

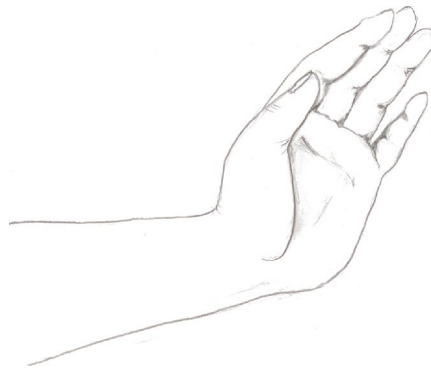
Physical Assertiveness

A proactive strategy for
detering the onset of
violence.

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What Would You Do?

Your leaving public transportation, and you feel like you are being followed...

You are shopping and the store clerk is making inappropriate comments ...

You are passing a bar, when a drunk man steps out and calls out menacingly to you..

You are at a crowded restaurant, when you inadvertently bump a diner, who becomes immediately hostile...

You are parking your car, when you are approached by an angry motorist who claims "you took his space"...

You standing in a crowded train, and a stranger purposely brushes up against you ...

You are at work, and a coworker corners you in a secluded area..

You are working at the store counter when a customer becomes verbally abusive...

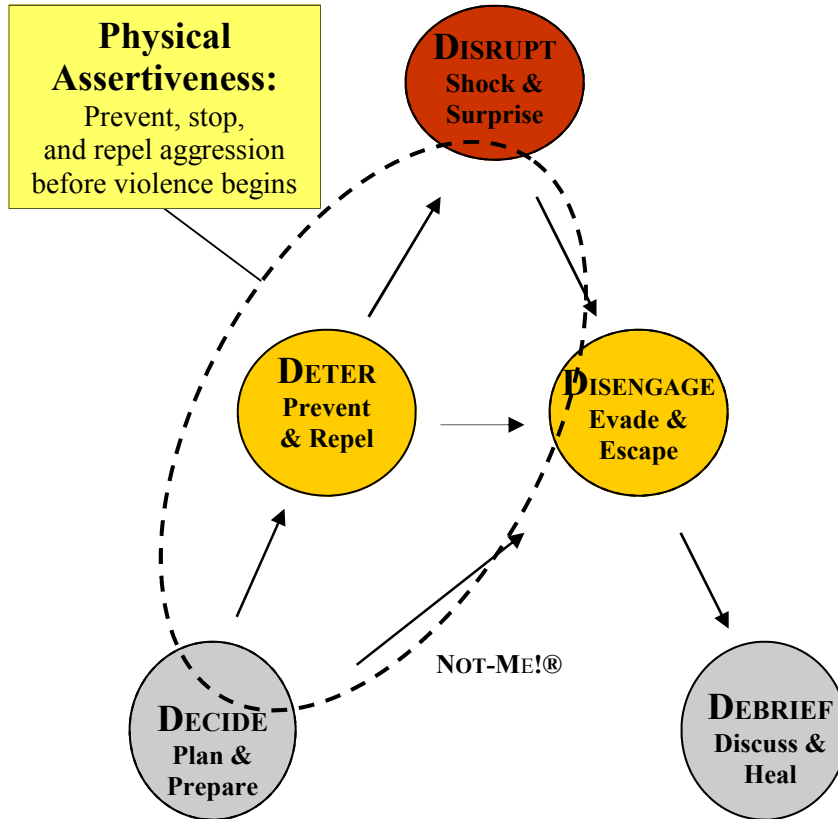
You are waiting in line, when someone forcefully and deliberately cuts in front of you...

You are returning from a social outing, and your date will not take "no" for an answer.

You are at dancing at a club, and an aggressive dancer grabs your wrist, and starts grinding against you...

You are walking down a deserted street at night, and a suspicious person you rapidly from behind...

Physical Assertiveness and the 5 D's of Self-Defense



Physical Assertiveness encompasses a critical portion of a complete plan of self-defense. It represents all of the actions involved in de-escalating, preventing, stopping, and repelling aggression before the onset of violence.

See Appendix B for more information on the 5 D's of Self-Defense.

What is Physical Assertiveness?

