

A bring-to-your-trainer guide

A behavior-first, trauma-sensitive framework for awareness, boundaries, escape, help-seeking, safe scenario practice, and measurable progress.

VERSION 1.0 | PLANNING AND EDUCATION RESOURCE

What this guide is

A structured conversation aid for an adult learner and a qualified trainer. It is not tactical instruction, certification, individualized safety planning, legal advice, or a guarantee of protection.

The person who chooses violence is responsible for it. A learner may stop, modify, or decline any exercise without pressure or penalty.

1 | The outcome and learning path

The goal is not domination or toughness. The goal is to notice meaningful context, choose a proportionate action, communicate when useful, create distance, reach a safer place, seek help, and recover enough attention to continue making decisions.

Seven-module pathway

1. Agency, fear and mindset 2. Detection and early safety choices 3. Boundaries and de-escalation 4. Startle and regulation 5. Movement and scenario decisions 6. Trainer selection 7. Practice and progress

Core principles

- No single cue proves harmful intent. Use clusters, context, changing behavior, and available options to guide proportionate safety choices - never diagnosis or profiling.
- Fear, freezing, startle, and compliance are human responses, not moral failures.
- Escape includes a destination: a staffed place, people, a barrier, a locked space, or another contextually safer option.
- Communication can help, but no script guarantees cooperation. Leaving or seeking help may be the better decision.
- Practice moves from explanation to predictable rehearsal to bounded variability. Surprise attacks and uncontrolled contact are excluded.
- Physical skills belong with a qualified instructor and should follow, not replace, decision, boundary, escape, and help-seeking skills.

2 | Detection without profiling

Treat observable changes as information to reassess, not as a verdict about a person. Many behaviors are nonspecific and may reflect stress, disability, culture, pain, distraction, or harmless habit.

Contextual prompts to discuss

- Distance closes after you move away or a stated boundary is ignored.
- Your movement is repeatedly mirrored after a route change.
- An exit, phone, vehicle door, or path to other people is being restricted.
- Hands remain concealed while other behavior or context raises concern.
- Attention repeatedly shifts between you, your belongings, exits, or nearby people.
- An interaction changes abruptly after conflict, rejection, separation, or a request to leave.

Practice rule

For each prompt, name at least two harmless explanations, then choose a low-cost safety action: increase distance, change route, move toward others, contact someone, leave, or request assistance.

Known-person dynamics

A current or former partner, acquaintance, relative, colleague, or date may already have trust, access, or conversational distance. Familiarity does not make violence inevitable and never creates responsibility for the targeted person. Training should include boundary violations and help-seeking without reenacting trauma.

3 | Boundaries and de-escalation

Practice brief language that can be recalled under stress. The objective is safety and disengagement, not persuasion at any cost.

Examples to adapt

Boundary	"Stop." / "I need space."
Action	"I am leaving now."
Witness/help	"You in the blue shirt - please call for help."
Limit plus option	"Lower your voice or this conversation is over."
Emergency relay	Location, concern, observable description, and what help is needed.

Safe role-play conditions

- Agree on words, intensity ceiling, duration, stop signal, and exit before starting.
- Use neutral content; no slurs, sexualized threats, personal history, humiliation, or improvised intimidation.
- Keep an unobstructed exit and an observer who can stop the exercise.
- Debrief the decision and communication, not acting style or loudness.
- Stop for distress, dissociation, panic, pain, loss of balance, or any request.

4 | Nervous-system literacy and safe progression

Unexpected stimuli can produce blinking, head movement, shoulder elevation, protective arm movement, freezing, or other responses before deliberate thought. A trainer should accommodate individual variation and avoid claims that one response or proprietary conversion is universal.

Progression ladder

1. Explain	Discuss purpose, choices, opt-out rights, and stop rules.
2. Rehearse	Use known timing, low intensity, and no contact.
3. Vary	Change neutral cues, route options, or task order within disclosed limits.
4. Add decisions	Mix threat, ambiguous, and non-threat trials; score restraint too.
5. Integrate	Combine boundary, movement to a marked safe zone, and a fictional help call.
6. Review	Debrief cues, choices, stress response, errors, and one next practice goal.

Hard exclusions

No weapon-disarming curriculum, injury techniques, live chemical or electrical exposure, projectiles, surprise attacks, blocked exits, trauma reenactment, coercive verbal abuse, chokes, head contact, or uncontrolled resistance.

