

JIKAN DOJO 慈館道場

An Introduction To SELF-DEFENCE



WHAT IS SELF-DEFENCE?

Self-defence courses are usually marketed as being oriented towards effectiveness and optimised towards situations as they occur in the **real world**. Short courses tend to draw from techniques of traditional martial arts such as karate and jujutsu and simplified for quick study.

Admittedly, there is a considerable difference between self-defence courses and formal martial arts practice. Self-defence courses generally teach a few specific, quick and easy to learn techniques and principles for survival. They stress on simplicity allowing beginners and novices to maintain effectiveness under intense and stressful situations. On the other hand, martial arts like Karate and jujutsu start relatively slowly, giving beginners and novices building blocks like pieces of a puzzle that fit together over time. After a while in dedicated martial arts training, the pieces start coming together and the basic techniques grow into more complex ones with greater effect.

However, for someone in desperate need of a quick solution to personal safety, years of training in traditional martial arts like karate and jujutsu may seem too long and is a bit discouraging for some. As a result, Jikan Dojo teaches a Level 1 and Level 2 Self-Defence Course hand in hand with the ever-rewarding study of traditional martial arts.

PRINCIPLES OF SELF-DEFENCE

1. THE SCIENCE OF FEAR - ADRENALINE AND PANIC

Every human being experiences hesitation or a 'brain freeze' when exposed to something they perceive to be a threat. This is also a normal response to an unsuspecting victim of a violent attack. From the moment our brains perceive a threat our central nervous system goes into action. Physically, this can result in decreased coordination, difficulty in thinking clearly, dilated airways and blood vessels affecting breathing and causing dizziness, all of which affect our ability to analyse and strategize. These physical symptoms are part of what is known as **panic**.

However, there is good news. As the central nervous system goes into action, natural chemicals are released by glands which quite quickly primes our bodies for maximum physical exertion. A rush of hormones under stress such as adrenaline, facilitate immediate physical reactions associated with a preparation for violent muscular action. This facilitates extra speed, strength and tolerance for pain. This phenomenon occurs in both humans and animals and is usually described as the '**flight or flight**' response, hyperarousal, or the Acute Stress Response.

In self-defence training, one of our goals is therefore to take advantage of the flight-or-flight response to overcome the symptoms of panic and to overcome our attackers. One of the ways we do this is by using principles of aggression and explosiveness in our techniques.

Also, through constant repetition we practice physical responses till they become second nature so that under intense stress, when we're less able to think and analyse we can still defend ourselves effectively.

2. AGGRESSION

SELF DEFENCE IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE FOR AN AMATEUR WITHOUT SUFFICIENT AGGRESSION! Self-defence techniques aren't meant to be used in playful demonstrations such as between friends as that requires some level of restraint.

Instead, be of the mind-set that in real-life self-defence techniques must always be done at 100%.

3. THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE

When faced with an assailant who is committed to attacking you, your aim should be to stun or incapacitate them sufficiently enough to make your escape. Maintaining the element of surprise can considerably increase your ability to do so. If you give away your intentions, your would-be attacker can adjust or strategize his approach making your chances of survival even smaller. Your body language and verbal interaction are the main elements affecting your ability to catch your assailant off-guard. While verbal self-defence dictates that you should be assertive while communicating with an aggressor, you should top short of indicating that you possess any form of weapon or fighting ability.

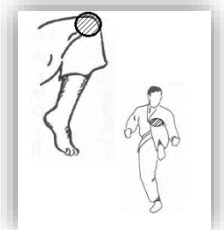
4. RULES OF SELF-DEFENCE

THERE ARE NO RULES!!

Once you establish that a threat is serious and unavoidable, you must be mentally prepared to do whatever it takes to save your own life. That could mean the use of techniques that are considered to be dirty in combat sports such as biting, gouging the eyes and headbutting. Be ruthless! This is not a sport. Your attacker has all intentions to cause you hurt you and **failure to act quickly enough can result in serious harm to yourself**. Remember there are no rules. Read about the law and self-defence below.

NATURAL WEAPONS

- Front knee kick
- Roundhouse elbow
- Rear elbow
- Palm heel strike



THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SELF-DEFENCE

5. *Misconceptions about self-defence.*

1. The “women are more timid” Myth: that it is impossible for women to actually fight back. According to research, there is almost no practical difference between a woman’s and a man’s capacity to act aggressively in a threatening situation. Women being less aggressive than men is nothing more than a social stigma.
2. The “Don’t escalate by retaliating” Myth: Fighting back increases the danger to the victim. This is not true. Both verbal and physical self-defense strategies such as shouting and pushing back in fact reduces the severity of a stranger attack (Ullman, 1997). Thus defenders need to be empowered to react to a self-situation without fear of reprisal, knowing that their reaction to a stranger will at the very least not exacerbate the situation. Further, empirical research has established that active resistance actually aids in avoiding rape and sexual assault by both violent strangers (Ullman & Knight, 1993) and acquaintances.
3. The “You will be blamed for retaliating” Myth: that fighting back shifts culpability to the victim rather than the perpetrator. A popular myth that we will discuss when we come to the topic of the law and self-defence. For now let just say that if you feel as if there is a genuine threat to yourself then you are entitled by law to defend yourself.

6. *WHAT MAKES YOU A TARGET*

Targets of crime are selected by the perpetrator based on three primary characteristics;

1. **Vulnerability** – how capable the target is of resisting;
2. **Gratifiability** – whether the target possesses the desired objects or qualities; and
3. **Antagonism** – how much the target prompts feelings or impulses that provoke the crime (Finkelhor & Asdigian, 1996).

How can you reduce your perceived vulnerability?

How can you reduce the potential gratifiability you present to an attacker?

How can you minimise antagonism in a potentially violent encounter?

7. *De-escalation*

De-escalation in self-defence describes non-physical, mostly verbal methods that are used to reduce the intensity of a hostile situation or even prevent it all-together. De-escalation or 'verbal self-defence' does not apply once an attack has already begun, and you should quickly take physical action once an attack has begun.

There are a few important exceptions in which research has proven that attempts at de-escalation should not be attempted;

- Sexual assault. Here reasoning, backing down or pleading only confirms your vulnerability and potentially increases gratifiability.
- Home invasion.
- Also, when threatened by an offender who you believe may be a psychopathic criminal, backing down is never an option. Approximately 10% of criminals exhibit psychopathy (according to Guttmacher, 1972b; Megargee & Bohn, 1979). They tend to come across in a more calm manner, and are usually very calculating and un-remorseful.

THE LAW AND SELF-DEFENCE

Much can be said about the law and self-defence. The law generally states that **ever human being has the inherent right to protect themselves.**

The law, while often open to interpretation generally states that any act of self-defence, must be "reasonable in the circumstances" as perceived by the victim. Another way of putting it is that "the response must be reasonable and proportionate" to the threat presented.

PROGRESSION – WHAT'S NEXT

So, you've had an introduction. You learned some strategies, principles and techniques but you also realised that there are several more common self-defence scenarios that you could prepare yourself for. The next step from this introductory course is the full Self-Defence Level 1 course. You can do this short course the next time we run one, or you can cover the same course material alongside Japanese jujutsu in our regular weekly classes. Please write to jikandojo@hotmail.co.uk for more information.

Also, you can find out more about the martial arts classes that we provide by visiting www.jikandojo.com