Physical assertiveness is the basis of self-defense. It is designed to prevent the on-set of violence through de-escalating, deterring and stopping aggression. It involves using assertive body language and verbal boundary setting, and physically creating space from violations of personal space and unwanted touch.

Physical assertiveness conveys the message of “*I will not be a victim!*.” This message is made stronger through the use of physical actions when necessary. It is effective against predators and aggressors that are seeking passive or submissive ‘victims’. It is effective against bullying and intimidation. It is an effective means to de-escalate and diffuse a confrontation.

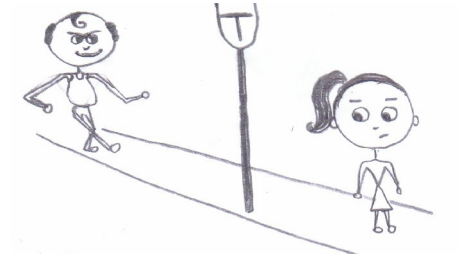
The skills of physical assertiveness do not include either trained “fighting techniques” such as punching, elbowing, kneeling, kicking, or grappling. The responses of physical assertiveness do not include the survival instincts of biting, clawing, gouging, or running.

Therefore, physical assertiveness is not a complete system of self-defense. A highly motivated attacker will not be stopped by physical assertiveness alone. Responding to aggression by a highly motivated attacker will require the violence of either innate survival responses, highly trained “fighting skills,” or a combination of both.

Physical assertiveness is employed to stop violence before it begins.

**“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”
- Ben Franklin**

Creepy Chris encounters Just Jane



Who Needs Physical Assertiveness?

Everyone. Any person who comes in contact with people who are aggressive or potentially violent needs to use physical assertiveness as a means to prevent violence and stay safe.

- School children need it to ward off bullying and the unwanted attention of bullies.
- Teenagers need it to set boundaries with aggressive peers and to deter undesired advances from the opposite sex.
- Adults need it to set limits in in all types of relationships, and encounters with acquaintances, coworkers, and strangers both in employment, and in social settings.
- Parents need it when dealing with out-of-control grown children.

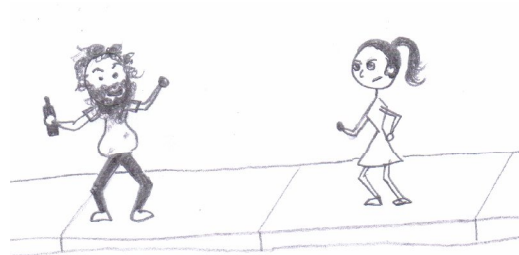
- People in an intimate relationship need it when dealing with an overly controlling or abusive partner.
- The elderly and disabled need it to prevent victimization.
- At-risk individuals need it to repel selective human predators.
- Everyone needs it to ensure they are not taken advantage of and are treated with respect and dignity at all times.

When is Physical Assertiveness Used?

Physical assertiveness is used whenever it is needed

It is used whenever you need to create a physical boundary with another person. It is used whenever you need to insure that your limits are respected. It is used whenever there is a danger that someone will try to take advantage of you.

Drunken Drew spots Passing Patty



How is Physical Assertiveness Used?

Physical assertiveness is the act of sending a message to a potential aggressor/attacker that you will enforce your boundaries with physical actions if necessary. It begins with projecting an assertive demeanor and using body language that reflects your inner conviction not to be violated.

If these initial actions are not enough, then verbal boundary setting is used to clearly specify your limits. If these limits are not respected, you must increase the intensity and conviction behind your words. This method is known as verbal escalation. Violation of verbal boundary setting invariably leads to the need to create physical space with physical actions. These actions include but are not limited to breaking holds and disrupting strikes to stun and warn off the aggressor. All physical actions are reinforced with strong verbal commands.

Why is Physical Assertiveness Effective?

Physical assertiveness is effective because it is a method of communication. It is a proactive, not reactionary response, that is more forceful than confidence and yet not inflammatory like aggressiveness.

Physical assertiveness works because it provides a non-violent resolution to an interpersonal conflict. It combines

forcefulness with a proactive strategy to create an ending to the situation. It simultaneously denies the aggressor the opportunity to attack and motivates the aggressor to reconsider his or her intent to use violence.

