

CLERGY

**A Book of Personal Safety
for Clergy**

by

Nick Tolson

For further information visit the website
www.nationalchurchwatch.com

or e mail : *nick@tolson.com*

CLERGY

Copyright – Nick Tolson 2006

The right of Nick Tolson to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988

All information in this book is given as advice and it is entirely the choice of the reader whether or not to apply this advice in any situation. The author cannot guarantee the success or otherwise of the information provided.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

This book is published by Nick Tolson

This book is dedicated to Alison – thanks for putting up with 20 years of daydreaming.

Not forgetting Matt, Bex, Sam, Tim, Andy and Ben.

And, of course, Simon who always encourages me in my work.

The first of many.....

Preface

At almost every seminar that I have run there has been someone who has been assaulted whilst following their vocation as a Minister. These assaults can happen to any minister of any denomination at any time. It does not matter whether you are a newly ordained curate or a very experienced member of the clergy; it does not matter whether you are based in the city, in a town or in a village, you can be faced with a potentially violent person at any time.

The intention of this book is for you to pick and mix any of the many personal safety tips to keep safe. Remember, it is estimated that if you as a minister are assaulted up to 300 people increase their fear of crime. You will not be able to follow your ministry in the way you would like and many clergy have been forced to move on or even retire because of the violence that has been used against them.

Please enjoy this book, the subject is serious but just remember my favourite saying, "*Be Aware, don't be paranoid.*"

Nick Tolson March 2006

Contents

<u>What would you do?</u>	6
<u>Clergy Crime Statistics</u>	7
<u>What is violence?</u>	11
<u>The Clergy Home</u>	12
<u>Less common problems</u>	22
<u>Being safe in the church</u>	24
<u>Visiting other people's homes</u>	26
<u>Incident Management</u>	27
<u>Summary</u>	40

What would you do?

Case Study 1

A town based Church of England Vicar was in his church alone when a man entered into his church. The man asked the Minister for money, when the minister refused the man produced a handgun and placed it in the Minister's mouth. After several minutes the Minister was able to persuade the man to go. The Minister was unable to move for five minutes after this attack due to shock. Eventually he was able to call the police who responded within a few minutes with armed officers who surrounded the church and searched for the offender who was not found. The next Sunday the Vicar was talking with some parishioners after the Sunday service when the man appeared and began to wave the gun round again. The Minister managed to persuade the man outside and eventually managed to get the man to give himself up to the police. The police was called and the man surrendered to armed officers.

Case Study 2

A Minister answered the door at home and was confronted with an apparently homeless man who asked for money to get a train to Cornwall to visit a sick relative. The Minister refused but said he would run the man to the train station where he would buy him a ticket. As the Minister and the man got into the car the man produced a knife and forced the Minister to drive to Cornwall. He released the Minister five hours later when they arrived in Cornwall. The man has never been caught.

Case Study 3

A retired Minister who was looking after a church in interregnum, took in an 17 year old lodger as he felt the young man was in need of help and guidance. The young man began to bully the minister and after 12 months the Minister planned to evict the young man. In a letter the Minister described how the young man in one terrifying incident had sprayed him with deodorant, removed all the light bulbs, locked him in his bedroom, and ripped out the phone lines to prevent his dialling 999. *"He tells me he believes force is the solution to 99% of life's problems,"* the Minister wrote. The very next day after the letter was written the 17 year old drowned the Minister in his own bath and then cut the body into pieces. He then hid the pieces in various places nearby. The Minister was not reported missing for 7 days after he failed to appear for a Sunday service.

Clergy Crime Statistics

CLERGYsafe Survey March 2006

Personal Profiles

Number of clergy questioned - 52

Age range of clergy – 32 years old to 70 years old

Average age – 49 years old

Male Clergy – 33 Female Clergy – 19

Range of length of ordination – 1 year to 43 years Average length of ordination – 12 yrs

Violence

- 48% of all clergy had suffered from some form of violence in the last 12 months;
- 52% of female clergy had suffered from some form of violence in the last 12 months;
- 45% of male clergy had suffered from some form of violence in the last 12 months;
- 40% of all clergy had between 2 and 5 violent incidents in the last 12 months;
- 7% of all clergy had suffered more than 5 incidents in the last 12 months;

Swearing, Shouting and Name calling

- The most common form of violence was swearing, shouting and name calling;
- There were 37 incidents of swearing at a total of 19 (36%) clergy, there were 31 incidents of shouting at 20 (40%) clergy and 15 incidents of name calling to 9 (1.8%) clergy;
- There was one incidence of spitting and one incidence of e mail abuse;

