

TRAINING FOR SUDDEN VIOLENCE



72 Practical **Drills**

Rory Miller

Author of Facing Violence

You don't get to pick where fights go.

"Those us who teach self-defense have a vital responsibility to ensure that our students can actually use what they learn. Miller gives exercises and training that serves this goal."

—Lawrence A. Kane, author, martial artist

"Useful drills for martial arts and self-defense, valuable insights for teaching these skills across the broad range of student experience and need."

—Jeffrey Cooper, MD, martial artist

"Knowledge has to be applied to be powerful. This book teaches effective drills logically and accessibly."

—Iain Abernethy, 6th dan, World Combat Association chief international coach, author of *Mental Strength*

The speed and brutality of a predatory attack can shock even an experienced martial artist. The sudden chaos, the cascade of stress hormones—you feel as though time slows down. In reality, the assault is over in an instant. How does anyone prepare for that?

In *Training for Sudden Violence: 72 Practical Drills*, Rory Miller gives you the tools to prepare and prevail, both physically and psychologically. He shares hard-won lessons from a world most of us hope we never experience.

- Train in fundamentals, combat drills, and dynamic fighting.
- Develop situational awareness.
- Condition yourself through stress inoculation.
- Take a critical look at your training habits.

"You don't get to pick where fights go," Miller writes. That's why he has created a series of drills to train you for the worst of it. You will defend yourself on your feet, on the ground, against weapons, in a crowd, and while blindfolded. You will reevaluate your training scenarios—keeping what works, discarding what does not, and improving your chances of survival.

This is a fight for your life, and it won't happen on a nice soft mat. It will get, as Miller says, "all kinds of messy." *Training for Sudden Violence* prepares you for that mess.



Author photo: Kami Miller

Rory Miller is author of the best-selling books *Meditations on Violence* and *Facing Violence*. He served for seventeen years in corrections as an officer and sergeant, working maximum security, booking, and mental health. Rory Miller resides in the Pacific Northwest.



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Contents

Contents	vii
Foreword	xi
Introduction	xv
Evaluating Drills	1
The One-Step	9
OS1: The One-Step	10
OS2: Four-Option One-Step	16
[Redacted]: The Baby Drill	18
OS3: Slow Man Drills	19
OS4: Three-Way Coaching	20
OS5: Dance Floor Melee	21
OS6: Frisk Fighting	22
OS7: Environmental Fighting	23
OS8: The Brawl	25
Interlude #1: Biases and Assumptions	27
Blindfold Drills	31
B1: Blindfolded Defense	32
B2: Blindfolded Targeting	35
B3: Core Fighting	37
B4: Blindfolded Infightin	38
D: Dynamic Fighting	41
D1: Dynamic Fighting	42
D2: Sumo	44
D3: The Hole against the Wall	45
D4: Moving in the Clinch	49
D5: French Randori	50
Interlude #2: Sources	51
F: Fundamentals	57
F1: Maai with Weapons	58
F2: Off-Lining	61

Contents

F3: Targeting	65
F4: Lock Flow	66
F5: Initiative	68
F6: Advanced Ukemi	70
F7: Pushing	72
F8: Core Defense	74
GM: Ground Movement Drills	77
GM1: Rollover	80
GM2: Rollover, Phase 2	81
GM3: Rollover, Phase 3	83
GM4: Rollover, Phase 4	85
GM5: The Wax On, Wax Off of Ground Fighting	88
GM6: One Up, One Down	89
GM7: Blindfolded Grappling	91
Interlude #3: Social and Asocial	93
PM: The Plastic-Mind Exercises	95
PM1: Animal Styles	97
PM2: Fighting the Elements	98
PM3: The Other	99
IW: Internal Work	101
IW1: Centering	102
IW2: Eating Frogs	104
IW3: The Game of the Stones	106
IW4: Lists	108
IW5: Slaughtering and Butchering	113
IW6: Ethics and Glitches	116
IW7: To Save My Children	118
IW8: The Predator Mind	120
IW9: Articulation	121
Interlude #4: Training Open-Ended Skills	125
C: Combat Drills	127
C1: Takeouts	128
C2: Multiman	130
C3: Breakthrough	132
C4: Bull in the Ring	133

Contents

C5: The Reception Line	134
Scenario Training	136
WW: World Work	153
WW1: The Clothespin Game	154
WW2: Ten New Things	156
WW3: Stalking	157
WW4: Escape and Evasion	159
WW5: Counting Coup	161
WW6: Say No	163
WW7: Dog Handling	166
WW8: Global Awareness	169
WW9: Legal Articulation	174
WW10: World Building	178
WW11: Personal Threat Assessment	182
SC: Sparring and Competition	185
SC1: Kumite and Variations	187
SC2: Judo Randori: Nage	189
SC3: Free Grappling and Variations	191
SC4: Jujutsu Randori	193
SC5: Full Contact	194
SC6: Mixed Martial Arts	195
SC7: Competition	196
Interlude #5: The Violence-Prone Play Group	197
T: Tricks and One-Offs	201
T1: The Touchstone	202
T2: “Hit Me as Hard as You Can”	203
T3: The No-Touch Parry	204
T4: Action/Reaction	205
T5: Gush	207
Real Superpowers You Can Have Today	211
Acknowledgments	213
Bibliography	215
Glossary	217
Index	221
About the Author	225

Introduction

I teach about violence. I worked in corrections for the better part of two decades, and as I left “the life” I discovered that my niche wasn’t so much teaching cops, as I had expected, or even teaching civilian self-defense. The material seemed to resonate most with experienced martial artists who were coming to discover how little they really knew about violence.

The first book, *Meditations on Violence* (YMAA, 2008), was as much therapy and catharsis as information. It was a mental dump of what I knew about Bad Stuff™.

The second, *Facing Violence* (YMAA, 2011), is less visceral and far less personal. But it is, in my opinion, far more useful. How to read a room, how to identify and classify violent people and situations, the nuances of explaining a split-second decision in logical, legal terms.