Physical assertiveness is based upon equalizing the imbalance of power. The aggressor's initial aggression may be based in part upon his or her belief that he or she has the upper hand in the conflict. This belief transfers to the incentive to use aggression and the threat of violent actions to force his or her desires upon his "victim." Physical assertiveness is designed to demonstrate to the aggressor that he or she has misjudged his or her ability to coerce and intimidate his or her "victim" as first perceived.

How is Physical Assertiveness different from "assertiveness"?

Assertiveness is *defined* as follows: *the quality of being self-assured and assertive.*¹

The *intent* of **assertiveness** is to:

*express your emotions and needs without violating others' rights and in the same time without being aggressive.*²

1: <http://www.allwords.com/word-assertiveness.html>

2: http://www.2knowmyself.com/self_confidence_assertiveness_definition

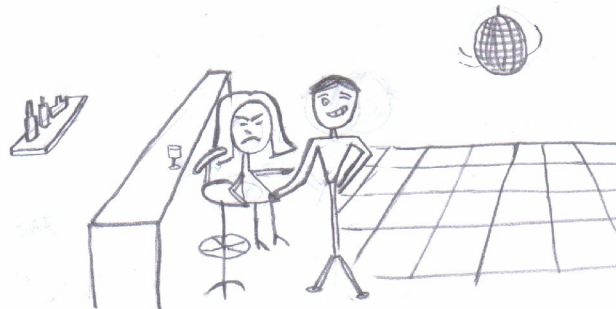
Physical Assertiveness becomes necessary when self-confidence is not enough, when the other is intent upon violating your rights unless you take action to prevent it.

Physical Assertiveness brings the elements of definitive body language and physical positioning to reduce the aggressor's opportunity to attack.

Physical Assertiveness incorporates strong verbal boundary setting to warn an aggressor to maintain his or her distance.

Physical Assertiveness utilizes physical means to create space and repel unwanted touch when necessary.

Flirtatious Fred makes a move on Not-Interested Nancy



How is Physical Assertiveness Different from Self-Defense?

Self-Defense is commonly described as “the act of defending yourself.” As such, Physical Assertiveness is a subset of the universe of self-defense.

Physical actions that are associated with self-defense but not associated with Physical Assertiveness are:

1. Punching, Elbowing
2. Kicking, Kneeing
3. Biting, Gouging, Clawing
4. Tackling, Grappling
5. Striking vital areas such as eyes, throat, and groin
6. The use of weapons
7. Actions with the intent to cause serious injury
8. Fleeing, Evading, Running away

Physical actions that are common to both self-defense and Physical Assertiveness are:

1. Shocking pushes designed to create space
2. Releases from grabs
3. Stunning strikes
4. Loud verbal commands
5. Physical positioning
6. Controlling and utilizing adrenaline

The actions of Physical Assertiveness are designed to minimize the need for the more mutually dangerous and potentially deadly actions associated with full-blown self-defense.

That being said, Physical Assertiveness is not a substitute for complete self-defense. Most likely, it will not be enough to deter and stop a highly motivated attacker.

Examples of Employing Physical Assertiveness

1. You are leaving public transportation, and you feel like you are being followed...

- *You immediately turn and convey with your body language that you are aware of your surroundings and will not be victimized.*

2. You are parking your car, when you are approached by an angry motorist who claims “you took his space”...

- *You place your hands in front of your body and firmly apologize for the misunderstanding, while maintaining your distance.*

3. You are passing a bar, when a drunk man steps out and calls out menacingly to you..

- *You acknowledge his presence without comment as you pass by. You keep a large amount of space between you and the drunk, but you prepare yourself to warn him off if he follows.*

4. You are dancing at a club, and an overly aggressive dancer grabs your wrist and starts grinding against you...

- *You immediately knock off his arm with your free hand to create space between you and him, and in no uncertain terms you tell him to “Back off” and dance elsewhere.*

5. You are walking down a deserted street late at night, and a suspicious person approaches you rapidly from behind...

- *You turn to face him with your hands in your protective stance and provide him space to walk by. If he stops to engage you in conversation, you firmly state that “you are not interested in talking”. If he instead comes closer, you raise your verbal intensity to a very loud “BACK OFF!”*

What May Happen If You Don’t Use Physical Assertiveness

Bully Betty eyes Timid Tina



Physical Assertiveness is a tool for interpersonal communication. It may be employed in a wide variety of circumstances. When dealing with a predatory aggressor who is looking for a passive or submission victim, not employing Physical Assertiveness may encourage the aggressor to increase the level of his aggression.

