

7 Personal Safety

Myths

for
Women



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THE
GREEN WRITER

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“How many giraffes can you stuff in a fridge?”
So goes a popular riddle.

If you responded, "One," then you're right!

Let's imagine tucking in a giraffe, its long limbs, tail, and tall neck, and all, in a fairly large family refrigerator. And then shutting the door tight.

Poor guy, it won't be easy for him to climb straight out and walk away tall. It'll most likely stay there with its limbs intertwined.

It might even grow some, like a plant in a tiny pot.

Have you seen those pathetic balled-up roots that weave into themselves and stying stunted?

Until you've released them, cropped them correctly, and replanted them to begin their healthy growth.

Myths are a lot like that. They're beliefs gone wrong—contorted and confused.

Myths and maxims are rooted in our brains from childhood.

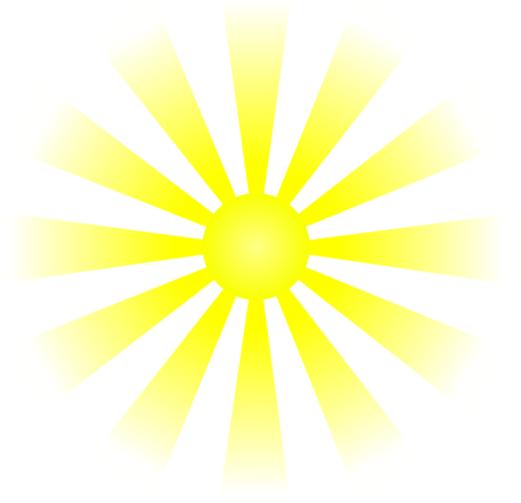
We are often taught to accept wrong or incomplete information as dictums—thoughts that were stuffed into our little brains as children.

Then, we began to misread the cues of trouble, and the end result was catastrophic.

It's an excruciating challenge to unbelieve the myths and straighten things up.

Just like those bent-up legs of the giraffe in the refrigerator.

Let's forget about the giraffe for now and jump into unraveling a few of these myths:



Myth #1

If it's daytime, I'm safe.

My grandparents were paranoid about me or my cousin-sisters going out at night. They were absolutely adamant about girls being back home before sunset.

I agree, evil gets on high after dark, but we cannot assume anymore that daytime is safe for us.

Deserted spaces have some obvious dangers – kidnap, rape, mugging.

Even daytime crowds have their own trouble spots in broad daylight.

Pickpockets, thieves, and Eve-teasers easily mix with the thronging crowd and look for their chance, camouflaged in the thick mix of people.

Avoid desolate places, even if they're the most scenic and peaceful spots you've ever been.

However, there's a caveat.

Busting the myth around daytime safety, I must share that people's neurological tendencies adjust to the time of the day.

The same setting that was okay in broad daylight becomes a little dangerous after the sun has set.

In fact, it can be totally dangerous in the middle of the night. Time is as important as the location.

This reality stays the same even if we agree to argue until the end of time.

According to the National Library of Medicine, USA, nighttime witnesses more impulsive and maladaptive behaviors, including violent crime.

Why only behavior? Haven't we all experienced a spike in physical pain at night?

Our asthma wheezing gets worse after sundown, a fever tends to rise, anxiety triggers insomnia, and depression increases with shorter winter days.

Light has been an icon of hope. Lack of it has an associated concern.

So, my grandparents had a point to dread the night. But we're only debunking the myth that daytimes are safe.

If daylight doesn't promise safety, nights must be handled more carefully. Let us not change our fear of the nights.

Myth #2

I can trust women, even if they are strangers.

Wrong. Sadly, we have to follow the stranger-danger mantra for all.

Many women out there have taken to unscrupulous paths for their livelihood, either by choice or by compulsion.

But here's the truth: Such women often exploit this myth and get comfortable with their victims before they strike.

Beware, and teach this to other girls you care for.

There are women in the drug cartels, in the flesh trade, and all businesses of the underworld.

Coming face to face with them, even by accident, can jeopardize your life. Or you get deliberately approached by one.

If a woman gets too close to appreciate your hair clips and wants to know where you bought them, simply click your heels and walk away.

You never know what her next move would be. Many women are involved in the human trafficking trade.

Believe it or not, women can also try to take advantage of unsuspecting men. My innocent husband almost became a victim several years back.

We were living far out of the city limits of New Delhi, where one would be lucky to get some public transport.

Returning from work one evening, he saw an old woman stranded on the highway.

His heart melted, and he agreed to drop her off at a busy crossroads a few miles down the road.

As soon as she got in, it was clear she had an agenda. She started off with an offer to sell bags.

When my husband politely turned it down, she raised her voice, accusing him of his habit of "picking up girls from the streets to misbehave."

Completely taken aback by this accusation, he was quick to act. He immediately pulled the car to the side of the road and sternly ordered her out.

