



5 TIPS TO SUPPORT THEM

Safety Top Of Mind For Women On The Go

BY BRITNEY BOOTH

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Police Identify Body of Abducted Runner Eliza Fletcher,” “Knoxville Runner Escapes Kidnapping, Attempted Rape” and “Michigan Nurse Gunned Down While Jogging” are just a few news headlines regarding violence inflicted on female runners in recent years.

In a survey of more than 2,000 runners conducted by *Runner's World* and *Women's Health* magazines, 74% of women said they'd been harassed via sexist comments or unwanted sexual attention when running, and 6% said they feared for their life while running.

UNWRITTEN HEADLINES, SECOND CHANCES

Amy Robbins, CEO and co-founder of Alexo Athletica, describes an encounter that was the catalyst to starting her concealed carry legging and activewear company.

“I never understood why people carried a firearm on their body every day until I went out training for a marathon one morning in 2015. I got followed and harassed by a van full of men. They didn't just follow me one time, they pretty much followed me for the whole first part of my run,” she shared.

“It was a very scary

experience for me,” she continued, “because it was at that moment I realized, *If this escalates from just the calls and harassing, what am I going to do? It's me against seven guys.* I didn't have a self-defense tool on my body. I don't even think I had my phone with me at that time.”

Luckily, they drove off and Robbins was able to make it home safely.

“I made it home and I got a second chance,” she recalled. “I was determined never to feel helpless and defenseless again. The next step for me was to get my concealed carry license and purchase a handgun. Then, I realized

there was no place for me to put it while out running. At that time, there weren't concealed carry leggings or activewear brands promoting the idea of empowering a woman to stay safe while exercising, so I created Alexo Athletica."

Because of these unfortunate situations making headlines and the quick spread of information on social media, retailers will likely see an uptick in women becoming increasingly more interested in self-protection tools, whether it's for running, taking their kid(s) to the park or everyday carry.

A study conducted by the NSSF in 2018 ("Concealed Carry Consumer Study Report") found during the course of a 12-month timespan, women — on average — spent nearly the same amount purchasing a firearm for concealed carry (\$889.50) as men (\$905.80).¹ The study also showed women spent significantly more money on handgun ammunition and reloading supplies (\$621.80) than men (\$501.40). And, on average, women (\$273.02) spent more on accessories during the 12 months than men (\$245.15).

Here are five ways to support your female customers on their self-defense journey.

1. START SMALL, OFFER VARIETY

Emily Valentine has run StyleMeTactical.com for six years as an avenue to connect with other women interested in firearms and fashion.

"I want women to get

to the point of thinking of their personal safety in any way it fits into their lifestyle," she said. "A gun isn't the only option. It's important to offer women tools for situational awareness and mindset training and start small."

A mindset switch may have a snowball effect, causing your customer to then become interested in carrying a flashlight or mace, which might then lead to becoming interested in carrying a firearm and taking classes at your facility.

One piece of advice you can give a customer who may be just starting out on their personal-protection journey and is overwhelmed is to begin by carrying a tactical flashlight on their person.

"It's a very simple non-lethal tool and a great segue into living the personal-protection lifestyle. A tactical flashlight shouldn't be underestimated. You can shine it into someone's eyes to blind them, or carry it in your hand to reinforce your fist and use it as a striking tool. You can take them anywhere and there are no legal restrictions for use, so young girls or teenagers can carry them and take them when they go places where there are gun restrictions, like concerts or airports," Valentine said.

Retailers will want to stock a variety of products to cover all levels of self-protection, whether non-lethal or lethal. Items like flashlights, keychain alarms, mace, TASERS, stun guns, knives and handguns are all options.

Handgun accessories specific for running, like

concealed carry leggings or shorts, athletic wear, belly band holsters, beltless holster options, fanny packs or waist packs are great, depending on the intended use.

Take the time to get to know your customer and their needs, and you'll be able to recommend the right tool for them.

2. ESTABLISH WOMEN'S CLASSES & GROUPS

Shooter's World, with three locations in Arizona, offers a weekly Ladies' Day. At this event, women get their first hour of range time and one gun rental for free. Doing this breaks the barrier down by allowing them to

come in on a fun day and bring a friend with them, making them even more comfortable. Shooter's World also offers women-specific classes taught by female instructors.

"Classes like this are empowering for women. 'You're absolutely capable of doing it, and we're going to show you how,'" shared Paige Roux, Shooter's World training coordinator and senior firearms instructor.

If yours is a retail-only location, partner with a gun range or instructor in the area who offers women-only classes. You'll have the ability to further assist your female customers by suggesting

If you're looking to stock your retail space with accessories, less-lethal personal protection options or trying to figure out what classes to offer for women, insights from around the world are at your fingertips.



Top: Style Me Tactical's Emily Valentine says on-body accessories like flashlights can serve as a "starter" to get women in the self-defense mindset before they decide to carry a firearm.
Bottom: When a guest steps into Femme Fatale ARMS, an inviting layout allows her to peruse new arrivals with ease. Maria Dockery maintains it's all about carrying quality products.



classes at whatever level they might need.

3. LISTEN TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

Maria Dockery, the owner of Femme Fatale ARMS in Palm Bay, Fla., confirmed all of the products in her ladies' gun store are driven by requests from female customers. By listening to the customers' needs, she's able to purchase high-quality products that will last.

"We don't underestimate the intelligence of our customers, and we don't sell substandard products.

We carry pepper spray, which is a great option if you're worried about dogs or other wild animals while hiking or running, as well as tactical flashlights, concealed carry leggings, belly wrap gun holsters — you name it. The key is making sure everything is great quality and laid out in a way that's inviting to women," she said.

4. BE APPROACHABLE

If you're stocking items specifically for women in your retail space or hosting classes geared toward female attendees, be sure to take a step back and approach the space and

content with women in mind.

"Approach women who come into your facility like you're an educator, but don't assume they're clueless. Be willing to help them narrow down self-defense or accessory options to fit their needs. Get out from behind the counter and chat with your customers," Valentine advised.

"The key is making sure everything is great quality and laid out in a way that's inviting to women."

Maria Dockery, Owner
Femme Fatale ARMS
 Palm Bay, Fla.

It can be helpful to make a women's area in your store with a display of products available for personal protection and accessories so someone who's never been to a gun store can easily find what they need.

This lessens the overwhelming sense of seeing rows and rows of

products and not knowing what to choose.

5. TAKE TO SOCIAL MEDIA

In this digital age, plenty of resources can be readily found with a quick social media search. Check out Instagram for accounts like @casualandtactical, @stylemetactical (mentioned above) and @elegantandarmed to draw inspiration from their content.

You'll find women-specific concealed carry product reviews for guns, holsters, knives, etc., podcasts, clothing/style tips for concealed carry, troubleshooting, concealed carry guides for women and even cigar reviews.

So, if you're looking to stock your retail space with accessories, or less-lethal personal-protection options or trying to figure out what classes to offer for women, insights from around the world are at your fingertips.

Using these tips will help support women who visit your retail space looking for a way to protect themselves while living an active lifestyle.

A comfortable, welcoming and encouraging environment will foster a lifetime of growth and training — and a loyal customer at your facility. **SI**

Footnote:

1. <https://bit.ly/3WC40XJ>