When not employed as a means to de-escalate and defuse a potentially violent individual, the individual may resort to using violence as a solution to resolve his or her immediate need.

When dealing with an individual that refuses to respect your rights and boundaries not utilizing Physical Assertiveness may result in a one time, or habitual circumstance of victimization.

The use of Physical Assertiveness is designed to not only send a message to others to respect your rights, but to also confirm to yourself that you have the right to protect yourself from intrusion by others, and to not be victimized.

Negative side effects from victimization include:

- increased stress and anxiety
- feelings of lack of control
- bottled or explosive anger
- passivity and depression

Benefits from the use of Physical Assertiveness include:

- a greater feeling of self-worth
- knowledge that situations can be controlled
- lower levels of stress and anxiety.
- reduced situations of conflict

A Step-by-Step Guide to Physical Assertiveness

Physical Assertiveness is comprised of three main elements.

- **Physical Positioning**
- **Communication**
- **Physical Follow-Through**

Physical positioning refers to the position of one person relative to another in the immediate environment. It also refers to the posture of the body and its appendages (body language).

1. The rule for relative positioning is to maintain a five-foot distance between you and a potential aggressor.

2. An effective defensive posture is raising the open hands in front of the body, palms forward, arms bent at a 90° angle at the elbow.

Communication refers to the message that is being conveyed to the aggressor. The message must come from the heart to be effective. An attempt to use bluffing or false bravado is not Physical Assertiveness. True Physical Assertiveness is based upon body language and verbal commands that reflect the sincere desire to prevent and stop

3. Effective verbal commands are variations of “Move away”, “Back Off”, “Knock it off”, “Stop it”, and “No.”

Physical Follow-Through refers to direct physical actions that reinforce the verbal commands. These actions may involve using stuns and strikes to create space and/or release from grabs.

4. An effective technique for enabling release from a wrist grab is a simultaneous strike to the aggressor’s grabbing forearm with the heel of the free hand, and sharp pull with the grabbed arm through the opening between the grabber’s thumb and fingers.

5. An effective method to create space is an explosive shocking strike/push to the aggressor’s inner shoulder joint (brachial plexus tie-in) combined with rapid movement away from the aggressor.

Paul the Predator selects Trusting Tracy



When Physical Assertiveness is Not Enough

In a civilized human interaction, the rules of society determine a person's behavior. Physical Assertiveness works when the rules of society have been bent but not completely broken.

Assume a situation where an aggressor/attacker has no regard for the rights and welfare of his victim. He or she is highly motivated to use force and violence. In this case, Physical Assertiveness alone will not be enough. The situation described is an uncivilized human interaction in which the behaviors determine the "rules." *Might makes right.*

This type of situation requires a complete plan of self-defense, a plan that incorporates the execution of both instinctual and trained techniques of violence intended to disrupt the attacker in to create the opportunity to escape and disengage from the situation.

The ability to successfully execute these actions is dependent upon preparation in the form of creating a strategic plan of action, and also by conditioning the mind and body to deal with the stress and physical demands of this type of violent encounter.

About the Author

Erik Kondo is the founder of NOT-ME! Inc., a non-profit that provides education on self-defense. He has been involved in the martial arts for fifteen years. As a person with a disability, his focus is on self-defense for people at a disadvantage relative to their attacker. His mission is to help people understand *what it really takes* to deal with and survive aggression.

