

What is self protection and how it differs from self-defence.

Before we start please let me stress that this is in no way a promotional publication for Sale Ju-Jitsu Academy, I have attempted to convey my experiences thoughts and opinions regarding personal safety which I have recently compiled into the following.

Thank you for your interest, primarily I think it is always important to stress the importance of avoidance when dealing with violent situations rather than the aggressive response which is better left as a last resort. However from past experience that last resort may be just around the corner. The question is do you know how or when to avoid a situation and when or how to act aggressively when your safety depends on it?

Self protection

Self protection starts the moment you step out of your front door in the morning and should end the moment you arrive home in the evening although in today's climate of increased violent crime this may no longer be a certainty, in order to determine to what degree you need to practice self protection and how you may be affected by the complacent theory of "It will never happen to me" "We must first ask this question"

How safe are you?

How safe are you from the likelihood of facing violence in your everyday life?

Well obviously this will depend on a number of factors.

The primary factor may be your job, do you work as a policeman or in the security business or do you drive for a living and suffer from road rage? If this sounds like you then likelihood of personal attack could be reasonably high.

You may be a business man working overseas, a solicitor working in a county court or with juveniles at a detention centre or as a social worker, in all of these circumstances the risk to personal injury from a health and safety perspective would be extremely high and we take the proper precautions to prevent an accident, yet most people take little or no precautions against personal attack.

In fact there are jobs that on the surface would not seem high risk such as an office worker, a nurse in A & E, a paramedic or even a traffic warden could have moments of extreme danger due to a probability of stressful or confrontational situations with disgruntled individuals.

How does your job stand up to a safety check?

What risks do you take in a day?

When do you feel vulnerable or uneasy?

I'm sure every job carries some element of risk and you may want to score your jobs risk using a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being high risk of attack and 1 being the chance of a stressed environment that could lead to confrontation).

If you are unhappy with a situation at work where you feel at risk then don't hesitate to bring it to the attention of a manager or supervisor.

Don't just let it carry on or accept it. Both the employer and employee have a responsibility for safety in the workplace. If your job is high risk then try to do everything possible to be well prepared using good pro-active tactics.

If you live in a high crime inner city area, the chances of being a victim of robbery, mugging or assault may be considerably higher than if you live in the leafy suburbs.

Living in bed-sit land, hostels or rented accommodation can also bring problems of burglary, strangers wondering around and poor security.

Lifestyle has a lot to do with the chances of running into violence or not. Of course anybody, anytime, anywhere can be a victim, but the key is to try and cut down the risks in order to make yourself a difficult and less attractive target.

Obviously life consists of risks in one form or another and we can't wrap everybody up in cotton wool. Also wouldn't life be boring without a degree of risk? The key is to be well prepared and adequately trained to minimise and cope with hazard by way of building enough confidence to cope with hostile individuals and have the ability to control the situation rather than be a victim to shock as well as violence.

Parachute jumping or hang gliding is a high risk activity but when you are prepared and have been trained to a proficient level in the techniques of both landing and all aspects of safety procedures associated with the sport before making your first jump you will have minimized the risk to an acceptable level thereby reducing the danger. Personal safety is no different.

To determine the degree of personal risk we must first examine ourselves, there are a number of factors that separate us from being a low risk target and a walking victim. How you carry, speak and conduct yourself speaks volumes about you and can be a contributing factor in whether or not you stand out as a victim.

If you are the sort of person that sees no danger anywhere, or ignores warning signals, you are going to have a problem.

If you can see no wrong in anybody or are over-trusting you will fall foul to the street predator. They will sniff you out from a distance and close in for "the kill".

Being aware of the dangers out there, being alert and perceptive of changing circumstances and having acceptance of violent crime happening to anybody, anywhere, anytime can go a long way to reducing your chances of being a victim.

You may want to take up a martial art or self defence system to give you confidence and physical skills, after many years of training in various types of martial arts I have found ju-jitsu to be by far the best form of self defence as it requires very little physical strength and can be adapted to fit the individual, we will cover this in greater detail in the self defence section of this paper.

