

Social vs. Asocial Violence: A Quick & Dirty Introduction

MARCH 26, 2015 BY MICHAEL TUCKER [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

In response to my post on [whether or not to follow the bad guy's instructions](#) in a potentially violent situation, one of my readers (who's trained at Magic City Dojo many times) sent me the following message (personal correspondence omitted) :

Hey Mike. Just read the new blog post. Great job! The topic, writing, and even the illustrations were all well-chosen and well done. 😊

On a similar vein (just thought of this), what would bullying be classified as? Social or asocial? And how do you determine when to defend yourself (ignoring any institutional rules) or just keep walking away?

First, let's look at a quick and dirty outline of social and asocial types of violence. Much of what follows is borrowed and paraphrased from Rory Miller and is written from memory – any mistakes are my own. For a more thorough understanding, I recommend reading his book, [Facing Violence](#).

Social Violence

Social violence is about establishing and/or maintaining a social order. Basically where people fit in the power hierarchy. Here are some indicators that you are in a social violence situation.

- *Audience Required* – whether present or to be informed later, an audience is required for social order so that the audience knows where their place as well as the aggressor's and your places are in the hierarchy. In some cases, such as the “educational beatdown” in a domestic abuse situation, the only audience is you and the attacker.
- *Non-Violent Option* – many times (but not always), the aggressor will give you a non-violent option to avoid violence (sometimes the bad guy instructions make you safer). In some situations, this is a way to save face for the aggressor. In others, it is a demonstration of his total power in that he has such control that violence isn't needed from the beginning; only as a last resort.
- *Assessment and Communication Skills* – Almost all social violence situations can be resolved through good awareness and verbal de-fusing skills. “Those who talk can be persuaded to walk” – Tony Blauer

Don't think for a second that just because it's a social violence situation it can't become lethal in a heartbeat.

Types of Social Violence

There are a few common types of social violence situations that Rory Miller has classified. Bear in mind that although there may be a primary classification for a scenario you find yourself in, there can certainly be overlapping classifications.

- *Monkey Dance (MD)* – This is the typical male ego vs. male ego fight. It starts as a look or phrase that builds and builds until the face saving exit is taken for both parties or that eventually escalates to blows. Understand that this is not self defense. This is fighting. There's a good chance you'll both go to jail. Women can and do monkey dance too.
- *Group Monkey Dance (GMD)* – The MD can quickly become a GMD. This is when the primary monkeys' friends get involved in escalating the situation. It could be the opponent's friends or yours. This can quickly get bad as the mob mentality begins to take hold.
- *Territorial Defense (TD)* – This is basically being somewhere you don't belong. From being in the wrong bar or even sitting on the wrong bar stool. A really clear example is gang turf. If the Crips venture into the Bloods territory, there is an increase for potential violence. This is not just location based, but could also be time of day based. You may be fine in an establishment during certain days of the week, but if you go in on Death Metal Rock night wearing a nice suit, you might yourself in trouble.
- *Educational Beatdown (EB)* – This is to teach you a lesson. Or this is to teach the bad guy's peer group a lesson by making an example out of you. Don't cross the leader. Much of domestic violence falls into this category. "You didn't dress the way I told you, so now I'm going to hit you as punishment. Do it right next time." Of course, there's more going on in DV situations, so please don't think I'm downplaying that.
- *Status Seeking Show (SSS)* – If you haven't heard of the "Knockout Game", Google it after you read this. The Knockout Game fits this category. This can also be the bad guy that breaks the conventional rules of violence. The one that uses very extreme violence for a minor perceived offense. Or the one that will attack a clearly disproportionate victim. For example: a 25 year old male bad guy attacking a 10 year old girl, an 83 year old man, a pregnant woman. His goal being that his peer group won't cross him because he's "Crazy Joe." This is about gaining status.

Strategies to Survive Social Violence

Awareness, detection, and assessment skills are key. Pay attention and make smart decisions. Develop people skills. Good etiquette is a dying art. And simply put, don't be an asshole.

If you're in dangerous places with dangerous people doing dangerous things, you're in danger. -...

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Much of the below will inflame your sense of right and wrong. That's your ego talking. This is not about what's right. It about staying out of the hospital and out of jail. Besides, it's more right to stay healthy and free for those that depend on you.

- *MD* – Don't let your ego hijack your brain. Don't base your strategy and tactics on ego. In all of these situations, your "rights" don't matter. Especially to the bad guy. In most cases, you can just walk away from this. Issue a tactical apology if necessary and let it go. Just know that it's possible for the bad guy to keep issuing insults and challenges as you make your exit. Just let it go. Choose safety and stay out of jail.
- *GMD* – Much of above still applies. The problem here is that there are other monkeys involved. Unless you have someone you have a responsibility to protect, you should just walk away. If you absolutely must, you may want to issue a tactical apology on behalf of your group and start trying to de-fuse both the opposition and your own group. To the opponent(s), "Guys...I'm sorry. My buddy(s) had a little too much to drink. I'm getting him (them) out of here." To your buddy(s), "Guys...come on. This isn't worth going to jail over. Let's go. We've got better shit to do." If your friends won't let it go, my advice to you is 1) to tell them that they are on their own and 2) you should pick better friends.
- *TT* – Easy. Don't go to places you obviously have no business being in. If you do find yourself there, just leave as soon as you realize that you are in the wrong place.
- *EB* – Hatsumi-sensei has said for years that it's important to "read the air." Pay attention to what looks acceptable and unacceptable. Shut up and listen. Try to learn the customs of the situation you are entering. Ask a guide. This is incredibly useful when traveling to foreign countries. Treat people with respect. If you don't know how to act or what to say, don't say anything. Don't speak unless spoken to. The basics apply here.
- *SSS* – This is the tough one. This can be triggered by any of the above that goes beyond the "normal" violence. This starts to blur the line into asocial violence. First, keep your awareness up as you normally would. Be prepared to go into beast mode with your defense. If you can de-value the status the bad guy is trying to gain, you may defuse it.

