Rereading ‘the Gift of Fear’ in the Age of Mass Shootings

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It’s been 25 years since Gavin de Becker’s influential book “The Gift of Fear” was published, teaching readers how to tell the difference between “true fear” and “unwarranted fear” by trusting their intuition. De Becker opens the book with a story about a woman who was raped and nearly murdered after letting a man into her apartment, even after she felt uncomfortable by his presence. He recounts how this woman initially ignored warning signs to avoid seeming rude. But after the rape, when the man went to the kitchen to get a knife to kill her, she trusted the impulse that told her to flee, which saved her life.

“The Gift of Fear” skyrocketed de Becker to personal safety stardom. His bestseller landed him on Oprah Winfrey’s television show — twice — and he has since published three more books, provided personal safety services to celebrities, assessed threats against Supreme Court justices and become Jeff Bezos’s longtime security officer, (Bezos owns The Washington Post.)