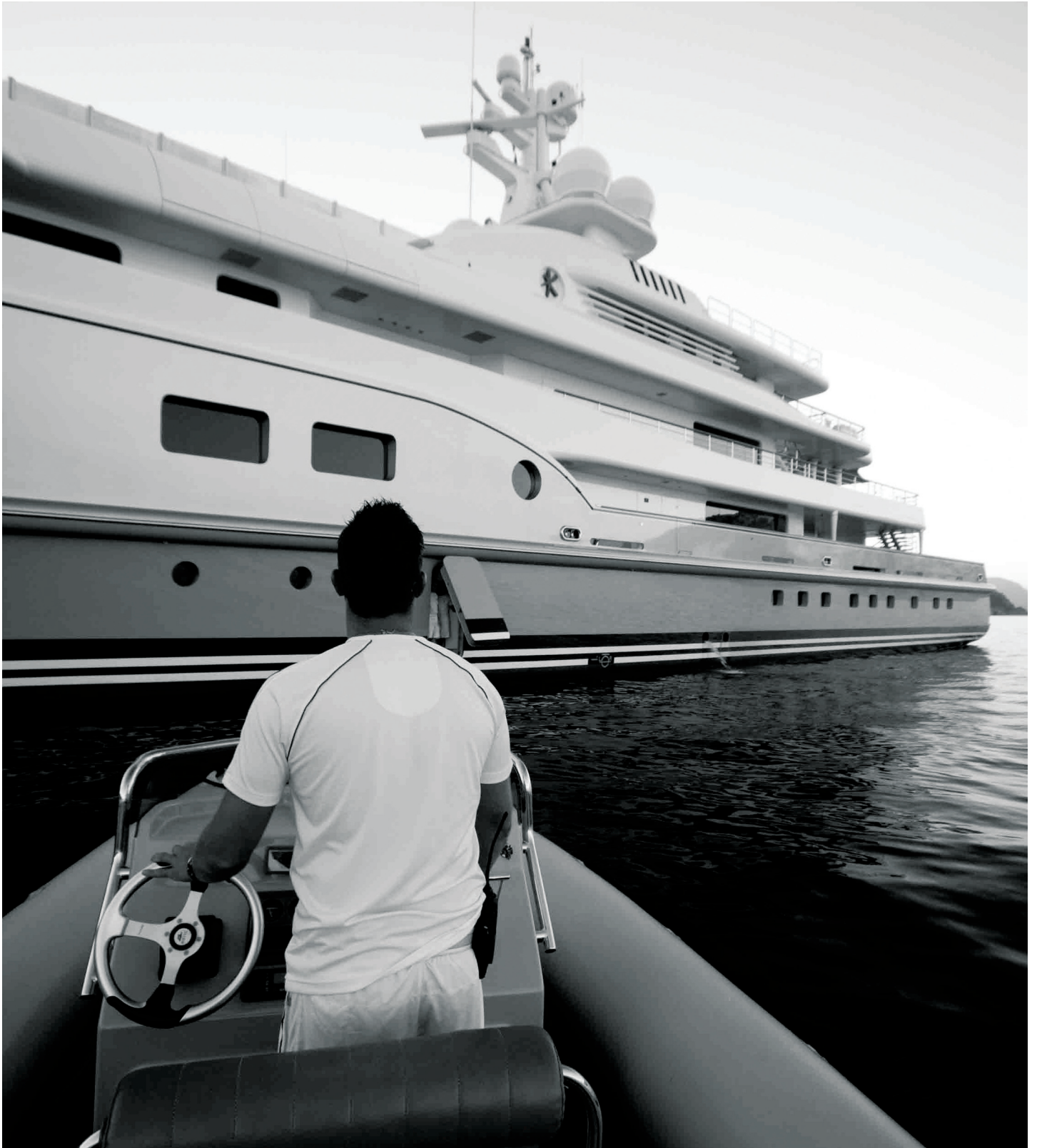


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# the crew

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# Keeping Safety In Mind



**The very nature of crewmembers' lives requires movement from port to port, with different surroundings and potential threats to personal safety in each location. Coupled with the attractive force of perceived wealth on a superyacht, this can have dire consequences – as has tragically been the case on numerous occasions. Security expert Patrick Estebe investigates theories on how your behaviour and way of thinking can reduce the likelihood of a personal attack.**

Everyone remembers the famous “We few, we happy few, we band of brothers” speech Henry V gave to his troops before the battle of Agincourt. What is less well recalled, yet extremely relevant, is his answer immediately after this speech when the messenger tells him that the French are attacking. At this point the situation is pretty dire: the French, with fresh troops, outnumber the exhausted English four to one and it does not look good for the English. Yet, despite being outnumbered and facing apparent defeat, the king still has faith in victory: “All things are ready, if our minds be so.”

Shakespeare has had many insights into the nature of man but battle and confrontations are a foreign field for most scholars. Despite this he makes a shrewd observation: the mind has indeed been the determining factor in confrontations.