Assaults

- 8 (15%) of all clergy had suffered from violence which resulted in injury
- These 8 clergy had suffered a total of 10 violent incidents
- Most assaults were a punch/kick resulting in actual bodily harm (7 incidents)
- One member of the clergy had been bitten, one was cut with a knife (*minor*) and one vicar reported his vicarage being shot at with a machine gun! (*No injury!*)
- 5 of the assaults occurred in the street (50%), 4 occurred at the vicarage (40%) and one assault occurred at the church (10%)

Independent Academic Research

- In 2001 an Independent study of more than 1,000 Anglican Clergy showed that in the last two years;
 - (i) 7 out of 10 clergy surveyed had experienced some kind of violence;
 - (ii) 7 out of 10 clergy had been verbally abused;
 - (iii) 1 in 5 were threatened with harm;
 - (iv) 12% were physically assaulted;
 - (v) 4 in 10 were afraid of becoming a victim while at work;
 - (vi) 90% of clergy had not received any personal safety training of any sort.

- In 2001 an Independent Study of crime against Places of Worship in Somerset found;
 - (i) Of the 77 clergy surveyed, 16 had been assaulted a total of 26 times in the last 2 years!
 - (ii) 20 of the assaults occurred during robberies;
- In July 2001, a charity produced a Community Safety practice briefing on Faith Communities for the Home Office, it states;

"In one of the local government areas where Nacro is conducting an audit of crime and disorder, 31 of the 37 people in public ministry roles (ie clergy or full time lay workers) had been threatened with assault or assaulted. Of the 19 who had actually been assaulted 12 of them now have some persistent medical or psychological health burden as a result of their victimisation."

What is violence?

A good definition is;

"Any Behaviour which produces damaging or hurtful effects, physically or emotionally, on people."

- Verbal Abuse is violence if you feel uncomfortable, upset or threatened by it.
- The threat of violence can be as bad as an actual assault if you believe it.
- Physical assault (*Whether injury is caused or not*) is never acceptable.
- Violence can be face to face, written, by telephone or via e mail.

The Clergy Home

- Remember, it is your home and no-one has the right to enter without permission.
- It is good to remember how your house is perceived by others;
 - (i) Clergy homes are often larger than other properties in the neighbourhood, and often in a good position
 - (ii) Your home is your office, therefore your office is your home so you are always available
 - (iii) Clergy homes are often the only place after 5pm to find an 'official' (*Such as a police officer, teacher, doctor or other professional*).
 - (iv) Clergy homes are often the only place where an official is present at all!
 - (v) Clergy are rich because you have a good house, a nice garden and only work on Sunday's! (*I think not!*)
- There are several reasons why you really must think about personal safety at the clergy home;
 - (i) If you are alone, you are vulnerable or at least perceived by others to be vulnerable
 - (ii) If you are married your spouse will answer the door as well!
 - (iii) Female clergy are often targeted by those who see them as 'weak'
 - (iv) If you have children, they will also answer the door, even if you tell them not to!
 - (v) You are often perceived as the last chance for people who are desperate and think that they have tried all other alternatives
- (i) Desperate people do desperate things. If you don't give them the answer they want then violence is seen by them as achieving some sort of action

Top Ten Tips - the Clergy Home

1. Make **sure** you can see out of your front door but people cannot see in;
2. Have somewhere for people to sit outside of your front door;
3. **Never** open the door if you are suspicious of someone, talk through the door if necessary ;
4. **Always** fit a smoke detector over the front door on the inside;
5. Make sure children **ALWAYS** use the chain on the front door;
6. **Never** be afraid to shut the door if you feel at risk;
7. **DO NOT** put up with abuse from anyone
8. **Never** be alone with anyone in your house who you are not 100% sure of;
9. Remember **50%** of assaults are from parishioners, do not let anyone in who is behaving oddly, even if you know them!
10. Be firm, it is **YOUR** home, no-one has the right to enter it.

On the Doorstep

- Make some simple preparations;
 - (i) You should have strengthened glass panels on either side of the door to see who is there
 - (ii) If your door is double glazed or similar then stick one way plastic onto it. This plastic can be found in most DIY stores. You can now see out but they can't see in
 - (iii) If your door is solid, you **MUST** have some means to see who is outside. The cheapest way is a spy hole (£2.50) or consider a CCTV system (£100). A simple door entry system with an intercom can cost as little as £50
 - (iv) There should be at least two locks on the door, one of which is a deadlock
 - (i) Do not leave the key in the lock, have it nearby usually behind a curtain or similar
 - (ii) fit a chain on the door, and make sure you use it if you are uncomfortable with the person you can see outside

- Put a garden bench immediately outside your door to allow people to sit and wait or to eat their food sitting down if you give them any

- Keep a wedge of wood next to, but behind the door. If you are talking to someone and they are getting agitated use your foot to manoeuvre it into position behind the door as you talk to them. If they try and push the door open to get to you the door will jam against the wedge and prevent the door opening for a few seconds, allowing you to escape or call for help. If possible, as soon as they release the pressure on the door, slam it shut.

