

Self Defense

By Jim Beasley

One of the main reasons that I started my martial arts training was to gain more knowledge in self defense. Since starting I have learned numerous techniques to defend myself and to counter attacks of others. What I would like to do here is to take self defense to the next level. Learn a little more about conflicts, escalation, de-escalation, and avoidance.

Let's start off with the conflict cycle. All types of conflict follow a cycle, a predictable sequence of events. The exact nature of the conflict and your chosen method for dealing with it will determine how long you spend at each phase and how intensely you act during that phase.

Conflicts are divided into three sections, pre-conflict, conflict, and post conflict. Real conflict is a seamless event and each phase may not be readily recognizable until afterwards.

Pre-conflict is the point in time up until the conflict begins. This is where your training and life experiences are drawn together. Everything that you have done and learned up to this point in time.

The conflict cycle is broken up into three phase's initiation, escalation and confrontation phases.

The initiation phase is the starting point, conflict doesn't just happen there has to be a starting point. This could be as simple as someone looking at you the wrong way or as complex as an organized pair of criminals signaling to one another.

The escalation phase is where conflict is imminent. The escalation phase could be immediate, such as someone pulls a knife on you, or gradual such as raised voices. How

far it goes depends on the conflict itself. Sometimes you can defuse it other times require an immediate reaction.

The confrontation phase is where physical combat takes place. Your actions during this phase also very greatly depending on the situation and will be evaluated afterwards by yourself at least and maybe even the police up to a judge and jury.

Post conflict is what happens after the fight. Do you just walk away, run away, or render first aid if appropriate? This is also the time for evaluation. How did I handle the situation? What could have been done differently? Could the situation have been avoided?

The next area to look at is the legality of using force. To legally use force three conditions must be met, means, opportunity, and intent.

Means, the attacker must have the necessary tools or skills to commit the crime. If a drunk says that he is going to kick your butt, however it is perfectly obvious that he can hardly stand; he at this point does not have the means to carry out his threat. However if a 22 year old body builder says the same thing they have the means to carry out the threat.

Opportunity, the conditions in which the encounter takes place must be immediately favorable to the commission of the crime. If a man threatens to pound you and he tells this to you over the phone he does not have the immediate opportunity to carry forward the threat. That does not mean you should ignore it or go over to his house and follow up on the threat.

Intent, this refers to the mental state of the aggressor at the time of the crime. No one can know what someone else is thinking, however you can make an educated guess based on the situation and circumstances.

With all of this in mind we can now focus on how to train for these events. We already train on techniques to use on various holds and attacks. But what about the situations that leads up to the confrontation? What do you do after you have someone in a restraining hold? In other words how do you finish it?

A realistic training cycle is a must. You have to not only train on techniques but on what leads up to a confrontation and what happens afterwards.

The starting point should not be when someone grabs or attempts to grab you. It should start with words. At this point you can rehearse what you might say to help deescalate the situation. It might even be best to just walk away. Each situation is different. Something to bring into class is real life situations. Use situations that you have been in or have witnessed. At this point you and the class can decide what the best course of action could have been. I have found real life situations a huge benefit in class. It gets everyone to think what they would do in a given circumstance. Each situation can be modified to produce different results. Have fun with this.

The next step in training would be techniques perfection. You must have a wide range of techniques that you can use in many different situations. These must also be instinctive. You should choose counters that you enjoy and are effective. When the time comes that you must use what you have trained for you must use it effectively. When the time comes you must decide to be aggressive enough, quickly enough. The faster you finish the fight the less chance you have of being hurt.

Once you have used a technique and you have someone in a hold, now what? How do you let go? What happens now? These are things that are very rarely practiced. I have heard of a police officer disarming someone with a knife only to hand it back to him afterwards. Why? Because this is what he practiced over and over again. Take the knife away, give it back so you can take it away again. You do what you practice. During training when performing a technique against someone we perform it until they "slap out". This is great and helps prevent injuries. However upper ranks should practice

performing the technique until the slap a\then hold for a count of three. This will negate the natural instinct to let go after someone slaps. If you are ever in a situation where someone gets you into a hold, slap. Chances are they will let go.

I would like to finish with a final thought. Your number one option for personal security is a lifelong commitment to avoidance, deterrence and de-escalation. However if a physical confrontation is unavoidable make sure you are aggressive enough, quickly enough.