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By Don Melnick, Owner/Instructor Israeli Krav Maga Cherry Hill

e live in a world full of distractions - bright lights, loud noises, cell phones, electronic devices, headphones, other people, and our own thoughts. You have probably seen videos of people walking into glass doors, telephone poles and shopping mall fountains, as well as bumping into others, either being hit or almost getting hit by traffic, or worse case being attacked by someone. How can you better avoid these potentially dangerous situations? Look up. Turn your head. Scan your surroundings. These simple tactics can help you to avoid

tactics fall under the overarching concept of Situational Awareness. The lower the level of engagement, the better the outcome. Be mindful of your surroundings and know

who and what is around you at all times, as best you can. Scanning the environment, painting a picture with your eyes, and keeping your head on a swivel for a greater field of vision, are some examples of how to stay alert for potential threats. A heightened sense of situational awareness can also help you to avoid having a passive situation escalate into an active threat situation.

Imagine walking through a mall, airport or other busy area, distracted from looking down at your phone/iPad, and you accidentally bump into someone else who is looking down at their own device. How will they perceive the bump? Will they blame you? Did they have a bad day, and are now taking their aggression out on you? Yelling leads to pushing, and pushing leads to punching (or worse). Now imagine walking, but you notice a distracted person approaching and are able to step out of the way. You have avoided a potential escalation of violence, simply by using situational awareness. This is a basic example, but substitute the other person for traffic, or a bad actor intent on robbing or harming you. Will you see the threat in time to protect yourself?