

My name is Aaron Ostrom, I'm a co-owner and firearms instructor for Pacific Outfitters.

The Times Standard recently reported that "Among California's 21 nonmetropolitan counties, the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office in 2016 reported the second-highest number of violent crimes, according to the FBI data.

That means the likelihood of being exposed to violent crime is much higher in our county, compared to other nonmetropolitan counties in California.

So what can you do to reduce your exposure to violent crime? In all our firearms classes we train people to have a "Self-Defense Mindset". A Self-Defense Mindset doesn't mean carrying a firearm, you don't even need a firearm to have this mindset. Having a Self-Defense Mindset means you understand three things:

- 1) That extreme violence CAN happen to me or my family anywhere.
- 2) Law Enforcement WON'T always be there for me.
- 3) My home, neighborhood and city are NOT immune to crime and violence, no matter how safe they may appear.

Acknowledging these three facts and using the tools we train will SIGNIFICANTLY reduce your EXPOSURE to violent crime.

One of the tools we train are knowing the "5 Colors of Mental Awareness." These colors go from WHITE, YELLOW, ORANGE, RED, to BLACK. What do these colors mean?

WHITE - Here you are unaware, not alert and oblivious to your environment. They do not notice impending danger until it too late. These are the same people who will be victims of violent crime because the criminals target the inattentive, the complacent, the lazy, the distracted, the preoccupied. Unless we are in our house, we never want to be in WHITE.

YELLOW - This is a relaxed state of general awareness. You simply have your head up and eyes open. You are alert and aware of your surroundings. You are difficult to surprise, therefore, you are difficult to harm. This is where we want to be the majority of the time.

ORANGE - This is a heightened state of awareness. Maybe you saw something that didn't look right. This is where you need to assess the potential threat and determine if it is actually a threat. If you've determined that there isn't a threat, you go back to yellow. If you've determined that there is a potential threat, then you move to RED.

RED - This is where you've determined there is a threat. When you are in RED, you are mentally preparing to defend yourself or create space. You are not being attacked, but you are waiting for the mental trigger, which is a pre-determined action on the part of the criminal that

will result in a defensive action from you. You are doing everything in your power to reduce the threat level and not go into BLACK.

BLACK - This is when you are physically engaged with the criminal. You have no other option but to defend yourself.

We also teach our students about "Transitional Spaces", these are spaces that we encounter in our day to day life that are significantly more susceptible to a criminal attack, and "Pre-Attack Indicators", these are very specific signs you look for that help you determine if an attack is going to take place.

The best weapon you have to prevent a violent attack is having a Self-Defense Mindset, and using the tools we teach you in your day to day life. These tools will significantly reduce your exposure to an unexpected attack against you.

Don't be a victim, by not being aware.

*This is how often for average (m/f)*