5 | Trainer and dojo interview

Use this page during an introductory meeting. Ask for concrete examples, not assurances.

Questions

- May I observe a class and read the written safety, stop, injury, and complaint procedures?
- How do you teach awareness, boundaries, escape, and help-seeking before physical skills?
- How are scenarios scripted, consented to, scaled, observed, and stopped?
- Do non-threat decisions, leaving, and asking for help count as successful outcomes?
- How do you adapt for disability, injury history, trauma, age, culture, and fitness?
- What qualifications cover coaching, first aid, safeguarding, and any device-specific training?
- Who owns video, how is consent recorded, and when is footage deleted?
- Can any participant decline or stop a drill without pressure, explanation, or penalty?

Notes

6 | Red flags and readiness gate

Red flags

- Guaranteed outcomes or claims that victimization proves inadequate training.
- Humiliation, secrecy, mandatory pain, live exposure, surprise attack, or pressure to ignore discomfort.
- Unscripted role-player force, blocked exits, unsafe size matching, or no independent stop authority.
- A single cue list taught as proof of intent or tied to race, ethnicity, disability, poverty, mental illness, clothing, or neighborhood stereotypes.
- No written emergency plan, no incident reporting, or unclear insurance and instructor credentials.
- Weapons or functional devices present during a session described as inert.

Before any practical session

YES / NO	The objective, script, risks, alternatives, and stop rules were explained.
YES / NO	The learner chose the intensity and may withdraw without penalty.
YES / NO	The exit is visible and unobstructed; the floor and barriers were checked.
YES / NO	Equipment was verified inert by two people; no live device is in the room.
YES / NO	A designated observer can stop the exercise immediately.
YES / NO	Relevant health, mobility, sensory, and trauma accommodations were discussed privately.
YES / NO	The debrief and data/video handling plan are understood.

7 | Progress record

Use a 0-3 scale: 0 = not attempted; 1 = completed with substantial prompting; 2 = completed with one prompt or correction; 3 = completed independently within the exercise rules. A lower score is information, not failure.

Recognizes relevant context without treating ambiguity as proof		
Chooses a proportionate action and can explain it		
Uses a clear boundary or decides not to engage		
Moves to the designated safer place without collision or fixation		
Relays location, concern, description, and need without guessing		
Uses a practiced regulation step and reports symptoms or stops		
Respects non-threat cues and inhibits unnecessary action		

Debrief prompts

- What did you notice first?
- What options did you identify?
- What did your body do under stress?
- What decision helped most?
- Where did you lose time or attention?
- What is one safe variable to change next time?

8 | Research boundary and sources

The Art of Survival 24-concept simulation battery is a planning artifact, not an approved research protocol. It requires investigator, ethics, legal, insurance, facility, medical, trauma-informed, and device-specialist review as applicable. Early development should favor screen-based classification, static nonhuman targets, marked routes, fictional emergency relays, and predictable no-contact exercises.

Research is not a class

A public education program should not imply recruitment, IRB approval, investigator affiliation, institutional backing, or validated protection. Participation in training is not consent to research.

Selected primary and authoritative sources

- Bureau of Justice Statistics. Female Murder Victims and Victim-Offender Relationship, 2021. NCJ 305613 (2022).
- Senn CY et al. Efficacy of a Sexual Assault Resistance Program for University Women. New England Journal of Medicine. 2015;372:2326-2335.
- Richmond JS et al. Verbal De-escalation of the Agitated Patient: Project BETA Consensus Statement. Western Journal of Emergency Medicine. 2012;13(1):17-25. (Clinical context; adapted cautiously.)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Resource for Action.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. STOP SV: A Technical Package to Prevent Sexual Violence.

Framework attribution

The submitted framework draws heavily on Tony Blauer and SPEAR concepts, including the Timeline of Violence and behavior-first framing. These are credited as influences. Art of Survival is not affiliated with or endorsed by Tony Blauer or SPEAR, and proprietary-system claims are not treated as independent scientific validation.

Important

If danger is immediate, contact local emergency services when it is safe to do so. For concerns involving a current or former partner, a qualified local survivor advocate can support individualized safety planning. Internet or printed guidance cannot account for every situation.

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