

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF

SELF-DEFENSE

A Comprehensive Instructional Guide

JOE VARADY

FOREWORD BY GARY QUESENBERRY, FEDERAL AIR MARSHAL (RET.)

9 LEVELS

***Basic to
Advanced***

“Well-organized and provides a systematic instructional guide to self-defense. Highly recommended!”

—Alain Burrese, 5th dan hapkido; former Army sniper; author

“This book does not disappoint; everyone will greatly benefit.”

—Michael Gallagher, Generations Taekwondo; executive board member for Universal Systems of Martial Arts

“Perfect for beginners, martial artists, and instructors. Should be part of every dojo library.”

—Allyson Appen, *shichidan* 7th dan, Cuong Nhu martial arts

“Distills a myriad of concepts into an easy-to-follow set of instructions. Recommend!”

—Michael A. Ponzio, *shichidan* 7th dan, Cuong Nhu martial arts; author

The most reliable self-defense techniques from both East and West

The Art and Science of Self-Defense provides you with a condensed system of distilled self-defense skills and techniques, each carefully selected for its reliability in a high-stress environment.

“Martial arts, combat sports, and self-defense are different realms; although interconnected, they are not entirely the same.”—Joe Varady

Streamlined and divided into nine logical stages of training, this curriculum allows both martial artists and those with no fighting experience to quickly and methodically learn and develop dependable skills for self-defense.

The book begins with the basics on which everything else relies—awareness, avoidance, and anticipation skills—before moving on to building a reliable arsenal of self-defense techniques for high-stress situations.

Topics include

- Awareness skills, including situational, spatial, and environmental
- Avoidance skills to deal with fear, escape, and de-escalation
- Anticipation skills for being approached, posturing, and reading body language
- Action arsenal, including targeting, striking, yelling, evading, and countering
- Advanced arsenals for dealing with ground fighting, weapons, and multiple attackers

Whether you are just starting out or have been practicing martial arts for years, there are important self-defense skills for everyone in this book.



Joe Varady, a seventh-degree black belt with over thirty years of experience in martial arts, is the award-winning author of *The Art and Science of Staff Fighting* and *The Art and Science of Stick Fighting*. He has trained in numerous Eastern and Western disciplines, including karate, judo, eskrima, boxing, fencing, and long sword. He has won many awards competing in full-contact weapons tournaments around the world. Holding a master's degree in elementary education, he is the head instructor at Satori Dojo and Modern Gladiatorial Arts. Joe Varady resides in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania.

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Foreword

by Gary Quesenberry

In 1995 after getting out of the Army, I decided to take a job in West Virginia working for the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). It had only been a few years after returning home from Desert Storm, and I was still in good shape, lean, mean, and looking for something to keep me “in the fight.” When I left for the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia, I had high expectations regarding the level of self-defense training I’d receive. After all, this would be a dangerous job, so I assumed we’d be learning some pretty high-speed fighting techniques. At the time, the BOP was focused on finding a self-defense system that could be learned quickly, give an advantage to smaller officers, and minimize the risk of injury to both staff and inmates. They landed on aikido joint locks and pressure point manipulation. This was all new to me at the time, so I practiced diligently and put forth maximum effort to be as proficient as possible with the techniques I was being taught. I naïvely assumed that this would be all I’d need to handle myself in a prison fight. Now imagine my surprise when I tried controlling an enraged inmate with a wristlock seven weeks later, only to find myself thrown violently against a block wall. “Oh shit! now what?” To save myself, I quickly scrapped the wrist locks and fell back on the brute-force, gross-motor-skill techniques I’d learned in the military.

Once the fight was over and the inmate was in cuffs, I came to an important realization. By focusing on one specific fighting style and trying to apply those techniques outside of a training environment, under far from controlled conditions, I had put myself in serious danger. What I learned that day was that real self-defense is an amalgamation of different fighting styles and that what works best for one person may not work as well for someone else. Maximizing your chances of success in a violent altercation requires exposure to a variety of fighting techniques as well as some real-world experience. Experience is what separates the good from the bad, the theoretical from the practical. Through experience, you learn what works best in the heat of battle and what things need to be discarded, leaving you with a system of self-defense that’s stripped of all the impractical nonsense.

