circumstances you have the ability to plan for each and make a rational best-fit decision to take action.

Decision making in the context of interpersonal violence and self defense should be centered around prevention strategies first, then mitigation strategies, then tactical strategies last. The best strategy is always preventative. This means avoiding the dangers through proper pre-planning or through real-time active decision making employing SA. Categories of prevention include Deterrence, Detection and Dispersion. In practical terms this could mean choosing to call a cab rather than walking home at night, choosing to go home early before a party grows out of hand, leaving an immediate area where you see a suspicious group, taking a detour and crossing the road to go around a suspicious person loitering up ahead at the corner, parking in well lit areas, or waiting for friends to walk together as a group.

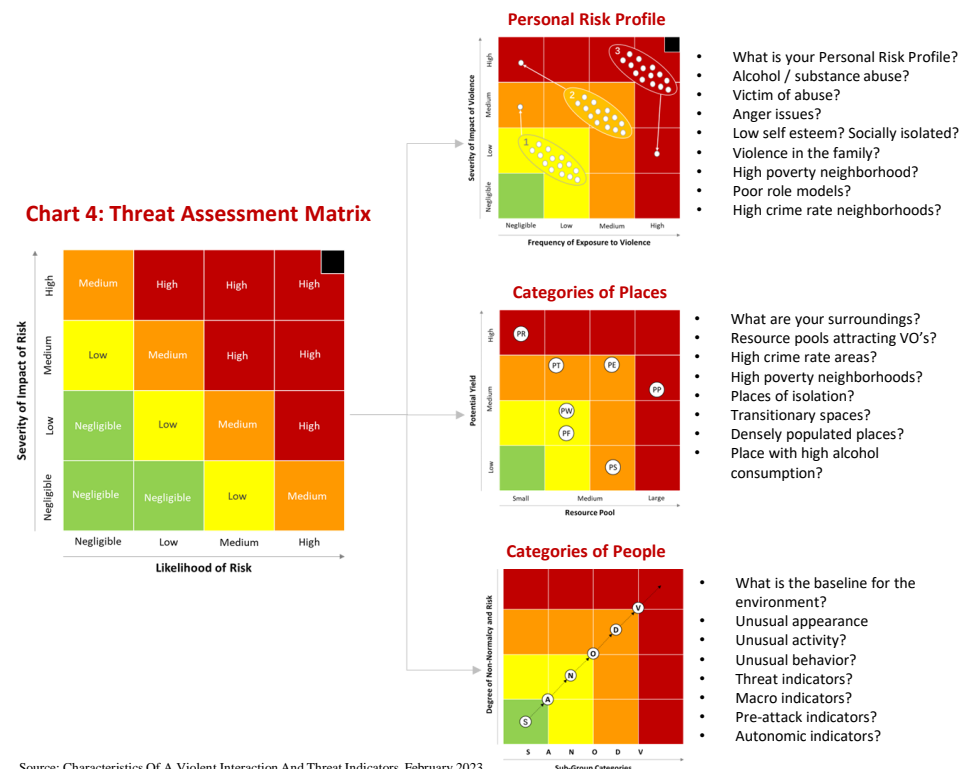
Mitigation strategies are beyond the scope of this article, but in general are intended to halt/stop an attack in progress and/or reduce the severity of impact of an attack. Categories of mitigation include Detachment and De-escalation. Tactical strategies are those used directly in physical hand-to-hand self defense. Tactical risks is highest as a result of engagement and should only be used as a last resort. Tactical strategies include kicking, striking, grappling, throwing, and the use of weapons.

## 3. Threat Assessment and Detection Revisited

In the context of understanding what constitutes abnormal behavior, I already discussed the need to have a basic understanding about what is contextually normal in your environment. This is called determining the baseline. Most people know based on experience what types of behaviors are normal in a given context, whether you are riding the subway, walking down a pedestrian street, window shopping, eating in a restaurant, attending a class, chatting with colleagues around the water cooler, or taking in a hockey game. With an understanding of the baseline you can more readily determine if someone's behavior is inconsistent and/or contrasts with the situation.