For the time being I would like to stress that self protection when practiced and executed well in potentially dangerous situations is far more important in preserving your life than if I were to explain the mechanics of the perfect punch.

5 Minute Self Assessment

Take a few minutes to read through my self assessment questionnaire, score yourself one point for every question answered positively giving a final score out of 25.

Don't cheat "you will only be cheating yourself"

- 1: Do you regularly visit night clubs or pubs?
- 2: Do you walk home on your own after a night out?
- 3: Do you become heavily intoxicated each time you go out?
- 4: Do you find yourself daydreaming while walking or on public transport?
- 5: Do you keep a check on your wallet or handbag?
- 6: When you park your vehicle do you park as close to your destination regardless of how well lit the street is?
- 7: Do you wear expensive jewellery or watch?
- 8: Do you wear offensive or provocative clothing?
- 9: Are you a racist?
- 10: Do you use cash machines often?
- 11: Do you hitch hike?
- 12: Do you wear an MP3 player while walking or jogging?
- 13: Do you permit strangers into your home?
- 14: Do you ever give personal information over the phone to strangers?
- 15: Do you ever fall asleep in public or on public transport?
- 16: Do you allow yourself to enter into verbal disputes with strangers?
- 17: Do you suffer from road rage?
- 18: Do you overreact at an insult or a derogatory comment?
- 19: Do you loose your temper often?
- 20: Do you have a problem with Authoritative figures (a good example would be receiving a ticket from a police officer or traffic warden that just happens to be younger than you are, Problem or not?)
- 21: Do you voice your opinions in a loud and tactless manner?
- 22: Do you walk along with your hands in your pockets and your head down?
- 23: Does your job involve handling large amounts of money?
- 24: Does your job involve travelling to foreign countries?
- 25: Does your job involve you visiting potentially unsavoury areas or entering the homes of strangers?

Ok how did you do? If your score is more than 10 you may want to review your lifestyle and if you can't or won't then beware, you are in the high risk bracket and sooner or later you are likely to encounter a violent situation that you may not be ready to deal with, more importantly you may be the cause of it.

Consider this, if you were an insurer and you had prepared the above risk assessment as the basis for personal injury cover, would you be happy to provide cover against violent attack if your clients score was the same as yours.

I know we can't live our lives behind closed doors or wrapped up in cotton wool but by being aware of the risks and the signals a predator looks for you may be better prepared and cut down on the risk of attack, we are all guilty of looking at past situations with hindsight and thinking of ways we could have avoided being attacked, I don't know how many people are able to deal with the after affects of an assault but I am confident there are very few people that cope well, as well as the injuries you may have sustained you may have to deal with regret and the loss of confidence that comes with the aftermath of such situations, I am sure you will never forget being attacked and when you hear about other people being attacked in the future, the memory of being attacked yourself will still be as real along with the thought of how you would change the situation should you be able to relive it again, if you are trained or at the very least mentally prepared most attacks are so easily avoided.

As a final thought proactive thinking is the key along with forward planning, I can't explain how to defend yourself with diagrams and descriptions; you will need training, however here are a few pointers that may help you practice self protection.

Do's

- Stay aware at all times
- Realize that you could be attacked anytime anywhere
- If you are not a confident person while you are in public then fake it, predators are looking for weak victims and they are very rarely intelligent enough to detect a good fake.
- Walk tall when in public especially at night, imagine how you would feel if you were invincible like say for instance "Arnold Schwarzenegger as the Terminator".
- Avoid all high risk situations because avoidance is the most important part of self protection.

