

Self-Defense for Women

A General Overview

By David T. Bish, Shichidan

What should and shouldn't be taught to women in a self-defense class? We always remark on the effectiveness of the techniques taught in Ju-Jitsu, but we base that on the student that has studied the art for a specified period of time and has practiced religiously. What should we expect from a student that is 5ft tall and 102 pounds that has just completed a 4-hour self-defense class for women?

Many instructors attempt to teach the same techniques that they teach in their dojo to their regular students. Attempting to use techniques demonstrated in a four hour seminar will only get the woman into more trouble or get her killed. The physical portion of self-defense is approximately ten percent of the whole. Students should be instructed on heightened awareness, prevention (surveillance and counter surveillance techniques), risk reduction, and avoidance. These four elements of self-defense should be the majority of the training when dealing with a short class of just a few hours.

I offer classes in self-defense ranging from 4 hours to eight weeks. The four-hour seminar consists of an Individual Protection Measures (IPM) slide presentation. This presentation is an adaptation of the same training provided to high-ranking military and civilian government officials. It covers the following elements:

Current crime statistics

- Types of Victims
- Victim by Location
- Victim by Association
- Target of Opportunity
- Victim Selection Criteria
- Methods to avoid becoming a victim

Be Alert

- Have a planned crisis response plan
- Use light and noise advantage
- Stay near other people
- Avoid routines

It also includes a section on residential security to decrease the possibility of an intruder into the home. The slide presentation is approximately 1 hour in length.

After the presentation the students are taken into the parking lot where a demonstration of a car-jacking incident is provided with a variety of defenses that require no special knowledge or technique. Everything is geared toward the normal reaction of a person subjected to this type crime. The victim will stand frozen with the thoughts of "If he does this, I will" or "When he grabs me I'll" unless they have a planned crisis response. The students should be taught that when put into a situation to react naturally in accordance with the "Fight or Flight" reaction. The primary objective is to get away, not to stand and fight or initiate a submission hold. If students are taught mechanical reactions to specified actions they will be required to think in a situation that is not conducive to thinking. This is because they do not have the long hours of training to re-program their responses. Aid the student in controlling those "natural reactions" so that they move in the right direction at the right time. The four-hour class should be limited to basic strikes, kicks and escapes. Teach the student where the most vulnerable targets are and allow the situation and natural response to take care of what type of Ate or Keri Waza to deliver based on the instruction provided. Remember that the primary objective is to allow the student to stun the attacker and then escape the situation. The session is concluded with students being attacked by assistants and reacting to those attacks in a full contact scenario.

I also offer both a 12-hour class and an 8-week class. The twelve-hour class incorporates the above components but students are shown a wider variety of Ate Waza for the specified targets and more technical Kensetsu Waza to give them an arsenal to choose from and to practice. This is not a "If he does this, you do that" sort of thing. The student still uses natural reaction to feign the attack but the "natural reaction" is "programmed" with effective striking

techniques, escapes and locks. Even with this, the student is still urged to escape the attack and run away whenever possible rather than stand and fight or attempt any type of Osae Waza. What will our 5ft, 102-pound young lady do after she applies an ashi-ude-garami on her 200 pound attacker after only 8 weeks of training? The student is provided real life, full contact scenarios in which they are attacked realistically by assistants who are wearing protective gear and the student defends. This builds the student's confidence in their skills and proves to them that they are not as "helpless" as they thought they were.

The 8-week course is designed to teach a full range of Atemi Waza, escapes, locks and car-jacking defenses along with all of the components mentioned earlier. The course should be broken down to provide the initial slide presentation and stress the fact that the best defense is not to be attacked. The second best defense is to do what you need to and get away to find help. This is covered in the first two days, the next portion of the course is to provide instruction on vulnerable areas and what type strikes work best for those areas. Again, the student is provided with a variety of strikes, kicks, escapes and locks to choose from, this is not a "programmed response drill". The course ends with a full contact scenario on the street, in the parking lot, and in the car.

These same classes with minor variations have been taught to general officers and executive level government civilian employees in Europe, the Middle East and the United States. This training module has proven itself extremely effective through the years.