## Using fear wisely

Fear is the first aspect of the mind to consider in matters of personal security. You must think in terms of the fear and/or feelings of invincibility that you have within and not only in terms of the dangers without. Fear is not only a reaction to a stimulus; it is itself a stimulus and can indicate our vulnerability to potential predators. Conversely, you can become intoxicated

with confidence and act as if invincible – which no one is, of course. Consequently, not only for peace of mind but also for enhanced security you should maintain a balance of healthy caution versus overconfidence. This article describes how you can stay safe through simple mindfulness in everyday activities and offer examples of proper attitude and demeanor in practice.

The adaptive value of fear is obvious and undeniable; it is an innate, reflex reaction that tells you to run or fight to escape an imminent and very real danger. As a caution, fear can be life saving. One must use fear to become aware of dangers, evaluate them and decide responses. But fear must be a servant, not a master. Fear unleashed is destructive of composure and acts as bait to would-be attackers.

This “smell of fear” is critical in a predator’s “victim selection process”; these terms were coined in a fascinating 1981 paper from *The Journal of Communication*. Authors Grayson and Stein wrote on the specific movements or behaviours that identify a potential victim to violent assailants. They showed videotapes of people walking down the street to incarcerated violent felons, asking them to rate how likely assault would be to succeed against each person in the videos. The

felons’ agreement on potential victims was far higher than mere statistical correlation: that likely victims stand out is an empirical fact according to the results. As to why, Grayson and Stein write, “Non-victims have an organised quality about their body movements, and they function comfortably within the context of their own bodies. In contrast, gestural movements of victims seem to communicate inconsistencies and dissonances.” Grayson and Stein call the demeanour of non-victims “being centred.” In my workshops, I call it “mindfulness”, as explained below.

As well as fear one must also consider its opposite; “invincibility syndrome” can occur either because of a person’s psychological profile, their personal successes or simply because they are enjoying themselves at a particular moment. This feeling of invincibility is capable of overriding the normal fear that saves lives. The “invincibility syndrome” is a well-known phenomenon among motorcycle riders and often precedes crashes. One cannot overstate the importance of these two factors, “provocative” fear and the bulletproof feeling, in personal security.

## Driven to distraction

Another part of our culture and conditioning is distraction. Observe how distracted we are as a matter of course. At any given moment we are bombarded with marketing, harried by worries, thrilled at exciting things to do and preoccupied with interactive games thrusting our minds into the highest levels of excitement. Distraction starts the moment you slip from mindfulness on the task at hand into any other considerations. Because a distracted mind is simply the mind of

someone who is thinking about something other than what they are doing, you can see the depth and span of the problem. The big trouble of having a distracted mind is that it puts you in reactive, and thus “victim”, mode. So if you are attacked while distracted, you can only react – the exact thing an assailant expects. A distracted mind is always a defeated mind. The lesson is that if you are in a potentially dangerous or unsafe situation you should only be thinking about what you are doing at that moment.

While it is easy to become distracted, it is very difficult to get back to mindfulness – and almost impossible when under stress. The good news is that it is not so difficult to discipline yourself to being mindful; you only have to pay attention. Can you see yourself paying the same attention to your partner as you did to him or her on your first date? Can you extend this awareness to every crewmember? And even to the clerk at the shop? Can you look at each thing as if you just saw it for the first time or everyone as if you just met them for the first time?

### **Achieving mindfulness**

To achieve mindfulness, you should strive to be mindful for as long as

you can, as often as possible. That is, practice it daily as you go about your everyday activities.

Part of mindfulness is the art of observation. But this does not mean merely the observation of the obvious, nor should it be a chore akin the “be aware of your surroundings” cliché. Observation has to go beyond the visible phenomenon to using your “sixth sense”, just like on the aforementioned first date – you not only look at the person, you also make efforts to perceive their character.

This is very important because an observing mind – or simply a quiet mind – can perceive intent, and if you perceive intent it matters little what attempts of deception are made to lure you, you will not be caught out. This intent perception has been experienced by each of us, for example if a person is staring at you but you cannot see them because you are turning your back to them. You can often still perceive that something is not quite right, turn around and counter-stare them to silently ask them to “cease and desist”. Whilst in this case the potential assailant’s intentions are inaudible, you may miss the mugger if you are distracted by a cell phone or simply lost in your thoughts.

The key to being able to pay attention or being mindful for any length of time is to be relaxed. Indeed, while being aware of your surroundings implies that it requires some effort, I suggest an easier approach – a very relaxed alertness – that can only be achieved when conditioned fear has been acknowledged and dissipated, putting the person in the mindset of a predator. You must be aware of any dangers and potential enemies but without undue fear.

However, as soon as you are attacked you start to analyse your surroundings and what is going on, and this is when social conditioning comes into play. At this point you cannot think “out of the box” because associations with your past experiences and thus neuroses from these memories will influence behaviour. The only way out of this is to avoid “naming” what you feel or see.

You only have to defeat your opponents; but you do not have to fight them to defeat them, you only have to outwit them. “All things are ready, if our minds be so.”

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