- ❑ Alternatively get into the habit of placing your foot just behind the door as you speak to someone. If they do push the door your foot will stop it and you can slam it shut if appropriate.
- ❑ If you look through the spy hole or window and someone is holding an obvious weapon (*Even if they are not brandishing it about!*) DO NOT open the door. If the door is open, slam it shut immediately without communicating to the person. Then call the police! Carrying a weapon around is a very serious criminal offence.
- ❑ If you must communicate with them do so from an upstairs window or through the door. Do not be persuaded to open the door!
- ❑ Have a guard placed on your letterbox to prevent people seeing through, or reaching through to open the door. These are easily available and cost about £5 It also prevents fireworks being fired through the letterbox as has happened on many occasions
- ❑ ALWAYS have a smoke detector fitted over the front door on the inside. *These are extremely cheap and are easy to fit. There have been quite a number of incidents recently where burning liquid has been poured into the clergy home via the letterbox. If possible always have a small fire extinguisher nearby Always call the fire brigade and the police even if it is a small fire and is out. Events like this are always a forerunner of serious problems if left alone.*
- ❑ Plan now. What would you do if you have to slam the door in someone's face? (*They are not going to be happy!*)
 - (i) How would you call the police?
 - (ii) Can you get out of the house, if required, without being seen from the front?
 - (iii) Have you spoken to your spouse and children about what to do if there is a problem at the front door?

- (i) Who would you inform after an incident? (*Church members, fellow clergy, police, etc etc?*)
- (ii) Can someone easily get around the back of the house if they wanted to?
- (iii) Is there anyone who lives nearby who would help you if you had a problem?

Some Common issues relating to the Front Door

- NEVER give money to someone at the door. The reasons for this are twofold;
 - (i) You are not really helping that person. If they are a drug addict they will probably use the money on drugs and even the worst drug addicts are good actors. You won't know whether the story is genuine or not. It is probably not!
 - (ii) You are putting your colleagues at risk because they may not give money. If you do the person has ammunition to abuse your colleague. Giving money raises the expectation of these people that everyone will give money.
- However, this doesn't mean that you can't love these people but it really has to be a tough love.
- Do not just say "No" to these people, always offer an alternative
- Have some tins ready for hungry people. You can get self heating tins these days. Do not be afraid to ask the PCC for a small budget to assist you with this practical help in your ministry
- Have some bin bags close by with some spare clothes and shoes in it. Let the person choose what they want outside.

- If someone asks for train tickets or similar, treat it as if they are asking for money. You will not be able to tell if the story is genuine or not, even if you are experienced! Almost all of these stories are false!
- Again, offer alternatives. Perhaps you could contact a relative or friend for them?
- Have 24 hour emergency numbers for social services, the local police station and health professionals near to hand. If you do not know them, ask your local policeman for them
- Never, ever let the person at the door use the phone. There have been examples of people saying they need to use the phone to contact someone urgently and then making an obscene phone call to someone! Remember it is your phone number that will be recorded, try explaining that to the police!!!!
- Always phone first. Make sure the person on the other end is happy to receive the call.
- It is extremely useful to have some sort of portable phone for the people to speak from outside your door. Do not let them into your house under any circumstances.
- If the person at the door says, "*I need to speak to someone.....*" Try and make an appointment for the next day. This is usually no problem that is truly a life and death situation
- If the person is insistent and you think that it is genuine, try and deal with it on the doorstep, or perhaps sit on the garden seat outside. Avoid inviting them in unless it is absolutely necessary. Do not invite them in if you are on your own. Ask them to wait and make contact

with someone nearby who is willing to pop around and sit in your kitchen while you deal with the person

- Keep a record of the people who call in a small log book. You should do this;
 - (i) for your own use
 - (ii) as a database
 - (iii) for the police to refer to if required and appropriate
 - (iv) for future use if something goes wrong
 - (v) for any future clergy who may take over your parish

- Consider having an arrangement with a local takeaway. However, be slightly wary as food vouchers or other methods of obtaining food can become a currency amongst homeless people

Your Family

- If you have a spouse (*and/or children*) always talk through how you think that they should deal with callers at the door

- You are trained and experienced, your spouse and your children are not

- Contrary to popular parish belief, your spouse is not an unpaid curate! Encourage them not to become one! It is ok to say “No”

- They are not necessarily pastors but they will have to deal with people pastorally now and then

- Talk through the following issues;
 - (i) when you are out, who answers the door?
 - (ii) Should the children ever answer the door?