The Threat Assessment Matrix (see Chart 4 below) is a modern risk assessment tool that ranks risk into five ascending categories from negligible, low, medium, high and extreme. The bottom axis denotes the 'likelihood of a violent interaction occurring' and the vertical axis denotes the 'potential severity of impact from the violent interaction'. Color coding is associated with risk levels where green = negligible, yellow = low, orange = medium, red = high and black = extreme.

As a practical tool for thinking more systematically about risk and your potential exposure to the threat of interpersonal violence, you can apply the Five W's to the Threat Assessment Matrix which provides a simple yet powerful conceptual framework for metacognition (thinking about thinking) and risk assessment.



Source: Characteristics Of A Violent Interaction And Threat Indicators, February 2023  
Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Mantis Kung Fu @ 2004 - 2022 Copyright



Answering the questions What is my personal risk profile (PRP), Who am I at risk to, Where am I at risk, and When am I at risk, will help to build better risk awareness and achieve a level SA in advance of going out and about on our daily routines.

VOs on the verge of attempting to commit a criminal act of violence will emit abnormal signals that are inconsistent with the environment. These can include patterns in physical movement (proxemics), body language (kinesics), verbal cues, and increasingly more nuanced autonomic indicators. Depending on the level of sophistication, some VOs may be able to hide these better than others, but invariably there will be some forms of information emitted. Therefore, your attention should be drawn to those people who's behavior is abnormal or inconsistent with their environment. This does not mean that people exhibiting inconsistent behaviors are automatically a threat, but it certainly should warrant further attention. This is part of the Threat Identification process.

### Macro Threat Indicators

Macro Threat Indicators (MTI, see Chart 5 below) are big picture contextualized anomalies that should be recognized as potentially suspicious. As a stand alone cue, each typically occupies the medium risk space of the TAM. Remember that while a single anomaly may not provide sufficient evidence to make a decision, clusters in three's typically provides adequate context to make a more rational best fit decision to act. The list of macro threat indicators below are common examples ranked on an ascending scale of potential risk. You can refer back to my article titled Characteristics of a Violent Interaction (7) where I dive into more detail explaining each of one.

Chart 5: Macro Threat Indicators



Source: Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Mantis Kung Fu @ 2004 - 2023 Copyright

Chart 6: Pre-Attack Indicators



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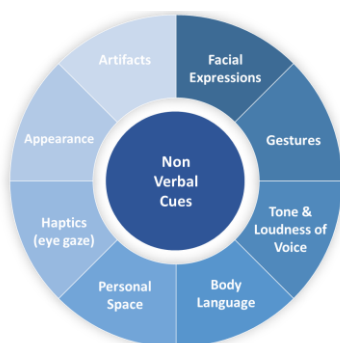
### Pre-Attack Indicators

Pre-Attack Indicators (PAI, see Chart 6 above) are of the highest rank order in threat assessment and come in three flavors: proxemics (use of spatial distance), kinesics (use of body language) and linguistics (use of verbal cues). When these are identified in clusters of three's or previously in combination with other MTI's, they provide powerful contextual information from which you can evaluate, plan and make best fit actionable decisions. All of these occur in close proximal distance so you must remember to keep your eyes on the VO at all times while paying close particular attention to what their hands are doing.

## Autonomic Indicators

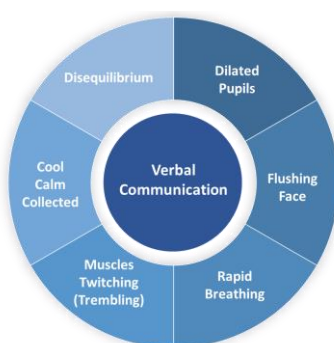
Sometimes also described as biometric indicators (see Chart 8 blow), these are physiological responses that are either involuntary or unconscious, typically but not always relating to the HPA stress response (flight or fight). Because a VO may be in heightened state of arousal, either emotional or stress induced, they may exhibit a number of autonomic traits that can tell you something about their physiological state. It is worth noting that autonomic indicators, either in the form of single observable cues or in clusters, should be contextualized and accompanied with other more specific threat indicators to be of actionable value.

