



Safety Solutions:

A Compilation of Articles from

Steve Zorn-
Personal Safety Unlimited

Modern Components of Reality-Based Self-Defense

by Steve Zorn, ICPS

There are literally thousands of martial arts, self-defense, and close quarter combat systems out there. All of them have their place and each offers a different perspective which essentially depends on the goal of the student. For example, if the student's interest is in cultural traditions and historical applications of a chosen style/system, they should choose a style/system which emphasizes these particular aspects. However, if the student's interest is in self-defense they should also choose a style/system accordingly.

If your primary interest is in reality-based self-defense, you should be aware that there are a few primary components which should make up such a system. If any one of these components is left out it could ultimately compromise your ability to protect yourself or your loved-ones.

There are 5 primary components of any "reality" system and a few secondary components. These components together represent a complete and comprehensive reality-based self-defense methodology. The components are as follows-

1) Mind-Set & Emotional Conditioning - the willingness and determination to do whatever it takes to survive a violent situation is one of the most important components of real self-defense. Before a student can successfully utilize physical skills to protect themselves they must prepare mentally. This mental preparation is the key to reality-based self-defense.

2) Awareness - the ability to observe the world around us is far more important than any physical self-defense skill. By properly using awareness skills, most people can completely avoid potentially violent situations before they happen. Awareness skills include internal awareness, external awareness, general observation skills, and common-sense strategies such as learning how to not look, act, or think like a victim.

3) Basics - this obviously includes blocks, strikes, kicks, as well foundational concepts principles, and theories. The basics include the study of weapon techniques as well as empty-hand techniques. The techniques should be based upon simple gross-motor skills which can be used effectively under the stress of a real assault.

Obviously, all self-defense and martial arts systems contain the basics. Although, there may be different basics taught by different systems...generally they all offer some solid techniques somewhere within their curriculum. The key is to learn which basics are actually functional in potential life-or-death altercations and which ones are not.

4) Skill & Combat Drills - this includes simple skill developing drills which are used to build skills and attributes that can't be developed as efficiently by other means. Attributes include things such as speed, power, coordination, endurance, flow, conditioning, sensitivity, and others.

Skill and combat drills have been a topic of debate for some reality instructors. Some of these instructors and systems tend to focus on basics and scenarios, claiming that drills have no place in a reality-based curriculum. However, the fact is that without drills these systems will never allow a student to develop to their maximum potential. As mentioned above, drills develop attributes that are needed to survive life-or-death altercations. Any system that neglects these attributes is simply neglecting the student, PERIOD. To put it in perspective it must be pointed out that all modern sports and modern athletes use drills to develop attributes. All modern military branches and soldiers use drills to develop attributes. All academic schools in this country use drills to develop attributes. If your so-called "reality" instructor is slamming drills or slamming those systems that teach drills, it's time to find another instructor.

5) Combat Scenarios - this includes scenarios and situations based on what really happens in the world. They can include scenarios involving robbery, sexual assault, and other vicious physical attacks. The key to scenario training is to make it as realistic as possible while avoiding injury to yourself or your training partners. To make scenarios realistic we need to avoid the common martial arts situations and focus on what is seen out on the street. This means minimizing the commonly taught mount and guard wrestling positions taught in martial arts ground fighting...simply because they have little functional use out on the street. We should know how to deal with them just in case but instead of training for them why not train to avoid them altogether?

Scenarios are taught by a majority of styles and systems. However, the key to realistic training is understanding how those scenarios are taught and how they are used to develop the practitioner's protective & defensive skills.

First, the scenarios need to be based on real-life attacks. The traditional self-defense scenarios versus wrist grabs, for example, are OK to teach beginners, but the truth is that such scenarios do not reflect reality. Traditional ground-fighting positions do not reflect reality, traditional defenses versus karate-style straight punches do not reflect reality. To develop reality-based scenarios we must simply study real-life attacks and build scenarios around such attacks. The key is to progressively increase the reality and intensity of the scenarios to the point of being as close to real-life as possible without the negative consequences such as injury, death or emotional trauma.

The above five components should represent the foundation of any reality-based self-defense style, system, or course. Along with these foundational components we need to include physical conditioning and crime prevention.

The study of all of these components will provide the student with the knowledge and skill that's needed to survive violent situations.

Now that we have an idea as to what should be included in a reality-based self-defense curriculum let's take a look at some things that might not be appropriate for those seeking simplistic and realistic self-defense-

Uniforms- Although uniforms may have their place in a comprehensive cultural-based martial arts systems, they have no place in reality-based training. Simply put, to replicate reality we must train in the clothes we will most likely be wearing at the time of assault, if we are unlucky enough to be assaulted.

Punches- As mentioned in other articles, if your goal is to learn every facet of martial arts then punching skills definitely have their place. However, if the goal is to learn quick methods of street survival, pass on the punching. The reasoning is simple, punching is a learned skill that takes months, sometimes years, to master. Once mastered there are still no guarantees that the practitioner won't severely damage their hands when they need them the most...while being assaulted. Remember, the head contains the hardest bones in the human body, while the hands contain the weakest bones in the human body. Even with this common-sense understanding, it still amazes me how many self-defense courses emphasize punching skills over simpler and more effective techniques.

Traditional Blocks- Although the traditional blocks taught in many martial arts systems tend to work great in a controlled training environment they seem to lose their effectiveness out on the street, especially for those with less training under

their belts. Chaotic assaults tend to cause a physiological response in humans. This response, referred to as the fight or flight response, tends to override some of the body mechanics learned through martial arts. In other words, some of these blocks do not represent our natural physiological response to actual real-life assaults. This may lead to conflict between the body's natural ingrained response and the trained response found through martial arts. Simply put, this may lead to a delayed physical & mental reaction to the threat which could lead to a negative outcome...for the good guy.

Traditional Kicks- These are a necessity for comprehensive martial arts training, but are inappropriate for real self-defense. Under the chaos of an assault, the act of standing can become difficult enough without having to worry about balancing on one leg. Remember, the feet are the foundation for the torso, if the foundation is weak so is everything else. Does this mean that kicks should not be included in a reality-based training program? It doesn't mean that at all but it does mean that we should limit the kicks to simplest and most effective ones, which includes the knee strike, the stomp kick, maybe a low front kick, and possibly a low round kick.

Traditional Ground Fighting- As mentioned previously in this article, ground fighting is needed to become a comprehensive martial artist. However, the need for traditional ground fighting in real self-defense is pretty slim. If a person finds themselves on the ground during an assault their goal should be to get back to their feet as quickly as possible in order to escape safely. The longer a person stays on the ground the greater the chances of severe injury or even death. Traditional ground fighting tactics emphasize locks, holds, submissions, and just plain wrestling, while reality-based ground tactics emphasize simple and efficient survival methods designed to enhance the ability to escape.

If self-defense is your primary reason for seeking out a training course, be sure that self-defense is what you are getting. Discuss your needs with the potential instructor. Be sure to ask questions and make sure you get the proper answers to those questions. If the instructor gives you the avoids or overlooks your questions, find another instructor. If you use this article as a guideline, you can't go wrong.

Ground Grappling or Ground Combatives?: A Reality-Based Perspective

by Steve Zorn, ICPS

I recently received an e-mail from a self-proclaimed "combatives" instructor who was rather offended by my previous article on reality-based self-defense. In that particular article I state that "traditional" ground fighting tactics have little value in life-or-death altercations where intended victims find themselves on the ground. The instructor apparently took offense to this and without looking further into what I teach he decided to e-mail me to express his discontent.

After reading the e-mail in question I decided to write this article to clear up some misconceptions about my views on ground combat, as well as clear up misconceptions about ground "grappling" in comparison to ground "combatives".

First off, there is a big difference between ground "grappling" and ground "combatives".

Ground Grappling / Traditional Ground Fighting

Ground grappling is based on modern martial arts sporting events as well as traditional martial arts systems. The techniques are used to wrestle, lock, control, choke, and submit opponents in both the training environment and the sports arena. The techniques and tactics that are employed by ground grapplers work great in those controlled environments and some might even partially work out on the street. However, due to the chaotic nature of real-world attacks and the complexity of the techniques in question, they have a very low probability of helping average people survive life-or-death altercations.

The lack of street value for ground grappling (aka traditional ground fighting) is easily recognized when we analyze various real-world altercations. The first thing that must be considered is that the majority of real-world assaults include weapons of some kind. In other words, the attacker deploys a knife, gun, club, or an improvised weapon prior to or during the actual assault. This alone means that the use of grappling techniques by the intended victim could easily lead to a greater risk of severe injury or even death.