The book you now hold in your hand is unlike any other I’ve read. It’s a self-defense guide that’s grounded in the realities of street-level combat, one that eliminates the fluff and self-aggrandizing chatter that permeate a lot of books in this genre. Right off the bat, author Joe Varady demonstrates his credibility by acknowledging the stark distinctions between basic forms of practice, sparring, and practical self-defense. I particularly like how the book is broken down into nine separate self-defense levels that walk you through everything from situational awareness and avoidance to taking on multiple attackers. Each level is filled with practical explanations of how the techniques are performed and under what circumstances the methods are best applied. Each level is then closed out with a series of activities that you can

complete to cement that section's learning points into your subconscious mind. This is all accompanied by "reality checks" that keep the teaching points grounded in their practical application and never let the book stray into the realm of theoretical fantasy.

Joe has done an incredible job of walking readers through the complex world of self-defense without prioritizing form over function. Everything you read in this book is practical, proven, and efficient. Throughout my career, I've read more self-defense books than I care to remember, but never have I had the privilege of reading one that's so thorough and well organized. If you care about your safety or the safety of your loved ones, you owe it to yourself to read this book. Then, when you've finished, pick up another copy for someone you care about. I can assure you they will be safer for reading it.

Gary Quesenberry

Federal Air Marshal (Ret.)

Author of:

Spotting Danger Before It Spots You: Build Situational Awareness to Stay Safe

Spotting Danger Before It Spots Your Kids: Teaching Situational Awareness to Keep Children Safe

Spotting Danger Before It Spots Your Teens: Teaching Situational Awareness to Keep Teenagers Safe

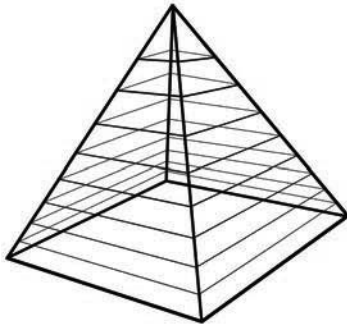
Preface

Ideally, we would all prefer to live in a safe and peaceful society. The unfortunate reality, however, is that we live in a world where violence can and does unexpectedly occur. The fear of becoming a victim of violent crime is one reason people begin training in the martial arts. As a martial arts instructor, I practice and teach a vast array of skills in my school. However, there are important differences between traditional exercises such as *kata* (solo forms), *bunkai* (partner applications to the solo forms), *kumite* (sparring), and practical, functional self-defense. It took me a long time to learn them. Self-defense needs to be proven effective in high-stress scenarios, especially against larger, stronger attackers. Failure could be life altering. Therefore, I take teaching self-defense as a very serious responsibility.

To keep up with the latest developments in my field, I am continuously reading books and watching videos on the martial arts, combat sports, and self-defense. I have distilled my decades of experience researching, teaching, and training down to the most effective essentials and present them to you in this book. It contains information not only on how to protect yourself, but perhaps more importantly, how to prevent becoming a victim of violence in the first place.

This is a workbook as much as it is a guide. Take the time to practice the activities presented in each level to train and develop your newly acquired skills. Then, continue to learn and grow by augmenting the knowledge presented here by reading books and watching videos about self-defense on your own. There is no substitute for hands-on learning, though. Enrolling in a martial art or combat sport, even for a brief period, can give you experience, help you build your physical skills, and provide you with regular opportunities to hone them.

Each journey begins with a single step. This book is a wonderful start. Enjoy the journey and make it your own.



Introduction

Part 1: Combat Sports, Martial Arts, and Self-Defense

The first step toward preparing yourself for self-defense is understanding what self-defense is and what it isn't. Passive self-defense is the act of keeping yourself safe from harm, and the best way to achieve safety is to avoid situations in which nonconsensual violence is likely to occur. When such situations cannot be avoided, active self-defense requires that you have the knowledge and skills to stun an attacker and escape to safety.

For maximum effectiveness, your self-defense training needs to be specific and aimed toward helping you achieve the immediate goals of escaping to safety. It begins by being mindful of why and how you are training. While training in the martial arts or for competition in combat sports can aid you in a self-defense situation, it does not prepare you for certain aspects unique to self-defense.



Before I go any further, I'd like to state that it is not my intention to denigrate the martial arts or combat sports. Each has its value, and I am personally heavily invested in, and have a great affinity for, both. I have literally dedicated my life to teaching and training in the martial arts, and my record shows that I obviously enjoy participating in combat sports. However, martial arts, combat sports, and self-defense are different realms, and, while interconnected, they are not entirely the same.