His swift reaction was such a surprise to her that she complied. By God's infinite grace, she had no weapon, and the site was deserted.

Had she screamed her false accusation to a crowd of people from the car, the angry

mob would have sided with her without batting an eyelid.

They'd first attack my husband and bash up the car before turning him to the police.

The woman perhaps had been coercing scared men into paying her a hefty sum, which hadn't worked out in her favor in this case.

But it left my husband jarred and shaky for the whole evening—and me, no less. Our two-year-old felt something wasn't right with our moods.

So, beware of female strangers.

I know there could be those truly helpless women out there seeking help.

But if you're alone, please take care of yourself first. No compromises.

Myth #3

A well-dressed and polished person is trustworthy.

How I wish this could be true.

We see bad characters in movies and novels dressed shabby, with nasty facial expressions, broken noses, and colored teeth to match.

We cross the street or lock our car doors when we see such folks at street intersections.

For polished, gentle folks, we alter our stance with extreme politeness. Our kids pick up the same attitude from us.

Just know that the wrong folks take advantage of this and dress up well. They get cozy enough to strike when you're least expecting.

Your mantra should be: If I don't know them, they are strangers. We must be on full alert no matter how polished these strangers seem to be on the outside.

If I were to tell you of a magical escape from a stalker who had followed my 27-year-old mom on a train trip, this book would become a novel.

I was only three, and the two of us were traveling to meet up with my dad in another city in Gujarat, India.

When my father joined us on the train, this perfectly polished and courteous gentleman, an attorney with a business card, befriended my dad first.

And soon after, he shared the story of his pilot brother's death in a recent plane crash that was making headlines.

As he was on his way to collect the ashes of his departed brother, my parents were mesmerized by his warmth and erudition. As a child, I could instantly warm up to welcome him into my little life.

His perfect mannerisms were so impressive that my parents could vouch for his credibility. He became an instant family favorite and a frequent visitor at home.

By some providential stroke of luck, my mom and I were saved by the skin of our teeth from getting kidnapped.

His plans were foiled in the most magical ways, for which we're thankful to this day.

The business card, as it turned out, was a total fake.

There never was a judge nor a lawyer by that name in that state High Court, and no one ever lived by that name at the residential address printed on the card.

Not everyone has been so fortunate in escaping such polished men's secret plans.



Myth #4

I can trust an old man because... he's old.

We women have a heart to help the old.

They quickly earn our empathy and trust. As a good human being, that's what is expected of us, right?

Pause right there.

You can absolutely have oodles of empathy for them. But do not stop too close to give directions or alms to an old man, for example.

Never drop your guards just because he's old.

If you feel like putting some money in an old beggar's bowl, do it quickly and move on. Best not to linger close for a chat.

Remember, convicts grow old, too.

Usually, a respectable old gentleman wouldn't strike up a conversation to ask a young girl for directions on the road.

So, have your caution buttons on full alert when an old man does. Have a grip on your personal alarm and pepper spray.

With all kinds of wigs and masks these days, even a young lawbreaker can pose to be a centenarian. I'm not kidding.

However, there may be those unique situations of genuine old men in distress asking for help in a lonely place.

An old man who seems to have fallen (or someone who stumbles right in front of you) may be desperately crying for help.

I'm not asking you to be heartless. Just be fully cautious.

Do not physically help him get up. Not unless there are several people around to assist you.

In a genuine case, too, it might not be the best medical decision. In case an old man is having a

seizure or any other major health episode, and you want to help him, stay around at a safe distance (about 25 feet) assuring him that you're arranging help.

Call an ambulance, if you can. Or holler out to other people around to assist him, depending on where you are.

If there's hardly anyone around, keep moving away from him as you continue to arrange help.

If you're all by yourself, I'd recommend you NOT help him get back up or stay too close to him to communicate.

For an imposter posing as sick, this could be his chance to make you his next victim.

Keep your defense tools handy the whole time, just in case.

Myth #5

Police stations are always safe, and all police officers are trustworthy.

This is a myth in many cultural contexts, even in advanced and so-called just societies. A lot depends on who you're asking.

Minority groups and marginalized communities are often dealt with differently, even in progressive societies.

It can be a difficult decision in societies with deep-rooted ethnic strife.

However, if you feel someone is following you and you come across a police station, pulling your car in or running into the building will thwart the pursuer.

Unless, of course, the pursuer is part of the clandestine process that controls the government and its public safety department.

The police, playing stooge to such powers, render themselves useless.

In such societies, the police can even be the harmful propagator of crime.

So, watch out and use your judgment regarding the reality of your local area.

If you're traveling in a foreign land, taking the help of the police is a no-brainer – you rarely have other options open in an unfamiliar place.

Keep your fingers crossed for receiving the best help. Be ready to be surprised, though.

