

Meeting Up with a Mugger

by Susan Bartelstone, Crime Prevention Specialist

*The safest thing to do in
a robbery is cooperate.*

*No property you own is
worth your life!*

*No absolutes exist in
crime scenarios and no
advice can address every
variable.
Evaluate each situation
individually and only
respond in the way you
instinctively judge best.*

Pepper Spray is an option, too.



Pre-set your phone to dial 911!

YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE! Muggings can be simple and straightforward, senselessly brutal or deadly, or anything in between. Most muggers, however, look for an "easy" target and a quick getaway. They primarily select people they think will be easily intimidated and offer no resistance. This selection is made on a gut-level, based on so-called "victim" characteristics that they sense. Assertive body language, assertive responses and a "non-victim" attitude are the key to keeping yourself safe in a mugging.

Here are some tips:

- ❖ **Keep the encounter brief.** The average robbery lasts only 52-60 seconds. Act as if you're conducting a routine business transaction and try not to prolong it.
- ❖ **Adopt a "non-victim" posture.** Head up, shoulders back, feet shoulder-width apart. Keep your expression blank—not scared, not angry. Make eye contact (*I see you; I'm aware you're there*) unless the person is high, drunk, acting erratic, or enraged. This is the best way to defuse a confrontation.
- ❖ **Adopt a "non-victim" attitude.** Don't beg, plead or cry. No arguments, questions or discussions either.
- ❖ **Respond assertively.** Speak as little as possible and keep your tone of voice firm, reassuring and conversational. Reinforce what you say by nodding your head when you say "yes" and shaking it when you say "no." Deep breathing will keep your voice firm and help control fear and panic.
- ❖ **Verbalize your cooperation.** Use assertive sentences that focus on behavior (*"I'm going to give you my money; you don't have to hurt me"*).
- ❖ **Keep gestures to a minimum.** Don't make any sudden, jerky movements. Keep hands visible at all times. "Talk" the robber through each movement you make (*"I'm taking my left hand and reaching into my pocketbook ... there's a lot of stuff in here and I'm trying to find my wallet"*).
- ❖ **Be observant.** Look for signs of drugs, alcohol, or crazy behavior. Confrontations with a person in any of these states are unpredictable, no matter how cooperative you are.
- ❖ **Use your wits.** Don't tell a mugger you have no money. Stall for time with fast-talk or bargaining until you can attract attention or create an opportunity to escape.
- ❖ **Plan ahead.** Carry a small amount of "mugger money" (\$20) that can be handed over quickly. Keep larger amounts hidden elsewhere on your person.