Chart 7: Non Verbal Cues



Source: Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Mantis Kung Fu @ 2004 - 2023 Copyright

Chart 8: Autonomic Indicators



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## 4. REAL State of Awareness and SA Model

The REAL State of Awareness and SA Model (REAL SASA, see Chart 9 on next page) equates the appropriate states of mental awareness to the corresponding environmental conditions and/or threat levels. It is a reformulation and synthesis of Jeff Cooper's states of awareness model, together with Endsley's SA framework for decision making. The area of the triangle is color coded matching to the Threat Assessment Matrix, designating five corresponding mental states of awareness that includes: Unaware (green), Aware (yellow), Alert (orange), Alarm (red) and Extreme (black). REAL is an acronym for Read, Evaluate, Act and Loop. Reading skills equates to perception, comprehension and projection in Endsley's SA model, Evaluation equates to the Decision (Planning) phase, Action equates to the Performance execution phase, and Loop equates to the continuous feedback loop that occurs real-time.

**Condition Green - Unaware.** This infers a state in which you are completely oblivious to the surroundings of your environment. You are unaware and unprepared for anything. It is premised on the assumption that you are in a safe zone with negligible levels of risk to you or your family. This may be appropriate when you are at home with the doors locked, where you can let your guard down and completely relax. You can take time to hang out with the kids, take a nap, read a book, listen to music, or do some work. In this type of scenario this would likely be ok. However, if you are outside walking down a busy street, while listening to music with your earphones, and/or reading social media on your mobile device, then Condition Green would be the wrong condition to be in.



**Chart 9: REAL State of Awareness and Situation Awareness Model (REAL SASA)**



Source: Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Mantis Kung Fu @ 2004 - 2023 Copyright

■ **Condition Yellow - Aware.** You are in a relaxed state of general awareness, head up, eyes up, alert and observant of your surroundings with no specific focal point. This is the state you should be in when you leave the house and go about your day. You are relaxed, you are confident and you are scanning the peripheral landscape taking in brief mental notes of the people, things and events happening around you. You have not seen anything to alert you that there is a threat, but you are paying attention to your environment, scanning to establish baselines and any contextual degrees of abnormalities should they arise. On the Threat Assessment Matrix this is Low Risk. You should be able to maintain this state indefinitely without causing any undue adverse mental or emotional fatigue (2).

■ **Condition Orange - Alert State.** You have a heightened state of alertness with specific focus because you have observed something suspicious that could potentially put you in danger. You have detected an anomaly and possibly some form of threat that requires you paying attention to further assess and identify any clusters. On the Threat Assessment Matrix this is Medium Risk. You will observe and evaluate the most likely course of action (MLCOA) and the most dangerous course of action (MDCOA) of the person, place, thing or event. You will also develop a rudimentary plan to potentially deal with each course of action (2).

For example, you are walking back to your car after taking in a Saturday afternoon play with the family located in the downtown core. Across the street you see what looks like a harmless panhandler (Loitering), who then establishes eye contact (Intermittent Scanning), and begins tracking your direction (Correlative Movement). In the alert state, you would immediately focus-in your attention, observe, assess and start making plans of action based on what the potential threat may do. If the panhandler gets distracted by something else and stops pursuit then you can swiftly continue to the car. If the situation were to have escalated then you were already aware, you had a plan and were ready to act quickly. Note that you can only remain in Condition Orange until the problem that affected your attention is resolved in some fashion. You should not remain in this condition for any extended period of time to avoid creating tunnel vision which can be distracting and cognitively taxing.





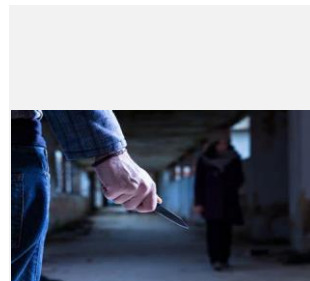
■ **Condition Red – Alarm.** You are in the alarm state and ready to act or defend yourself. You are mentally prepared for a conflict, you are hyper vigilant and could act physically if the situation required. On the Threat Assessment Matrix this is High Risk. You have identified a cluster of threat indicators and believe the threat is real based on what a reasonable person would believe. The VO is in striking range (or quickly closing), you perceive them as having means, and you believe your life to be in immanent danger.

