
E 5 | DEALING WITH THREATENING SITUATIONS

The following provides advice for dealing with threatening situations. We recommend that you prepare for threatening situations by practising in safe settings and by speaking to people in your affinity group. This will help you better understand your own abilities and limits, and you can also discuss the issue of safety/protection within the group. Doing so also helps groups to be better prepared for dangerous situations. Although the view that ‘Nothing will happen anyway!’ might sound enticing, it merely means that no-one will know what to do if something actually does happen.

1. Be prepared!

Make sure you know about possible threats that are close to your location (whether you are staying in a camp or a house, etc.) and look for contact people. Have you thought about how you might react in different threatening situations? How are individuals in the group likely to react and what reaction would they like to see from the group as a whole?

2. Stay calm!

Try not to panic; avoid making hasty movements, because these can provoke reflex counter-reactions and escalate the situation. Keep a clear head and try to gain an overview of what is happening: How many people are involved? What do they want? How willing do they appear to use violence? Is alcohol playing a role in the situation? Who is close by, and who can help? Check whether anyone in your group is panicking, and how everyone in the group is feeling.

3. Get active!

Try not to become paralyzed by fear! Fear can slow down the speed at which you can make decisions.

4. Don't take on the role of the victim!

Take the initiative and make your opinion very clear, e.g. ‘Leave us alone!’ Consider whether you should record a threatening situation. If you decide to do so, tell everyone what you are doing, e.g. ‘We are filming you making these threats!’

5. Maintain contact with the attackers

Establish/maintain eye contact and communication with the attackers. But also try to keep an overview of the situation.

6. Talk and listen!

Make sure that you speak loudly, calmly and clearly! Listen to what the attackers are saying. You can learn a lot about their intentions by doing so.

7. Do not threaten or insult the attackers!

Criticize their behaviour, but do not be degrading.

8. Wherever possible, avoid any form of physical contact!

Physical contact usually involves crossing a person's personal limits and can lead to further aggression.

9. Ask for help!

If bystanders are nearby, speak to them directly and ask them to help you, giving specific instructions: ‘Hey, you in the red jacket! Can you call.../get...’.

10. Be realistic!

Considered and calm action is far better than seemingly heroic deeds or taking incalculable risks.

Source: IJGD, adapted by Skills for Action, <http://www.skills-for-action.de/en>