While I say this, I must emphasize that there are great police officers and other employees in the police force who do a phenomenal job in protecting communities of people.

My sincere honor for their dedication.

Wish it was true.

In an ideal world, all relatives would chip in when you're down. Except that some don't.

This world is not the Planet of Utopia. You're left with the option of picking and choosing, by experience and observation, who you can trust.

It's not uncommon to have a lecherous person amongst the relatives. Such debauchery often goes unreported.

Women in most cultures are hesitant to discuss it in the open and continue to suffer at their hands.

Often silenced by blackmail, physical threat, guilt, and fear.

Such men continue to bully and confidently grow their reach to younger girls in the family.

It's time to change all of that.

Keep documenting such suffering and keep your safety tools handy in their unavoidable company.



Myth #7

**If I've talked to someone
several times, I kind of
know him because
familiarity builds trust.**

How I wish this was true.

Many killers and rapists resort to this thought process and allow for many occasions for the trust to build before they strike.

This could be a person living down the street with whom you may have chatted several times at the local grocery store and community events.

Suppose you don't know a person's full name, profession, employer, permanent address, and several family members.

In that case, this person should be placed in the stranger danger zone.

When it comes to your body's protection, never fully trust people of unknown heritage and morality, says the ancient Indian wisdom book Hitopodesha (which literally means 'beneficial advice').

The advice is to never completely trust such people and to never extend your hospitality to them, bringing them into your safe zone.

Especially if you're a woman and alone during your interaction.



Question your belief system.

Did I tell you about the lion king who got married on the tallest hill in his jungle?

He wanted the event to be memorable for all his subjects, too.

So, he graciously invited each and every animal to the feast to dance under the moonlight all night.

However, one animal failed to show up. His prairie had four tall giraffes, but only three attended the feast.

It's time to question why the fourth giraffe did not participate in this event of a lifetime.

While you ponder on it, let's revisit our myth-busting challenge. When it comes to safety, question every age-old belief and deconstruct any myth you come across.

Bring all your thoughts to your trusted friends and family. A lot might be unraveled around a group chat to empower all of you.

Keep faith, keep calm. In all situations, bring on your inner avatar.

You can help yourself and many others with your power to care.

Breathe deep, hold your head high, keep one foot in front of the other, and most important of all – keep your eyes and ears open.

And, if you're still wondering about the giraffe that missed the lion's wedding party, remember that you stuffed it in your refrigerator.

It's waiting for its liberation. Like duh!

Just like the myths waiting for their release from the stuffy corners of our brains.

If you feel you learned something from this sneak peek into the prevalent myths on women's safety felt interesting, be sure to read the full book.

There are many tips for each of the crucial settings in a woman's life outside her safe zones. It can save a life, or save someone from the brink of a traumatic experience.

Choose safety to bloom your best.

Poised and Prepared

*200+ Personal Safety Tips
Every Woman Must Know*

Scroll on for a peek into the
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Acknowledgments

About the Author

You already have a sneak peek into Chapter 2 .

The whole book is a treasure house of tips for all settings of modern life.

With the prelaunch around the corner, it'll all be just a click away. Stay tuned for my announcement email in your inbox.

Here are a few reviews I had received for the book:

“Prevention is always better than cure. This book is a synopsis of actions women can adopt to prevent violation of their selves and their bodies. This needs to be translated into other languages.”

– **Dr. Mousumi De**, *PA-C, DMSc, MBBS, MPhil, DPH, Public Health Specialist, Certified Correctional Health Physician, high-security prison, North Texas, USA*

“This book will help us develop our awareness, reflexes, and judgments... it is an absolutely necessary tool for our society.”

– **Sarbari Gupta**, *BA, Founder and Former Chief Editor of Du-Kool Magazine and an active community empath, California, USA*

As a woman, your safety is vulnerable even when you least suspect it. You can avoid such incidents by planning ahead.

Prior prep always helps in being unstressed.

Reading this book will help you:

- Make plans to keep trouble at bay
- Identify potential dangers, listed by settings
- Grow your situational and intuitive alertness
- Identify your safe zones and vulnerable areas
- Create safety groups and proactive communities

You can gift this book to a woman to help her avoid dangers and become proactive in protecting others.

Even men will benefit from this book — to fortify their families' safety and to be supportive members of their community.



Growing up in urban India, author Balaka Ghosal faced many difficult moments in the presence of people with dubious intent.

These could happen to any woman anywhere on this planet, altering her life forever.

Although Balaka has felt the icy touch of a pistol under her jaw and a dagger at her waist, she is grateful to have been spared the rough endings.

Being aware, alert, and equipped helped her replace fear with peace and confidence.

She shares her life lessons to support women to live their lives with poise and preparedness.

Stay tuned to thegreenwriter.com for more tips and stories in our emails.