Don'ts

- Don't allow yourself to become incapable of protecting yourself due to intoxication
- Try not to be on the streets alone late at night as not only will you look like an easy target but you will stand out because there will be no crowd.
- Never enter a stranger's car, never, never, never.
- Never use your mobile phone while walking home at night.
- MP3 players are very attractive to muggers for more than one reason, they are valuable and can be sold easily therefore are prone to be stolen, more importantly they will prevent you from being aware of danger.
- If you are the type of person who keeps a wallet in your back pocket you will probably keep checking it, don't, it will draw attention to its location and the more you touch it the more a predator will think that you have money in there. It will also show that you are uneasy or nervous, keep it in a front pocket where you can see it or at the very least checking it will not be so obvious.
- If you have any racist opinion however small keep them to yourself, even people who are not racists say racist things without really thinking that they may be causing offence to someone in earshot.
- When walking down the street keep your hands out of your pockets, predators use this type of signal to associate you with someone that is unaware of danger and unprepared to take physical action.
- Clothing with logos especially football shirts can spark off a violent attack.

Self defence

Real fighting is not like anything you are likely to have experienced, it is nothing like TV or cinema fights; it's not even like the playground scraps you remember from school, or the kind of choreographed martial arts demonstrations you may have seen at a martial arts club.

You would expect that mixed martial arts or limited rules fights such as TV's Ultimate Fight Championship would be as close to the real thing as you could get, the real difference is that both opponents are trained, aggressive and willing to fight, unlike the average person going about their everyday business, it is likely to be sudden, aggressive and confusing to the untrained.

If you feel the need to learn a self defence art such as ju-jitsu contact the world ju-jitsu federation or find a local ju-jitsu club.

Remember fighting skills are no different to any other skills.

You will have to invest time and effort into getting them right so that your initial actions are more instinctive and reactive.

There is no quick fix to self defence no quick-fix fighting systems, no deadly or killer arts or even "10 easy steps to self defence", you will have to train yourself and simulate attack situations regularly at a club or in a one on one tuition environment to gain the confidence to use the skills learned when you need to defend yourself, remember that you are only as good as the last time you trained.

Why choose ju-jitsu?

As I mentioned in the previous chapter I have studied various martial arts in the pursuit of finding the ultimate self defensive system, ju-jitsu has been around for over 2000 years and was first used on the battlefields of ancient Japan,

The primary function of ju-jitsu or to use its correct name Bushido was to be used as a method of unarmed close combat, Bushido was developed by the Samurai (the Bushi), in the event that a Samurai either lost his weapon which would have in all cases been his katana (the samurai sword of choice) or he was too close to use it, he would have a way of defending himself against attack, usually from an armed soldier or an enemy Samurai.

The tried and tested techniques were so effective that they fast became a part of the Bushi Training program and eventually as Japan moved forward in taking on the ways of the western world swords were outlawed by the emperor and the samurai were no longer permitted to carry a sword in public, this gave rise to the use of wooden weapons and the need for the unarmed combat techniques of the Bushi which were then developed into the fighting art of ju-jitsu.

Today, more than 2000 years on ju-jitsu is still very alive and more popular than ever, in the US and Europe during the 1970's Karate was the most popular and most widely known martial art and was adopted by the west as the ultimate fighting art.

Never having seen martial arts before the average person in the UK, the US or Europe would not have ever used such techniques or in most cases found themselves in a violent situation so they would have thought Karate to be the best form of self defence available to them.

In actual fact the hype surrounding Karate would have ensured a known practitioner of Karate complete safety due to its mystique a person would usually be able to avoid attack by saying that he or she was a black belt in Karate, which sparked off the urban myth that a black belt would have to inform an attacker that they were about to be engaged by a black belt. How do you think this technique would help you in today's society?

Karate has now become a house hold word and has been developed into a spectacular competition sport from a sparing or from its extremely in-depth use of Kata form, it was the forerunner to all martial arts in the UK and no matter what you feel about it has helped the development of all other martial arts practiced today. It is a very useful tool for building confidence in children as well as fitness and discipline, however it does not fit me although some of the Kata form is present in ju-jitsu.

So answering my original question "why choose ju-jitsu",

Ju-jitsu has been adopted by armed forces, the police force and security forces all around the world because of its adaptability to almost every attack situation, students are taught close combat techniques involving high contact, locking, throwing, striking and kicking as well as defence against attack using weapons which is becoming more and more important in today violent society.