The next thing that must be considered is that real-world assaults are likely to include multiple attackers. While keeping that in mind, it becomes clear how risky one-on-one grappling techniques can be. In such cases, there is a possibility that, while the intended victim is engaged in a grappling match with the attacker, the attacker's partners can stomp, stab, shoot, and/or ambush them. I should also point out that it's highly probable that anyone who happens along, while the ground grapple is taking place, can innocently assume that the intended victim is the attacker. This could lead to a multiple attacker situation, when it could have easily been avoided by using more combative tactics.

Another consideration that must be addressed is the environment. Most ground grappling systems utilize soft mats in order to prevent injuries to the practitioners. However, the fact remains that real-world assaults take place in various inconvenient locations including: drive ways, parking lots, night clubs, street corners, dark alleys, etc. Such locations represent great dangers to the intended victim due to environmental obstacles and hazards such as gravel, glass, curbs, furniture, etc.

Unfortunately ground grapplers just assume that they will be alone or with their buddies when they are attacked. However, like the majority of real-world assaults, we must consider that we won't always be alone. We must also consider that we might not always be with friends who are willing to watch our backs. In other words, what happens when the intended victim is out with his wife and/or his children when the assault takes place? Is the intended victim supposed to just grapple around on the ground while his wife/child is being victimized by the attacker's partner?? Or is the wife/child just supposed to stand there and watch him die at the hands of the attacker?? Also, what if his buddies, who were talking tough just moments ago, decide to up and split while he grapples with the attacker? Now he is left alone to deal with any or all of the factors that we have already discussed.

Once we take all of those considerations into play it becomes obvious why ground grappling isn't a viable solution to dealing with real-world ground attacks. It becomes painfully clear that the longer the intended victim stays on the ground attempting to grapple with his attacker, the greater the risk to his life or to the lives of his loved ones.

Ground Combatives / Ground Survival

Ground combatives, on the other hand, is based on gross motor-skill tactics which can easily be used by most people under the stress of physical assault. These tactics are not only easier to learn, they require less training, and less athletic ability than the previously mentioned grappling tactics. The techniques taught in ground combatives are used to injure or incapacitate (aka neutralize) the attacker as quickly and efficiently as possible. Such techniques are utilized in order to facilitate both the safety and the escape of the intended victim.

Ground combatives are designed to allow the intended victim to neutralize the threat and get back to their feet as quickly as possible. From there the intended victim can assess the situation and determine if there are other possible threats (the attacker's partners) and/or possible clear routes of escape. This also allows the intended victim to more easily protect himself and/or his family members.

In closing, ground grappling does have a place in a comprehensive martial arts curriculum but has little value in real-world life-or-death altercations. In self-defense the goal is not to score points, make a tap-out, or win trophies. In self-defense the goal is to survive the altercation so that we can live another day and go back home to our families and friends.

TESTIMONIAL:

"I've been to several of Steve's Seminars now and I always look forward to the next one. He takes all of the arts and styles he's learned, weeds out the stuff that won't help you protect yourself or the lives of your loved ones, and gives you simple, effective, and hardcore self defense strategies. He won't waste your time with pretty, fancy techniques that not only won't work in a real life situation, but could also get you hurt or worse. He breaks it down in a simple progression that's easy to learn and applies to almost any situation; whether it's with or without weapons or on the ground or standing up. His system simply works. Period."

Paul Powell
Tae Kwon Do instructor

Mental Rehearsal For Self-Defense

by Steve Zorn, ICPS

As you walk toward your vehicle, across the dark parking lot you notice a silhouette of a person standing in your path. You hesitate for a moment, thinking of the possible negative outcomes to this situation should you continue forward. In that moment you decide it might be safer to turn around and head back in the direction from which you just came, but just as you start to turn someone grabs you from behind.....

I would like you to take a moment to visualize the above scene in your mind. Picture yourself walking to your vehicle as you find yourself in this particular situation. Attempt to use as much detail as possible. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel? How do you respond? What skills do you use? What skills do you avoid? How does this scenario end?

While the above mental exercise is known by many names such as guided imagery and / or visualization, for defensive training it is commonly referred to as crisis rehearsal. However, for the article's sake I will refer to it simply as "mental rehearsal". This simple tool is just one small training methodology used in reality-based self-defense programs around the country. While it is not exclusive to the field of self-defense, it is a valuable tool for those who want to be physically and mentally prepared for possible violent encounters.

So, what exactly is "mental rehearsal"? It is simply the act of using the imagination to create scenarios in the mind in order to successfully practice our skills, tactics, and strategies. In essence, it's the act of guiding the mind and the body through violent situations without the negative consequences. In other words, without the fear of injury or death due to a mistake.

What makes "mental rehearsal" so valuable for self-defense training? To be honest, lots of things. The first of which, is psychological conditioning. By regularly using mental rehearsal to practice scenarios to successfully deal with violent situations, the practitioner gains improved confidence and improved cognitive processing. This, in turn, improves the practitioner's ability to deal with real situations. It also increases the speed at which the practitioner can choose the appropriate response to the potential threat. Essentially it's like everything else that we do in life, the more we think about it and the more we practice it, the better we get at it.

Along with the psychological conditioning there is also the benefit of the physical improvements. Research into mental rehearsal has shown that just visualizing a physical skill will stimulate neural-pathways between the brain and the body. This can create positive re-enforcement of various physical self-defense skills as well as common escape strategies. In other words, the more you practice in your mind the better you become physically. However, research has also shown that results are better retained if the mental practice is combined with actual physical practice.

Mental rehearsal is more than just practicing techniques or visualizing comprehensive scenarios in the theater of the mind. It is a serious training tool that can hurt your ability, if used incorrectly. The old saying "practice makes perfect" is a good example of what I mean here. Most instructors know that poor practice does nothing to make the practitioner perfect. In fact, it's only "perfect practice that makes perfect". The same holds true for mental rehearsal. If you should envision yourself failing a scenario, you are simply programming yourself, physically and mentally, to fail. If you mentally practice poor or incorrect physical skills, you are only decreasing your chances of successfully using the proper skills in real life situations. The keys to successful mental rehearsal are based on having a solid understanding of the objective of mental practice, as well as having a solid grasp of the physical and mental skills that will be used to reach that objective. Once these things have been established, the practitioner must then use multi-sensory visualization to properly program the mind and the body. The term multi-sensory simply means that during mental rehearsal the practitioner must learn to use all of their senses. They must not only see the scenarios in their mind but they must also hear the sounds, feel the emotions and textures, and smell the odors of the environment and the potential threats. In other words, the mental scenarios must be as real as possible in order to successfully build positive neural-pathways and correct responses. While this may be difficult at first, it is a necessary step to using this tool to positively influence the mind and body.

The concept of mental rehearsal is not new. It has been used successfully in sports, and various health-related fields for years. It is used by some military and law enforcement personnel as well. The fact that it continues to be used should be enough to convince any student of self-defense how important of a tool it actually is.

Non-Physical Skills...Their Role In Self-Defense

By Steve Zorn, ICPS

While it's true that "self-defense" is offered in many martial arts schools and even some fitness facilities, we must ask ourselves if it's really self-defense that's being taught. Are the students of these schools and facilities really learning to protect themselves or are they just learning simplified martial arts under the guise of "self-defense"?

I cannot honestly answer this question as it pertains to each and every facility making such claims, but what I can do is provide simple guidelines to help you, the reader, decide if your school or facility is teaching real self-defense or some fake imitation.

As previous articles have pointed out, there is a difference between martial arts and self-defense. While there may be some similarities in the physical applications between the two, this is generally where the similarities stop. Martial arts self-defense programs, what I refer to as traditional self-defense, generally over-emphasize the physical skills while under-emphasizing or even neglecting the psychological and analytical skills needed to deal with life-threatening situations. The belief is that it's the physical skills that determine the outcome of the altercation when, in fact, it's what the student does before the situation turns physical that will determine the ultimate outcome. While physical skills are vitally important, they are the least important of all real self-defense skills.

Self-defense is about staying out of harm's way. It's about learning to detect possible violent situations and dealing with them before they turn violent. Self-defense is NOT about letting someone physically assault you so you can, in turn, defend yourself. Once this is understood, self-defense can be approached in a direct and realistic manner.

So, what does real self-defense training consist of? That's the question I intend to address. The first step to answering this question involves analyzing violent situations and then reverse-engineering them. In other words, we must take a look at how violent situations occur in the first place so that we can learn how to prevent them from escalating to a physical level. Analyzing the situations in this manner can help us understand that there are so many more things we can do prior to using last-ditch physical skills. In other words, while physical skills are necessary, they should be used last and least.

