

# Lesson 1: Understanding Normalcy Bias

School Safety & Security Audiocast hosted by Brotherhood Mutual  
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# What is normalcy bias?

About 70% of people in disasters display normalcy bias.

- It is an instinctual, natural reaction to a crisis.
- You have a difficult time accepting that something *abnormal* is happening.
- Your mind comes up with a rational explanation for what is happening.
- Example – when you hear a gunshot, your brain tells you it must be fireworks.
- Awareness and training are key to overcoming normalcy bias during a crisis.



*There's no way you're going to effectively respond to a crisis you don't mentally accept. We call that overcoming the big 'D' and that is 'DENIAL.'*



# Documented Examples of Normalcy Bias Denial

- *Las Vegas, Nevada, Concert Shooting*

Many people thought the sound system was malfunctioning

- *Dallas, Texas, Church Shooting*

Witness thought shooter was part of a skit

- *Indian Ocean, Tsunami*

People stood on the beach and watched as it came ashore



*We have to teach people what normalcy bias is. If we just talk about it, just for a little bit, it becomes easier to overcome.*



# Overcoming Normalcy Bias

- To explain away the abnormal is instinctual. In the case of threats and crisis, we have to train to overcome our instincts instead of reinforcing them.
- Listening to today's discussion is one step toward overcoming normalcy bias. Knowing what it is and recognizing it can help you shift into response mode.
- This plays into the next lesson where you'll learn about the untrained vs trained and reacting vs responding.







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