

When I was in the 2nd grade, a man called our home, claiming to be calling from the local library. He said he had a bunch of questions for me. Even as a 7 year old, I immediately realized that this man had an evil intent after he asked his first question -- "you sound like you're a bit tense, why don't you take off your socks first" ... We called the cops and nothing came of it.

When I was in the 9th grade, a man took out his penis in the middle of the afternoon and began to masturbate to me on the subway. He was sitting across from me but I didn't notice him as I was buried in my Biology textbook. I looked up and saw that there were a couple of other people on the train, who I looked at pleadingly for help in my moment of panic and fear. I also immediately understood that the man was happy that I finally saw him. I gathered my things and ran off the subway at the next stop, realizing that he was chasing me. I never looked back, and I did what I was told -- tell an adult.

I ran into a deli off the subway stop, tearfully telling them what had happened to me, saying I was unsure if he had followed me. They called me a cab, and I took it home. My dad tried to console me by jokingly telling me that I should wear heels and kick them where they were most sensitive, if that were to ever happen to me again.

When I was a freshman in college, another strange call came in, claiming he had given me an STD during a drunken night. I knew that his story was not even remotely possible because I would never engage in any of the activities he recalled, but I was scared out of my mind and called the cops. Yet again, nothing came of it, even though both times I knew that the police had tracked down the phone number of the offenders. My best hope is that they keep their names and numbers on record for when they commit a "real crime." Doubtful.

There are just too many crazy, horny men out there who are nothing but scared.

Finally, at 25 years of age, I realize that the best thing to do is to act calm and ignore (while internally planning an exit strategy to remove myself to as far away as possible from the molesters) because there was a chance that the man was not just horny & nuts, but also potentially willing to act out his aggression with violence or a weapon. As a feisty teen, I would yell back and give molesters the finger, but I began to realize that many guys actually enjoyed seeing my repulsion and reaction. I've also consoled myself with the state of affairs, having lived for a year in Buenos Aires, where the catcalls & physical assaults were infinitely more horrible.

It could be worse. I could've been raped or physically assaulted like my dear girlfriends have been. Thank God I made it this far OK.

A male friend has gone as far as insinuating that my seemingly complaisant response to the molestations was in fact actually a form of tacit approval. He argues that when I don't stand up for myself and for what I believe in, I am behaving like the Germans who accepted Nazi rule.

My silence does not have anything to do with approval. It is a deep and dark conclusion, accumulating from countless life experiences & enough trial and error: there is no way to fight back and win. Usually the molestations occur with no witnesses or no phone records, and I

know that the law will pit my word against his.

Ironically, I find myself being as friendly as I can be to my offenders, so that they will immediately be disarmed by my friendliness and thereby be less likely to escalate their behavior into anything worse. Of course there are better days, when I have the tenacity to snarl back. But then again, I regret having wasted any breath, dreading that I've returned negative energy into the universe & essentially perpetuating a world of hate.

I can only hope that some day there will be a solution that lies somewhere between kicking someone in the balls and completely ignoring the issue.