Let's start from the beginning. How can we prevent potentially violent situations? That's easy, we AVOID such situations. To AVOID situations we must be AWARE of such situations before they happen. So, the first step to dealing with violent situations is using common-sense awareness & avoidance strategies. Ultimately, awareness leads to avoidance and avoidance leads to prevention. Understanding this is the key to real self-defense. If we are aware of potentially violent situations before they happen and we avoid those situations, it's highly unlikely that we would ever have to physically protect ourselves. In short, awareness strategies should form the foundation of any realistic self-defense program that is designed to protect lives. Any program neglecting this foundational area is not based on reality.

What about other necessary skills when awareness & avoidance fails? What about methods of escape? Obviously we don't live in a perfect world. While we may have excellent awareness & avoidance skills there is still a chance that we might find ourselves in potentially violent situations. Based on this fact, we must have a solid understanding of how and when to escape.

What about verbal and non-verbal de-escalation strategies? As we know, conflict resolution is about learning effective communication skills in order to successfully deal with conflict in our lives. Wouldn't potentially violent situations be considered an extreme form of personal conflict? This being the case, doesn't it make sense that we should first attempt to resolve such conflict in a non-violent manner if at all possible?

As we can see, there are many steps that can be taken to be aware of and ultimately avoid potentially violent situations. When those situations can not be avoided, there are still steps that we can take to avoid possible physical altercations. Simply put, physical survival skills should be used only as a last resort when all other options have been exhausted.

Don't be fooled by imitation "self-defense" systems that only teach physical skills and avoid or neglect the most important components of all, the non-physical skills. As I have pointed out, a system based solely on physical skills does not prepare the student for the realities of violent altercations. In fact, it does not provide the student with options and instead conditions them to rely on physical skills regardless of the level of threat.

If self-defense is truly the goal, I recommend that you search out an instructor or a system that offers a comprehensive program including an emphasis on non-physical skills. As our lives may someday depend on our training, we should make sure that our training provides us with the necessary skills to not only survive but to win!

TESTIMONIAL:

"Steve's seminars are focused on reality based self-defense. Within 5 minutes, not 5 years, but within 5 minutes of the start of the seminar I was learning applicable fighting techniques! Steve not only knows the system, but also how to present it for maximum impact. The techniques and tactics cut right to the meat, offering easily learned and practical self defense."

Eric Engelsrud
CQC student

TESTIMONIAL:

"Steve, I want to thank you very much for taking the time to come down to train with us here in Seymour, IN. Everyone in attendance was terribly impressed with the techniques you shared and ALL look forward to your return visit if you have the time. Do not hesitate to contact us if you will be in or around our area in the future. I believe Hock would be very proud of the way you represent CQC also, you did an excellent job!!!"

Sincerely, Doug Taylor
Seymour, IN
Self-Defense Instructor

Reflexive Training for Real Self-Defense

by Steve Zorn, ICPS

In order to learn effective self-defense skills it's important to have an understanding of motor-skill research. Essentially this helps us understand how the body responds to a given stimulus. This in turn helps us understand which techniques will most likely be effective under the stress of a real assault and which ones won't.

One aspect of motor-skill research is the understanding of reflexes, instinctive responses to an attack.

Motor-skill researcher, Richard Schmidt has broken the common reflexes down into 4 basic categories:

- 1) *M1 Reflex*
- 2) *M2 Reflex*
- 3) *Triggered Reaction*
- 4) *M3 Reflex*

M1 Reflex is the monosynaptic stretch reflex which occurs when a muscle is suddenly and unexpectedly placed under a load. This is the fastest known reflex. The knee-jerk reflex or patellar reflex (stretch reflex) is an M1 Reflex.

M2 Reflex is the polysynaptic functional stretch reflex. Because it includes more synapses and goes further up the spinal cord it's a bit slower than the M1 Reflex.

Triggered Reaction is slower than M1 & M2 Reflexes because it involves many more synapses. The cross-extensor reflex (withdrawal reflex) falls into this category. This is commonly seen when a person touches a hot stove, hits their thumb with a hammer, or stubs their toe on the door jam. Generally the stimulus is tactile in nature, such as something that causes pain. However, some sounds and some visual cues can also cause this reflex. This is seen when someone gets startled (jumps) during a loud sound or when someone sneaks up behind them and yells. It can also include someone sneaking up behind you and touching you suddenly. Generally, during a triggered reaction the hands will move toward the center of the body to instinctively protect the head and torso or they will move toward the site of the injury or away from the source of pain. Example, when touching a hot stove the burned hand moves away from the source (stove) toward the center of the body and the opposite hand meets it there while attempting to cover it (protect it). In the case of a car accident, the driver will have a tendency to convulsively lock the arms out in order to protect

themselves from impacting the steering wheel, dash, or windshield. The passenger may bring the hands up to protect the head and torso or even reach for the dash or door in an effort to keep themselves from impacting the dashboard or windshield. Since most people have not been taught anything else they will usually fall back onto these general instinctive responses / reflexes.

All of the above reflexes are involuntary, meaning that they occur without conscious thought. They are referred to as "simple reflexes" by some researchers.

M3 Reflex is a voluntary reaction-time reflex and is the slowest of the reflexes. This is referred to as a "conditioned reflex" by some researchers. For our purpose, this is the category that trained defensive or protective flinch responses fall into. Generally, the stimulus is visual in nature but can also be based on tactile or auditory cues. This could include seeing our car about to hit a tree or seeing another car about to crash into ours. In regards to self-defense it could include seeing a punch coming at our head or even seeing the attacker tensing his arm or making a fist prior to the attack. Essentially, we perceive the possible threat, identify it as an actual threat, and then activate a motor-program. However, in regards to self-defense this is where things get tricky. If we have tons of different motor-programs, say 10 defenses against a straight punch, 10 different defenses against a round punch, 10 different defenses against a knife attack, etc. etc. then it's going to take some extra time for us to choose the appropriate motor-program (response) for that particular attack. Also, if we have been training a bunch of unnatural blocking movements, we have the same problem. By the time the practitioner has actually chosen the appropriate blocking technique it's likely they will have already been hit by the attacker.

The key to real self-defense is to attempt to turn the M3 Reflexes into "automatic responses" which will essentially make them equivalent to Triggered Reactions. How do we do that? Simple! We train with natural gross-motor movements that are often activated during Triggered Reactions. We minimize our physical options and make those options applicable to dozens of different situations and different types of attacks. We train our brain to perceive and identify the threat sooner. Example, instead of waiting to see a punch coming at us before we respond, we should learn to identify verbal and non-verbal cues that normally occur prior to the attack. Then we respond to those cues rather than an actual attack. We then train these basic responses over and over again through various adrenal / stress inoculation drills until they become spontaneous.

In most cases, if the skills are based on natural neural-pathways they are generally easy to learn, easy to retain, and easy to use for the majority of average non-athletic individuals. Those who are athletic will have a definite advantage.

TESTIMONIAL:

"I would like to take the time to tell anyone who has had or will have the pleasure of training under Steve Zorn.. I have known Steve for 2 years and have trained with him numerous times, and there could be hundreds of ways to describe it but one way to start with is research. I have been training various Martial Arts for 20 years and with some of the self proclaimed finest martial arts stylists in the country , and all of them claim to be the most efficient , lethal or finest .. But the problem is the people they have trained lack the street experience that you need to mix in with your martial arts to make it realistic. Steve has been on the same quest for street combative experience that I have and if you want knowledge he has it.. If your going to teach people to survive in a real world combat scenario you need to know first what your talking about and second how to apply it ... He can do both .. Under the Scientific Fighting Congress Steve has been training under Hock Hochheim and Hock is one of the few people out there who brings the real street experience into play.. When you train with Steve he goes over the material and brings a unique way of keeping your attention with humor but also being realistic and knowledgeable and using the S.F.C. material as a foundation you can't go wrong.. I would highly recommend him to Law Enforcement down to the everyday person.. If your looking for sport fighting go elsewhere if you want real world self defense , Steve is the one you need to be seeing.

When the game of combat gets tough , Change the rules of the game... "

Ted Grubbs
Certified JKD Instructor,
BJJ Student,
CQC Student

Stress Inoculation- It's Not Self-Defense Without It!

by Steve Zorn, ICPS

Stress is a part of life and no matter what we attempt to do about it, nothing can eliminate it. Stress is life and life is stress! However, while we may not be able to eliminate it there are things that we can do to help us better handle stress and the burden that it places on our minds and bodies. Although, the concepts discussed here can be applied to any and all forms of stress, I will specifically focus on the context of violence-induced stress. In other words, stress that is caused by potentially violent situations such as assaults, robberies, rapes, etc.