This one will be different. Maija Soderholm, author of *The Liar, the Cheat, and the Thief* and one of the sneakiest swordswomen I know, suggested a book of drills and exercises. Things that are suited to my goal (surviving violence) and to my way of teaching, which is getting the student to see and evaluate clearly enough that each student becomes a self-teacher.

Teaching, especially in martial arts, is often hierarchical. There is a clear sense of who is above and who is below. Information flow down, always under control of the instructor. Sometimes it comes with a ritual of dominance and submission: some students bow to a master.

I believe that you cannot be taught simultaneously to bow and to stand your ground. That the habit of obedience is a short step away from the habit of submission. That if you do what your instructor says when you know in your heart it is wrong, you will also obey a rapist. Trust me, a violent predator is far scarier than your instructor. Maybe not on an intellectual level (“My instructor kicks ass! He is the best fighter I have ever seen”). But on a gut level (“This man is going to hurt me and hurt me and he is never going to stop and he is enjoying every second”).

Introduction

It's not that criminals are somehow magically better fighters than people who train and stay in shape. It is that criminals will go to a place inside themselves that your instructor will not, a place that too many people cannot even imagine.

So what follows are drills and exercises that I think are important for observation, for integrating mind/body, and for efficient motion

Some involve motion, because anything that escalates to a physical fight is a matter of motion. Many involve mind-set, because most of the catastrophic failures I have seen in a fight have been mental, not physical. Almost all, at some level, are about accurately seeing the world.

I believe there are three aspects you must master to successfully defend yourself: awareness, initiative, and permission.

Awareness is as broad and deep or as narrow and focused as you can handle it. From seeing in an instant the position and momentum of an attacker and each part of the attacker to seeing the dynamics of a room or a street, awareness goes as far as you have the discipline and curiosity to take it. It must be an informed awareness, however. Seeing everything is not the same as understanding everything. You may notice three young men suddenly going silent and separating, but if you do not recognize what that means, the information is useless.

Initiative is the ability to act decisively and ruthlessly. Simply to act. Simply to move. Make a decision. Execute.

People hesitate. They make a decision and they question it. They decide to move and then they prepare to move and set to move. All of these hesitations are visible and take time. They make you an easier victim.

Permission is the ability to do what you have decided to do. You have an entire lifetime of social conditioning telling you what conflict is and how to deal with it. When the type of violence you are facing is different from the social conflict you have been prepared for, the social responses *will not work*. Not only do violent criminals know this, they count on it. You must give yourself permission to break the rules, and to do that, you must know what the rules are.

There are also four elements in any conflict: you, the threat or threats (bad guys), the environment, and luck.

Most martial arts are centered on *you*: teaching you to move, to punch, kick, pin, and throw. Further, much of the training focuses on the physical self and at best pays lip service to the ethical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual aspects. You have a brain and a spirit that must be explored and trained. All three (mind, body, spirit) are potential points of failure. You must emphasize the strengths and know the weaknesses.

There is also a *bad guy* (or many) in a fight and you must understand him. If he is a predator, he is there neither to test you nor to help you develop skills. He is there to take something from you and do it as safely and efficiently as possible. To let you know anything in advance or to feed you the type of attacks you have trained against would be stupid. Do not count on the threat being stupid. You should know, as much as possible, how threats think and feel and plan as well as how all humans move and how they break.

Fights happen in *places*. Often, training is set up to minimize the variables of environment so specific skills can be trained and tested. It is fine as long as you understand the depth of the limitation. You will fight in a world of infinite hazards and opportunities. The one who is better at seeing and exploiting these has a huge edge in the real world.

Last is *luck*. Professionals work to take luck out of any planned operations and dojo are kept clean and uncluttered to try to minimize chaos. Chaos is the natural environment of a fight. Stuff happens. What you don't see, like slippery surfaces or a table behind you, can have a profound effect on the outcome. Managing chaos, the use and mitigation of luck, is a skill as well—a skill centered on awareness of possibility or hazard and ruthless exploitation (e.g., initiative) of those elements.

Fighting is inherently conservative and this shows in martial arts. Fighting is dangerous. People get hurt and killed. For everything that might work, there are a hundred things that seem like a good idea that can lead to a messy death. We have kata and tradition *not* because people are stuck in tradition, but because when people consistently survived, it was considered imperative to remember how and model it.

A lot has been lost in translation and by transmission over time, but most of the systems that survived have the bones. But that may not

Introduction

be enough. They also were built around specific individuals in specific times and places.

There isn't a section on training kata in this book, largely because I am not convinced kata is good training for assault survival. I think kata was the premier way to preserve and transmit physical information in a society where literacy was rare and video unheard of.

How you will fight must be built around *you*. Your physicality (both in build and in how you naturally move) as well as your temperament. A certain amount of aggression is required, but if you really cannot injure another person, training to injure is wasted time. If you can't handle messy liquid spills, knife training probably isn't for you.

I don't like the term "fighting" but I wind up using it a lot. Our obsession with social conflict and the fact that most of our experience centers in social conflict have stunted our language. So I use "fight" as a generic term, and that is very, very wrong. It puts images in your head that do not belong there.

Most conflict is social and establishes membership, establishes dominance, or enforces rules. There is no difference between a fraternity hazing and a gang "jumping in." All over the world, young men follow the same steps leading up to a fistfight. The dynamics behind a spanking and an execution are the same.

It all has rules; it all has rituals. There is a lead-up. One or both of the people usually must be angry or make themselves angry—very few people can fight "cold."

This is what we are used to. This is the default belief about violence. This is the place where "fighting" with its implications of a contest with a winner and a loser, is valid.

These assumptions drive most of our training. From the lethal duels of bygone eras to sparring today, this is what we expect and this is what we train for.

And almost every last incident of this kind of physical fight is 100 percent preventable. You can walk away from it all. All of your training works here and none of it is necessary.

