

## Opinion: When fear takes over

Posted by [Jacqui Atkielski](#) On 08/04/2016

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**HOLLYWOOD, MD** -- I grew up watching the nightly news, listening to it in the morning on the way to schools, and eventually started a career in media.

One of the more enjoyable parts of my job is having the ability to network within a community. Talk with others, try to walk in their shoes and get a glimpse of how they experience life. It helps me as a writer and as a person.

I didn't discover one of the more sticky parts of having a media career until after I finished a senior journalism college class. A part of growing up included watching the news every night, from ABC to FOX, and I confirmed one of my suspicions when one lesson discussed how media will saturate their medium (airwaves, Internet, etc.) with stories they know people will tune in to.

More biased news sources will hype up 'buzz-worthy' topics to scare people into watching their show again.

While it is important to stay informed about what is going on around the local, state and national community, obsessing about the possibilities is only going to hurt your mental and physical health.

My dad will give advice through cliché sayings, with my favorite being "I complained I had no shoes until I met the man that had no feet." Another one he likes to tell is that 10 percent of the population are thugs, who choose to not be accountable for their actions and will steal, rape or kill me if given the opportunity. These are the people who don't use turn signals going down the highway, or won't leave a good tip for the worn-out server. These people will steal from donation jars and only go to church to be seen by others. They choose to not be good people, and you probably know the saying about the bad apples spoiling the bunch.

So when I moved to the Southern Maryland area from Middle Tennessee this spring, he warned me via another cliché to stay aware of my surroundings and be wary of the people I came into contact with. Hold them at arms' length and keep my cards to my chest.

When my boyfriend dropped me off at the [Rick Springfield show at Calvert Marine Museum](#) this weekend, he asked me to take my keys with me, where I have a can of pepper spray hung on the key ring just in case. I have tried to carry a variety of physical tools with me to protect myself, such as the aforementioned pepper spray, pocket knives and a very heavy monkey ball key chain. I've read articles about self-defense, where to hit people where it hurts if they choose to attack me. I try my best to stay alert and aware of my surroundings. When I go out to cover an event, or have a good evening, I hope for the best but expect the worst.

Truly, there is no better tool than mental willpower. Sometimes I have to force myself to not fall apart after witnessing newscasts where they play graphic videos on repeat. I get wound up reading the wrong articles, when I should be focused on my work or other aspects of my life.

There is still a possibility of an incident, no matter where I go, but I have to be careful to not let it ruin my mood or take away my rational thinking. I can't let fear grab ahold and wring the life out of me.

Life is supposed to be for living, for experiencing, not for hiding in the darkest corner of my apartment, scrolling my Facebook and other social media feeds looking for news stories to confirm my fears that the world is going to hell. I have to live in spite of what is reported.

So I will continue to live a good life, helping others as much as I can while enjoying the opportunities my career and life offer me. Because as far as I understand, I only get one life to experience. And I want to make the most of it. Have the courage to live a good life, and stay aware of your surroundings.

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