(i) If you have baby sitters, explain to them that they shouldn't answer the door unless you have made an arrangement. Be strict with them!

- If children are allowed to answer the door consider putting a spy hole in at child height and instruct them on when they shouldn't open the door
- Get children to put the chain on the door every time when they open it. Make it a habit
- If need be get them to say, *"I'm sorry the my mum/dad is not available at the moment, please call back tomorrow."* Tell them it's ok to then shut the door without getting into a conversation
- Children under 12 really shouldn't answer the door, and certainly without an adult being immediately behind them
- A number of husbands have been a little over protective of their spouses who are ordained. A little note to them,

"It's ok! Let your wife deal with it, it's her job! But it is fine to be near while she's dealing. Don't be tempted to interfere unless there is a dire emergency!"
(I hope that's ok ladies!)

- All clergy homes should have a personal attack alarm by their front door. The button should be placed high up on the inner door frame (*Which stops an errant child from messing with it!*). Think through when you are going to use it.

- Use the personal attack alarm if someone threatens you, attempts to attack you or actually attacks you. You can even use it if someone commits criminal damage to your door (*ie kicks it*) when you shut it because you feel unsafe.
- If someone should force their way into your home press your personal attack alarm immediately. If appropriate insist that they leave immediately. If they are at all violent or threatening, leave the house and go to a neighbour for help. Always call the police. What would you do if you had children in the house? Think it through now!
- If you have called the police, call a colleague for support. Who would you call, think it through now. Warn other clergy in the immediate area as it is common for someone who is violent to go immediately to another clergy home
- Never feel guilty about calling the police. They really won't mind if it turns out to be a false alarm! They would rather turn up and find the person gone then be called because someone hasn't seen you for a while!

Welcoming people into your home

- Almost all clergy homes are also part of their place of work. In an ideal world no member of the clergy should ever invite people they don't know very well into their home. This includes members of the congregation!
- If possible arrange appointments in the church, or other area as long as it doesn't put you at extra risk.
- It may take a few weeks for people to register that you would prefer to meet them elsewhere, particularly if your predecessor had an 'open house' policy. Stick to your guns, it's your home!
- Many clergy will not be able to talk to people elsewhere so you need to take some practical steps to protect yourself whilst in your home.

The Study

- Make a definite separation between your work place (i.e. study) and your home. By this I mean always take people into your study to talk. Only let genuine friends into your front room. Be strict! Remember you are allowed to have some privacy in your own home!
- Set your study up so that when you are sat with someone, you are nearest the door. Remember, you may have to leave quickly!
- Never, ever leave anyone alone in your study
- Have a kettle and some disposable cups in the study so you don't have to leave them to make a cup of tea
- Have coffee, tea, water and soft drinks in your study
- Have a ready supply of tissues, baby wipes and a cloth in case of any 'accidents'
- If someone needs to use the loo then escort them and wait outside until they finish.
- Do not go to the toilet yourself unless you are desperate! Going to the loo is all part of preparing for your guest!
- If you are to be alone with someone, never shut your study door. If something is being said confidentially then just lower your tone of voice and lean forward. The person will naturally copy your level of voice.
- If someone is insistent that you close the door, be suspicious. Explain that you are not allowed to due to Diocesan policy. Remember there have been

many accusations made when clergy have behaved properly, but have been on their own

- If someone's behaviour becomes inappropriate, immediately bring the meeting to a close, give an excuse, such as having a service or another appointment. Say that you will ring them. When you do, ensure that there is another adult present or nearby to ensure that the inappropriate behaviour doesn't repeat itself.
- Do not be afraid to tell someone to stop behaving inappropriately.