This book can serve to help bridge the gap. If you are already a student or instructor of the combat sports or martial arts, you will be pleased to find that you are already familiar with many, if not all, of the physical techniques presented here. The secret that you may not be as familiar with is how all these parts work together to best keep you safe in a reality-based self-defense scenario.

Combat Sports

Combat sports such as mixed martial arts (MMA), boxing, kickboxing, jujitsu, and eskrima are games of consensual violence in which participants test their abilities against comparably skilled fighters. Each sport is unique and focuses on its own specific skill set that is taught and learned systematically, practiced repeatedly over time, and then tested often by its participants in highly structured situations, contests, and mock fights. These structured tests occur within agreed-upon boundaries in both time and space and are regulated by a predetermined set of rules. Since the focus in these matches is winning by physically dominating your opponent, combat sports usually appeal most to the fittest and more athletically inclined among us. These people dedicate countless hours to developing and honing their athleticism and abilities. Learning, practicing, and using self-defense skills, on the other hand, is quite different. Self-defense skills have to be easily learned and implemented in a wide variety of circumstances by ordinary people with a minimal amount of training.

While the skills gained from training in combat sports can be used effectively in self-defense, combat sports also have the potential to ingrain mind-sets that might work against you on the street. Combat sports occur in a relatively safe, controlled environment and progress like a game of physical chess. If at any time you find yourself in a dangerous position, there are rules to ensure your safety, and you always have the option of stopping the action by tapping or bowing out. Self-defense is not a competition match. There are no referees and no rules, as well as no option to tap or bow out. Your goal is to avoid confrontation. If it is necessary to physically resist, you may have to employ methods that are unfair to your attacker, or, in other words, cheat. Combat sports, on the other hand, condition you to fight in a particular fashion and to abide by a certain set of rules. The reality is that you are going to fight the way you train. Therefore, for self-defense, you need to train the way you'll have to fight.

It is also important to note that, in any given self-defense encounter, the odds are low that you will be defending yourself against another fighter trained in your particular sport or art. Employing your arsenal of techniques in self-defense as you would in competition might be akin to using a hammer to smash a fly sitting on your television screen. Using the wrong tools at the wrong time could end up being regrettably costly. In self-defense, you need to be prepared to deal with a threat in a variety of ways, but you should also be ready and able to avoid or verbally de-escalate a bad situation.

Martial Arts

While many martial arts schools also claim to prepare their students for self-defense, this may only partially be true. The primary goal of most traditional martial arts styles has changed in the last century from self-protection to self-perfection. This shift is especially evident in those arts ending with the suffix *-do*. The suffix “-do” in words like judo, karate-do, and aikido indicate that these arts emphasize a path of personal development over *jitsu*, or raw fighting technique. This is not necessarily a bad thing. We live in an era where people train in the martial arts for a wide variety of reasons besides self-defense: to develop discipline, for calisthenic exercise, to build strength or relieve stress, and to develop coordination, among others.

Training in most martial arts will help you in self-defense because it helps you develop many attributes and abilities that can be great assets in a physical confrontation. The missing component is usually the pressure testing of techniques. The martial arts are only validated if they can produce reliable results demonstrating that the techniques can be successfully applied by a wide range of people in high-stress situations simulating, as closely as possible, the conditions under which actual self-defense would have to be used. Therefore, students need to regularly practice applying their skills against noncompliant attackers under progressively greater levels of resistance. Only then can students develop the neural pathways, or muscle memory, required to perform the same techniques successfully under stress. While there are some martial arts schools that do engage in regular pressure testing of their self-defense techniques, the unfortunate reality is that most do not.

Kata

Kata, and other solo patterns performed without a partner, are a traditional training method commonly used in many martial arts schools to teach a style’s core techniques and their applications. Aficionados of kata often find enjoyment in the graceful, balanced movement and opportunity for self-expression. However, when aesthetic beauty becomes the primary focus of the exercise, solo forms become more akin to dance or gymnastics routines. When practiced for therapeutic exercise or as moving meditation with health benefits, kata becomes more like a martial yoga, losing much of its practical value. Others study and practice kata as a vehicle for historical or cultural research. There is nothing wrong with practicing kata for any of these reasons. Since life is usually peaceful, we can afford to make personal enjoyment and development an important part of our training. However, this does not mean that kata practice is the same as developing practical self-defense skills.