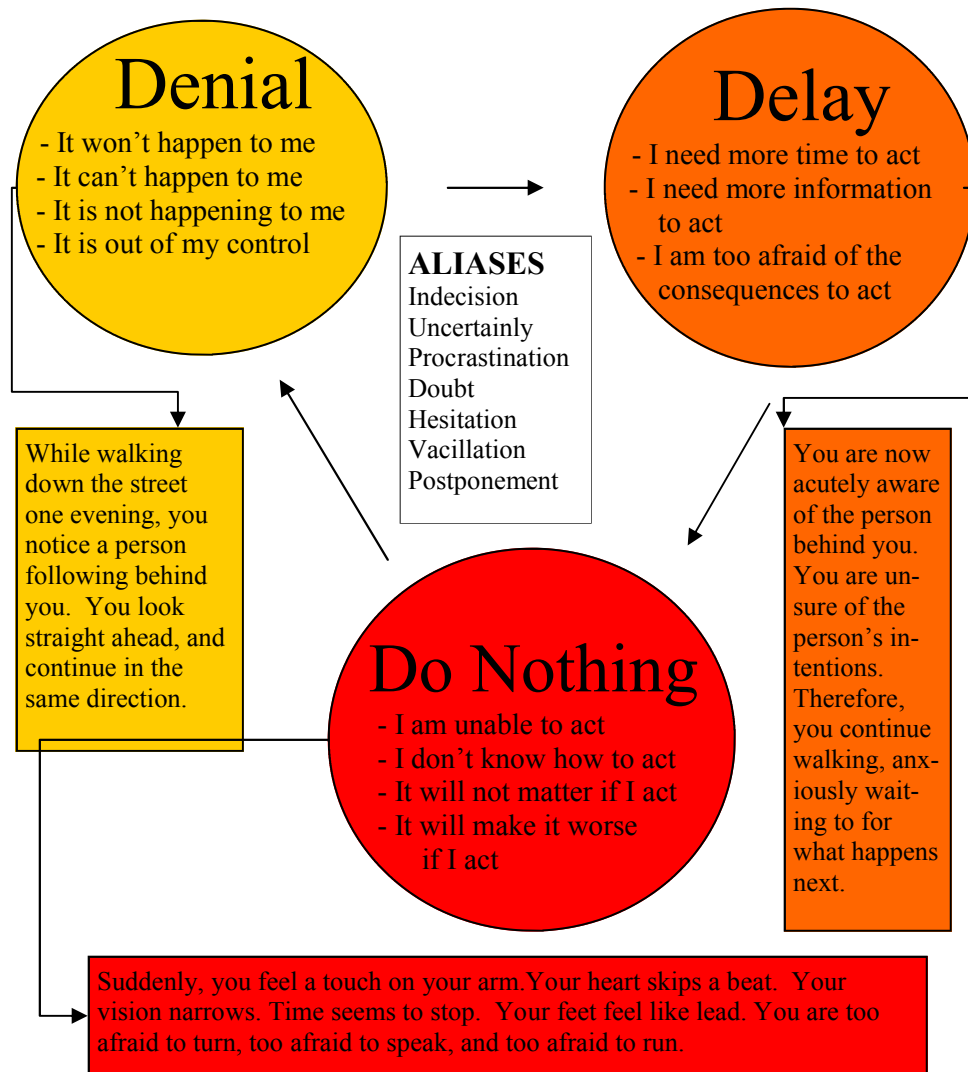
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Appendix A: The D-Cycle of Defeat

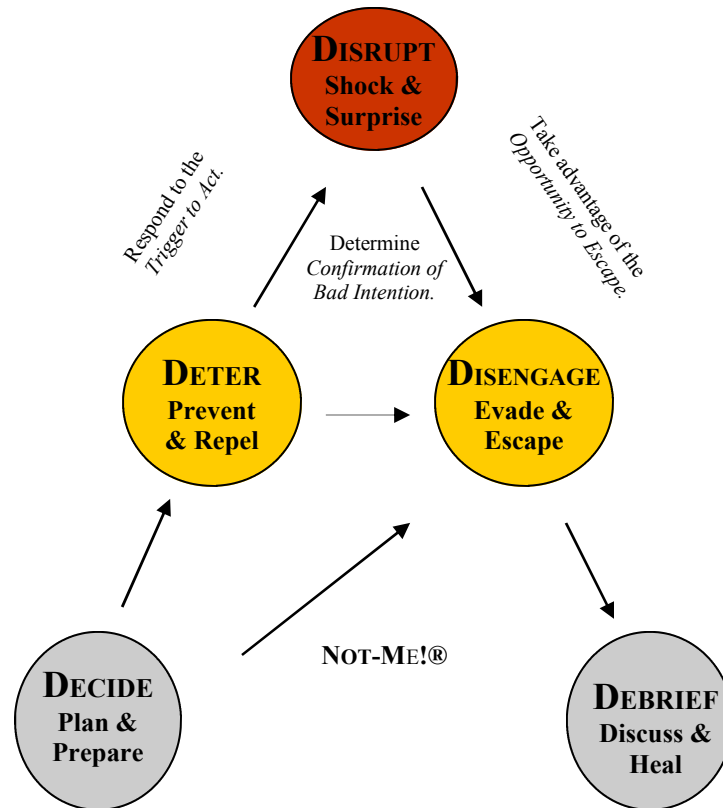
The **D-cycle of Defeat** represents the internal decision making process that occurs when a person is confronted by an unexpected stressful situation. The duration of this cycle may be either short or long term depending upon the individual. The longer the cycle lasts, the more likely that the outcome will be defeat.