Less common problems

- **YOU MUST GET HELP!** (*If your house is on fire you call the fire brigade!*)
- Recognise that you do not have to deal with the problems on your own. There are people who will help. Try and confide in someone who can actually help, rather than someone who will give tea and sympathy (*Although that is important as well, but it won't solve the problem!*) because they haven't got any experience with dealing with these more difficult problems.
- **Harassment** – When someone decides to try and make your life difficult through repetitive actions. This could be by silent or abusive phone calls, letter writing or other actions.
- You must not ignore harassment in whatever form that it takes. It is usually best to seek 'official' help. For the telephone it may be BT, with abusive letters, the police are probably best.
- For someone (*usually a parishioner*) who is non-violent but persists in harassing, such as turning up for every service and staring at you or similar, it is better to get a colleague to talk to them. This would usually be the Archdeacon. The important thing is to ensure that the pastoral care of the person is passed on and not just abandoned.

- Consider engaging a private investigator. For example you could call me! I investigate a number of these sorts of incidents every year. (*Thought I'd get a plug in quick!*) Make sure the person who is engaged is a recognised professional with the appropriate professional indemnity insurance.
- An investigator will cost anything between £1000 and £5000. This may seem a lot but they are usually successful and can be much more effective than an overworked, not very interested police force!
- Make sure that any letters or similar that come are sealed into a plastic wallet. **DO NOT** let anyone handle them or examine them without gloves on. I have had several cases where letters have been contaminated by well intentioned people who want to help.
- Sometimes your home can become subject to repetitive attacks by youngsters or others. If this happens it is important that you tell someone, such as the police or community leaders. If the attacks are severe, then the Diocese should be encouraged to consider selling the clergy home and buying one near to the church rather than right next to it. This often solves the problem of aggressive visitors at the door, yet the member of the clergy is still within the parish!
- Make sure you make a record of every incident, this is vital for the police/council if they wish to apply for an ASBO (*anti social behaviour order*) against the people causing you problems.

Being safe in the church

- Look at how you operate within your church.
- How busy is it? Have you a room in which you see people? How many people actually come to the church to ask for money?
- It is far better to see people in your church after making an appointment with them
- Most violence comes from those who have arrived with no appointment
- Any room that you use as a parish office or other meeting room should be laid out according to a study in your own house.
- All parish offices with any sort of equipment such as computers and photocopiers should be alarmed. This should preferably be a monitored alarm, but a very loud internal alarm (*Which costs about £30 or so*) is an absolute must!
- Always talk about personal safety and security with your staff whether volunteer or paid staff
- Consider issuing personal attack alarms to your staff, not to scare them, but just to remind them that they are vulnerable and that they need to be careful no matter where they live
- Think about how you would call the police if there was a problem. Does your church have a phone? Is it easily accessible? Do mobile phones work within your building? Whose responsibility is it to alert the police? Talk it through with your church council.
- How would you deal with a problem during a service? Although it is the responsibility of the churchwardens to deal with any disturbance, is that practical?

- Would you stop a service and deal with the problem yourself? Perhaps there are members of the congregation (*Such as police officers or ex police officers*) who would be able to deal with this? Try and identify them and talk through the likely problems
- Have a policy about protesters. Even the smallest church can become a target for local protestors. A good method is to allow any person who disturbs a service in order to protest 2 minutes to say their piece. After two minutes they are asked to sit down or leave. This is a reasonable thing to do and you will find that people are so shocked at being given the opportunity to speak they usually waste the opportunity!
- If you have fairly frequent disturbances, such as youngsters banging on windows or drunks disturbing the service then encourage the police to enforce the Public Order Act or talk to your local council about getting an ASBO (Anti-social behaviour order). It is a big step but sometimes necessary.

Visiting other people's homes

- It is very rare that you will have a problem in other people's homes. However, you will usually be there at a time of great stress, such as a person dying, and it may be that the emotion that people feel will manifest itself in violence.
- Ensure that it really is necessary for you to go into that person's home. Is there any way to get the person to your territory? (*Either church or home*)
- Try and plan ahead. Know exactly where you are going.
- Always tell someone where you are going or at least have an arrangement where you will ring someone at an appointed time to say that you are ok
- Leave an itinerary in a sealed envelope at home if you do not wish people to know where you intend to go. It's vital that there is some way of tracing where you went if you failed to come home
- Try and ascertain who is in the house you are intending to visit before you get there!
- Go in daylight if possible
- Remember that you are entering their space
- When you arrive, remember that you are the visitor
- Let them know how long you have if possible
- Wait to be invited in or at least ask if you can come in
- Do not enter if you are uncomfortable. (*ie when someone is extremely drunk or disturbed*)

- How would you leave? Perhaps you could pretend that your mobile phone is on silent and someone is calling you. You can always pretend that you have left something in your car.
- As you go in, note how the front door locks, you may need to leave in a hurry!
- Try and sit nearest the door
- Do not spread any documents around, you may not want to spend time gathering them up if someone becomes violent, or otherwise difficult
- If there are pets, such as dogs, in the room where you are speaking to someone, ask them to be put in another room while you are there.