Asocial Violence

This is the really dangerous stuff. These are the muggings, rapes, and murders. This is the type of violence we are referring to when we talk about the 3 things bad guys want and the 3 things bad guys don't want. The 3%er. The sociopath.

There's no social order game being played. This is completely outside the social order. This isn't monkey stuff, this is predator stuff. You are simply a means to an end. Food to be devoured.

There are two basic types of predators.

- *Resource Predator* – This predator uses you as a tool to gain something else. This is the hostage taker that holds you for ransom. This is the mugger that wants your property. He victimizes you to gain something else.
- *Process Predator* – This is the predator that does his crime because he enjoys it. The crime itself is the goal. This is the rapist. This is the serial killer.

Some indicators that you are in an asocial violence situation:

- *A Lack of Audience* – Because the situation is clearly a crime and the bad guy doesn't want to get caught, he wants as few potential witnesses as possible. It's not about showing how bad ass he is. It's about getting what he wants from you.
- *Almost Always a Weapon Present* – Many times the weapon is used first as intimidation to get compliance from you. This is to prevent you from fighting back, running away, screaming for help, etc. Be ready for him to use the weapon at any time.
- *Isolated Location* – This is connected with the lack of audience principle. Have your awareness raised higher in isolated areas such as stairwells, vacant lots, parking decks, elevators, etc. Look around and pay attention.
- *Concealed Body Parts* – Does the bad guy have his face concealed to prevent identification? Gloves to prevent leaving fingerprints? Hiding his hands behind his back or in his clothes to potentially conceal a weapon? There's a quote often heard in law enforcement circles that says, "The eyes may be windows to the soul, but the hands will kill you."

Sometimes asocial violence is used to gain social status. Such as the gang member that murders someone to increase his street cred.

Strategies to Survive Asocial Violence

Again awareness, detection, and assessment skills are critical. You can avoid a lot of bad shit by just paying attention. Don't go to places that you know or suspect have a high level of criminal activity. Apply that principle to the time of day. Contact your local police departments for crime reports. You can probably find much of that info online. Many police departments issue tips and crime updates on their agency's Facebook page. Avoid people with criminal backgrounds. Don't be friends with drug dealers or gang members.

- *Fortify* – Lock your doors and windows to your home, office, and car. Keep the maintenance up on your car. You don't want your fastest means of escape to fail you at a critical moment. Plus broken down cars are an expensive pain in the ass even when you're not in danger.
- *Communications* – Keep your phone charged at all times if possible. I have a charger at work, in my car, and in my bedroom. If I am at work or in my car...my phone is on the charger. I also have an app on every screen of my phone for dialing 911. I touch the app, then I touch the green call button. Practice entering your phone's password under stress. I also recommend keeping a cheap or old cell phone at least in your bedroom on a charger at all times. Most out of service phones will still dial 911 if the battery is good.
- *Mobility* – Car maintenance. Don't allow your gas to go below a 1/4 tank. Park nose out. It takes the same amount of time as parking nose in and then having to back out when you leave a parking spot, but when you need to leave in a hurry, you save time on your escape/exit. Plus, you can more easily see where you are going, so you also prevent minor accidents. Choose clothing and footwear that allows you to fight and run. Laced and closed toe shoes are preferred. Slip-on shoes will slip off in a fight or full bore run. Sorry ladies, but high heels are the worst and probably just not good for your body in general. The ability to sprint, not jog, is a good skill.

- *Self Defense* – The most important skill you hope you will never need. If you couldn't avoid the situation, you couldn't de-fuse it by attracting attention (in asocial situations) or giving up the property (in a resource crime), and the attack is going to become physical, you need to fight. Just fighting back is the most important thing. Knowing how to fight back efficiently is even better. This is why it's important to train! And the good news is that learning to deal with the street thug doesn't require 20 years of practice. Just a few simple skills and strategies and a little bit of time can do the job.

Back to the Questions

On a similar vein (just thought of this), what would bullying be classified as? Social or asocial?

I would say that bullying is one of those overlapping situations.

The typical bully is usually doing things from a process predator perspective. The act makes him feel powerful. He's most likely doing this because he feels powerless in some or many other situations in his life. Sometimes his act is to increase or maintain his social status.

Sometimes you can end it through skillfully using social pressure so that if the bully continues his bullying, he'll lose social status.

Sometimes you may have to stand your ground and once the bully realizes he can't intimidate you, he'll find a face saving way out for himself. If he does that, don't mock him. First, it's morally wrong. Don't become a bully yourself. Two, in the bully's mind, this may challenge his ego and/or leave him feeling that he has no other recourse but to initiate violence.

And sometimes if you stand your ground, you may have to fight.

In my experience (I was bullied a good bit in grade school), the only thing that stops bullying is standing up to the bully. Giving in to the bully just prolongs the bullying. Of course, this was in a time where both kids didn't get in any more trouble than a day of detention with the school if there was a fight. We had one fight and that was then end of it.

This is a complex topic and is probably deserves having its own article due to the psychology and scenarios involved.

And how do you determine when to defend yourself (ignoring any institutional rules) or just keep walking away?

With most forms of social violence, you can just walk away. "Walking away" is a metaphor for any way of resolving the situation without physical violence.

If physical violence is imminent and unavoidable; that's when you must defend yourself. Be nice. Until it's time to not be nice.