Denial is the beginning step of the cycle. The person does not acknowledge the presence of an immediate threat. **Delay** is the 2nd step. The person is aware of the threat, but is unsure of how to respond. **Do Nothing** is the 3rd step. The person is frozen in inaction.

The three steps become a cycle when they form a self reinforcing pattern. **Denial** leads to **Delay**, which leads to **Do Nothing**, which may be part of a larger pattern of **Denial**.



Appendix B: 5D's of Self-Defense



Begins with a plan.

Ends with peace of mind.

DECIDE
 Never be taken to a second location.
 Carry a mobile telephone.
 Take a self-defense class.
 Never give up. Lock your doors.
 Do not accept a ride from a stranger.

DETER
 Be aware of your surroundings.
 Be assertive.
 Stay alert for danger.
 Walk with confidence.
 Use your intuition.

DISRUPT
 Kick to the groin. Stomp on foot.
 Use anything available as a weapon.
 Yell as loud as you can.
 Gouge the attacker's eyes.
 Fight with everything you have.

DISENGAGE
 Flee at the first opportunity.
 Get away as fast as you can.
 Never corner the attacker.
 Have an exit strategy.
 Evade and escape.

DEBRIEF Call the police. Get medical attention. Talk to someone.

"Goals that are not written down are just wishes."
Unknown Author

The 5D Decision for Life

From this day on, I **decide**:

- to plan and prepare to keep myself, and the people I care about safe, and healthy
- to do my best to **deter**, and prevent unsafe, and unhealthy situations from happening to me, or those I love
- to do my best to **disrupt**, and interrupt any unsafe, or unhealthy situation in progress
- to do my best to **disengage**, and get away from an unsafe, or unhealthy situation as soon as I am able
- to **debrief**, and discuss with a trusted person about any unsafe or unhealthy situations that have occurred in the past, or may occur in the future.

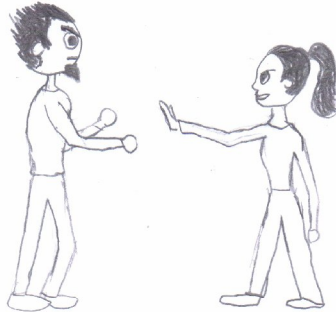
Signed

Date

Reading, considering, and signing the 5D Decision for Life means that you have created a contract with yourself. Only you have the power to enforce it. You have now joined with many others who have also **decided** to take control of their personal safety and well being.

Physical Assertiveness

Troublesome Ted is warned off by Assertive Angie



Physical Assertiveness In the News

Eight Year Old Girl Stops Man Who Attempted to Kidnap Her

Boston, Mass

A man is in jail, charged with attempting to kidnap an eight year old girl as she got on the bus at her elementary school.

The man, 43, of Charlestown, allegedly tried to pull the girl away as she was boarding a bus for home around 2:45 p.m, claiming he was her brother, according to the Suffolk County District Attorney's office. Instead, the girl began screaming: **"No, no! No, I don't know him!"** The man fled and a teacher called police, who found him at Broadway and Cary Street, the DA's office says.

“Physical Assertiveness is what you do, how you do it, when you do it, and who you are!”