Assaults are rare, but they are the most serious person-to-person attacks. A human predator wants something from you: your money and jewelry or just a few minutes of pleasure hurting you. He will get it with minimal risk to himself. Minimum effort expended.

We do not work ourselves up or get angry to slaughter a steer. An experienced criminal will not do so with you. We do not take risks or even consider somehow “making it fair” when we butcher a chicken. A predator will not play fair with you.

To make it safe and efficient for himself, the predator will make the attack close range, hard, fast, and a surprise for you.

It will be nothing like sparring. Nothing like even the most extreme no-holds-barred match.

This will be an assault, and the things you need to train for, the things I teach, are those little skills that buy you some precious warning or a microsecond. The things that might give you a few percentage points of an edge.

If you already train martial arts, nothing here (nothing in anything I teach) is intended to replace your training. Hopefully, you will find drills in here that put your training into real-world context. Exercises that will bring your mind to the pitch that hard training has brought your body. Things that will make skills a little easier to access under stress and ways to practice making the motions you have trained natural for you.

This is a book of drills and exercises. As such, it depends on certain shared concepts. You won’t get the underlying concepts here. If you don’t understand self-defense law or you have no idea of how bad guys attack, or the psychological and legal implications that follow a violent event are mysteries . . . well, you and I probably aren’t talking about the same thing when we say “self-defense.”

I also think it’s kind of rude to spend a bunch of pages in a book just recapping a previous book. So here’s the deal. Most of the stuff in here will be useful no matter how you study (and believe me, *how* you train is far more relevant than *what* you train). If you don’t understand the relevance of something, you might want to take a look at a previous book. If the thing you don’t get appears to be emotional or internal,

Introduction

probably *Meditations on Violence*. If the glitch is more concrete (self-defense law or different classifications of bad guys, for instance), there is probably more material in *Facing Violence*.

I suppose, for most people, martial arts and self-defense, training for violence, is something of a hobby. They do it for fun, a couple of times a week and, to my eyes, with no sense of urgency. For the last couple of years, I've been teaching mostly civilians, for the decade before that, I was teaching corrections and enforcement officers

Every class I taught I would look at the officers and know, without a doubt, at least a third of that class would need what I taught before the year was out, and at least one would bet his or her life on it. If I bullshitted them, if I lied to them, if I made them comfortable instead of effective, the price would be paid in blood and I would be one of the ones going to do the hospital visits or, gods forfend, the funerals.

It's a huge responsibility. I had these men and women for as little as eight hours a year. Not all were in great shape: some old, some small, many had old injuries. They had to be able to prevail against younger, stronger people, people who sometimes got the first move at close range and had no compunction about spilling blood.

That responsibility forces you to rethink everything you do. You don't have time for egos. The drills aren't about identity. You know what I mean: the constant internet bickering about which style is right or whether boxing punches or karate punches are "proper."

Going home to your family is your identity. There is no time to waste. And you can't hand wave past the bad stuff. With only those eight hours we had people handle situations that experienced martial artists put in a "That's a no-win situation. We don't train for that" category.

We didn't have that option. If we took that attitude . . . hospital visits. Funerals. I hate funerals.

The pressure to make something effective, the responsibility for other people's lives, the limited time, the high stakes forced us to apply the same idea of ruthless efficiency to teaching that your martial arts should apply to combat. And it worked.

So here's my philosophy for teaching self-defense:

1. I have no interest in teaching you to do what I do. You aren't me. We have different bodies and different minds. Imitate an instructor and the best you can ever hope for is to become a flawed clone of someone else.

But work on *you*, and you can become better than your teacher. Not the same, better. The key is to become the most efficient “you” that you can be. If you ever need these skills, I won't be there. Neither will your sensei or your mommy. Whatever saves your life must come from inside . . . so start working on your insides.

2. The physical skills of self-defense are easy. It is not that hard to kill or cripple a human being. Knowing when such force is appropriate and necessary, recognizing danger, and summoning the will to cross that line—those are rarely taught and absolutely critical.
3. The baseline of self-defense has almost no relationship to the baseline for martial arts, however. Two examples:

Let's start with one very simple thing—power generation.

A traditional martial artist is taught how to hit hard. Different systems have different methods of power generation, but two of the most common involve a solid connection with the ground and good structure.

The solid connection with the ground allows you to put the power of your legs into a punch. Good structure keeps that power from being lost or bled off into space by excessive motion. You can add more to it, whipping action with the hips and rotational power transmitted through the spine . . . doesn't matter. If you've been training for any length of time, you should have been taught how to hit hard.

Here's where it gets ugly. You get surprised.

“Not me! I have good situational awareness!” Get over that. Assuming (1) there is an experienced bad guy in the picture, and (2) you aren't creating a situation yourself—you will be surprised. If the bad guy can't get surprised, he'll go hit someone else.

Got that? If you aren't surprised, you don't get to use your skills.

You are surprised. It's not like the timing in sparring, with the closing distance and maintaining defense and some feints for you to read and interpret. Nope. The bad guy got close, got you distracted for a second, and hit

Introduction



Power generation. How do you hit hard bent over, pushed into a wall, on a threat who is too close? When your connection with the ground is iffy, your structure is completely destroyed, and the blows coming at your head are making you flinch

you. Not the one-half-power-hit-and-judge-for-effect that most inexperienced people do. Nope, it's a flurry attack, so many things coming at your face and body so fast that your mind freezes. Crunching noises and pain coming from your face, your belly collapses with a blow, and you can't breathe and you're shoved, bent over into a wall with more hits coming in.

This is the natural environment of a sudden assault, and if you don't have an answer for this situation, you don't have an answer at all.

That's just one example, but everything else in self-defense—the timing, distance, speed, strategy, targeting—is vastly different from the assumptions of sparring.

In case you don't get it yet, one more example:

At the 2011 Montreal seminar I asked, "Who is your nightmare opponent?" Take a few minutes and think about that.