Continuing with above example, once you noticed the panhandler continuing to track your movement (Correlative Movement for extended duration), you took action to turn around and walk your family back in the direction of the theater where you can all wait inside safely until the situation subsides. You did this because you identified the potential threat and already had a plan of action. However, once you turned around and started walking back to the theater - while having kept your attention focused on the threat - you noticed the VO crossed the road and began closing distance quickly (Closing Proximity and Focused Attention both for extended duration). You calmly instructed your partner to swiftly return back to the theatre - no more than half a block away. Keeping adequate space between your family and the threat, you aggressively yelled, “Stop, don’t come any closer!” and put your hands up before they got within 3 meters of you.

You had already planned that if the situation escalated and they continued to close distance then you would hold your ground and defend if necessary until your family was safely back. The VO was startled, retreated and left the area. The danger was averted and you and your family were safe. Typically, Condition Red cannot sustain functionally for long periods of time without adverse effects. You may experience focus lock, tunnel vision, or adverse effects of adrenaline. If this occurs, your training and instinct determine your ability to operate effectively” (2).

■ **Condition Black – Extreme.** This level is the most dire in which the threat has already directly engaged you (the attack is under way). In this state you have been exposed to hyper stressful events and have experienced catastrophic breakdown in the form of mental and physical performance (2). You may not be thinking clearly, your heart rate is rapid, and you have experienced a massive adrenaline dump causing you to become counterproductive. In this condition you may have also already sustained serious injury making you prone to further attack and life threatening injuries. At this point your mental and physical capacities may be severely compromised and you are fighting for your life.

Following from the example above, it turned out the VO was in a highly dysregulated state because they were high on crystal methamphetamine making their behavior unpredictable. Not responding to your warning they continued to rush forward (Target Glancing, Shifting, Intense Gaze, Trembling, Dilated Pupils, appearance of Dysregulation). Because you were prepared you were able quickly incapacitate the threat. As you looked back to ensure your family made it safely back to the security of the theatre, you were blindsided by the VO's friend who came rushing in from across the street tackling you to the ground. On the fall you hit your head with force on the sustaining a flash knock out and a deep cut above the brow of your eye. This caused disorientation and excessive blood flow further blurring your vision. You were in a seriously compromised state meanwhile you continued to sustain a two-on-one attack.



## Factors Affecting Judgement in SA

When SA is incomplete or inaccurate this can lead to ineffective decision-making that can place you directly in the face of danger. This may be due to a number of breakdowns in the SA process including failure to perceive the situation, failure to comprehend the situation, or failure to predict the unfolding circumstances (4). This in turn leads to ineffective decision making and poor performance outcomes.

Failure to correctly perceive the situation is a Level 1 failure (4). This is particularly common in proactive violence where the VO uses indirect tactics to leverage the element of surprise and attack without warning. In this scenario important informational cues and threat indicators may not have been available to you. Other times there may be perceivable threat indicators available to you but for a number of reasons you do not perceive them in time, or even not at all.

Level 2 failures occur when there is a failure to comprehend the situation. This can occur in both proactive and reactive violence. This may be due to a lack of training and experience resulting in you not having the correct schema's (mental models) to comprehend. Alternatively, you may have had the appropriate training and experience but in the heat of the moment defaulted to bad and/or inappropriate habits leading to misinterpretation (4).

Level 3 failures occur when there is an inability to project (predict) the unfolding circumstance into the future (4). You may be fully aware of what is going on but are just unable to predict what it means for the future. Breakdowns in SA (L1, 2 or 3) can occur for a number of reasons including a simple lack of attention, distractions, forgetfulness, a lack of experience, a lack of training, fatigue, complacency, sensory overload, misperceptions, misguided expectations and even incongruent goals. These challenges are neatly summarized by Endsley in what she calls SA Demons. Accounting and optimizing for these and other influences on human performance is central to the practice of good SA and developing good preventative self defense strategies. (<https://humanfactors101.com/topics/situation-awareness/>)

## SA Challenges

**Attention Tunneling / Tunnel Vision (SA level 1).** Good SA is dependent on switching attention amongst multiple data streams. Locking in on certain data sources and excluding others is attention tunneling. For example, focusing in on one attacker when there may be multiple (6).

**Requisite Memory Trap (SA level 2):** Forgetting things (i.e. where the nearest exit is, if the VO had a weapon, if there were multiple VO's). The working memory processes and holds chunks of data to support compression in SA (6). The working memory is a limited resource and if it is overloaded or comes under undue stress it may not support you during a VI.

