



## Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC

### **The Ordinary World – The Illusion of Safety**

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#### **We Live in the Ordinary World**

We live our lives in predictable patterns. We wake up in our homes, drive to work, go out for dinner, and return home at night believing that our houses and the laws of the land keep us safe. This illusion of safety is often called the normalcy bias, the “this could never happen to me” trap. Nothing bad happened yesterday or last week, so it won’t happen tomorrow or next week. So, we go about our usual routines and stop paying attention.

This is the ordinary world, a place where people believe danger is not a concern because they live in a safe community or neighborhood. However, what if that belief is a lie? What if your door can be breached? What if violence visits you on the street? What if the police and our laws, despite their best intentions, cannot always be there in time?

Crime happens everywhere, not just in urban centers. Violence is not reserved for the people who act recklessly, or who are “unlucky,” or who are criminals. Violence can come to you in your local Walmart parking lot and even in your home at 2:00 a.m. It can come to you at gas stations and in quiet suburban streets. Even churches are not protected from violence.

We believe the people we train to legally carry a handgun for self-protection are guardians. The armed citizen begins their guardian’s journey in the ordinary world. The ordinary world is where we fall prey to the normalcy bias, thinking our safety is guaranteed, only to learn that our security is fragile, unpredictable, and often only ours to protect. They now must begin a transformation journey along a path to responsible self-defense, but many are reluctant to follow that path. We see some of these reluctant people in our wear-and-carry course.

## **The Myth of Absolute Security**

People have a powerful need for safety. Abraham Maslow created a hierarchy of human needs, with the most basic and powerful needs at the bottom. Safety was the second from the bottom, with physiological needs (hunger, sex, sleep) being the most powerful. We need stability and predictability in our lives. Countries create laws, governments, police forces, and militaries to provide a buffer against chaos. However, the harsh reality is that absolute security does not exist. It never has, and it never will.

The myth of safety makes life easier. It allows us to go about our daily lives without worrying about violence and to avoid the nagging sense that we always need to be vigilant. However, buying into that myth doesn't make it true. It blinds us to reality until reality smacks us right in the face.

For the armed citizen, the first very important lesson is that your and your family's safety is not guaranteed. It's your responsibility as a guardian to embrace the responsibility and train to develop the knowledge and skills you need to protect yourself and others.

## **Modern Threats**

Armed robberies, mass shootings, and terrorist attacks make the news, but ordinary people are more likely to experience everyday criminal violence like street violence and carjackings. For example, in 2025, the Philadelphia police department reported 10,287 carjackings. Victims were nurses, teachers, and working parents caught off guard living their ordinary lives. In 2024, the FBI reported 24 active shooter incidents that resulted in 23 people killed and 83 wounded. These events happened in schools, shopping centers, churches, and other public spaces. People living their ordinary lives are suddenly caught up in extreme danger. The mental health crises in the United States bring more violence to ordinary people in the form of domestic and political violence. Modern threats are not rare; they are inextricably woven into the fabric of contemporary society.

The above assessment of modern threats isn't about living in a state of paranoia. It's about paying attention to who and what is around you, accepting that threats exist, and choosing not to be helpless when they appear. It's about becoming a guardian.

## **Consequences of Complacency and Denial**

Many victims were not paying attention to who and what was close to them. They are oblivious to potential warning signs, or if they see the signs, they ignore them because they deny they are in danger. That denial is called the normalcy bias, the belief that

because something has never happened to you before, it won't happen in the future. We teach our customers about the normalcy bias in our wear-and-carry permit courses.

For the armed citizen, the critical lesson is clear: carrying a firearm for self-defense is only part of the equation. You must pay attention to what's happening around you and be aware of people who present signs of being dangerous. Don't say to yourself, "must be a coincidence," or "I'm just being paranoid." Pay attention and be prepared to act in self-defense.

### **Why We Resist Change and Preparedness**

Paul and I are often flabbergasted at how many people resist becoming more prepared. They get their carry permits but never become comfortable with carrying a handgun for self-defense. Carrying a firearm disrupts that comfort zone. It's a persistent reminder that danger exists, and it requires ongoing training, discipline, and responsibility. But that's too heavy a burden for some people to carry.

But being prepared is not about fear; it's about freedom. When you are prepared, you are not bound by fear because you know you have the tools, skills, and mindset to face adversity. As Colonel Jeff Cooper said (paraphrased), when facing danger, you must think, "I knew this could happen one day and I know what to do about it." That is a very powerful mindset. And, how do you develop that mindset? Train!

We like to explain preparedness by comparing it to something everyone understands—homeowner's insurance. When we ask people why they carry it, the answer is almost always the same: "Because a fire, flood, or tornado could destroy my house." Then we ask the follow-up: "Is that kind of destruction likely, or just possible?" Most people admit it's unlikely, but it is possible.

That's when we make the connection. The same reasoning applies to personal safety. The odds of becoming a victim of violent crime may not be high, but it is possible. And just like with homeowner's insurance, preparation is about protecting yourself against that possibility.

### **Examples of Recognizing the Need for Self-Reliance**

Neatly documented fat-checked cases of victims that show precisely how the illusion of safety drives people to carry a firearm for protection area difficult to find. Drawing on patterns from true crime reports, we created three scenarios that illustrate how people came to realize they needed to be prepared to defend themselves.