Introduction

One of the answers: “He’d be about 50 percent more than I weigh, much stronger, with more skill and experience.”

Yeah, that would suck, huh? Then add that he gets the first move at the time and place of his choosing. And he may be counting on a previous relationship with you to keep you from acting.

Guys, our worst nightmare is where the average woman starts her day. As guys, we’ve been roughhousing, pushing, and hitting one another since childhood and, largely, we’ve been encouraged. Sometimes overtly, but often subtly, girls have been punished when they wanted to play like that. So the average man reaches adulthood (even with no formal training) better trained and far more conditioned and experienced with violence than almost any woman.

And men are stronger. We rarely get into contests of direct strength with women without holding back a lot, but when we do, the difference is stark. On top of it all, most women have only learned social strategies to deal with conflict . . . and social strategies not only fail but backfire when attempted on a predator.

Women are an easy example, but this is the baseline of self-defense. If the predator can’t stack advantages to this level, he just picks someone else.

What you can do within your own weight class is irrelevant to self-defense skills. This is the baseline. This is what I train for.

Global Awareness

WW8

Kasey Keckeisen is a good friend, a superior martial artist, and a SWAT operative, leader, and trainer. Several of us have done experiments and exercises like his Kato-Cato, but few have written about it so well. And so with his permission:

I did an experiment thirteen years ago that helped me start to understand some concepts about how violence happens in the world and how to adjust training methods to compensate for the differences.

I called it the Kato-Cato experiment because it happened in Mankato University and it reminded me of Cato from the *Pink Panther* movies.

Around 1997 or 1998 I was going to Mankato State University. I was a black belt in aikido, cross training in goju ryu karate and judo. I had just read *Autumn Lightning: The Education of an American Samurai*, by Dave Lowry.

In the book there is a story of a young samurai who seeks out training from a sword master. After the master finally accepts him as a student, he begins a series of grueling and unusual training methods. One of these methods is that the master would wait until the samurai was engrossed in one of the many menial, tedious tasks (cooking, cleaning, gathering firewood, daily life . . .) required of an apprentice, and then jump out and whack him with a bokken.

At first the samurai would get knocked out. Then he would barely get out of the way but spill all the food or firewood. Eventually the samurai would evade or block the bokken with the lid from the teapot or the kindling he was carrying, continuing on about his business. Only then would the master allow him to pick up a sword.

I decided that I needed to re-create that training experience for myself. At that time I was living at the fraternity house with twenty- to thirty-some odd guys.

I chose five guys that lived at the house, had classes with me, and knew my schedule. Basically they had access to me twenty-four hours a day. I gave these guys a big piece of neon-colored chalk (the kind kids use to write on driveways), roughly the size of a tanto.

I made a bet with them that if they could leave a chalk mark on me in a vital area (not just counting coup or point sparring), I would buy them dinner,

Training for sudden violence

and they could sign the clothing they marked and I would have to wear it for twenty-four hours, letting everyone know who “killed” the great and powerful Kasey. They got one chance for a lethal attack. I had one chance to block/evade. I promised I wouldn’t lock, throw, or strike them—just block/evade.

Some lessons that stuck with me:

- Awareness
- Reading terrain
- Improvised weapons
- Threat assessment
- Counter-ambush
- Midbrain or monkey brain—my kryptonite
- Violence dynamics

I didn’t have terms to express the lessons I learned until I started reading and training with Marc [*MacYoung*] and Rory. Many professionals have experienced these concepts and realities for themselves. However, it is difficult to express in words and even more difficult to convey to others. Luckily Marc and Rory have been developing a common lexicon of terms to express the realities of violence. Like Syd Hoar’s book *The A–Z of Judo*, where he lists all the different names the same technique goes by. When I read that book I was like, “I know that technique, only I call it X.” With the realities of violence it’s like, “I’ve experienced X, only I call it Y.” I played this game in ’97, but I will use terms I’ve recently adopted into my teaching method to convey the lessons I learned.

As Paul Harvey used to say, here is the rest of the story.

Just playing the game improved my awareness. Again, becoming actively aware that you are looking for anomalies in pattern makes a tremendous difference in the identification and assessment

First I was looking for those five guys, which was fairly easy. Then those guys would give the chalk to other guys I didn’t know were playing the game. However, unless you’re a sociopath hunting and killing people, even just playing at hunting and killing people is hard. There are telltale signs. Subconscious weapons checks, hiding hands, target glances.

They came at me when I was sleeping, they came at me when I was eating, they came at me at school, and I was very successful at detecting and

deflecting their attacks. How was I killed, you ask? A lot of these attack-prevention skills are used by your forebrain. I was killed when I was forced into my midbrain or “monkey brain.”

Monkey brain is where the term “monkey dance” comes from. Basically your monkey brain is concerned with the Fs: fight, flight, freeze, feed, and fornicate. I used “fornicate” because my dad says I use *fuck* too much in my writing. I hear you thinking, “Kasey, you didn’t answer the question. How did you get killed?”

OK, so my buddy who is beautifully devious was dating a very attractive girl. She reminded me of Neve Campbell, and she had a belly ring (this is back when belly rings were new and exotic and only for women who had nice tummies). So he gives her the chalk. She blatantly flirts and uses her feminine wiles. All my samurai skills of awareness and threat assessment (forebrain) turn off. Monkey brain takes over. All the monkey can handle is fight, flight, freeze, feed, and fornicate. So where my forebrain should have thought:

- I have a girlfriend.
- She has a boyfriend (my good buddy).
- Why is she acting like this?
- Basically looking for anomalies in pattern.

My monkey brain thought:

- Boobies.
- Tummy.
- She totally digs me.
- Ouch. How did I get stabbed with chalk?

Good thing I had an understanding girlfriend (she eventually married me).

The “temptress” used social skills to commit asocial violence. That’s how I got killed.

And now you know the rest of the story.

So how can I prevent getting killed in this manner? Learn how to prevent or delay the monkey brain from taking over.

