

Even with the best judgment in the world, you can still find yourself in an unpleasant situation with a client who seemed perfectly sane and rational when he came in the door and now seems determined to be aggressive, violent or worse.

Where and how you work plays a major part in the self-defence strategies you may need. If you're working in a sauna with a door onto a central corridor and other people wandering by or waiting in reception, attracting attention will get you the help you need. If you're an escort doing an outcall to a detached house, you're going to need to be able to get yourself out of there, and that might mean bringing him down to give yourself a head start.

These are the basic tools of self-defence:

Awareness

This term is used in self-defence speak to mean avoiding danger by thinking ahead, such as clocking your escape routes before you go into the room, not allowing a client to lock you in, or any forward planning that is going to help you get out of the situation. If you're working in a sauna or flat, this can be simple and straightforward; if you do outcall work, you're going to need to be good at thinking on your feet.

De-escalation

This means using your body language, tone of voice and words to calm the situation before it gets violent. Speak calmly, keep your hands open and be sympathetic and understanding.

Flight

Also known as running away. If the situation hasn't become violent, make an excuse - you left the lube next door, you need to pee, whatever - and get out of the room or house. If the situation has become violent, you may need to stun them to give yourself a chance to get out - see Fight, below.

Attract attention

Use a personal alarm if you have one (and you need to have one), scream,

shout, smash things - particularly good for getting neighbours on the phone to reception or the police if you're in a hotel or flat.

Fight

Most women have an inherent size and strength disadvantage against men. If you do need to fight, you still need to run - you're unlikely to be able to hold your own against him in a prolonged tussle. You want to get him down, and you want to get out. Don't wait to see how he reacts to your attack. Picture yourself fighting through him to the door rather than with him to win.

Aim for the eyes, groin or throat if you can, but anything soft and fleshy will do. Don't kick unless you're already down - it's very easy to predict a kick, grab the leg or foot and knock someone to the ground.

If you're regularly in the kind of situation where you might need to fight your way out, you may want to think about doing some self-defence training. A lot of courses offer the first class free, so it probably won't cost you anything just to have a look. A web search for "women self defence Edinburgh" (or wherever) will give you a good idea as to what's on offer. You may want to try something that is specifically aimed at self-defence (such as Krav Maga), rather than taking up a martial art from scratch. Although martial arts can be a great way to keep fit, it can take quite awhile to get good enough to defend yourself, and some are aimed more at 'performance combat' - where you learn how to perform set moves with an opponent - rather than teaching you how to respond to an unfamiliar attack.

