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Personal Safety

Personal safety is a question of acting on our instincts. Bill puts the issue starkly: what if you are walking on the street and you see a man hitting a woman? Will you step in - but if so, will you be hurt? Will your intervention only make things worse? If you are capable of dealing with the situation, are you then going to end up the one being arrested for assault, or sued by damages? If, instead, you stand back and witness the incident, and later make a statement to police, do you want to get that involved? Are you prepared to go to court?

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You, the person on that street, have to decide on all these circumstances, in a second. If you have been through personal safety training, and how to deal with potential confrontations, the chances are, Bill says, that you will be able to make your mind up, whether your decision is to step in or to observe and act as a witness. Again, this is not merely a theoretical situation, or one not directly relevant to private security. What if a retail security officer is called by radio to aid another store's officer chase a shoplifter? In the heat of the chase, someone can get stabbed or shot.

Bill suggests that a way to control such a situation is via CCTV, and from the control room; and bringing in the police, who are trained to deal with knives and guns. Bill says: "My own opinion is that security personnel should never try to arrest someone brandishing a knife or any weapon. They should take note of identification issues and deal with it as a witness." It is not necessary to make an arrest, to seek to become a hero, he adds. In control Training, then, is not only about not backing off - not walking away from a man hitting a woman on the street - but about being in control of a situation, not being rash. Because, as Bill says, once you make a rash decision, it is difficult to back off. In a violent or threatening situation, things can change very quickly. A proper decision one second can be the wrong one a few seconds later, meaning you need to do something else. "Again, only training, I think, can make you aware of all these issues."