Incident Management

- Understanding the process of an incident helps you to take action to prevent it.
- There are three elements to any incident;
 - (i) Victim
 - (ii) Offender
 - (iii) Opportunity
- Remove one of these elements and the incident will not occur or will stop.
- Thinking about common incidents now will save time and might make the difference between injury and nothing happening.
- Most clergy/churchworkers will deal with particular personal safety incidents again and again. *(such as beggars at the door, the drunk at the church, homeless people, members of the community with mental illness)*

- ❑ Start with the most common incidents you personally have to face in your Place of Worship and prepare!
- ❑ For example, do you have a list of statutory and non-statutory agencies for the homeless in your home. Are their 24 hour numbers hanging by the phone?

Dealing with Incidents

Remember.....

The way you react to someone will affect the way they react to you!

- So THINK before you act or react
- There are three elements to dealing with any incident;
 - (i) Calming
 - (ii) Reaching
 - (iii) Controlling
- Calming - Ensure that you are calm;
 - (i) Pause for a moment before opening that door,
 - (ii) Take a deep breath, savour the extra oxygen,
 - (iii) Relax your muscles,
 - (iv) Think through very quickly how you would deal with this situation,
 - (v) What are the likely outcomes?
 - (vi) What if something unexpected happens?
 - (vii) Are you sending out non-verbal aggressive signals (*Such as pointing at someone!*)
 - (viii) Do you usually appear aggressive and threatening or passive and able to be exploited? Ask someone who knows you and is honest enough to tell you!
 - (ix) Practice being firm but not overbearing or weak in an incident.

- Calming - the other person
 - (i) Avoid saying "*Calm Down!*"
 - (ii) Listen to what they are saying, there may be clues buried in a torrent of words,
 - (i) Let them talk as long as possible, the more they talk the less inclined they may be to be violent as talking is exhausting,
 - (ii) Watch them, see if there are visible signs that they are calming down,
 - (iii) Do not argue, disagree by all means, but not in an argumentative or aggressive manner,
 - (iv) Be yourself. Do not hide behind a title or officialdom. This will only inflame a situation.

- Reaching - If they are showing signs of calming down, begin to reach out to them;
 - (i) Once a dialogue has begun, try to understand the root cause of the upset,
 - (ii) Listen carefully, repeat the relevant facts back to them to ensure you understand the problem,
 - (iii) Smile, if appropriate. Don't make it seem patronising!
 - (iv) If appropriate, make notes to show them that you are taking them seriously,
 - (v) Deal with the simple matters first, and then try and tackle the complex ones,
 - (vi) Always offer alternatives if you have to say "NO" (*ie do not give money, but offer food*)
 - (vii) Never argue, inform the person of your intentions politely, simply and clearly.

- Controlling - Remember, you are in charge;
 - (i) Do not allow the person to dictate to you,
 - (ii) Always be polite, but always be firm,
 - (iii) Do not change your mind unless it is absolutely obvious you need to!
 - (iv) If you need to end a conversation, be honest and tell them why,
 - (v) Establish realities. Do not get their hopes up if there is no realistic prospect of something happening,

Body Language

- 7% of communication is verbal
- 38% of communication is voice tone
- 55% of communication is non - verbal (*ie body language!*)
- Body Language is your way of identifying potential personal safety risk situations,
- Most body language cannot be hidden, even if you try,
- Your body language in an incident is as important as the potential offender's,
- The reading of body language is a skill that everyone already has,
- Reading the body language is easy, interpreting and acting upon that information is the hard bit!
- Acting upon body language is a skill that needs to be practised.
- People who are violent can be one or more of the following;
 - (i) drunk,
 - (ii) drugged,
 - (iii) Very Angry,
 - (iv) Fearful,
 - (v) Mentally Ill
 - (vi) Medically ill (*ie head injury, epilepsy, hypoglycaemia, etc.*)

- With (i) - (iv) above body language before violence is actually enhanced and more easily spotted.
- With (v) & (vi) it can be more difficult but mentally ill people usually display verbal language that warns you that something is wrong.
- If words are saying one thing and their body language is saying another then be alert.
- Always trust your instincts. If something is making you feel uncomfortable never suppress it, ACT on it. The worse that can happen is that you feel a little bit of a fool. If you don't act on it you can become a victim.
- There are 156 physical changes to someone who is considering to use violence against you.
- These are caused when the cerebral cortex (*the intelligent part of the brain*) shuts down and lets the Cerebellum and brain stem (*The animal parts of the brain*) take over.
- The cerebellum and brain stem are there to control the basics in life such as instinctive reactions (*Freeze, Flight and Fright*) and fighting.
- Body Language can be divided up into two distinct areas;
 - (i) Warning Signs
 - (ii) Danger Signs

