



# THREAT DE-ESCALATION:

**3 Proven Tactics for  
Avoiding the Fight**





ignored the aggression. The victim could have disengaged, turned off the street, driven away and called 911 to report the threat. Unfortunately, these young men escalated their conflict to great tragedy. But you can learn from it.

As a responsible gun owner, you need to understand the difference between a real threat and an imagined threat. Now is the time to reflect — while you are relaxed. It's a little late to consider options when someone is yelling at you or making lewd remarks while you are out having a good time with your family. This is an ideal opportunity to begin training your ego to use other avenues of response.

Allowing your emotions to pull you into a confrontation outside your vehicle, your home or your safe zone could cost you a small fortune, weeks in a hospital or in court, or possibly the loss of your life. You'll likely agree that walking or driving away is the best course of action for a low-level threat, especially one aimed at your ego. Discussing the option of walking away and passing this on to your loved ones — especially your children — could spare them the potential of a criminal record, physical harm or even death.

## **2. APOLOGIZE & WALK AWAY**

As a personal safety self-defense instructor for the past 20 years, I teach situational awareness as the first principle of defense. Be aware, see potential threats and leave before things escalate. Do you know what is next on the list? Learning to ignore verbal comments and walk away.

Imagine you are in a crowd, maybe in a bar or at a ballgame. Maybe a guy bumps into you and yells at you for bumping into him. This is when you should apologize and walk away. It doesn't matter who is at fault. A simple "sorry" can de-escalate a potential confrontation. Apologize and walk away. Start practicing now. If you think this is the weak or cowardly way to defend your ego, read on.

Imagine that you are in a parking lot and someone hurls the worst possible aggressive, insulting and abusive language at you, your spouse or your child, baiting you into an argument. You could spend \$20,000 defending yourself if you take the bait and are lured into a physical confrontation because someone with one beer too many insulted your race or sexuality. This is called the "\$20,000 Trap."

As a responsible gun owner, you take pride in your ability to protect yourself, your family and your property. You invest your time and spend your money researching and acquiring the best firearm for your needs, the best self-defense training classes, the best accessories and the most reliable ammunition for your gun. You owe it to yourself to take a few minutes to consider your response to aggressive taunts.

You must de-escalate, delay or avoid an unwanted physical encounter before it escalates. Here are three proven tactics for getting out of such a situation and seven more things to remind you that avoiding confrontation is always the best path.

### **1. DISENGAGE**

The easiest solution is to not respond; to walk away, drive away or leave. Find a safer place.

Last year, in my hometown, two young men were driving side-by-side on a main road, yelling back and forth. Tempers escalated until a 21-year-old man pulled out his pistol, shot and killed the other driver, and then fled.

When this story hit the news, I wondered how many chances these young men had before one life was lost and one was ruined. The victim could have

### 3. DIVERT & DIFFUSE

A twist on apologize and walk away is to divert and diffuse. I learned this while studying with a special forces close-quarter combat instructor named Eric while he was visiting from Europe. Eric was one of the most composed, quietly confident and unassuming teachers with whom I have ever trained. Here is the story he shared:

Eric was in a nightclub with his girlfriend. The two of them were standing in the coat-check line at the end of the show. While trying to butt into the line, a drunken customer bumped into Eric, knocking him against his girlfriend. Eric stepped back and quickly noticed the guy was wearing a T-shirt with a rock-band logo that he recognized. Instead of falling into a habitual response and challenging the intoxicated man, Eric said, "I love that album, man. It's one of my favorites!" Eric calmly diverted the potential confrontation by recognizing and making a positive comment to the aggressor. Within seconds, the two began sharing their love of music — and the situation was diffused. When they got to the checkout counter, the drunkard insisted on paying for the coat-check fees and wished Eric and his girlfriend a nice evening. No harm and no foul because Eric kept his ego in check and used calm words to diffuse a potentially damaging encounter. He saved his bone-crushing skillset for a real physical threat to his world.

### COMMENTS AND GESTURES ARE NOT WORTH \$20,000

Like maintaining skills with firearms, it takes concentration, reflection and a re-ordering of your values to build mental defenses to verbal aggression. If a stranger makes a sexual comment about your loved one, your instinct might be to engage; to defend against what your mind has tricked you into believing is a threat. But is engaging worth the potential consequences? If you do not allow another person to offend or penetrate your psychological armor, then there is nothing to defend.

Still not convinced it's easier to walk or drive away from verbal threats or to diffuse them? Here's a list of possible problems you could face if you fall into the trap.

#### YOU COULD BE ARRESTED & CHARGED

If you were to become physical with someone and caused injury to him or her, you could be charged with assault and battery. Faced with the possibility of a criminal record, you would probably want to hire a criminal defense attorney.

If you were to be convicted, your criminal record could affect employment and future earnings, restrict travel or cost you in other, not-as-easily quantifiable ways. You could spend time in jail, and if you already had a criminal record or were on parole, that could dramatically up the ante for future sentencing.

#### YOU COULD FACE CIVIL LIABILITY

Independent from any criminal prosecution, you could be sued for physical injuries or property damages.

#### YOU COULD TARNISH YOUR GOOD NAME

You could jeopardize your good name in the community and tarnish your family's reputation.

#### YOU COULD INCUR MEDICAL COSTS

You could be forced to pay the medical expenses of the person you injured in this attack simply because you were tricked into believing that person's words meant something. If you were to be injured in the confrontation, you could incur health expenses that could affect your future premiums.

#### YOU COULD BE BURDENED BY UNDUE TURMOIL

Your family and life could be burdened with the stress of waiting for court dates, hiring a lawyer and having the police come to your home or workplace.

#### YOU COULD INCUR ABUNDANT LEGAL FEES

Here's the real big-ticket expense not enough people consider: legal fees. Retaining any good attorney could cost a minimum of \$10,000 — and that's just the start. There could be bail costs, court costs and appeals — and it could go on for years. If you were to lose the case, you'd want to review the points above, because they could all come crashing down on you.

#### YOU COULD FACE THE 'REVENGE FACTOR'

Another potential threat is the "revenge factor" from the person with whom you chose to engage. He could find out where you live or work and want retribution, bringing a few buddies along for the ride. He could target your property or your family, causing more stress and possible injury or death.

#### PICK YOUR BATTLES

Take a deep breath and review the factors above, because it could save you a hurricane of hurt.

I am not suggesting for one moment that you back down from defending a real threat to you or your loved ones. The old saying, "Pick your battles," is appropriate here — to you as a gun owner and a law-abiding citizen. Each state has clear laws about your right to stand your ground and defend your property and person. I am simply saying that you must make sure the threat is real and that you truly believe your life is in jeopardy in order to avoid getting sucked into a trap that could cost you everything.

*Steve Brass is a use-of-force and close-combat trainer. He designed and teaches a simple stun-and-run system of self-defense called "Street Smart Defense." For more information, visit [StreetSmartDefense.net](http://StreetSmartDefense.net).*





# **GAIN CONFIDENCE, PREPAREDNESS & PEACE OF MIND**

*WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP TO THE  
U.S. CONCEALED CARRY ASSOCIATION*

[www.USCCA.com](http://www.USCCA.com)  
1-877-677-1919

