

## *Mental Awareness*

Awareness, according to experts, makes up 90% of self-defense, the remaining 10% being physical techniques. With awareness, you can identify and avoid potentially dangerous situations. Without it, you become an easy target for a criminal.

Colonel Jeff Cooper, a combat pistol instructor, developed the Color Code system, used by most military and police organizations, to differentiate different levels of awareness.

These color codes help recognize, evaluate, and avoid potential threats. They are used to measure rising threat and make most situations avoidable. The following are the colors in ascending order of awareness of danger: white, yellow, orange, and red.



### Unaware (**Code White**)

⊕ You are totally unaware. You should only be in this condition when you are asleep!

⊕ You feel **secure**, whether or not you are actually safe.

⊕ Awareness is switched **off** –

asleep/daydreaming

- ⊕ Fully concentrating on work, book, movie, etc.
- ⊕ You are **unaware** of your environment, its inhabitants, and their rituals of attack.
- ⊕ All **attackers look** for victims in this state.
- ⊕ You will be caught totally unprepared for a violent encounter.

### Aware (**Code Yellow**)

- ⊕ Conscious of your surroundings, cognizant of those around you
- ⊕ You are **cautious**. You should spend most of the time in this state.

- ⊕ Awareness is switched **on**; Conscious of your surroundings, cognizant of those around you
- ⊕ State of **threat awareness** and **relaxed alertness**.
- ⊕ You have a **360-degree peripheral awareness** of such environmental danger spots as secluded doorways, entries, and alleys, as well as such psychological triggers as adrenal dump and attacker ruses. Be aware of people, vehicles, behind large objects, dark areas, etc.
- ⊕ Mentally identified where potential threats may emanate
- ⊕ Driving, walking on street, jogging, in public building
- ⊕ This is the minimum condition you should live your life in when you walk out of your house.
- ⊕ There is no specific threat in yellow.

### Alert (Code Orange)

- ⊕ You can be in **danger**. You are aware of a *potential* threat.
- ⊕ When a stranger approaches on a deserted street
- ⊕ State of **threat evaluation**.
- ⊕ **Specific alert**. A possible target has been identified. A particular situation that has drawn your attention and could present a major problem. Someone may be giving oral indicators such as direct threats or using suspicious language. Focus on the potential attacker.
- ⊕ Check to see if there is an avenue of escape, potential weapons available, and if others around you are friend or foe.
- ⊕ **Decision** is made to **take action**: Set a limit that will initiate action once the threat has crossed said limit
- ⊕ In Alert/Orange you have determined upon a specific adversary and are prepared to take action which may result in deadly force, but you are not in a lethal mode.

### Alarm (Code Red)

- ⊕ You are in **conflict**.
- ⊕ Potential threat is now a real threat to victim's physical safety
- ⊕ State of **threat avoidance**.
- ⊕ **Fight or flight**. Flee, defend, or attack. You have evaluated the situation, and if there is a threat, you prepare to fight or run.
- ⊕ Never stand or fight if there is a possibility of fleeing.
- ⊕ **Carry out decision** to act made in Code Orange. You don't have to think; no indecision on the course of action; you are prepared.
- ⊕ If use of physical self-defense techniques is necessary, use the level of force appropriate to the threat. e.g., don't treat someone who pushes you because he is rude like someone who is trying to stab you with a knife.
- ⊕ In Red you are in a lethal mode and will shoot if circumstances warrant

### How to Use the Color Codes of Awareness

The color codes of awareness are a continuum of your awareness and readiness to defend. The objective is to constantly flow from one color to the next above or below, depending on the situation.

Never be in white. Spend most your time in **yellow**, even in places where you feel safe, such as at home.

**Constantly be aware and alert**, and shift from yellow and orange often as you notice potential threats and dangers. While walking down the street, practice imaginary shifts between the two colors. Practice thinking of ways to respond to potential attackers.

When in orange, notice what you can do to flee, defend, or attack if it becomes necessary, and make the decision to take a specific action if the situation escalates to red.

What would you do if that person walking behind you picks up the pace and makes a move toward you? What would you do if someone jumped out of the alley just ahead of you? What would you do if someone walking in front of you suddenly cuts your path and raises his hands toward you?

### **The Color Codes in Practice**

Here's one example of how the Color Codes of awareness could be used. A 100-pound woman is walking to her car, carrying grocery bags. Being aware and alert in Code Yellow, she sees two suspicious men near her car.

She switches from Yellow to Orange. She decides on her self-defense options. They walk toward her and reach for her. She switches to Red, and executes her decisions: she throws the bags at them and runs back into the store.

Another example. You are walking and someone diagonally across the street stares at you for no apparent reason, with an angry expression. He doesn't avert his gaze. You shift to Orange and decide to run the opposite direction and yell for help.

He starts moving quickly toward you, crossing the street without regard to traffic. You immediately shift to Red, and without thinking or deciding, run the opposite direction at the fastest speed you can, and either lose him or run into a police officer or security guard that can help you.

**Don't make the criminals happy.** The number one thing that makes crooks happy is the fact that way too many honest citizens go through life without actually paying attention to what is going on around them until it is too late to do much about it. If these good people manage to survive a deadly encounter it is generally because luck has smiled on them.

**Put your cell phone away.** Keep your head up and pay attention to your surroundings; you should never be walking around looking at the screen of a mobile device. If you see something that doesn't look right, keep an eye on it until it goes away or until you can go away. Be prepared to act, and have a plan, if that situation you are watching turns out to be an actual threat. Perps will see you are paying attention, recognize your sense of awareness and go looking for an easier target. Don't be easy!

**Keep your tools handy.** Simply watching to the nightly news makes one realize that a violent criminal attack can occur anywhere and without any notice. Violent crimes doesn't just occur in the *bad* part of town. It happens in our homes, our churches, our schools, at local stores, movie theaters and just about everywhere else that you can name. No one is able to accurately predict when and where they will be the victim of a violent crime.

If you went to all that trouble to get a carry license, you should carry your defensive tools everywhere that it is legal to do so. That is the only way that you will have a chance to protect yourself and your family. Asking the perp to come back tomorrow when you have remembered your defensive tools will probably not work to your advantage.

**We live in a good neighborhood.** Too many people let down their guard when they are at home because that is where they feel the safest. This is the main reason that home invasions occur in our society. Your home is only your safe space when you have taken every precaution to make it a hard target for the criminal and maintain its hardness.

You should keep the doors locked even when you are at home. You should have good external lighting installed to make it safer to check out nighttime problems. The door between the garage and the house should always be locked; the vehicles in the garage should always be locked. A good watchdog is also an excellent early-alarm system. And you should always be near a defensive firearm if you have been trained in their safe and proper use. A strategically located pepper gel canister near every door is a good start. Finally, you should make a plan and practice it frequently with the entire family.

### **Conclusion**

Starting right now be in Code Yellow. Throughout your day, identify potential areas of danger and switch to Code Orange as necessary. Switch back to Code Yellow if no threat exists. Do this exercise again tomorrow. And the next day. And so on. Eventually, **awareness becomes a habit**. Make the most important self-defense skill, awareness, a habit.