- Warning Signs are when someone is becoming agitated and is violence is becoming an option for them. The signs include;

- (i) Prolonged Staring

The person wants to show you that he is 'top dog' and you will do his will

- (i) Facial Colour may change

Often the neck behind the ears, or the cheeks will redden as the heart pumps faster as the person unconsciously 'shows off'

- (i) Head tilts back as person tries to 'stand tall'

This is especially true for someone shorter than you. In any confrontation it is better to be taller than someone to scare them. Think about policemen moving up and down on their toes, it's intended to intimidate.

- (i) Kicking the ground

This is an unconscious act to ensure the ground you're fighting on is firm. Much like a bull does in the bullring.

- (i) Changing weight on feet

Similar to (iv) above, it's about checking the ground is secure.

- (i) Exaggerated movement, especially arms and hands

A lot of this is about bravado. The person is trying to intimidate you into submission. They may not realise it but their animal brain knows that it is always better to not fight if at all possible.

- (i) Abrupt starting and stopping of nervous behaviour

Almost like a schizophrenic who actually talks to themselves, most people will have this inner battle for a few seconds as they make the final decision to attack. The animal brain knows that to fight is dangerous, but will usually believe that it can win.

- You may have 1 to 2 minutes when these warning signs are displayed and you can take action to interrupt the violence cycle (*See below*)

- The Danger Signs. This is when the animal brain of a person weighed the options and because it is acting out of the influence of drink, drugs, mental illness, anger or fear, it has decided to fight. You may see;

- (i) Clenching and unclenching of fists

This is to assist the heart (Which is now beating very rapidly) to pump oxygen around the body, but especially the muscles.

- (i) Face goes pale

As the blood pumps to the muscles and to the vital organs, such as the liver and kidneys, it will draw blood away from the surface of the skin.

- (i) Head drops forward to protect throat

From standing tall to impress, the animal brain will drop forward to protect the weakest part of the body, the throat. Hit the throat and death or serious injury is a likely outcome. The animal brain wants to protect the throat and will therefore drop the chin to cover it as much as possible.

- (i) Hands raise above the waist

In order to hit someone, and to maintain balance, the animal brain will bring the arms up to allow them to be pulled back to add power to the punch. Almost no-one will hit when there hands are below their waist.

- (i) Stance changes to side on

Again, like (iv) this allows a lot of force to be put into the arms in order to try for the 'knockout' blow. Also, the person has much better balance when they stand side on.

- (i) Glancing at intended target

The person needs to be reassured that they will win by hitting you. They will therefore glance to ensure they haven't misjudged the situation. (Of course, due to their drink/drug/anger/illness/fear it will seem absolutely the right thing to do!)

- (i) Lowering of body before attack

Again, in order to put the most amount of force onto target (You!) the person will slightly bend their legs to move suddenly against you.

- You have 2 to 3 SECONDS to act when these signs appear. This may not seem long, but in a violent situation your body will dump adrenaline into your bloodstream and you will be amazed how quickly you can think!

Self Rescue Action

- First and foremost you will need to interrupt the cycle of violence that starts with the warning signs being displayed. This can be achieved by trying any of the following;

- (i) Give in

Give the person what they want if it stops them assaulting you. Assuming that what they want is practical and involves no major loss to you. (i.e. give them a fiver Your physical well being is worth more than a few quid or a principle. However, ensure that you report it to the police, and your colleagues, and review your procedures and security. Could you have dealt with it in a different way? Are there any security devices that may have helped?

- (i) Lie

Say something like, "hold on a second, I'll just go and get what you want." Or "I'll just check with my colleagues whether that is ok" Most people will wait while you get away. Almost all will pause a few seconds while they digest what you have said. Don't wait for them to answer or acknowledge, just get away and close your front door. Then call the police, or ask someone to come around. Lying in order to prevent violence to you or any other person is absolutely acceptable.

- (i) Pretend to be sick

This is especially effective if someone has hold of you or has actually hit you. Say you feel sick, bend over at the waist and hold your mouth. Look away from the person and stumble away as if looking for a toilet. Make the appropriate retching sounds! (A good tip is to practice this with your children, it's quite entertaining!) You are not very

threatening if you are being sick. The person will back off and believe that he has incapacitated you. They will probably think that you are a big softy! But in the end, if you get away without injury, who cares!