Kasey described not only how a global awareness drill is set up, but was able to analyze his vulnerabilities after the fact. “Stupid things

Training for sudden violence

I do that can get me killed” are things you want to find out in training, not in real life.

Do this: design a global awareness exercise incorporating these considerations:

- Real risk. The cost of losing could be pain, embarrassment of singing in public, wearing a shirt with the winner’s name, or buying a dinner on a student’s budget, but it has to hurt to lose.
- Incomplete control. You don’t get to know all the rules. Kasey’s friends recruited others. He didn’t see that coming the first time
- Train for what you are training for. The purpose of a global awareness drill is to detect danger, not to practice impromptu knife fighting
- As important as real danger might be, you have to make it safe on a number of levels:
 - You don’t want people to get injured, so safe training weapons are actually better than unarmed attack. Part of what you need to sense is commitment.
 - You don’t want anybody going to jail. This is simply covered by recruiting smart friends. Smart friends will recognize that they don’t want to draw a scene or attract attention at something that, at a distance, might look like an attack or a fight. Excellent, because real criminals don’t want witnesses either. This safety factor makes it more realistic, not less so.
- No safe times or safe places. You might want them or think you need them. You don’t. If a place is safe, it should be because you made it safe, not because of an artificial rule that can become a habit of thought.
- Throughout the exercise and again afterward, you should have personal “debriefings” where you go over the lessons that you have learned in each encounter and each encounter avoided.

A lot of people have talked and written about the Cooper color codes. White for oblivious in a safe place, yellow for on alert, orange for imminent danger, red for under attack.

I have heard at least one instructor say you can't live in condition yellow. That's not true. Not only is condition yellow perfectly natural, it is not stressful or paranoid. It is *energizing*. It is simply paying attention. The same skill that will let you know when a human predator is disturbing the flow around you will let you know that the gulls are swarming a school of fish you can't see, or read tracks in the frost or smell a change in the weather. There is nothing special about condition yellow. It is just living, aware, in the moment. It is natural for all animals.

Any time you spend in condition white, you aren't living anyway.

Legal Articulation

WW9

Most of the readers will not have a grounding in force law. If you do, this exercise is simple.

Do this: choose a news article about self-defense or an officer using force. From that article, derive the elements of a self-defense claim and articulate why or why not the force used was legal. Do this every time you read such an article, especially if the article is trying to be sensationalistic.

The elements justifying force can be divided into three “threat factors”:

Did the threat have the intent to harm? Intent is not always conscious. Someone running over you because of texting while driving is just as much of a threat as someone who deliberately set out to kill you by automobile. Lenny in *Of Mice and Men* killed things he thought he was only petting. Don’t confuse this with legal culpability of the threat. You are justifying the necessity of your defense, not what the attacker could be charged with.

Did the threat have the means to cause harm? “Means” is simply ability. A knife or gun is obvious means for a lethal threat. But so are size and fists or boots. Was the threat capable of harm and, if so, of how much harm?

Did the threat have the opportunity to cause harm? In other words, could the threat reach the intended victim with the means?

Examples may make things a little clearer. If you have ever seen a two-year-old in a tantrum, you have seen pure, murderous intent. Completely without conscience, the child would kill or destroy anything he could. Godzilla destroying Tokyo could not match a two-year-old for vicious *intent*.

However, a two-year-old lacks the means to be a credible threat. He simply isn’t big or strong enough to carry out his intentions.

A man with a knife is a lethal threat. He has the means. However, if he can’t reach you (you are locked in your house or car, or he is far away), he lacks opportunity.

All three must be present: intent, means, and opportunity, *or* the threat must be intent on developing a lacking element. Jack Nicholson’s

character in *The Shining* had murderous *intent* and a fire ax for *means*. If he were breaking down your door to create *opportunity*, you would not need to wait for him to get all the way in before you cap his ass.

For civilian self-defense, there is often a fourth element: preclusion (in most states. Always check your local laws). In order for it to be self-defense, you must show that there was no other option. There was no opportunity to run or talk, or those options would not have worked.

Preclusion does not apply to peace officers. Cops have a duty to act. They are usually forbidden, by policy or statute, from running away from dangerous situations.

The intent, means, and opportunity make for a threat of a specific level . . . and the level of the threat authorizes a certain amount of force.

The bottom line is this: *for a claim of self-defense, one must use the minimum level of force that one reasonably believes is necessary to safely resolve the situation.*

Officers are held to a similar standard

Minimum level of force means the following:

- If presence is enough (witnesses tend to make bad guys quit being bad), you don't use more.
- If verbal force is enough (ranging from reasoning to screaming to getting help), you don't use more.
- If touch is enough (push, pull, hold, takedown), you don't use more.
- If pain is enough, you don't use more.
- If damage is enough, you don't use more.
- Only if nothing else is enough do you use lethal force.

There is also the doctrine of competing harms. Lethal force is only authorized if imminent death or serious injury is threatened. In most jurisdictions, lasting harm (damage) is inappropriate in defending property.

Reasonably believe means that you cannot be held responsible for things that you could not have known. If you saw a 280-pound man swinging a club at you, that is what you knew. When it comes out that

the threat was a child of fifteen that cannot be used against you. It also means you will not be expected to make a decision in a half-second that some self-proclaimed expert came to after days of deliberation. Further, there is a lot of case law trying to define “reasonable.” In real life, it means when the jury hears your story, they would have done about what you did.

It also means that fear alone does not justify force. It must be a reasonable fear. If you have been terrified of clowns since you were a child, that fear does not magically turn your clown-murdering spree into self-defense.

Necessary is the word that necessitates preclusion.

Safely is a reminder that self-defense is not a contest or a game. You are not required to give the bad guy a fair chance. You use enough force to get out in one piece. If a citizen or an officer is trying to save another person and takes extra risk to do it, not only does he fail to save the victim, but he also becomes a part of the problem. Resources (other officers or paramedics or involved bystanders) who might have been available to save the victims are wasted trying to save the “hero.” If you want to help others, you have a responsibility to stay in one piece.

