Situational awareness and body language practice – group dynamics

Categories : [Uncategorized](#)

Tagged as : [body language training](#), [gut feeling](#), [how to](#), [practise](#), [self defensetraining](#)

"Be aware"; "Be alert"; "[Pay attention](#)". Everybody tells you this, but none of them tell you how to do it. Or even [what to look for](#). So this weekend you're going to get some body language training. You're going to train yourself like this because it's going to help you be more "street smart" and make you safer.

If you're not sure what situational awareness is, or how you get it - read [The 3 Steps to Situational Awareness](#) article first.

How to tell when something's wrong

One theme that I've noticed coming from many different places is you can't spot the **unusual** until you know what the **usual** is. From Marc MacYoung to Rory Miller to the guys teaching the [US Marines how to read body language](#). They all make a point of telling people they need to practise looking at the normal in order to be able to spot when something is wrong with a situation.

I remember our house being robbed years ago when I was a teenager. IIRC the first sign something was wrong when we came home was my brother saying that he'd left the side-gate closed. I.e. he knew what was normal (the side gate closed). That made the unusual stand out (side gate open).

This weekend's body language training – identifying who's together

So this weekend you're going to look at people to figure out what's normal. **That way the abnormal will stand out**.

Pick a day when you can dedicate an hour to self-improvement. And then go to the mall. Or the most populated place you can find. A market, the beach, wherever.

What you're looking for is groups. You're going to spot groups of people. And then you're going to explain to yourself how you knew those people are together.

It can be as simple as a couple holding hands, or a group of teenagers at the movies. Or even a couple employees taking a lunch break together. Try pick as many different types of groups as you can – spotting 249 couples because they're holding hands will only get you so far.

Now the important part

Spotting groups should be easy – you're a human being after all. The fun part is figuring out how you know those 4 people with their phones glued to their eyeballs are actually part of a group. This is where you start to teach yourself about body language.

Did you see a group of giggling 12 year old girls standing around outside the movies? It's obvious they're all together as a group of friends – but what are these signs that make it so "obvious"?

Is it because they're standing close together? But don't people stand close together at a busy supermarket? YouTube some videos of a [Black Friday sale](#) – are those people together?

Is it because they're mostly facing each other? Crowds of people face each other across sports stadiums at weekend sports all the time.

What you're going to end up looking for is combinations. One clue on its own doesn't necessarily mean much ([with some exceptions](#)), it's when you combine a few that you see the pattern.

So how did you know that group was a group?

Maybe it goes like this:

Close together + bodies turned to face each other/center of group + talking among themselves + all have same "energy"/atmosphere + same style dress + context.

So for our group of 12 year old girls we might know they're in a group together because:

Clue 1 - they're standing close together;

Clue 2 - their bodies are turned so they're orientated towards the group (this is more than just turning your face to look at someone) – the focus of their bodies is on the group;

Clue 3 – correlated movement – if they're moving, they're all moving in the same direction, at the same pace so they stay together;

Clue 4 - they're communicating with each other, and not just a once off "hello", constant and repeated;

Clue 5 - same atmosphere coming from all of them – e.g. giggling, high energy levels, excited

energy;

Clue 6 - same "uniform" – they're all wearing different clothes, but they're all dressed like a pop singer;

Clue 7 - context – what else do you think a bunch of 12 year olds facing each other outside the movies could be, a turf war?

Clusters of 3

Usually 3 clues is enough for you to make a decision. So try aim for at least 3 clues when you're explaining how you knew those people were in a group together.

Some guys at the beach together? How'd you know?

Clue 1 – close together. The beach has plenty of space, no reason to be close to strangers. It's like sitting at a bar – if there are open barstools, no guy will sit next to another guy unless they're friends.

Clue 2 – energy/focus. All 3 of them are lying back, trying hard to look and act nonchalant, like they don't care about anything.

Clue 3 – uniform. All 3 are dressed for the beach (obviously) but they all manage to look a bit scruffy and unkempt (hair too long for high school and too long for having a job).

Conclusion – college dudes at the beach together trying to look cool.

There will probably be other clues, stop at 3 if you want, keep going if you want to stretch yourself. Whenever possible, try to include **focus** as one of the clues – where are the peoples' focus?

How does this make me safer?

Once you know what's normal, and you automatically explain it to yourself, then you can start noticing what's out of the ordinary. Like criminals and Bad Guys.

You're on your way to your car and someone's walking behind you. But a few moments ago he was by the entrance to the nightclub with those other guys (body orientation, correlated movement, and energy levels all matched up). Why's this dude now matching your movements not his friends?

Let's look at the college guys at the beach. If they're college dudes, their focus is either non-existent or it's a lazy focus (occasionally focusing on passers-by, usually women). If they're trying to act cool then their energy is probably very relaxed (like blobs of jelly)

How would they look if it was college age guys on the beach, just hanging out, but their energy is anxious (stiff spines, tense postures, not relaxed), and all of them were highly focused on people walking by (eyes moving from one person to the next, constantly looking at people, never looking "spaced out")?

Knowing what normal college guys at the beach look like makes it easier to spot the guys that are there for other reasons.

Go practise

You are a human being. Which means you have lots of experience with body language. For most people it's entirely sub-conscious though. People get a bad feeling but they don't know why. So they don't act on it. And often they regret it later when the SHTF. They had just enough experience being human to know something was off, but not enough practice at naming what was off. If they had more practice explaining their gut feelings, they'd have a better chance of acting on those gut feels.