

I was sitting on a plane, getting ready for takeoff recently. There was a couple in front of me having a conversation about plane safety. He was explaining, in some detail, why it is safer to fly on a plane than drive a car. He talked about the staff on the ground that just spent time going over the outside of the plane to make sure everything was working fine. He talked about the pilots conducting a massive checklist prior to the engines starting, much less moving. His inspirational speech on the training and qualifications of the pilots made me proud of their commitment. There was a comment on how the flight attendants brief everyone on the safety features on the plane. He even mentioned the investigation and studies conducted when there is a plane crash, in order for others to make improvements in equipment design, maintenance, and training.

He quickly moved into the dangers of driving a car. He asked the last time she checked her car prior to starting the engine and driving away. He even dangerously mentioned she does not even look over her shoulder when backing up. She just puts in it reverse. He comments about the number of other people driving on the road where their only qualification to drive a car took place when they were sixteen years of age. He asked her how many times she checks to make sure everyone is seat belted in prior to driving away. Or how many times she has struck something with her bumper. Do that in a plane and you are not flying for a while. She responds back with that she does not know the pilots or the ground crew but she knows who is in her car. Fear of flying may have something to do with fear of the unknown.

This conversation got me thinking about fear of crime. I often mention to people I meet that most of the aggravated assaults is between persons that are related or know each other. But when you speak with those involved in the acquaintance violence, there is, often times, not the fear. There is an explanation. A downplaying. A "it will not happen again." A "I have this under control."

Fear of crime frequently draws its strength from the unknown or lack of control. Walking down the street at night is different than walking down the same street during the day. Same street, different time. What I cannot see or influence can scare me. I remember the first time I saw the statistics that over 90% of sexual assaults were acquaintances. I have shared this stat with people before but it does not diminish their fear of this type of crime. The possibility of a stranger committing this type of crime can rock a community.

And to the gentleman who chose to have this discussion prior to takeoff, I made the same mistake, once. My wife and I took our oldest son on a New Year's Eve cruise in the Caribbean. We are sitting on the deck and I may have mentioned The Poseidon Cruise was based on a New Year's Eve cruise. My timing may have been a tad off.