Resolve means simply to end it. If you lock onto one solution and miss an easier, more obvious way, you have failed at preclusion. Running away resolves most self-defense situations as effectively as fighting and without force. More effectively, in most instances.

The situation must be *yours*. If you create the situation or decide something is your job that is not (like making the guys in the back of the theater be quiet), you might use force, but it is unlikely you’ll be able to claim self-defense. The patrons of a club cannot throw out obnoxious people. The owner, manager, or the owner’s designee (the bouncers) may. Officers if they are called, may or must.

Remember that in any use of force, it is not an “average” situation. The force used to stop one threat will be insufficient to stop several. Weapons, even weapons not in hand (e.g., standing next to a rack of kitchen knives), may require more, faster force than an unarmed threat. If there is no opportunity to escape and no guarantee of how

much force the threat will use if he renders the victim helpless, the victim must use any force available to prevent becoming helpless.

When the victim is surprised, there is no time or information to fine-tune an appropriate amount of force. The victim must use as much force as is available to get safe enough to make those distinctions.

A younger, stronger, bigger threat will require more force than an elderly, unhealthy, smaller threat.

A threat in an altered state of consciousness may not only be incapable of understanding speech, but may not respond to pain or any lower level of force, and may even ignore damage.

Look at the circumstances and the different comparative factors between the people involved.

And so, the exercise is simple.

Do this: when you read a news story about a force situation, articulate your reasoning. Was the force necessary? Was there a threat with intent, means, and opportunity? Were there other options (preclusion)? Identify the specific force used as a level. Was there a lower level that would have worked safely and reliably? Why or why not?

Then, most important of all, explain as you would to a jury why this level of force was appropriate. Do not try to explain why it wasn't appropriate. If you ever use force, you will likely make a life-altering decision in a fraction of a second. It will not be cognitive or planned or reasoned. It will be based on good, if subconscious, decisions. Assume, for the purpose of this exercise, that you made the exact decision the person in the article made and explain it.

World Building

WW10

This is a thought experiment for a group. I'm occasionally asked to give classes on realistic violence for writers. Sometimes the disconnects are pretty deep. People have been very conditioned by the films they have watched and the stories they have read to expect violence to happen in a certain way. Often the physicality of it is wrong: short people don't and can't fight like tall people, arms only reach so far, a sword has so much momentum, and you can't just reverse the stroke with a flick of your wrist . . .

But often, everything is wrong. The fights happen for reasons that wouldn't be reasons to any real professionals. And the villains act like people with ego issues, not hunger or vengeance issues. And both act like they live in a world where loss has no more impact than watching your football team lose on television.

Do this: the world building exercise starts with choosing one of the basic survival modes of early humanity, whether the participants want to work from the viewpoint of a hunter-gatherer society or an early farming society. The people can discuss what those choices mean about the skills to get food and how children are raised and what are considered virtues and how deviance is handled . . . all from the baseline reminder that this is a world where people starve.

Then you introduce the "to save my children" (TSMC) exercise (IW7):

If no one were going to help you and there were a very real possibility your children would starve tomorrow, what would you be willing to do? Steal, rob, murder, prostitute yourself, prostitute your children . . . ?

The TSMC exercise uses the paradigm to understand a certain type of modern criminal. In world building, it is followed up differently:

This has been the baseline for most people for most of human history.

The exercise works as a group discussion at first. What strategies would work to safely kill strangers for food or money? Who would

you target? Would you prey on people in your own community? Or would that weaken the tribe too much?

And how would you make the kill?

As much as possible, the students work through this. They will benefit from some guidance from someone who has thought about it deeply. For instance, consider that preying on insiders would decrease resources. That equates very well with the fact that betrayal triggers the most extreme levels of violence in the real world.

For writers, I then ask if their antagonists are attacking in ways that are congruent with their motivations. In self-defense circles I have them compare the attacks they designed with the defenses they train.

We then discuss basic strategy, and I suggest two: raiders and lurers. Raiders will go out and take things from other tribes. The lurers will entice people to come to them. One example of luring that everyone recognizes after a few seconds of thought is the story of Hansel and Gretel. In a world where children are abandoned to starve so there will be enough food for the parents, what better lure for a cannibal than a house seemingly made of gingerbread?

The group then divides, one to create a raider society, the other to create a lurer society.

Then the questions:

1. If you are willing to murder for food or money, what story do you tell yourself? We are humans, and no matter what we do, we will convince ourselves that we are the good guys. What mechanism do you use to justify premeditated and socially sanctioned murder?

Note well: I'm fairly cool with "Because I don't want my children to die." But very few people are cool with simple justifications on big issues. They want something greater.

2. What story do you tell your children?
3. How do you teach them to kill, both the mechanics of it and the justifications? Seriously, how do you explain to a six-year-old why it is OK to kill a Taboolian but not OK to hit his sister?
4. Would the societies exploit without killing? Can the raiders demand tribute instead of killing and taking? Would they take slaves or would slaves slow them down? The lurers killing people for food

or money—would they ever consider taking one with special skills alive? Would that be too great a security risk? How much would it change society?