**Workload, Anxiety, Fatigue, and other Stressors (SA level 1 and 2):** Limited working memory when under stress, anxiety and fatigue are likely issues in the warning environment. WAFOS taxes attention and working memory (6). Alcohol consumption and drug use will also significantly reduce working memory.

**Data Overload (SA level 1):** There is more data available than can be processed by the human "band-width" (6).

**Misplaced Salience (SA level 1):** Salience is how "compelling" a piece of data is, often dependent on how it is presented (6). Examples include Con and Ploy tactics, Concealing the Hands and Darting Eyes which may lead you to drop your guard.

**Complexity Creep (SA level 1, 2 and 3):** Complexity slows down the perception of information and it undermines the understanding and the projection of information. It also makes it difficult to develop mental models thereby limiting you ability to read certain subsets of an environment (6).

**Errant Mental Models (SA level 2 and 3):** Use or application of the wrong mental model may result in incorrect interpretation of data. Will lead to mis-assessment of the problem (6).

## 5. Eight Point Path to Self Defense

Remember that the Routines Action Theory Model of Crime (Cohen and Felson in 1979) (9) posits that probability of a crime occurring increases when there is a meeting in time and space of three elements: 1) the motivated offender, 2) the suitable target, and 3) the absence of capable guardian. Motivated offenders are defined as having both criminal intent (motive) and an ability to carry out those intentions (means) if they meet in space and time (opportunity). Target suitability (see Chart 10) is determined by factors that increase the attractiveness of a target as determined by the offender, and influences the occurrence of direct contact with potential offenders. Guardianship can include formal guardians such as the police, but ordinary citizens also act as guardians as they go about their own routine activities.

The implication of this is important in formulating preventative and mitigative strategies. This means that you can prevent and/or mitigate the probability of an occurrence and/or impact of a VI by: 1) reducing your exposure/proximity in time and place to dangerous people, 2) reducing your attractiveness as a high yield target, 3) reducing your vulnerability as an isolated, weak, and unaware target, and 4) increasing the presence of guardianship.

**Chart 10: Target Selection**



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Target Selection is the process of how a VO chooses a potential target for predation. It is not a process that happens within you, but rather, is an internal process that occurs inside the mind of the offender.

Keeping the above theory in mind, the Eight Point Path to Self Defense (see Chart 11 below) succinctly describes eight sequential actionable strategies that you should follow and adhere to in the context of preventing and mitigating risk exposure to interpersonal violence. Keep in mind that the practice of proper Situational Awareness (SA) is absolutely critical to successfully following and implementing these strategies.

**Chart 11: Eight Point Path to Self Defense**



Source: Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Mantis Kung Fu @ 2004 - 2023 Copyright

- **Deter.** Mindfulness, confidence, risk awareness, proper planning and good SA practices will make you a hard target and deter VO's. These practices will either keep you from ever entering the VO's radar, or will trigger the de-selection process as they seek an alternative target for an easy payday. This is deterrence.
- **Detect.** Through proper SA you will be able to proactively identify potential threats in your environment. In doing so you will be able to better predict patterns in violent behavior make best fit decisions that keep you safe. This is detection. ■
- **Disperse.** After identifying a potential threat, you will have time to quickly evaluate the situation, formulate an exit plan and Disperse from the immediate area thereby preventing a bad situation from happening. This is detection. ■
- **Detach.** Unable to disperse, you recognize the VO is locked onto you tracking your movement. You continue reading the macro indicators and are aware of their intentions. You have already evaluated and planned for MLCOA and MDCOA. The VO closes proximity and you are further reading non-verbal and verbal cues. You still have some safe distance, are able to remain calm, and through the use of directional movement including use of your own verbal and non-verbal cues, are able to momentarily halt the interaction and disperse from the immediate area. This is detachment. ■ ■

