

# TECHNICAL NOTE

Self-defense is not an emotional reaction. It is a conditioned and measured response to a threat.

## Reading Our Environment Part II

### Establishing a Baseline of Behavior

by Don Adams

When we talk about baselining an area, we are talking about assessing the general sense of how the people are acting and interacting. We want to get a quick and reliable understanding of how people behave who are there for the purpose of the area. What is the established routine behavior? Not everyone will be doing the exact same thing at the exact same time, but the activity of the area will feel consistent and fall within the general type of behavior.

There are going to be those areas that we frequent where we are already familiar with. We are already going to know what the natural behavior is. It could be a grocery store, a barber shop or salon. It could be a fitness gym, a car dealership, or a restaurant. It could even be a church. But, if it's new to us we can take one of two paths. We either must take the time to establish the normative behavior from scratch or else rely on what we know about a similar area's established behavior.

That is called baselining and it's our first step to read our environment.

When we baseline an area or group of people we are asking and answering the question, "What's going on here?" We can't identify an anomalous behavior if we don't know what appropriate behavior looks like.

One we answer the first question we must answer the second question, "What stands out?" It may be nothing, or there may be some activity that doesn't seem to fit. It may be something as simple as a parent disciplining a child or it could be someone having an intense conversation with a store employee or another customer having an intense discussion with

another person. It could be someone huddling whispering in a corner that might catch your attention. Any behavior that doesn't fit our baseline will draw our attention and at that point we must make a decision. What are we going to do (about the anomalous behavior that now has our attention.

That decision could be to do nothing because it's not a threat, do nothing but be aware and keep an eye on it, or even get the "hell out of Dodge" so to speak.

Another environment that we might find ourselves in is a crowded environment. It might be a concert, a festival, or some other event where people might be crowded together. The three questions are still valid, but the focus might be on the group as a whole and not an individual.

We still take an assessment of behaviors. People might be dancing, shouting, singing along, randomly moving from booth to booth or listening to a speaker.

Proxemics is the study of the use of space by people. More concerning to us on a macro level, is how that use of space changes. Is the use of space changing or is there a significant movement by the group in one direction or the other. Is the group being significantly pushed or pulled in a specific direction or to a specific point?

A Proxemic Push is the collective movement of a group of people in a direction away from a particular area or person. Conversely a Proxemic Pull is a collective movement towards a particular area. This is a indicator of something significant occurring. It could be positive or negative but when observed, it is imperative that we find the source and reason for this event.