5. Social controls. Raiders require teamwork, discipline, and clear lines of authority to survive. Lurers will either starve or be massacred if word gets out about what they do. What do you do with tribesmen who aren't trustworthy?
6. Lesser levels of social control: How are disputes handled within a tribe that is very good at killing? Remember that killing tribe members weakens you in battle with others. In class after class, this question is the one that gets the students thinking about ritualized fighting—duels to first blood, nonlethal unarmed combat, stylized sport fighting—Martial arts, in other words.
7. What happens when the tribe is no longer hungry? It will be generations after the original stories were invented. If the tribal gods demanded sacrifice (really to justify gathering food or wealth), will they continue to demand the same? Even when food and wealth are plentiful? What will the people in charge of the stories do to remain in power? How long will it take and what influences for a cultural identity story to change?
8. If the group is threatened by another group of outsiders, how does the group imagine, plan, and thus conduct war? It will be less a problem for a raider society, where sacking and pillaging are just part of being a man, but for an overtly peaceful society like many lurers . . . how do you get people to fight—teach them to fight? Do you create a new myth or get a new prophecy? Hire mercenaries? Try to adapt the luring tactics to war and poison a peace delegation?
9. If you do go to war and one member of the tribe is very, very good at killing people and seems to enjoy it, what do you do with him during peacetime? He is a hero in wartime, someone people fear at least a bit in peacetime. Do you need extra controls on the proven warriors? If so, what? And who enforces that level of control?

On one level or another, all of these problems still exist.

World building is a thought and discussion experiment, but people have unwittingly re-created historical societies from the Thuggee to the Mongols playing it, sometimes in eerie detail.

For analysis:

Do you see parallels between the types and strategies of modern criminals? Do many violent criminals have a personal mythology?

Do we as humans assume that the mythology came first and the behavior followed? When we do make that assumption, we kind of forget there was a need underlying it all.

This will likely offend some people, but try to give it some honest thought: how many religions suddenly make more sense when you start looking at them as justifying lies for children? How many of the purposes behind the myths simply no longer apply? Right and wrong may or may not change over time, but resources to fulfill needs do, and that drives a lot of the rules.

Personal Threat Assessment

WW11

There are a very limited number of types of interpersonal violence, and each of those follows a specific logic. Each has predictable goals and parameters. The implication, of course, is that each person is more vulnerable to certain types of bad stuff than other types of bad stuff.

To go into this exercise in depth requires some background. For more information, read the section on violence dynamics in *Facing Violence*.

Very quickly: Social violence, and the more common social conflict center on aspects of group identity and tend to be less dangerous. The specific triggers are usually as follows

- Group membership. Some groups have initiation rights with violence. Some groups draw lines with some level of what might be called violence. Gang colors are protected, possibly with more force, but with the same dynamic as fans feel about their sports teams.
- Territory protection. Many groups, if not most, will discourage outsiders. How violent that will be is cultural. A stranger walking into a redneck watering hole will be treated differently than the same stranger walking into a private yacht club or the grounds of a Colombian drug lord.
- Territory access. There are places generally considered open to the public, like certain bars, where newcomers will be given a challenge.
- Determining the hierarchy. Probably the most common—straight-up dominance fistfight
- Enforcing the rules. All groups have rules. In functional groups that disapprove of violence, a glance or a quick word is all the enforcement necessary. In different groups, rules may be enforced with anything from a letter of reprimand to a beating or an execution. The most extreme levels of violence are reserved for people who have betrayed their own group.

Asocial violence is directed outside the tribe. It is more similar to hunting or slaughtering than fighting. These are the basic types:

- Resource predation—crime, violent or not, committed for money. Drug addiction requires a lot of cash and drives a lot of crime, both violent and nonviolent.
- Process predation—the rarest type. There are certain people who enjoy hurting other people, including rape and murder. Some will say that committing their crime of choice is the only time they feel alive.

There are a handful of places where violence is likely to happen:

- Where young men gather in groups.
- Where people get their minds altered. (Combine those two and you have bars.)
- Where territories, real or imagined, are in dispute. (Combine all three and you have the potential for soccer riots.)
- Where you don't know the rules.
- And, last, predatory violence tends to happen in lonely places.

A personal threat profile is taking this information, as well as anything you know from other sources or learned from exercises IW8 or WW4 and WW5, and applying that information to you.

If you are a young, strong, fit martial athlete, are you a likely target for a mugging (resource predator)? Would you be on the list of preferred victims? Probably not . . . unless you already have some bad habits, such as flashing rolls of cash in strip clubs to try to impress people.

On the other hand, big healthy guys get monkey-dance challenges more. The math is better. If the person wins or you back down, that's a lot of status. Even if the person loses, they get points for "heart," trying someone bigger.

Do this: complete your personal threat profile. Then do some profiles for other people. You'll find some disturbing truths about the way the world works. The strong young men who train for violence are only targets for the safest and most predictable types—the social violence.

Training for sudden violence

The untrained, the small, and the weak are the targets for predation. Those least likely to develop the skills are the ones most likely to need them, and the guy who looks the toughest will consistently be the least tested . . . except for situations he contributes to.

