

**FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS

Proxemics

The study of the nature, degree, and effect of spatial separation that individuals naturally maintain.

Rule 10-5-2

1. At 10 feet, conduct a visual risk and threat assessment of your area and the people in it. Develop an exit plan/escape routes- "How will I physically avoid contact with this person/persons?" Are there any potential weapons at your immediate disposal? At this distance, if someone who makes you uncomfortable approaches you, be ready to put your hand up to halt their approach- this lets them know that you are aware of their presence, and communicates that you want them to respect your boundary.
2. At 5 feet, you need to raise your awareness to the next level. First, attempt to move away to maintain your 'reactionary gap'. Also, where your hands are is very important. If someone is invading your space, consider putting your hands together, just below your chin. This is a great position to use the 'emergency time out' gesture, making a 'T' with your two hands to help communicate to the person that they need to stop. This hand position will also help to quickly block a punch or attack, and your muscles and bones in your arms may keep a bullet or knife from penetrating to your vital organs.
3. At 2 feet, you are typically engaging someone socially, perhaps with a handshake, or perhaps handing something to them, or receiving something from them. At this distance, the location of your hands, together and under your chin, becomes more critical. You are in a position to communicate with your hands, and verbally, that the person needs to stop what they are doing. You are very vulnerable at this distance.

Warning signs

1. Distance- if a person is not respecting your personal space, or continues to advance into your space, this could be a sign of potential aggression.
2. Position- where a person chooses to position themselves can communicate respect for your personal space, or potential aggression (perhaps even intentionally blocking an exit).
3. Voice- tone/word choice- the tone of voice and words used often indicate aggression.
4. Hands- danger typically comes from the hands of a person; pay attention to aggressive hand movements. Watch for flexing hands, clenched fists, clapping hands, and clenching knuckles, which can be signs of a potential attack.
5. Eyes- are they piercing yours in an attempt to intimidate you? Are they nervously darting around, seeming to be alert for an attack or interference from someone who might be coming to assist you? Are their eyes narrowing as they stare at you? Are the eyes bloodshot, or pupils dilated, which could indicate signs of intoxication? Where a person is looking and how intently may help to clue you in to the intentions of the person.

AT ALL TIMES, TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS!