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Attack–Escape–Evade: A Civilian Response Model to the Active Killer

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During an Active Killer Incident, time is of the essence whether you are a responding law enforcement officer or a civilian who is in the wrong place at the wrong time. Many active killer response programs advocate that civilians fight back “*only as a last resort.*” This is a losing strategy especially against a threat that is actively slaughtering innocent people. One cannot wordsmith the act of fighting back against an active killer into a more socially digestible context. Survival requires extreme measures. It wasn’t long ago that tourniquets were touted as the “last resort” when dealing with severe bleeding. And you were told if you apply a tourniquet the patient will lose their limb but you will save their life. Fortunately, we know better these days and the paradigm is now that tourniquets are the first line of defense to stop severe arterial bleeding. It has taken far too long for this paradigm shift to take effect but the result is that lives are being saved with the rapid application of a tourniquet to treat severe arterial bleeding. Now is the time for an equally important paradigm shift when teaching civilians how to respond to an active killer incident.

It is time to put the “*fight back only as last resort*” mantra to rest regarding active killer incidents. Fighting back might be your least preferred option but realistically you must respond based on the actions of the killer. This can literally mean you are fighting for your life from the instant the killer decides you are his next target! The “*last resort*” mantra is a passive, losing strategy that must be laid to rest once and for all. Violence is ugly and one cannot dress it up into a more user friendly suitable context that makes employers or human resource professionals feel better about the wording being used rather than the results being obtain. Pushing a last resort mantra is not helpful to civilians, employees, or anyone attending active killer training whose goal is to survive the encounter. Be wary of any active killer or active shooter training program that claims fighting back is only a last resort.

Fighting back might be your least preferred option but you must respond based on the actions of the killer.

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When a **Dedicated Threat** is attempting to kill you, one must have the proper survival oriented mindset to prevail in such a violent and chaotic environment. You do not get the time or luxury of working up to the idea of fighting back to save your life. You must be mentally prepared to fight back to save your life from the moment an active killer incident starts. Yes, you may have other options that do not include fighting back but you had better be mentally prepared to fight for your life from the onset of violence!

A "**Dedicated Threat**" is a person or persons whose main goal, desire, and motivation is to severely injure or kill you by any means necessary.

This is the worst-case scenario.

In the civilian arena, one of the more popular responses to an active shooter incident is "Run, Hide, Fight". Over the past few years, the "Run, Hide, Fight" campaign has faced increasing criticism for being too passive. Additionally, it is commonly taught as a linear model meaning that the first response option during an active killer incident is to run. If running is not an option, hide. If hiding is not an option, then fight back only as a last resort. While this linear approach may not have been intended this is how many people interpret Run, Hide, Fight. Every decision a civilian makes during an active killer incident may be the determining factor on living or dying. Passivity will not serve one well when facing a lethal threat. In an extremely high stress environment where civilians will be experiencing both psychological and physiological reactions to stress they may literally get stuck in the response order of Run, Hide, Fight when confronted against a lethal threat rather than choosing the most appropriate option based upon the threats actions. This is why it is critical to teach material correctly. There is a big difference between moving through a linear response versus choosing the most appropriate response. There are other active killer programs that also advocate fighting back only as a last resort.

Your response to an active killer must be dependent upon the actions of the killer.

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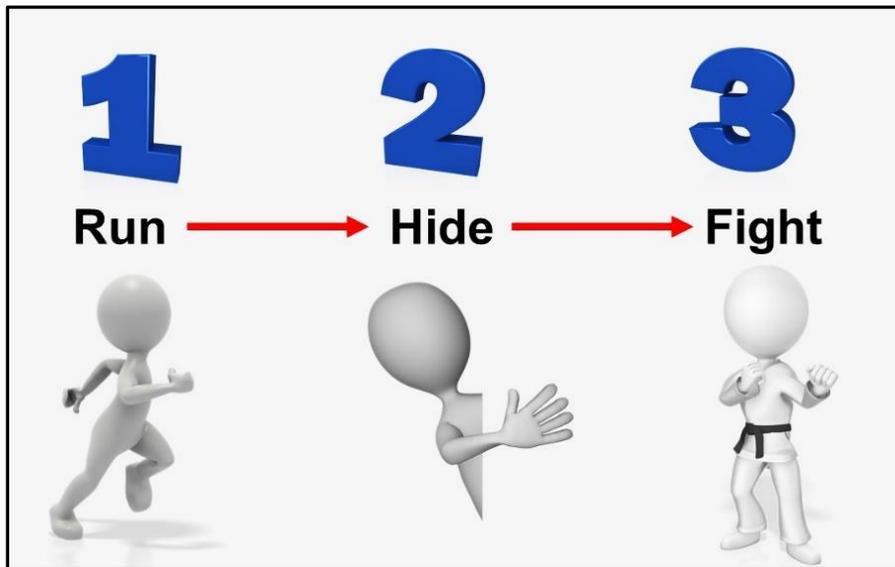
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When confronted face-to-face with an active killer you do not have an option of running or hiding. Your only option is to fight back immediately and decisively. You must attack the attacker. To run or hide at this point is to implement the wrong choice at the wrong time. The continual pushing that fighting is a last resort will result in civilians who attend such training who are not mentally prepared to survive an active killer incident. The emphasis needs to be on teaching civilians to choose the most appropriate response option based upon the actions of the killer.



The "Run, Hide, Fight" Model is typically taught in a linear progression.

Attack – Escape – Evade: A Civilian Response Paradigm

When faced with extreme violence one must singularly focus on survival. A response model must forge a survival mindset and reinforce response options. Training must also focus on combating psychological and physiological reactions to stress as most civilians are not well versed in the impact of stress relating to extreme violence. Active killer incidents by their very nature are the worst-case scenario. Your day may go from peaceful to utter chaos within seconds. The importance of developing a survival oriented mindset cannot be overstated. Your mindset is your first line of defense against violence. As is often said: "***The will to win beats the skill to win.***" This speaks directly to the importance and value of mindset.

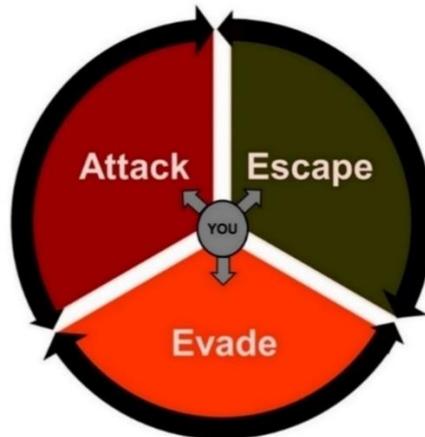
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Mindset

Active killer incidents are lethal encounters that require an indomitable mindset to survive. The “**Default Mental Position**” and the first cognitive response when confronted with an active killer must be to **ATTACK**. Yes, fight back! Be prepared mentally for the *worst-case scenario* and be ready to fight, but if other options are presented be flexible and adaptable in your response. The paradigm shift for civilians who are thrust into an active killer incident is: **Attack – Escape – Evade**. For many the thought of ATTACKING first as your default mental position is counterintuitive because we are often told that we must first focus on escaping or getting away from the killer. But the reality is that we do not always have such options based on the actions of the threat. Our first and only option may be to immediately fight back and attack the attacker!



Civilians must start with a very clear understanding they are ready, willing, and able to fight back from the beginning of an active killer incident where innocent people are being slaughtered. As civilians rarely use violence to resolve conflict it is common to have a thought process that one will “*work up*” to fighting back if all other options fail which has resulted in idea of fighting back “*only as a last resort.*” That is “*best-case scenario*” thinking. Active killer incidents escalate quickly and are extremely violent. One must be mentally prepared to fight back from the beginning of an incident, not work up to it if other options fail.

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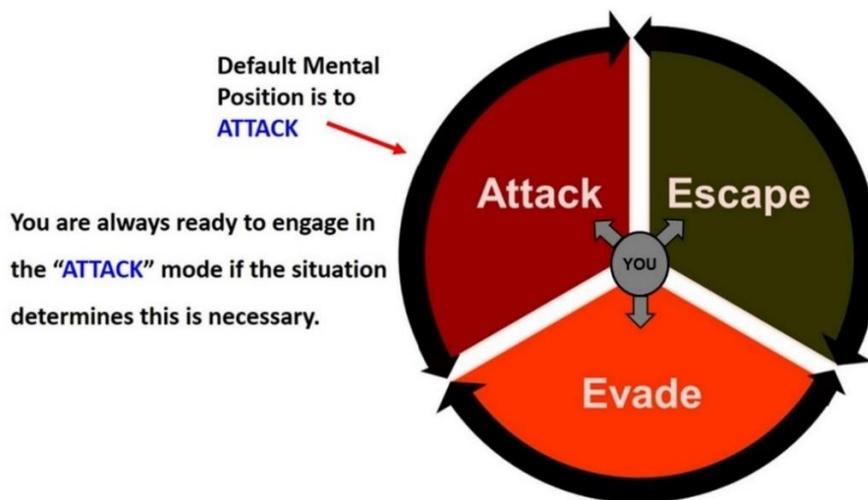
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The **Attack-Escape-Evade Civilian Response Model** is about forging an aggressive survival mindset and presenting response options in a logical manner that increases survivability for civilians in the worst-case scenario of violence.

The **Attack – Escape – Evade Civilian Response Model** is a circular design where the civilian responds **based on the actions of the active killer**. The civilian does NOT work through a linear or progressive process where one must choose option A before B before choosing option C. Instead, **the civilian chooses the best response option based on the actions of the active killer**. Therefore, if you can “**Escape**” or “**Evade**” then do so. When Escaping or Evading your mindset is that you are always ready to **Attack** if fighting becomes necessary. The circular model allows the civilian to choose the most appropriate response option based on what the killer is doing and where he is located. Regardless of which response you choose you are always ready to “Attack” and fight back as the threat status may change at any moment. This mindset is true mental preparedness. Let’s examine each response option in more detail.



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Attack:

To “Attack” (fight) is using whatever force is reasonable and necessary to stop the killer from slaughtering innocent people. From the start of the killing the civilians mindset is they are ready to fight to survive. During an Active Killer Incident civilians are in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury which mandates an immediate and decisive response. Anytime you are confronted with an active killer where Escape and Evade are not options you must attack the killer and fight for your life. This is why it is important to have the mindset that you are ready to fight back from the onset of a violent encounter. Do not have a “*last resort*” mentality! Mentally prepare now so you do not have a delay in your response. Remember, you do not get to warm up to the idea of fighting as you may be immediately confronted in a situation where fighting is your only option. Being mentally prepared at the beginning of an incident can save your life.

Escape:

“**Escape**” means the civilian is not in imminent danger at that moment in time. While escaping you are still in danger as the threat can become imminent based on proximity or the type of weapon being used by the killer. Your mindset is that you are ready to attack but you have the ability to escape. **To escape means you immediately and safely leave the area.** Remember, as you are escaping, the situation may change requiring you to immediately switch from Escape mode to Attack mode.

Evade:

“**Evade**” means the civilian is in danger, but the threat is not imminent because the killer is not in the direct vicinity or is unaware of a potential victims location. This is still an extremely dangerous situation. The civilian evades the threat because he is not in a position to “Attack” the killer and does not have an opportunity to “Escape.” **When attempting to “Evade” the killer you are doing whatever is necessary to remain out of visual and auditory contact from the killer.** Again, the environment can change requiring you to transition from “Evade” mode to “Attack” mode.

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Conclusion:

Civilians must have an aggressive survival oriented mindset when faced with lethal violence. The **Attack – Escape – Evade Civilian Response Model** provides a realistic and practical paradigm for civilians. The default mindset is a willingness to “Attack” the threat by fighting back in order to stop his murderous rampage. When time is of the essence and lives are being lost there is no substitute for an aggressive mindset. We must trust that civilians are up to the task through proper training and a well-executed training curriculum that focuses on using appropriate response options being implemented at the correct time. We must also stress there is no such thing as a “last resort” in regard to fighting. It may be the least preferred option but it is by no means a last resort option as a civilians response is based on the actions of the killer and not a linear progression through an ineffective response model. A maxim I often use in training is:

Hope is not a survival strategy.

Luck is not a survival tactic.

The **Attack – Escape – Evade Civilian Response Model** provides civilians an easy to remember plan that forges a survival oriented mindset for the worst-case scenario. We live in a world where evil exists and bad people intentionally harm good people. There is no substitute for being prepared. A civilians default mental position must be to ATTACK and fight back from the moment violence occurs. This survival mindset does not necessitate the need to warm up to the idea of fighting back while simultaneously allows the civilian to choose other options such as Escape or Evade. If you should ever find yourself in an active killer incident your goal is to: **WIN – SURVIVE – PREVAIL!**

About the author

Scott Kirshner, M.Ed. has been a Parole Administrator, Supervisory Probation Officer, and a Corrections Officer. He has extensive experience as an officer survival trainer and has been a lead defensive tactics instructor, firearms instructor, and use of force instructor. He is the author of numerous books on officer survival which are available on Amazon.com. Mr. Kirshner is the owner and Lead Instructor of Dedicated Threat Solutions, LLC. The author can be reached at: info@dedicatedthreatsolutions.com or to learn more visit: www.dedicatedthreatsolutions.com

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Active Killer Incidents: A Guide for the Armed Civilian

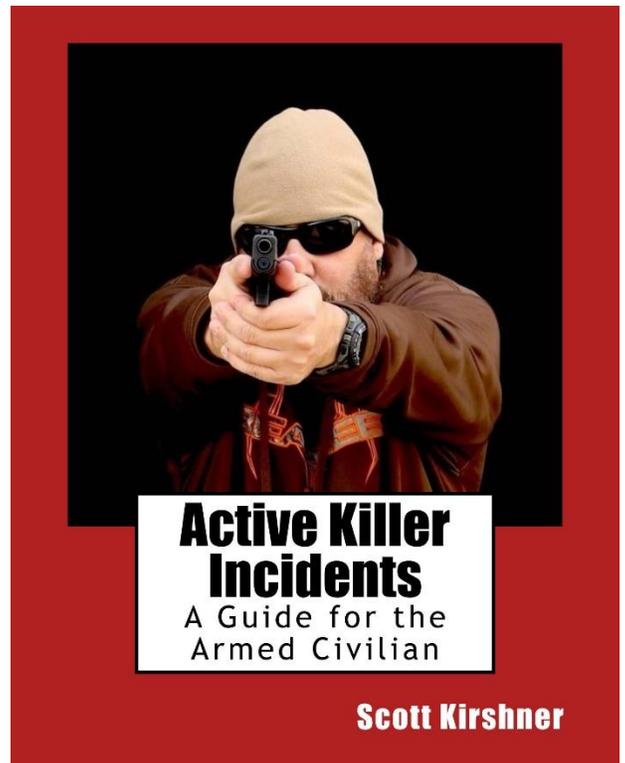
Active Killer Incidents: A Guide for the Armed Civilian covers sound tactical principles for preparedness minded civilians to prevail in an Active Shooter or Active Killer Incident. Covered in this book are methods for civilians to stop an active killer using solo and team tactics. Introduced is the "**Attack, Escape, Evade**" civilian response paradigm.

Topics discussed include close quarter battle to include the foundational skills of:

- ⇒ Mindset
- ⇒ Situational Awareness
- ⇒ Color Codes
- ⇒ OODA Loop

Also covered is civilian gear along with **tactical trauma care** to include valuable training scenarios. This work contains insightful and relevant information that can keep you and loved ones alive.

If you have made the commitment to **WIN, SURVIVE, and PREVAIL** against violence this book will take your skills to the next level.



Available on Amazon:

<https://www.amazon.com/Active-Killer-Incidents-Guide-Civilian/dp/1542641306/>

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