During extreme stressful situations the body begins to temporarily adapt to the stress by initiating a physiological process, often referred to as the "fight or flight" response. This causes the adrenal glands to release adrenaline into the bloodstream temporarily increasing physical strength and speed. However, there are numerous other physical and mental effects. This includes: increased tunnel vision, increased heart rate, decreased cognitive functioning, decrease in fine motor-control, and auditory exclusion among others. These effects, or side-effects if you will, can be either positive or negative depending on the situation in question. Known by other names, such as Combat Stress Reaction, Survival Stress Reaction, Body Alarm Response, and the adrenal response, this complex bodily process helps the body prepare to physically deal with the stressor head on (fight) or run away from it (flight). However, there is actually a third response that is often overlooked and that is the "freeze" response. So, practically speaking, it would be better to refer to the whole process as the "fight, flight, or freeze" response. The "freeze" is both a physiological and psychological effect of overwhelming external and internal stimulus. It can be thought of as the "deer in headlights" response. In psychology, it's referred to as the "holding mechanism". Simply put, it can happen when a victim is so overwhelmed by the threat and the physiological response of their own body that they can not effectively think clearly or choose an appropriate response to the threat.

The "fight, flight, or freeze" response is a physiological process that everyone goes through when faced with potentially violent situations. However, just as people vary in size and appearance, their physiological response can also vary. In other words, what creates an intense adrenal response in one person may not create such an intense response in another person. This variance can be based on an infinite number of factors such as age, physical conditioning, mental conditioning, previous training, etc. Although, it has been found that if training is

conducted in a form that gradually exposes a person to the stressor in a controlled training environment, the person can learn to decrease the overall effects of the adrenal response. Simply put, by simulating real-world situations in the training environment, students can learn not only how the adrenal response will effect their ability to protect themselves but what they can do to use this process to their advantage. This progressive training methodology, otherwise known as stress inoculation, is one of the foundational components of all realistic self-defense programs. If any program, claiming to be "self-defense", is void of this simple training tool it will not prepare the student to successfully deal with real-world situations, regardless of what other's might claim. Essentially such a program falls under the category of "martial arts", not "self-defense".

There is another, often overlooked, advantage to using stress inoculation in the field of self-defense- It's been shown that when a person successfully employs specific tools and techniques during this physiological process, the moves become anchored into the neuropathways. In other words, if a specific strike was used successfully under the adrenal response in training, the strike will essentially be hardwired into the muscle-memory and the practitioner will be able to initiate the same strike in real situations with little to no conscious thought. It's that ultimate level of spontaneity that martial artists spend years searching for but rarely find.

While it is true that such a training process can be somewhat intimidating at first, especially for those who have been previously victimized, it is also true that there is no other method that will better prepare a person for real-world violence. Once a student has successfully participated in a stress inoculation session, their confidence and skills will increase dramatically. Their ability to physically and mentally protect themselves will surpass anything that they could acquire through the martial arts programs hiding under the disguise of "self-defense". In truth, programs like those only offer a false sense of security and false confidence.

TESTIMONIAL:

"I attended the recent Seymour seminar with a small training group. We found SZORN to be clear, to the point, and in obvious command of the material. We plan to attend the next one in the area."

Charley Harrison
CQC Instructor

Victimology: What Makes A Victim?

by Steve Zorn, ICPS

This question has always remained...What makes someone a potential victim?

Some may tell you that victims are determined by social status. Others claim that victims are chosen based on how they dress. However, while these things may play a small, very small part in victim selection...research has shown that there is a more basic underlying factor that assists human predators in choosing their targets.

Criminal interviews have shown that predators select their victims through general observation. By simply watching body language signals and behaviors, a predator can spot a target who is statistically less likely to resist or fight back. As we know, predators do not want resistance and they don't want to get caught. Based on this fact, they will tend to focus on those targets that they feel can easily be overwhelmed. By simply demonstrating assertive body language we can greatly reduce our chances of being chosen as that target. Through the proper use of assertive body language, we can lead the predator to believe that we will, in fact, provide the resistance that they strive so hard to avoid.

In 1984 a couple of researchers, Betty Grayson and Morris Stein conducted a study to determine the factors used by predators to select their victims. During their research they video-taped pedestrians on a busy sidewalk in New York. They then visited a correctional facility and showed the tape to convicts who were incarcerated for various violent offenses such as robbery, rape, and murder. They asked these convicts to review the videos and choose those pedestrians which they believed would provide the least resistance, in essence being the best potential victims. In a short period of time the convicts had chosen their potential targets.

At first the specifics behind the victim selection process was not apparent. Some of the chosen targets were large men while some of the smaller women were quickly overlooked. Why? The selection process obviously was not consciously or sub-consciously based on race, age, size, or even gender. In fact, the convicts could not even confirm why they had chosen the targets that they had, at least not consciously.

Digging deeper, Grayson and Stein decided to study the chosen targets rather than those predators that had selected them. What they found would shed an interesting light on why certain people are chosen as victims while others are often avoided like the plague.

Through this research it was discovered that victims are often chosen based on a quick observation of their physical movements and overall body language. Here is what they found...

Stride (Victim):

Chosen victims generally have an exaggerated stride, either long or short. They tend to walk in an unnatural, uncoordinated fashion. This might include dragging, shuffling, or lifting their feet unnaturally.

Stride (Non-Victim):

Non-victims tend to walk in a natural coordinated manner. Their stride is smooth and natural.

Rate: victims tend to walk at a different rate than non-victims. Usually, they walk slower than the flow of pedestrian traffic. Their movement lacks a sense of deliberateness or purpose. However, an unnaturally rapid pace can project nervousness or fear.

Fluidity: victims had an awkward body movement. Jerkiness, raising and lowering one's center of gravity, or wavering from side to side. This was contrasted with smoother, more coordinated movement of the non-victims. Wholeness: victims lacked "wholeness" in their body movement. They swung their arms as if they were detached and independent from the rest of their body. Non-victims moved their body from their "center" as a coordinated whole implying strength, balance and confidence.

Posture and Gaze: a slumped posture is indicative of weakness or submissiveness. A downward gaze implies preoccupation and being unaware of one's surroundings. Also, someone reluctant to establish eye contact can be perceived as submissive.

These traits reflect a person's perceived vigilance and potential to fight. The researchers concluded that ,when people understand how to move confidently, they can reduce their risk of assault. Self-defense training develops the qualities

of movement that discourage victim selection and helps people project a confident attitude. You cannot simply "pretend" or "fake" confidence and expect to ward off human predators.

Much of the selection process is subconscious. However, it is possible to consciously and consistently control non-verbal signals that you project. Through regular conscious effort and practice, you can change non-verbal cues and greatly reduce your chances of being victimized. Here are some benefits of proper self-defense training:

Awareness & Avoidance: predators seek victims who are unaware, preoccupied, and easy to ambush. By becoming more aware of your surroundings, you not only increase the odds of detecting a potential predator, but you project an image of a non-victim.

Physical and Emotional Fitness: your overall physical fitness can impact your ability to protect yourself: If you are attacked your ability to successfully escape or fight off the attacker is dramatically reduced by poor physical conditioning. A strong, toned, and healthy body will project the quality of movement of a non-victim. Fitness can also influence you on an emotional level. The increased self-esteem, confidence and emotional resilience that result from being in good physical condition are non-victim qualities that predators want to avoid.

Reduced Potential For Being Attacked: Reality-Based Self-Defense training greatly reduces the chances of having to defend yourself. It teaches you the basic steps to successful personal safety and offers options for dealing with threatening people and situations.

Knowledge: knowledge reduces fear and builds confidence. Confidence is a non-victim quality. Read anything dealing with self-defense issues and concerns. Do what you can to understand how confrontations happen, how to avoid them, and how to respond if you cannot avoid them.

Experience: through regular simulation training as utilized in Reality-Based Self-Defense, you will gain valuable experience as to what actually takes place during physical assaults. This will prepare you both physically and mentally to the assault should your awareness and avoidance strategies fail.

Shooting Stances: Why the Debate?

by Steve Zorn, ICPS

The debate on shooting stances has raged for as long as some people can remember.

Some shooters claim that the Weaver Stance is the stance of choice for combat situations. Others claim that the Weaver Stance is not instinctive and therefore falls short under the stress of a real gun-fight. These people are usually proponents of the Classic or Modern Isosceles Stance.

The problem is that a lot of firearms instructors and trainers tend to become fixated on specific stances and methods of shooting. Why is this a problem? Simple, it does not reflect reality.

If we were to analyze every shooting incident over the past 10 years we would quickly find that the shooting stances and methods varied from incident to incident. The simple truth is that there is not a shooting stance that is best for every situation or for every person. As the old saying goes "one man's food is another man's poison". However, anyone interested in being able to survive a gun fight should understand that the stances each have their place.

