



Columbia Heights Police Department

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Tips and Techniques to Keep You from Being a Victim

Part One: by Investigator Tim Noll

I have been a police officer for 11 years now and have noticed a pattern when it comes to victims of person on person crimes (robbery, assaults, theft). In this posting and the postings to come, I will cover what I have learned over these years and I hope this information is informative to the great citizens of Columbia Heights.

For a predator to attack you, he needs three things: intent, means, and opportunity. Denying him any one of those three things makes it impossible for him to attack. The easiest way to do that is to avoid a predator so completely that he is not only denied the opportunity to attack you, but also the intent as it specifically relates to you. If you're not on his radar, he can't even intend to attack you. You can accomplish this to a very significant degree simply by avoiding dangerous places. If you're unable to avoid a predator, making yourself a bad target is the next best thing.

What is a bad target? A bad target is someone that is aware of their surroundings and avoids dangerous areas. Don't be that person you see on the bus that has their face buried in their phone and is completely unaware of their surroundings. Don't be that person you see staggering down the sidewalk from the bar too intoxicated to even remember where their house is. Most victims of person on person crimes are picked out by the predator because they are vulnerable in more ways than one. Predators choose their target based on the concept of risk vs. reward. The predator wants to get one or more things out of the attack (reward) while minimizing the chance of getting injured or caught in the process (risk).

In general, a predator will choose victims they think they can successfully attack. While you can't change your age, height, and gender, there are some things you can do to make yourself a higher risk target. Paying attention to your surroundings is a big one, which I'll cover in more detail in part 2 of this piece, but if a predator sees he'll be unable to take you by surprise, he'll probably choose a target who is paying less attention. Walking around with headphones in your ears, listening to music, talking on the phone, or texting, is a sure sign you're not paying attention. Avoid these behaviors, especially in isolated areas. Along similar lines, don't get drunk in public. Drunk people make perfect victims because they will be lousy witnesses to the crime. They likely won't be able to remember in detail what the suspect(s) look like and they will be less likely to fight back against an attack. Even if by some miracle a suspect is identified, it will be very hard to prosecute the crime if the only witness is the victim and the victim was too intoxicated to positively identify their attacker.