It is guaranteed to build confidence through proven techniques that have been adapted over time into a truly modern self defence system while keeping a foothold in the past by the use of wooden weapons as well as swords and other weapons used by the Samurai.

I could go into depth about the origins of wooden weapons and their development from farm implements used by farmers to defend themselves against bandits, however there is a time and a place for everything and seeing as this paper is aimed at modern day society I will draw a line under the subject of weapons that have no relevance.

Knowing the difference

Once you have learned how to minimize danger and how you could prepare yourself against the act of violence you will then need to know how to prevent escalation of a potentially violent situation.

Most situations however aggressive they may initially seem can be diffused by talking to the potential attacker, however remember that your body language speaks louder than you can verbally.

Usually people that are angry just want to vent and don't really want to fight, they will probably look shocked when you tell them that you don't want to let things become violent as the actual act had not entered their mind,

We always assume that an aggressive encounter will result in violence, however very few incidents that involve vocal exchanges result in violence as long as one person remains calm, in order to gain control of a situation you must be willing to change your perception regarding agitated or vocally aggressive individuals and realise that they are probably not expecting a fight,

Such situations will change should there be a gang or small group of teenagers, but only regarding the reason for the verbal abuse, peer pressure and bravado play a part and this situation should be far easier to walk away from providing you are willing to allow the individuals to verbally abuse you while you walk away, realise that you are dealing with idiots that have nothing else in their lives that makes them feel empowered or gives them status, walk away and don't dwell on it, you are a better person for having made the first move in diffusing a situation that someone may live to regret.

Staying calm is not as easy as you may think, most people assume that they will act a certain way during an aggressive encounter, we would all like to think that we would be able to deal with the situation the same way we have seen similar situations dealt with on TV or in books, in actual fact the reality is something entirely different, you will find it very difficult to cope mentally if you are not trained to deal with the mental side of an attack as well as the physical, although when you can deal with a situation physically you will have more confidence and will be less distracted by the threat of violence which will in turn help you cope enough to either calm it down, escape or in some cases disable the individual.

In situations involving alcohol, self protection will work very well however if self protection techniques do not work while you are alone at night and you are faced with a potentially violent individual remember in most cases the violence or the threat of violence is a terrorism technique and is used as way of scaring you into submission

usually they want money or items of value, from past experience I have found that when you are faced with a person that is intent on violence they will rarely speak, should you encounter an individual that is desperate for money they will very often be agitated and almost in a state of panic themselves, don't mistake this for fear it is frustration or desperation and they may have a habit to feed, this will motivate them to take a risk in order to obtain your money and they may be carrying a weapon, if this becomes obvious give them what they want and go on with your life.

Keeping a safe distance is still important should the same attacker want more from you than money (sex for instance) you should be ready to act, fight or flight so to speak, play the situation over in your mind and try to make a decision as to how you would act then reinforce that image over and over until it becomes the first thing your brain sees should it actually happen.

Try to realise that rape is not always about sex, sometimes is more about domination and power, the aggressor or rapist in this situation will usually prey upon the weak or easy target in order to gain the domination fix that he needs (refer to what I have said about not looking like a victim).

He will want to be the dominant person within this situation "don't let him", use the same self protection techniques and if necessary try and escape or use a good self defence technique (attack is always the best form of defence) if you are unsure that you would be able to motivate yourself to attack just imagine exactly what he is about to take from you and show no mercy. No matter what happens next, as of that moment your life has already changed and there isn't a jury in the country that would convict a rape victim.

We are hearing in the news recently how the law is changing in favour of the victim, the definition of excessive force has now changed and you have more rights regarding the damage you inflict on an attacker while defending your life, not that it would matter when your life is at stake.

Always remember when you are attacked that the person attacking you has no regard for you, he is about to take something from you, your belongings are replaceable and you should not try to keep them at any cost to your safety, however should the attacker move into your safe zone (this space can be whatever you deem expectable to you) then you must act, for all you know he may be about to take your life.

Be safe.