It might help to think of the stances as screwdrivers. The Weaver Stance is a flat head screwdriver and the Isosceles Stance is a phillips head screwdriver. Depending on the type of screw that we are working with we must choose the appropriate corresponding screwdriver. We obviously would not be able to use a phillips head screwdriver on a screw requiring a flat head screwdriver. The same holds true for shooting situations.

As an example, if we are forced to clear the rooms of our home we would naturally assume a Weaver Stance in order to successfully apply the "slice the pie" concept and avoid exposing ourselves unnecessarily. If we used an Isosceles Stance while "slicing the pie" it would quickly place us in an extremely vulnerable and potentially deadly position. Essentially anytime we are forced to shoot from behind cover we would likely find ourselves assuming a Weaver Stance. Simply put, in these situations the Weaver Stance helps to minimize our own target areas while still allowing us to potentially shoot the threat. On the opposite end of the analysis we know that if caught in the open during a gunfight it's quicker and even more instinctive to assume a Classic or Modern Isosceles

Stance. While a Weaver Stance would obviously reduce our exposure to incoming fire by allowing us to blade our bodies, it also requires more complex motor-control and an unnatural upright position.

Based on this reality I simply can't figure out why so many people waste so much time debating shooting stances. If they truly care about their safety they would recognize the need for both stances depending on the situation and they would train accordingly.

TESTIMONIAL:

"Steve,

The seminar was great, fully enjoyed it. I do realize you're doing this on your own, but you made a good representation of the Hochheim Group. I had seen their website before and wondered about them, but if you represent the training and attitude that they provide then I would have to believe they're a top notch organization."

Ken Gary
Self-Defense Instructor

TESTIMONIAL:

"I was skeptical that someone could cover something useful regarding knife defense in only 4 hours. The program that was presented was extremely useful and easy to learn. The instructors did a great job of teaching and presenting it to cops at the right level. One of the best knife courses I've been to, and I regularly train in the Filipino Martial Arts. Great Job !"

Officer Joe Engman
City of Bellevue Police Dept, WA

All Self-Defense Systems Are Not Created Equal!

by Steve Zorn, ICPS

When most people hear the term "self-defense" they envision practitioners in traditional white karate uniforms performing traditional self-defense techniques against a compliant training partner. Unfortunately, real self-defense training is so rarely seen that most people do not understand the difference between real self-defense and traditional self-defense (martial arts).

It's true that most martial arts schools offer some form of self-defense training. The problem is that most of the program's material is based upon the traditional techniques taught within their particular style or system. This leads to what I call "traditional self-defense". To the untrained eye, these traditional self-defense programs might look realistic. Unsuspecting students might even come to believe that the material can effectively be used against large, aggressive, and non-complaint attackers. The truth is, this leads to a false sense of confidence and can lead to an increased risk of severe injury or even death for the intended victim.

Martial arts have a long history. Some of the common systems date back 40 or 50 years while others claim to date back several hundred years. Regardless of how old or new the system might be, it's generally based upon a traditional learning structure. Such a structure includes oral and written traditions such as learning foreign languages, wearing specified uniforms, bowing to instructors & the training area, learning physical techniques designed to defeat attacks taught within the system, and much more. These systems can have a profound positive effect on the student but not always in functional ways. As long as the study of these systems is placed in proper perspective and within the context of the modern world, they can represent a positive experience. However, if these systems are taken out of context they can represent, not only a negative experience, but a life threatening one as well.

In truth, traditional self-defense systems are designed to fit within the confines of the traditional martial arts from which they are founded on. In short, the instructor wants to make sure the separate self-defense program is compatible with the martial arts techniques taught at the school. This provides the self-defense student with the opportunity to pursue continued training in a long-term martial arts program, if they should choose to. It also provides the martial arts student an opportunity to learn a more simplified self-defense version of their extensive

martial arts curriculum. The problem with such programs is that they focus on traditional and unrealistic defenses against traditional and unrealistic attacks. Basically, this type of training provides the student an opportunity to become proficient at defending themselves against unrealistic attacks in a controlled training environment, against compliant training partners. As you might guess, this has little value in physically or mentally preparing the student for dealing with real life-or-death altercations.

Realistic self-defense training, on the other hand, is radically different than "traditional self-defense". "Reality-based self-defense", as it's called, strives to simulate reality as much as possible while avoiding injuries. This type of training is void of the stereotypical traditional learning structure. Instead, the programs are based on modern learning theories as well as cutting-edge physiological and psychological research. The material is developed by basing techniques and tactics on those used in actual life-or-death altercations by those who survived such situations. These techniques and tactics are then pressure-tested through simulations, which are based on actual incidents. The goal of "reality-based self-defense" is to prepare the student both physically and mentally to deal with real-world assaults. To this end reality-based self-defense includes other components rarely seen in martial arts schools or traditional self-defense programs.

Components Of Traditional Self-Defense

- un-natural blocking techniques
- punching techniques
- emphasis on un-natural fine and complex-motor skills
- traditional kicking techniques
- traditional martial arts stances
- traditional footwork drills
- defense against static attacks
- emphasis on attacker's limbs rather than attacker
- traditional wrist-grab defenses
- traditional choke defenses
- traditional kick defenses
- traditional grab & hold defenses
- traditional defenses against joint-locks
- traditional weapon defenses
- separate and conflicting techniques for standing, and ground defense
- emphasis on multiple techniques for similar attacks
- emphasis on 70%-100% physical, 0%-30% mental

Components Of Reality-Based Self-Defense

- awareness & prevention tactics
- escape tactics
- de-escalation tactics
- study of non-verbal communication
- study of physiology
- study of psychology
- emphasis on natural gross-motor skills
- natural instinctive stance & positioning
- natural footwork patterns
- instinctive protective tactics
- scenario simulations
- emphasis on attacker rather than attacker's limbs
- adrenal response training
- emphasis on tactics rather than techniques
- emphasis on making one or two tactics fit all attacks
- same tactics for standing and ground defense
- emphasis on attack prevention rather than attack defense
- emphasis on 60%-90% mental, 10%-40% physical

On the surface these differences may not be so obvious. However, once a qualified instructor demonstrates the differences to the student, they will never look at traditional self-defense the same way again.

My goal in writing this article was to point out the difference between "traditional self-defense" and "reality-based self-defense". I want people to understand that not all self-defense systems are created equal and that not all self-defense systems are designed for the threats that we might be forced to face in today's world. Also, it needs to be perfectly clear that not all self-defense instructors have the student's best interest in mind when they offer these traditional self-defense programs.

They say that knowledge is power, and I hope that this knowledge will give the reader the power to make positive and effective choices when it comes to their personal safety.

Good Luck & Stay Safe!

Defensive Use of Improvised Weapons

by Steve Zorn, ICPS

The term "improvised weapons" is pretty common among hardcore martial arts and self-defense practitioners, but is often misunderstood by the general public. Some people seem to think that the term is used to refer to various home-made guns, bombs, booby-traps. Others seem to think that it refers to home-made stabbing or cutting weapons often found behind prison walls. The fact is, there is a difference between those items mentioned and actual "improvised weapons". I hope to clear up some misconceptions and misunderstanding in this article.

First, allow me to attempt to explain those misunderstood terms.

"Improvised Weapons" is a term used to represent common everyday objects that can be used in a variety of defensive applications. These objects are not physically altered in any way, in an effort to make them more functional as weapons. They are generally utilized in their normal state. Improvised Weapons can include items such as ball-point pens, combs, etc.

"Makeshift Weapons" is a term used to represent any everyday object that has been physically altered to enhance its potential as a weapon. It can also be used to represent the making of standard weapons such as guns, knives, and bombs out of commonly available items. Makeshift Weapons include those items previously mentioned, that are often mistaken for "Improvised Weapons".

The underlying concept of "improvised weapons" is to learn how to use commonly available objects in order to survive physical altercations. It's not about learning to fashion a killing instrument out of a hanger and duct tape, or making bombs out of common household chemicals. We'll leave that to the criminals!

The fact is, that the majority of violent attacks that occur in the modern world, involve weapons of some sort or even multiple assailants. This being the case, we must understand that empty-hand defensive skills may not be enough. In order to survive such violent encounters we must have a tactical advantage. Some instructors would suggest carrying a knife, a gun, or some other "modern" personal protection tools. Although, on the surface this sounds like good advice it doesn't take into consideration that there are laws governing the use of such tools. These laws vary from state to state and country to country, making it extremely difficult advice to follow. Not to mention the fact that some people

make moral and/or ethical decisions not to carry such destructive personal protection devices. Taking all of this into consideration we come to realize our best tactical advantage comes from learning how to use our entire environment in defense of ourselves and our loved-ones. Obviously, this knowledge can only come from research, crisis rehearsal, and physical practice of the foundational concepts.

