

# **SITUATIONAL AWARENESS IN THE WORKPLACE**

## **SESSION 1: WHAT IS SITUATIONAL AWARENESS?**



**REDHAWK**  
FIREARM TRAINING

## Professional Endorsements for Samuel Middlebrook

***“Samuel Middlebrook is an excellent teacher, a quality man with high standards who inspires confidence.”***

Sheriff Brian Winter, Yakima County, Washington

***“Samuel Middlebrook is one of the most inspirational, empowering, and motivating instructors I have ever worked with.”***

Michael Green, United States Army “Green Beret” Special Forces

***“Samuel Middlebrook is a phenomenal teacher. He knows what is most important and how to break it down to the most basic, easy to understand level. He is a great instructor, and even better man.”***

Sam Jeffrey, Director of Harding University’s Criminal Justice Program and Former CIA Special Agent

***“I’ve never met a man I trust more than Samuel Middlebrook. He’s a naturally gifted teacher and possesses an uncanny ability to speak to people in the way they can understand. I’m proud to call him a friend and mentor.”***

Lieutenant Luke Brandon, Washington State Patrol

***“I’ve trained with very few instructors as positive, encouraging, and capable as Samuel Middlebrook. The only word that comes to mind is ‘phenomenal’.”***

E.J. Williamson, Former Task Commander, United States Naval Special Warfare Command

# SITUATIONAL AWARENESS IN THE WORKPLACE

## 1. Why is this presentation worth our time together?

- a. This conversation can help me save my life or help protect me from harm should a “security event” arise around me, specifically in the workplace.
- b. Defining a “Security Event”.
- c. Defining “Situational Awareness” and helping me develop simple, easy-to-execute steps to ensure my personal safety in the workplace.
- d. I am ultimately responsible for my own safety, even here at work.

## 2. What is a “Security Event”?

- a. Any interaction that poses a threat to my emotional, mental, or physical well-being.
  - i. When a potential, current, or former regular resident, guest, or “walk-in” is irate, angry, or otherwise visibly upset.
  - ii. When a volunteer or staff member provider is irate, angry, or otherwise visibly upset.
  - iii. When anyone in my presence is crossing my personal boundaries of acceptable behavior.
  - iv. When anyone in my presence is becoming physically dominant, aggressive, or violent.
  - v. When anyone in my presence is being victimized by, participating in, or perpetrating abusive, violent, or otherwise threatening behavior.

### 3. What is “Situational Awareness”?

- a. My personal acknowledgment that bad things don't just happen to other people, but they can happen to me. I will never see a threat coming if I don't believe it could happen to me. I understand that many people do not believe that certain security events could happen to them unless they are proven wrong, after it is too late to impact the outcome.
- b. My ability to **perceive** what is happening around me.
- c. My ability to quickly **understand** what I am perceiving.
- d. My ability to **predict** what could happen next based on what I understand.

PERCEIVE, UNDERSTAND, and PREDICT. By practicing this type of thought process, I can learn to see “bad things” coming in time to affect the outcome.

### 4. What is Intuition?

- a. Subconscious thought that connects patterns of behavior and situations using personal experience and knowledge to have a “gut feeling” about an interaction or scenario.
- b. Quick judgments about your personal safety that are surprisingly accurate.
- c. 15 Seconds v. 3 Minutes.
  - i. Most people can tell in 15 seconds if someone is lying to them, but if they listen to the person talk for at least three minutes, their ability to ascertain the honesty of the individual speaking diminishes to less than 40% accuracy.  
(Nalini Ambady, “The Perils of Pondering: Intuition and Slice Judgments”, Oxford Journal of Social Psychology 77, 1999)
- d. When it comes to my personal safety, far more often than not, I need to trust my intuition!

### 5. How does my body naturally respond to stressful or threatening situations?

- a. Freeze, Flight, Fight
- b. FREEZE: Under stress, the body refuses to go where the mind has not already been.
- c. FLIGHT: A subconscious thought that becomes pervasive conscious thought to leave or escape the situation that I have perceived, and now understand is happening around me.
- d. FIGHT: A survival mode that my brain kicks into gear to help me survive.
- e. ALL three responses can cause you harm if not mitigated by Situational Awareness.

## 6. How can Situational Awareness help me mitigate the “freeze, flight, fight” reactions?

### a. Understanding my Limbic System

- i. The structures of the limbic system are involved in motivation, emotion, learning, and memory.
- ii. The limbic system operates by influencing the endocrine system and the autonomic nervous system.
- iii. Motivation, emotion, learning, and memory are all impacted by my Limbic System, and because my body is efficient under stress, motivation will take over my emotions, my learning, and my memory.
- iv. ***This is why our memory of traumatic events can sometimes be foggy, or not exist at all.***

### b. Understanding the foundations of Situational Awareness

- i. Situational Awareness begins with understanding that while people are mostly predictable, under stress or under the influence of intoxicants, anyone can act outside of their normal baseline of behavior.
- ii. Situational Awareness is rooted in **observable**, **describable** behaviors.
- iii. Situational Awareness has nothing to do with race, gender, age, or other appearance-based observations.
- iv. Acknowledging my personal biases can help me understand when I am prone to believe that I am in a potential “security event” even though I am not.
- v. Acknowledging that my personal lines of “normal” patterns of speech and body language might be different from someone else’s based on their culture, geography, or family of origin. This is very helpful for me to understand why someone might flail their hands when they are speak, speak at louder volumes than I am accustomed to, or speak slightly faster or slower than I am accustomed to.

### c. Acknowledging the decisions of Situational Awareness

- i. What am I willing to do in order to keep myself safe? Everyone will have different lines on this, and that is actually good, because it indicates honesty.
- ii. Do I know how to do whatever it is I am willing to do? Do I have skills to go with my willingness?
- iii. Am I prepared to do whatever it is I am willing to do at a moment’s notice? This is where Situational Awareness comes into play.

d. Acknowledging the mechanics of Situational Awareness (The “OODA” Loop)

i. **OBSERVE**. Am I aware of what is happening around me enough to actively perceive it?

ii. **ORIENT**. Am I responding to what I am perceiving in such a way that I am moving my body to create space, to prepare to leave the situation, or to protect myself if need be?

iii. **DECIDE**. Am I engaging my Situational Awareness so that I can employ decent solutions instantly instead of calculating the “perfect” solution a few minutes later? In this exercise, we will discover the length of minutes under stress.

iv. **ACT**. Am I mentally rehearsing my pre-determined solutions enough so that I can perform them at a moment notice?

Is it REALLY possible for me to “keep my wits about me” under stress? YES!