

# Appendix B: Situational Awareness Fast Fact

## Purpose of this Tool

The purpose of this tool is to provide information on the importance of situational awareness and to help improve situational awareness in the healthcare setting.

## Who Uses this Tool

Any worker who directly cares for or who may encounter in their work a care recipient with a risk of violence.

## How to Use this Tool

This tool can be printed or distributed electronically and can be used in worker training.

### Situational Awareness: A Building Block for Safer Workplaces

Situational Awareness is a critical, but often neglected dimension of workplace safety. It is a term commonly used to describe our awareness and understanding of what is happening around us and what could happen if hazards and risk are not addressed. It is based on the belief that everything we do is influenced by the dynamic relationship we have with our environment and is a mental model or mindset that results in us being fully alert and engaged with the factors and conditions in our workplace.

Situational Awareness helps healthcare workers, teams, and organizations focus on the bigger picture and determine what actions need to be taken in each situation to be safer. Situational Awareness is a tool for making the right decisions, at the right time, for the right reasons.

## Why is Situational Awareness Important?

Healthcare workers face many challenges in their workplaces. These challenges come from multiple sources that include, but are not limited to, exposures to occupational hazards and increasingly complex clinical care settings. Being aware of the interdependent elements of an unfolding situation or work environment and understanding their meaning and potential impact is crucial to reducing negative outcomes.

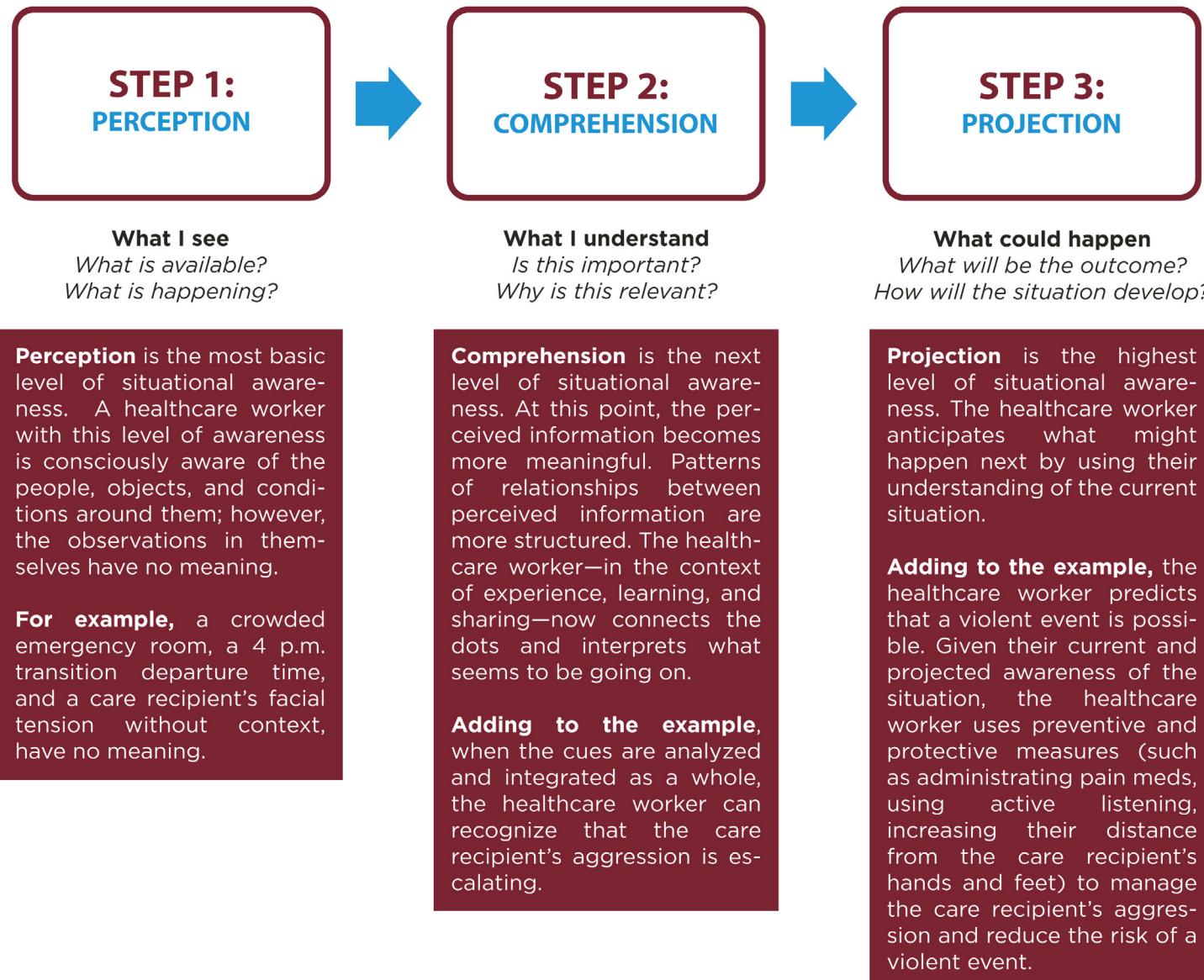
Situational Awareness is an important skill to develop and maintain to:

- Identify and report hazards proactively
- Solve problems and make decisions quickly
- Respond to incidents faster and more adaptively
- Protect workers and care recipients from harm, injury, and illness

## What are the Levels of Situational Awareness?

The most well-known model of Situational Awareness was proposed by Mica Endsley in 1995.

The model outlines three (3) levels of awareness needed to recognize and effectively respond to situations that may affect the safety and well-being of individuals in each environment. By keeping the three levels of Situational Awareness in mind, individuals, teams, and organizations will be more adept to make good decisions and act accordingly.



## 5 Helpful Tips to Increase Your Situational Awareness



**Be Alert**

Situational awareness is developed and maintained by gathering information. Make sure that your senses are fully turned on and tuned in to your environment.



**Be Wise**

Remember that behaviours and elements in the environment can change at any time. Don't limit your answers to "what is happening" or "what could happen" to one assessment. Reassess the situation as often as needed to make sure the information you have is as accurate and as complete as possible.



Be aware and plan for factors that can divert your attention and thinking. Common examples include:

- **Task or Senses Fixation.** Narrowed attention or focus to one task or place in the situation.
- **Complacency.** Assuming that a situation is routine and predictable.
- **Distractions or Unrealistic Expectations.** External interfering factors or the belief that the job can be done faster and with less effort than possible.
- **Inexperience or Low Self-Efficacy.** Lack of training, experience, or confidence to understand the meaning of environmental cues.
- **Time or Fatigue.** Short notices, urgency, fatigue.



**Plan Ahead**

Be proactive—review and get familiar with what needs to be done and the plan to get there. Take time to ask the right action-provoking questions—so what? and what if?



**Keep Practicing**

Use it so you don't lose it! Take advantage of opportunities to learn more about and refine your situational awareness skills. Some examples include:

- **Mock Exercises** – practical exercises to deal with situations such as Code White and Code Silver.
- **Briefings and Debriefings** – reports and safety huddles to provide and discuss key information with the team.
- **Analysis of Previous Incidents** – formal reviews to identify root cause.

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