Once we understand how valuable the study of improvised weapons can be we must then learn which common objects are suitable for personal protection and which ones are not. The truth is that almost anything can be used effectively with proper research and training.

Here is a list of some of the common items which might be used in improvised fashion-

Small Hand-Held Objects (Close Range)

Ball-Point Pens
Standard Pencils
Pocket Combs
Pocket Flashlights
Credit Cards
Cell Phones
TV Remotes
OC Containers
Video Cassettes
Small Books
Sunglasses
Standard Telephone
Glass Bottles
Bic Styles Lighters
Plastic Soda Bottles
Small Bricks
Hand-sized Rocks
Drinking Glass
Coffee Mugs
Cooking Utensils Magazines
Shoes
Ash-Trays
Small Hand-Held Weights

Hair Brushes
Toothbrush
Purses
Wrist Watches
Rings

Mid-Length Objects (Mid-Range)

Large Flashlights
Large Books
Standard Car Antennae
Tire Irons
Standard Lamps
Umbrellas
Walking Cane

Long Objects (Mid to Long Range)

Walking Canes
Brooms
Mops
Shovels
Rakes
Boat Paddles
Pool Cues

Flexible Objects (Close, Mid, & Long Range)

Rope
Belts
Chain
Shoe Lace
Garden Hose
Air Hose
Telephone Cords
Electric Cords
Purse Straps
Towels
Bandannas
Scarves

Throwing Objects (Close, Mid, & Long Range)

Most items mentioned above or any handheld items

Sand

Gravel

Hot Drinks (Coffee, Tea, Chocolate, Etc.)

Coats & Jackets

Hats

Pocket Change

Perfumes

Any Household Chemicals

Obviously there are literally thousands of everyday items that could be placed on this list, but that isn't the goal of this article. The goal is to give the reader a solid understanding of the concepts and then lead them into the proper direction for personal study and growth.

Once you start to look at these items with a new perspective, you will look at all items with the same perspective. It will literally change your view of the world and you will realize that you are never unarmed.

Now that we have discussed the definition of "improvised weapons" and listed some everyday items which fall into this category, let's talk about training.- If you currently study the martial arts, it's just a matter of taking your martial skills and learning to apply them to these various improvised tools. The key is to use the basics and body mechanics that you already possess rather than trying to learn new skills or new body mechanics. If you are fairly proficient in the martial arts, this is a relatively easy task to accomplish. However, if you are not a martial artist you might still be able to develop some basic skills with improvised weapons with just a little creativity and some investment in training. Unfortunately, this can only take you so far. If you want to develop some decent skill you will want to seek out a qualified instructor who can teach you the skills that you might need to survive those unfortunate altercations.

In conclusion, violent encounters are an unfortunate part of life and they are something that we must all understand and prepare ourselves for. In the event that you happen to find yourselves in such an altercation you want to be sure that you are prepared beforehand, because once it takes place you might not have another opportunity to make those preparations. The study of improvised

weapons is a big step in this preparation process. Invest the time and energy into this study and you won't be disappointed.

Resources for Further Study:

"101 Weapons for Women" by Rodney R. Rice

"Hardcore Self-Defense" by C. R. Jahn

"Pool Cues, Beer Bottles & Baseball Bats" by Marc "Animal" MacYoung

***Please note- It's the reader's responsibility to gain more knowledge by seeking out qualified instructors in the use of improvised weapons as well as researching the self-defense laws in their own states and jurisdictions. The author assumes no responsibility for the use or mis-use of this information. USE AT YOU OWN RISK!*

TESTIMONIAL:

"Zorn is Quite possibly the best kept secret in Reality Based Self Defense, Truly second to none."

Fernan Vargas
CQC Instructor
Defensive Tactics Instructor

TESTIMONIAL:

"Steve is very good at presenting course simply and effectively! Sense of humor is great! Thanks."

Patsy Doty
self-defense course participant

Child Abduction Prevention?- A look at Reality! (PART 1)

by Steve Zorn, ICPS

There are literally hundreds of martial arts schools and instructors out there offering courses on child abduction prevention.

On the surface this appears to be a good thing. However, the problem is that not all of these schools or instructors are qualified to offer such courses and their courses do not always reflect "reality". This is a fact and once we realize this we have to then determine what makes an instructor qualified to offer certain material. For one, the instructor has to have a strong desire to actually help both the parents and the children. If the instructor actually does have this desire then he/she will do everything in their power to learn the latest and most advanced research in the particular field. The instructor will make absolutely sure that the material offered holds up to the "reality" of the situation, in this case it must hold up under the stress of an actual abduction attempt. If the material doesn't appear to be based on this "reality" then I would suggest finding another instructor. As an example, a martial arts instructor in a nearby town is offering so-called child abduction prevention classes. Somehow this instructor coaxed the local news channel into doing a segment on his school and his classes. During the interview the instructor states that his classes are based on teaching the children how to punch and kick. He claims that punching and kicking is the key to children surviving abduction attempts. This is absolutely an absurd idea and any instructor teaching such nonsense is being negligent to their students as well as the parents and in my mind, committing a criminal act. The majority of techniques taught in martial arts schools are absolutely useless for child abduction prevention and this includes punches and kicks. The fact is, the majority of child abductors are both larger and stronger than the children they abduct. This means that children will most likely be unable to effectively employ punches and kicks to escape such a situation. Anyone teaching such tactics to children has never had to face a violent situation where the use of force was a requirement to their survival. If they had, they would know that it's difficult for a large adult to effectively use punches and kicks in such situations. This being the case, how can they expect a child to effectively use such tactics??

The next thing that qualifies an instructor to offer "reality-based" child abduction prevention classes is the possession of a solid background in both martial arts

and various areas of self-defense and security. Being a black belt instructor in one style of martial arts does not automatically qualify anyone to teach child abduction prevention, in fact it doesn't even qualify them to teach basic self-defense. The key is finding those instructors that have invested years of dedicated research into the field of child abduction prevention or have pursued instructor certification with reputable organizations who specialize in this particular area. Also It must be pointed out that there is a big difference between martial arts and self-defense and any solid self-defense program will only loosely be based upon any particular style of martial arts. To that end, child abduction prevention, which is a form of specialized self-defense, should not remotely resemble a martial arts program. If it does, find another instructor.

Lastly, financial gain should not be a priority of any credible instructor. In fact most credible instructors will be conducting such courses for free in order to aggressively help the parents and children in their communities. However, it's not uncommon for an instructor to charge a small fee for their valuable time and possibly to cover the charges of various program handouts. If the instructor is charging an unreasonable amount for such a service or if it seems that financial gain is a top priority, find another instructor.

In closing, child abduction prevention is ultimately the responsibility of parents. With this understanding they should seek out qualified instructors to help them gain a better understanding of the subject and learn how they can keep their children safe. They should also learn what to look for in a qualified instructor and choose such an instructor wisely. The end result can be either positive or negative, based upon these choices. Remember, we are talking about the safety of children here!

TESTIMONIAL:

"Good straight forward principles, oriented towards real world scenarios."

International Law Enforcement
Trainers and Educators
2005 Conference Attendee

Child Abduction Prevention?- A look at Reality! (PART 2)

by Steve Zorn, ICPS

Child abduction prevention is a serious subject that should not be taken lightly. However, I am still amazed at the number of instructors and systems, even nationally recognized systems, that continue to promote not-so-serious techniques and strategies. As mentioned in part 1 of this article, a serious abduction prevention program will not be based on punches, kicks, or other fancy martial arts techniques. The facts of my previous article remain the same, these types of skills are next to useless for children who's potential abductors generally outweigh them by 100 pounds or more. If this truly is the case, why are such techniques still being promoted by programs around the country? There are an infinite number of possible reasons for this, here are just a few-

- 1) The instructor wants to believe in the program so much that he/she refuses to acknowledge the weakness of said program
- 2) The program is based solely on martial arts knowledge and lacks research in other fields such as learning & teaching theories, motor-skill theories, survival stress reactions, etc.
- 3) The material presented in the program has not been pressure-tested for practicality or effectiveness
- 4) The program is based on a specific martial arts system and is designed to compliment the instructor's chosen system taught within the school.

Regardless of why this practice has continued, it needs to change. Every time one of these programs is offered to unsuspecting parents & children, it creates a false sense of confidence and leads these children to believe that they are prepared for something they may not be.

To illustrate the point I would like to discuss some of the martial arts techniques commonly taught in some of these programs. While these techniques and skills appear to work great in a controlled training environment, they tend to fall apart under the stress of a real abduction attempt.