- **Mark's Story:** Mark was a schoolteacher who never considered himself a “gun guy.” One night while driving home from a late faculty meeting, he stopped at a convenience store. A man emerged from the shadows, approached his car, and demanded money. Mark realized later that “No one was there to help me.” That night, he began his transformation journey toward armed self-reliance.
- **Angela's Story:** Angela endured years of domestic abuse. Even though she was separated from her husband and had a restraining order placed on him, he stalked her after their separation. She realized, “I knew I had to protect myself. Nobody else can do it for me.” She signed up for a wear-and-carry course, completed 16 hours of training, including 6 hours on a live-fire range, and then began regular training to ensure she had the skills to use her handgun effectively. She then got a firearms instructor license and started teaching other women about empowerment and self-defense.
- **Carlos's Story:** Carlos was a special operations combat veteran. His normalcy bias was that he believed he left danger behind when he returned home. But his neighborhood began to change. One of his neighbors experienced a home invasion and was seriously injured. Carlos said, “I realized I can't ignore what's happening. I refuse to be a bystander. My family needs me to keep them safe.” Carrying, once again, wasn't about living as a special operations warrior. He now realized that being an armed citizen was about becoming a guardian, or as Colonel Dave Grossman says, becoming a “sheepdog.”

The three scenarios share a common theme. Mark, Angela, and Carlos awakened from the normalcy bias. They realized that they must assume responsibility for protecting their families and themselves because no one else will, not even the police, because, to borrow an often-used saying, when seconds matter, the police are only minutes away.

### **Challenging the Illusion, Preparing for the Call**

The ordinary world leads us to believe that we don't really have to think about safety, that security will always be there, and that serious danger affects only others. Informed and trained armed citizens recognize that illusion. They understand that safety requires disciplined training and informed situational awareness. Safety is not automatic. It is built on informed situational awareness (which we teach our customers), avoiding potentially dangerous places and situations, and, if faced with a deadly threat, the willingness to act with speed, aggression, and accuracy.

## Conclusion

This essay challenged you to examine the myths of safety and security, the undeniable existence of modern threats, the dangers of denial, and illustrated how complacency can put you in danger. You've read three scenarios about fictional people who recognized the need to embark on a transformation journey, moving from unprepared to prepared.

The next step is crucial. Once you awaken to the illusion of safety, you face a choice. You can continue believing that “this could never happen to me,” or you can answer the call to guardianship.

Right now, as you read this sentence, decide to stop living passively and begin preparing to serve as a guardian for yourself, your family, and those who cannot defend themselves. This is the journey of the armed citizen. The path forward is not easy. However, it is meaningful, and it begins when you answer the call.

In the next essay (March, 2026), you will read about recognizing the call to guardianship. It is about understanding why some people are naturally inclined to be guardians, while others are not. You will learn about the moral and ethical foundations that support your decision to become a guardian. And you will understand why fully embracing the role of the guardian requires physical readiness, mental and emotional resilience, and moral clarity.

## Reflection Questions—Take Time to Reflect

Ask yourself...

1. What illusions of safety have I personally believed, and how could they have affected my preparedness?
2. How do crime statistics challenge the perception that “it won't happen to me”?
3. In what ways have I experienced or witnessed “normalcy bias” in times of crisis?
4. How does preparedness free me from fear rather than reinforce it?
5. What first steps can I take today to transition from complacency to responsibility?

### **Practical Tips**

Tip 1: Don't rely on the illusion of safety. Locks, laws, and institutions cannot eliminate danger.

Tip 2: Know the risks. Carjackings, assaults, and active shooter events happen to good people living ordinary lives.

Tip 3: Beware of normalcy bias. Don't assume that because you've been safe so far, you'll always be safe.

Tip 4: Step out of the comfort zone. Being prepared may feel uncomfortable at first, but it ultimately leads to freedom.

Tip 5: Adopt a homeowner's insurance metaphor. Will your house burn down? Probably not. But is it possible? It sure is. Will you face a deadly force threat? Probably not. But is it possible? It sure is. Prepare for the possibility rather than the probability.

## About the Author

Francis (Frank) Duffy is a veteran of the 6th and 5th U.S. Army Special Forces Groups (the Green Berets), a graduate of the Army Ranger School, and a Green Beret combat diver. He is also a certified executive protection specialist.

He is a certified instructor for the NRA (rifle and handgun instructor), the Maryland State Police, and the United States Concealed Carry Association (USCCA). He is a certified concealed carry instructor for the District of Columbia.

He is also a member of the Board of Directors for Maryland Shall Issue, an all-volunteer, non-partisan organization dedicated to preserving and advancing gun owners' rights in Maryland. He is the co-founder and Vice President of Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC. He can be reached at 443-472-0216 or via email at [frank@spartanftg.com](mailto:frank@spartanftg.com).

Individuals interested in scheduling a private, one-on-one firearms training session should contact Frank.

## About the Spartan Firearms Training Group

The Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC ([www.spartanftg.com](http://www.spartanftg.com)) is a Special Forces Veteran-Owned business formed in 2015 by Paul and Francis Duffy. At the end of March 2025, we entered into our 11th year of business, and we have trained thousands of Maryland residents in a variety of ways, including:

- Concealed carry training
- Handgun Qualification License (HQL) training
- Emergency Casualty Care training
- Long-distance precision shooting training
- Home Defense training
- Private, 1-on-1 firearms training
- Private group training

Our training calendar can be found at the [SFTG Calendar](#).

Paul Duffy can be contacted at 410-707-2992 or [Paul@spartanftg.com](mailto:Paul@spartanftg.com).

**WHEN FACING A LIFE-THREATENING EVENT, YOU WILL FALL TO THE LEVEL OF YOUR TRAINING, NOT RISE TO THE LEVEL OF YOUR EXPECTATIONS. TRAIN THE WAY YOU FIGHT!**

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