- ❑ Get away if you feel threatened in any way. Never run, walk quickly if needed
- ❑ Try not to turn your back literally, but walk away at an angle.
- ❑ Step back while you are talking
Always step back when any of the warning or danger signs appear. Take a very slow, gentle step backwards to increase the distance between you, preferably out of their arm reach, but at least far enough away that if they do try and hit you it will be with less force due to the distance the punch or kick has to travel.
- ❑ Talk
Let them talk and then you talk. The more they talk, the more energy they will use and the less inclined they will feel like hitting you. If you are talking watch their body language to make sure you are saying the right things
- ❑ Put your hands up!
Not as in surrender! Raise your hands above your waist with the palms open and facing almost upwards. This is a very non-threatening gesture. Should someone try and hit you your arms and hands are in the way of the important parts of your body, and also it takes a microsecond to raise them up to protect your head. It is far less painful to be hit on the arm or hand, than on your main body or head!
- ❑ Stand sideways on.
Whilst talking, put your favoured leg behind your weaker one to a distance of eight inches or so. Get your balance and keep your head facing the front. This presents the person with a side on view and less of a target to hit.

- Practice this, linking it with stepping backwards and putting your hands up. If done slowly the person you are talking to will not notice that you are preparing, just in case violence is used. Try and make it natural, practice it with people who are no threat whatsoever. Eventually you will do this as a habit, and this is a good habit to have.

- Try and be calm, confident and objective

- Do not be domineering

- Be non-critical

- Do not touch anyone who is arguing with you

- Do show concern and understanding

When someone attacks

- Of course, sometimes people will be intent on attacking you, no matter what. Or perhaps you were preoccupied and didn't notice the signs. If this happens then try the following;
 - (i) step backwards quickly, maintaining your balance
 - (ii) if not doing so already, stand sideways on,
 - (iii) raise your left arm to shoulder height and lock the elbow
 - (iv) Put your left palm facing the attacker in a 'stop' sign like the police use!
 - (v) Put your right hand at chest level with your right elbow bent, the palm facing the attacker
 - (vi) As they lunge forwards, shout, "NO!", "Leave me alone!" or similar
 - (vii) Keep stepping backwards as far as possible, try not to be threatening
 - (viii) If you can't step backwards, step sideways. Keep moving!

- This posture is very non-threatening, however you are literally keeping the person at arm's length. If they try and hit you again and again, keep shouting.

- Remember it is far less painful for your arms to be hit than your body or head.
- Keep shouting as if there is someone near. Hopefully there is, but your assailant will not know whether there is or not

Self Defence

- By this I mean break away holds or control and restraint techniques
- The law states that you may use 'reasonable' force deemed necessary and reasonable in the circumstances. 'Reasonable' means that amount of force which is sufficient to stop the attacker or to prevent yourself or someone else from being injured
- Each case is taken on it's own merits
- It is not recommended to use self-defence unless you are fully trained. It takes 3 to 5 years to master a self defence technique to an adequate standard
- Violence breeds violence
- Once you become a threat (*i.e. you have tried to fight back using self-defence*) the person attacking you may well move up the level of violence in order to win. This might mean they pull out a knife and stab you. Remember these are not normally people behaving rationally. Your job is to stay alive!
- If someone uses violence against you, always call the police using the 999 system as soon as practicable after the event.
- You have a duty to protect other people. If you do not report the violence then your colleagues or others may well have violence used against them by your attacker because having used it once, he won't worry about using it again.

- You do not have to reveal to the police what was said by the offender prior to the violence if it was said in confidence, such as in confession. The offence is the assault on you, that is not covered by confidentiality!

REPORT IT!

- You should not interfere with any evidence that is left behind by any offender.
- Always try and protect any evidence from being degraded, such as covering blood or spit up if it is raining and likely to be washed away.
- If you do decide to try and stop someone just remember that a person in a state of excitement, or who is struggling violently, will have a rapid heart beat and be breathing rapidly. This means that they need more oxygen so it is always dangerous to sit on the person's chest or to put an arm around the throat from behind.

Summary

It is very easy to be afraid of becoming a victim. It is something that you just need to take some preventative action just as you do when you put a smoke detector in your house to prevent you being harmed in the case of a fire by giving you an early warning. (At least I hope you do!) If you need any more assistance please do not hesitate to contact me via my e mail at *nick@tolson.com*

I hope you have found this publication helpful.

Remember.....

“Be aware, don't be paranoid!