PUNCHING

Most people understand the basic concept of a punch. Basically the hand is formed into a tight fist and is used to strike at various bodily targets, while using the tops of the knuckles as a striking surface. Punching is an important component of any comprehensive martial arts curriculum. However, punching is a learned skill that requires months, years, or even longer to master. It is a skill that represents the essence of the term "Martial ARTS". Punching is, in fact, an art form in and of itself. To be an effective puncher the practitioner must possess solid kinesthetic awareness, have a fair amount of muscular strength, have an understanding of body mechanics and power development, and must be in fair physical condition. Now, if all of that isn't enough to illustrate why it's an inappropriate skill for a child abduction prevention program, let's look deeper. The hands contain the most brittle bones in the human body, while the head, the most common target for punching, contains the hardest bones in the human body. Once this is understood we can see why using the fist to punch the head, doesn't make much sense. If it doesn't make much sense for adults, why would it make any more sense for a child? Then to take this even further, the study of real adult fights has shown that some adults can take brutal punches to the head and body with little to no effect. If this is the case, how can a child be expected to punch hard enough to actually inflict enough injury on an adult abductor in order to successfully escape their grasp?

CRANE-HAND STRIKE

This is a common martial arts technique often included in children's programs. If you aren't familiar with it, the technique consists of touching the fingertips of your hand together so that the hand forms the shape of a bird beak. The combined fingertips form the striking surface, which is often directed at the eyes or other soft targets. In practice, the children strike hand-held pads using this odd hand configuration. In training, it works great against large hand-held targets but how effective is such a technique against real-life aggressively moving humans? That's what I would like the reader to think about. If we actually analyze the hand configuration, the target area, and the skill that's necessary to acquire said target under stress, we realize how difficult such a technique can be for an adult. While keeping this mind, how much more difficult will it be for a child who has less coordination, less motor control, less athletic ability, etc.? On top of this, consider the fact that the potential abductor will likely grab the child's arms and/or torso in an effort to carry them to a nearby vehicle or some other location. During this process it will be highly unlikely the child will have the opportunity to use this martial arts strike to effectively hit a target the size of a quarter, on an aggressively moving abductor.

PALM STRIKE

This is a simple tool that consists of directing the open palm of the hand toward the desired target area. The striking surface is generally the lower edge of the palm closest to the wrist, commonly referred to as the palm heel and the target area is generally the facial area. While I agree that this can be an effective tool for adult self-defense, it is less effective and less practical for children, especially smaller ones. Why is that? Let me tell you. In order for the palm strike to be effective it must be reinforced by a certain amount of muscular strength. Like punching, a proper palm strike requires some kinesthetic awareness and some coordination, although not to the same extent. As was implied previously, the potential abductor will likely be bigger, stronger, more coordinated, and more aggressive than their chosen victim. If such is the case, how can a child be expected to strike hard enough with the palm or accurately enough to slow, deter, or stop such a predator?

KNEE STRIKE

Like the palm strike, this is another solid technique for adult self-defense. It consists of driving the knee into the groin or other nearby target area of an attacker. However, this technique is of little value to children in potential abduction situations. Like the palm strike, a proper and effective knee strike requires a certain amount of muscular strength. On top of that, it also requires a minimum height in relation to the height of an abductor. In other words, most children will be too short to effectively apply a knee strike to the most practical target area of an abductor, the groin. If that isn't enough to illustrate how inappropriate this technique is for children, consider this, men do not always fall down in agony when they are properly and effectively struck in the groin. I have seen and heard of many cases where a man takes a full power blow to the groin but keeps on coming. While facing this reality, how can we expect children to use such a technique to effectively escape an abduction attempt?

KICKS (all variations)

This is another common martial arts technique taught in various so-called child abduction prevention programs. Essentially it consists of using the legs and feet in a variety of ways to hit various targets on an attacker. Examples might include: a front kick that targets the attacker's shin or goes straight into the groin, or a round kick that targets the attacker's knee or side of the leg. In a training environment such techniques work extremely well for children. The mock abductor allows the child to perfectly kick them in the desired target and then reacts with dramatic results. However, this is nothing like the stress and chaos of

a real abduction attempt. Under stress most people have difficulty standing on one leg, which is essentially what is being done while attempting kicks. If that isn't enough, we must consider that the abductor may likely be rushing in on the child giving them little opportunity to assume their proper kicking position. In a split second the abductor will have the child securely in their arms and will be carrying them off into the unknown, all while the child attempts a technique that has been found ineffective, even for adults.

FOOT STOMP

This is another martial arts technique often taught in children's programs. A foot stomp consists of driving the heel of the foot straight down onto the desired target. In most cases, the top of the abductor's feet is the primary target while in other cases it might be the abductors hands or head if they happen to end up in a prone position during the struggle. While such a technique might have validity for adults, it is another technique that is ineffective for children. Let me ask you this, how often have you tried to stomp the foot of a friend or family member while they quickly attempt to move their feet to avoid it? If you have never tried this I would suggest doing so right now. You will quickly learn just how hard it is to stomp a foot that won't stay still. What is often overlooked in the controlled training environment is the fact that the abductor is in a hurry and they won't be standing still long enough for any child to effectively stomp on the foot or toes. Not only this, but the majority of children, especially smaller ones, will not possess the strength or body mechanics to effectively use such a technique against an adult abductor, even if they are lucky enough to hit the target.

Now that we have taken a deeper look at some of these common techniques taught to children, let me make a few points for clarification. Some of these techniques may work for older children and teens depending on the several factors such as size and strength of the victim and size & strength of the abductor. However, it seems more appropriate to give children techniques that have a higher probability of success, regardless of these factors. In other words, the children need skills that are not dependent on their physical attributes or on the physical attributes of the abductor. They need skills that have a good chance of working in most situations, most of the time without having to rely on luck. In some cases, instructors use success stories of children they have trained to promote the effectiveness of some of the techniques mentioned above. However, what the instructor neglects to mention is the situation, the physical attributes of the abductor or the victim, the percentage that the skill was used effectively, etc. etc. Instead of just taking an instructor's word for it we need to analyze the situation by using as many details as possible. We need to ask questions and

make no assumptions based on the instructor's word alone. For example, a 110 pound boy successfully uses a palm strike to deter a 140 pound abductor. This simply proves that given the similarities in size and strength the palm strike was effective for the boy. Does this mean that the palm strike will be just as effective for a 60 pound girl in the same situation? Absolutely not! The point is that the techniques should be universally effective for all children and should not be based on physical attributes. Even if a technique is successfully used by a child it does not automatically make it a good technique. A good technique is one that has a high probability of success regardless of the child or the situation.

If you happen to be a parent looking for solid abduction prevention skills for your child, please take all of the above into consideration. Your child's safety is a serious issue and one that should not be taken lightly. Do some homework to investigate the instructor and the material that they offer. Don't assume that just because they are an instructor that they have your child's best interest in mind. Don't assume that just because a program is offered by someone of authority or is nationally recognized that it offers the best techniques or strategies available to children.

If you happen to be an instructor offering such programs to children I ask that you seriously reflect on what has been written here and that you take the children into consideration before you teach them skills that could compromise their safety.

TESTIMONIAL:

"My children recently attended one of your free seminars in Warsaw. My son and I observed and my daughter participated in the class. I think it is one of the best classes a child could possibly take due to the increased amount of abductions in our society. I would like to thank you for all that you are doing to help children learn how to escape a dangerous situation. God has truly gifted you with the ability to know what and how to teach children. The fact that you offer seminars for free shows how much you care about children and being able to reach as many as possible. God will truly reward you for all that you do!"

Pam Bailey
seminar participant

The Value Of Martial Arts For Abduction Prevention?

by Steve Zorn, ICPS

If you have read my previous articles on child abduction prevention you already know how I feel regarding this topic. While I appreciate the martial arts for what it has to offer children (confidence, fitness, coordination, respect, etc.), I do not appreciate that it is commonly promoted for abduction prevention.

While recently promoting child safety in the community, I came in contact with a young man and his mother. When the mother saw my handouts regarding abduction prevention she was confident that her son was fully capable of avoiding abductors as he recently learned about such topics in his Tae Kwon Do class.

So, I asked the boy what he would do if someone grabbed him. He briefly explained a complex wrist-grab release that he was taught in class. I asked what he would do if that didn't work. He explained that he was taught to scream. I asked him what he would do if that didn't work. He explained that he was taught to keep trying the previous two techniques. While this sounds good to children and may even sound good to parents, it is not likely to prevent a child from being picked up and carried away. As I clearly pointed out in my previous articles, strikes & kicks will likely fail for children. The same thing applies to those traditional grab releases taught in most martial arts or karate programs. It's simple physiology! A smaller child will be less likely to break the grab or hold of a larger and stronger (likely adult) predator with complex martial arts techniques.