Index

- action/reaction, 205–206
aikido, 189
airway crushing, 16
alignment, 2, 10
animal styles, 97
antisocial personality disorders, 203, 204
armor, 127, 133, 205; in scenario training, 139, 140
articulation, 121–123, 137, 174–177
asocial violence, 93–94, 171, 183
assassination, in clothespin game, 154–155
assault, xviii, xix, 11, 33–34, 104, 192, 193; rhythm training for, 6; touchstone and, 202
assumptions, in training, 27–29, 197
autism spectrum, 203, 204
Autumn Lightning: The Education of an American Samurai (Lowry), 169
avoidance, 137
awareness, xvi, xxi–xxii, 74, 142, 156; in clothespin game, 154–155; global, 169–173
A–Z of Judo, The (Hoar), 170
baby drill, 18
balance, 44, 62, 77, 81, 83; hole against the wall and, 48; judo randori and, 190
base, 79, 83, 89
bear hug, 41
behavioral psychology, 6
betrayal group, 54, 182
biases, 27–29, 197
Blauer, Tony, 128
blending, 157–158
blindfold drills, 31–39; core fighting 37; defense, 32–34; grappling, 91; for infighting 38–39; targeting in, 35–36
block-and-strike, 11
bone breaking, 1, 16
boundary setting, 163–165
Bown, Tim, 141
boxing, 194, 195
Boyd, John, 128
brain concussions, 16, 194
brainwashing, 4
brawl, 24–25
breakthrough, 132
Breton, Peter, 134–135
bucket list, 108
bulletman, 127, 141
bull in the ring, 133
butchering, 113–115
camouflage 157
carjacking, 144
centering, 102–103
center of gravity (CoG): balance and, 83; in blindfold defense, 34; in clinch, 49; ground movement drills and, 78, 79; *kumite* and, 188; in one up, one down, 89; rollover and, 80; of threat, 79
cervical spine, 16
Championship Fighting: Explosive Punching and Aggressive Defense (Dempsey), 62
chaos, xvii, 42
Christensen, Loren, 128
clinch, 49
close-range combat. *See* infightin
clothespin game, 154–155
coaching: for animal styles, 97; for blindfold defense, 33; for dynamic fighting 43; for hole against the wall and, 48; for off-lining, 64; for one-step, 12–14; for rollover, 80, 84; three-way, 20
combat drills, 127–152; breakthrough, 132; bull in the ring, 133; multiman, 130–131; reception line, 134–135; scenario training, 136–152; takeouts, 128–129
competition, 10, 50. *See also* sparring and competition
concealment, 157
conditioned reflexes 1
conditioning, 6–7, 192, 203; social, xvi, 61, 110, 163–165
confidence 136
constricted falls, 70
Cooper color codes, 172–173
core defense, 74–75
core fighting 37
counterattacks, 71
counting coup, 161–162
covering, 11–12
crawling, 157
criminal, xvi, 4, 162
critique, 13, 20
dance floor melee 21
deadly force, 16, 136
debriefing 146–147, 172, 203
decisiveness, xvi
de-escalation, 109–110, 137
defense, 104. *See also* self-defense; for bear hug, 41; blindfold, 32–34; core, 74–75; shrimp for, 88
defensive tactics (DTs), 77
demonstration dummy. *See* uke
Dempsey, Jack, 62
distracting strikes, 16
dog handling, 166–168
dojo, chaos and, xvii

Index

- dominance, xv, xviii, 94; dog handling for, 166–169; for dynamic fighting 43; grappling and, 191–192; hierarchy and, 182; off-lining and, 61
drawing weapons, 70
drop step, 62–64
dynamic fighting 41–50, 44, 130
- eating frogs, 104–105
ebi (shrimp), 88
ego, 3, 95, 178, 211
emotions, 28–29, 131
emptiness, 45, 81
environment, xvii, 23–24, 27, 42
escape and evasion, 159–160
ethics, 113, 116–117
evaluation, 1–7, 51, 54
- Facing Violence* (Miller), xv, xx, 93, 128, 182
falling, 62–63, 70–71, 89
fears, 108–110, 136, 158, 176
feeds, 3, 4, 32
feet, power generation from, 2
fencing, 5, 6
ferocity, 27
fighting xvii, xviii, 10, 16, 23–24, 37, 98, 191, 194, 204; combat drills for, 127–152; in dance floor melee 21; dynamic, 41–50, 44, 130; four-option one-step and, 16; frisk, 22; ground movement drills for, 77–91; improvisation and, 125–126; infighting 28, 34, 38–39, 74; internal work for, 101–123; mixed martial arts and, 195; one-step and, 15
fire 98
flaws 1, 3, 4, 6, 10
foam bricks, 13
focus mitt drill, 7
force-on-force drills, 1, 2
forcing, 162
four-option one-step, 16–17
free randori, in jujutsu, 7
French randori, 50
frisk fighting 22
frogs, 104–105
full contact, 186, 194
- game of the stones, 106–107
ghosting, 58
glitch hunting, 203
global awareness, 169–173
golden move, 13
good structure, power generation from, xxi
gouging, 189
grappling, 38, 185; ground movement drills for, 77–91; in jujutsu, 189; mixed martial arts and, 195; momentum of attacker in, 81; one-step and, 12
ground, xxi, 79
ground movement drills, 77–91; one up, one down, 89–90; rollover, 79–87; wax on, wax off of, 88
gush, 207–209
- habits, 1, 2, 6, 7, 105, 111–112; of articulation, 123; for escape and evasion, 159; game of the stones and, 106; grappling and, 191, 192; in one-step, 10; scenario training for, 137; with slow-motion attacks, 12
heart, 133, 152, 183
hide 'n' seek, 160
hierarchy, xv, 182, 197
HighGear, 127
high-speed multiple-opponent scenarios, 7
hip throws, 190
“hit me as hard as you can,” 203
Hoar, Syd, 170
hole against the wall, 45–48, 83
hubud, 5
- Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* (Johnstone), 125
improvisation, 125–126
infighting 28, 34, 38–39, 74
information sources, 51–55
initiative, xvi, 68–69
intent, of threat, 174–175
internal bleeding, 16
internal work: articulation, 121–123; centering, 102–103; eating frogs, 104–105; ethics and glitches, 116–117; for fighting 101–123; game of the stones, 106–107; lists, 108–112; saving my children, 118–119; slaughtering and butchering, 113–115
ippon kumite, 9
- Johnstone, Keith, 125
judging distance (*maai*), 60, 187
judo, 50, 185, 189–190, 195
jujutsu, 7, 189–190, 193, 203
- karate kata, xvii, xviii, 61
Keckeisen, Kasey, 169
kenpo, 189
kicks, 185, 187–188
Kim (Kipling), 106
Kipling, Rudyard, 106
knives, xviii, 5, 10–11, 21, 68, 172, 174
kumite (punches and kicks), 185, 187–188
- LARP (live action role-playing game), 140
law, 121–123, 137
legal articulation, 174–177
lethal force, 175, 208
leverage, in rollover, 80
Liar, the Cheat, and the Thief, The (Soderholm), xv
listening, 211
lists, 108–112
live action role-playing game (LARP), 140
lock flow drill 66–67
locks, 66–67; in blindfold grappling, 91; four-option one-step and, 16; grappling and, 191; hole against the wall and, 45; in jujutsu, 189; in one-step, 12
love, 110–111