- De-escalate Unable to detach yourself from the situation, you are face-to-face with the VO, in a potentially dangerous interaction with the situation is escalating rapidly. You comprehend the danger, your intent is focused on the VO, you are reading non-verbal and verbal cues, and you are cognizant of their hands anticipating MDCOA. In the case of affective violence you are able to appear calm, momentarily talk the VO down, and diffuse the situation enough to disperse. In the case of proactive violence (not including IPV), you are able to give them what they want (valuables, wallet, car, etc.) and end the interaction before it goes physically violent, and then disperse. Reducing the intensity of an escalating interaction is de-escalation. ■ ■
- Defend (tactical). You are face-to-face with the VO, unable to de-escalate, and intently aware of the danger you are potentially facing. You are reading multiple pre-attack indicators and you are ready to defend yourself. The VO engages you and you resort to tactical defenses incapacitating them momentarily before dispersing from the immediate area to place of safety where you can regroup. This is defense. ■ ■
- Debrief. You defended successfully and now the interaction is over. Depending on the seriousness of the altercation, who sustained what injuries, to what degree, and if law enforcement is involved, you may or may not need to provide a written statement of what happened. If, in circumstances of justified self defense where you reasonably defended your person against an attack, and in the course of events the was VO injured, you may still be exposed to certain legal and criminal risks. In this regards it is important that you stay nearby in a safe location, call 911, and take mental notes of what happened immediately after the altercation. Be sure to locate witnesses who saw the event and that they stick around. In the case that the VO used a weapon, be sure that its position is not disturbed until law enforcement arrives. When law enforcement arrives be sure to tell them you were the intended victim, you were attacked and that you defended yourself. Depending on the seriousness of the altercation you may also be advisable to seek / await legal counsel before providing any additional details (verbal or written) to law enforcement. Remember that you have the natural, moral and legal right to defend yourself against aggression, not to mention the right to an attorney. I would highly suggest you read my article on the Foundational Concepts and Legal Principals in Self Defense (11) for a more thorough background on self defense law in Canada.
- Decompress. After an altercation has taken place, and depending on the severity of the event, you will need time to decompress, both physically and mentally. In the immediate aftermath, assuming you were able to escape without injury, you will still be suffering from exhaustion and the effects of the HPA stress response. Your body will still be flooded with norepinephrine (adrenaline), your heart and breathing rates will be rapid, you will have no energy reserves left and you may be in a state of shock. Your mind will also require time to clam down before you can begin processing what happened. If you were injured, you may be in need of immediate emergency aid. In the following days and weeks, you may not sleep well as your mind seeks to comprehend and bring meaning to the traumatic event. You may also be on edge and easily triggered in the case of an extreme traumatic event. You may also suffer from varying degrees of PTSD, in which you will need support from family, friends, even professional counselling. This is Decompression.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

As you go about your life and daily routines, situational awareness is the practice of observing your environment to determine contextual degrees of normalcy (baseline), detect anomalies and potential threats, apply critical thinking and judgment to discern predictive patterns of risk, and making actionable best fit decisions to prevent and mitigate risk. Today's article introduced you to the fundamentals of SA, Threat Assessment, REAL State of Awareness and the Eight Point Path to Self defense. In my next upcoming article and the last of this now two year on-going series, I will introduce the Tactical Engagement Cycle which is intimately related to the sixth domain of Defend on the Eight Point Path to Self Defense.

All in all, interpersonal safety and self-defense approached properly incorporates a robust knowledge base across many disciplines that includes biology, psychology, sociology, criminology, and of course the study of tactical self-defense. In this eight-part series on Theory of Mind in Self Defense I have taken you on an educational journey attempting to provide a robust analytical overview into the academic literature, empirical studies, and most importantly applied professional practices on this vast topic.

Regardless of whether you are a martial arts hobbyist or professional combatants instructor, this series will undoubtedly serve as an invaluable resource with which you can study and integrate into our own tactical training and teaching.

As always, be kind, be safe, and train hard!

Nathan Wright  
Chief Instructor, Canada  
Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu

## Footnotes

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# Mantis Publications & Research

March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023



## 2023 Publications



## Past Publications



### Who We Are

We are a diverse group of people dedicated to the transmission and promotion of traditional Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu (Qi Xing Tang Lang Quan). We represent the proud family lineage of Master Luo Guang Yu, who made the style famous in the Shanghai Jingwu Association in 1919. In 2019 we celebrated the 100-year centennial anniversary of Seven Star Mantis in Shanghai.

### Contact Us: Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Mantis Kung Fu Club

#### Canada

Nathan Wright  
Chief Instructor  
nwright@luoguangyu.com  
www.luoguangyu.com  
Facebook @LuoGuangYu

#### New Zealand

Cameron Hirst  
Chief Instructor  
nz.7star@gmail.com



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