For those readers who don't understand what I am referring to here, allow me to explain. A "traditional" martial arts wrist-grab release goes something like this- an abductor grabs the victim's wrist in an effort to pull him/her into a car or to some other location. The intended victim will apply a large circular arm motion or a quick jerk toward the abductor's thumb in an effort to break the hold. While these types of techniques work great in a controlled training environment, like a martial arts school, they tend to fail under the stress of a real assault. Why is that? It's actually pretty simple. In the controlled training environment, the attacker is usually a willing partner or a willing instructor who wants to see the student be successful with that particular skill. In order for the student, in this case a child, to be successful the partner/instructor will actually allow the student to complete the skill while providing little to no resistance. This means that the child is allowed to practice the skill over and over against an unrealistic grab. The only thing the

child develops from this experience is a false sense of confidence with the skill in question.

If that isn't bad enough, we must consider the that if a child is forced to use abduction skills it will most likely be against a predator who is bigger, stronger, and meaner than the child. Also, these techniques (and instructors who teach them) do not take into consideration the physiological effects that an attempted abduction will have on the child. Simply put, the adrenal response created by the stress will decrease certain physical skills that the child may have possessed under normal training conditions. Now, don't get me wrong. The "traditional" wrist-grab releases may be highly effective for children to use against other children of similar size & strength, a school bully for example, but they are next to useless against determined child predators.

Here are some quotes from Grace Hechinger, a child safety expert, regarding martial arts for abduction prevention-

"The best forms of self-defense are those with little or no risk to the child intended to be the victim. Physical self-defense always involves the risk that the response might miss it's mark, offer no effective protection and even enrage the attacker."

"Sometimes children are advised to kick an assailant. But Detective Oates, pointing out that kicking will most often enrage an attacker, says, "you have to land a perfect shot to make it work". In a confrontation, most children would not be up to doing that- nor would most adults."

"Other experts caution that courses in self-defense, improperly taught, may give children a false sense of security. Both you and your children should keep in mind that a little knowledge, poorly used, can be more dangerous than none at all. One or two karate classes should not create the illusion that a youngster knows how to defend himself."

"If you feel that your home safety lessons need a boost from outside expertise, a general self-defense class which emphasizes prevention and common-sense avoidance can be useful. But you should be careful when the training is in the specifics of the martial arts."

"This kind of training features a physical approach to problems. Most children still need to learn more civilized methods."

Here is a solid quote from Detective Ric Bentz regarding this subject-

For Children:

"Don't try to fight back. Flee, don't fight. A child's impulse to use karate or boxing against an adult predator is misguided and dangerous."

While I understand that not everyone attends martial arts classes to learn self-defense or personal safety, but those people who do attend classes for that reason should not be misled in order for the school to make a few bucks. Personal safety is a serious subject and as I have said before it should not be taken lightly. After all, we only have one life. If you are a parent, understand that your children only have one life as well. Take steps to protect those lives before it's too late!

TESTIMONIAL:

"Thank you for coming to the Senior Center today! Everyone was so very positive about you and your presentation. Your passion for both people and safety shows!"

Please come again! Yours could be a yearly presentation..... "

Kathy Schumacher
Winona Lake Senior Center

The Danger of "Stranger-Danger"- The need for updated child safety programs

by Steve Zorn, ICPS

As a child, how often did your parents tell you "don't talk to strangers"? How often have you said such a thing to your children? While it might appear to be sound advice, just how effective is such a strategy, really? Honestly, I believe that such a strategy was created by people who don't really understand the complex issues of child development or their overall safety.

For example, how many times have you given the "don't talk to strangers" advice to your children, only to turn around and verbally interact with the pizza delivery driver who drops off supper, or the person bagging your groceries at the local super-market... while in plain view of your child? How often have you verbally engaged people that you only met moments ago, while your child looks on in confusion? Is it just one of those cases of "do as I say, not as I do" or is it that adults, like children, just don't comprehend what a "stranger" actually is?

In truth, if none of us ever interacted with "strangers", how would we ever develop friendships? How would we ever find a spouse? How would we ever survive? I think you get my point. Interacting with "strangers" is a normal daily occurrence; it's a part of life. This alone, proves how the "stranger-danger" concept is not only ineffective but how it can be confusing on the most basic level for children. Essentially, it goes against our natural instinct!

To take this even further- what happens if a child is actually abducted and taken a good distance from his/her home? Even if they are lucky enough to escape, everyone in the general vicinity is likely to be a "stranger". If the child has been ingrained to avoid "strangers" there is a good chance that he/she will avoid seeking out help. What happens then?

Here is a case in point-

In July of 2002, seven year old Erica Pratt was abducted outside her Philadelphia home. The two abductors took Erica to a home and bound her with duct tape before hiding her in the basement. Almost 24 hours after her abduction, Erica was able to chew through the duct tape and escape. However, Erica didn't do this alone. After she chewed through the tape she was able to get to a window to call outside for help. This attracted the attention of "strangers" passing by. It was

those "strangers", people that Erica had never met before who saved her life that day. If Erica had been taught to fear "strangers" what do you think might have happened?

Another case in point-

July 2005, Brennan Hawkins wanders into the Utah woods away from his Boy Scout camp only to find himself lost for 4 days. When Brennan is finally found alive he tells how he actually hid from the rescuers that he had seen days before because he was taught the common idea "don't talk to strangers". Brennan was lucky and made it back alive but this not-so-sound advice almost made things worse.

Simply put, the majority of "strangers" are good people who would go out of their way to help children. While there is a potential that a small percentage of "strangers" are bad people, we must not categorize the good ones in with the bad ones under the general term "strangers". To do so, only frightens children and decreases their chances of effectively dealing with bad situations. So, what do we do instead? That's pretty simple. Instead of teaching your children to fear "strangers", teach them to recognize strange behavior. A bad person can easily be recognized by their behavior as compared to normal good people. For example, teach children that adults asking children for help is a strange behavior, unless that adult is a parent asking the child to perform chores or the like. Teach your children how an abductor might move or act when attempting to lure them away. Teach your child the common lures used to sexually abuse or abduct children. Teach them that those things are strange behaviors that will help them to recognize potentially bad situations. Also, teach them to trust their gut feelings or instincts. If they feel uncomfortable around anyone for any reason, tell them it's alright to get away and tell you or another trusted family member or adult.

Another point that is often overlooked...according the Department of Justice Statistics an estimated 85%-90% of child sexual abuse and assault cases, are perpetrated by people known to the child or the child's family. In other words, people who would not be thought of as "strangers".

Hopefully, this gives you an idea as to why "stranger-danger" is an out-dated and ineffective teaching concept, and why it should be eliminated from child safety programs. Instead, we must empower children with the knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe through a proper understanding of the real threats that

exist in our world. This means taking a hard look at previous educational methods and then updating them to reflect this reality.

TESTIMONIAL:

"We appreciate the knowledge, sharing, and concern Steve demonstrated with our group in his training. The ladies gained a sense of confidence after having learned and participated in the session. We welcome the opportunity to include Steve's expertise as part of our resource network."

Lynn Moore
self-defense course participant
Indiana Statewide Association of REC's

TESTIMONIAL:

"This was a super class to take. I have learned more about self-defense today than I have learned in 2 years of Tae Kwon Do classes. Steve simplified things so I could remember them."

seminar participant

TESTIMONIAL:

"Mr. Zorn has a great repertoire of knowledge and explains the techniques in a way that most people will understand and execute them. I have never taken a class (from Steve) that was not excellent and useful."

seminar participant

About The Author



Steve Zorn has been involved in the field of personal safety for over 18 years. In that period of time he has been exposed to dozens of martial arts, self-defense, and close quarter combat systems; including various law enforcement, child safety, and crime prevention programs.

Here is just a small sampling of his many accomplishments -

Founder of Personal Safety Unlimited

Founder of Simple Defense

Holder of multiple martial arts black belts

Certified close quarter combat instructor

Certified law enforcement instructor

Certified child safety instructor

Certified womens self-defense instructor

Certified fitness instructor

Creator of numerous specialized safety programs

Former self-defense instructor for United Airlines

Former instructor for the National Law Enforcement & Security Institute

Designated International Crime Prevention Specialist

Over the years Steve has provided his services to men, women, children, teens, and seniors from all walks of life. He has also instructed law enforcement and security personnel in various aspects of personal safety. Steve continues to pursue advanced training, and updates his education each year. He also continues to conduct seminars throughout Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan on various aspects of self-defense and crime prevention. Steve currently works with EMS Safety Services to spread CPR & first aid throughout the community.