Choreographed *bunkai* (kata applications) can be difficult to execute effectively when your training partner deviates from his prearranged sequence of attacks. This is an obvious weakness as in reality attacks are unpredictable. Katas’ self-defense value increases when moves can be applied more generally to a wider variety of attacks and are then practiced under progressively greater levels of resistance. You need to be pushed out of your comfort zone in

order to develop resilience, timing, and proper body mechanics applicable to a reality-based self-defense situation.

This argument may best be illustrated by the classic feud between karate masters Choki Motobu and Gichin Funakoshi in the 1930s. Funakoshi was a schoolteacher, and, partially due to his cultural sophistication, was chosen as one of the first ambassadors of karate from Okinawa to Japan. In his dojo, Funakoshi emphasized solo kata as a primary training method. Choki Motobu, on the other hand, was a renowned karate fighter who defeated many challengers, including a famous Western boxer. Motobu also practiced kata but believed that the applications needed to be practiced against attackers who were actively resisting.

One day, Motobu showed up at Funakoshi's dojo unexpectedly. Not approving of what he saw there, Motobu challenged Funakoshi to an empty-handed duel. Motobu later claimed that he did not want to injure Funakoshi, so he used a wrist lock, *kote gaeshi*, to throw Funakoshi to the ground three times in rapid succession, and that there was nothing Funakoshi could have done to counter his technique. Having proven his point, Motobu left. Since Funakoshi never gave his side of the story, we can assume that Motobu's account is accurate.

Motobu commented, "He (Funakoshi) can only copy the master's elegance by performing the outer portion of what they taught him and uses that to mislead others into believing he is an expert when he is not. His demonstrations were simply implausible. This kind of person is a good-for-nothing scalawag. In fact, his tricky behavior and eloquent explanation easily deceive people. To the naïve person, Funakoshi's demonstration and explanation represents the real art! Nothing is more harmful to the world than a martial art that is not effective in actual self-defense" (*Ryukyu Kenpo Karate-jutsu Tatsujin Motobu Choki Seiden* by Nakata Mizuhiko, translated by Joe Swift).

It is interesting to note that several students of Funakoshi who founded their own styles in later years sought a more balanced approach to karate by integrating Motobu's practical fighting skills with Funakoshi's more elegant style.

For more on this topic, check out *Meditations on Violence: A Comparison of Martial Arts Training and Real World Violence* by Rory Miller.¹

Self-Defense

The U.S. National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) shows that violent crime has been on the uptick in recent years. After declining 62 percent from 1994 to 2015, the number of violent-crime victims increased steadily from 2015 through 2018. In just one year, from 2017 to 2018, the number of violent incidents in the United States increased from 5.2 million to 6.0 million, while incidences of rape or sexual assault more than doubled. Hopefully, this trend is coming to an end, as statistics for 2019 (the latest available as of the writing of this

1. Rory Miller, *Meditations on Violence: A Comparison of Martial Arts Training and Real World Violence* (Wolfeboro, NH: YMAA Publication Center, 2008).

book) showed a slight decrease in the rate of violent crime from 2018, but levels are still higher than they were in 2017.

Self-defense is the use of reasonable force to protect yourself from bodily harm resulting from an attack by an aggressor. Self-defense is not fighting in terms of pitting your skills against another. Since proper perspective is critical to good decision-making, this distinction becomes a very important one to make. You engage in self-defense only when necessary to ensure your own personal safety or that of another. On the other hand, fighting indicates an aggressive mindset in which you intend to physically dominate another person, unlike self-defense that prioritizes avoiding physical encounters altogether. Since the goal in self-defense is your personal safety, you'll need to keep your cool and check your ego at the door.

Self-defense training is beneficial for people of all genders. Although you often see courses advertised as “women’s self-defense,” self-defense is *not* just for women. Men experience higher victimization rates than women for all types of violent crime, except for sexual assault. According to the NCVS, in 2017, 1.7 percent of women aged 15 or older indicated that they had fallen victim to a violent crime compared to 2.5 percent of men. According to the National Center for Transgender Equality, transgender people face far greater levels of physical and sexual violence. More than 25 percent of trans people have faced a bias-driven assault, and rates are even higher for trans women and trans people of color.

Learning self-defense can be surprisingly empowering. Additional benefits gained from training include an increased sense of calmness and self-confidence as a result of facing and overcoming your fears. This, in turn, can improve your life by giving you a more positive, non-defeatist attitude. This increased confidence alone can reduce your chances of becoming a victim.

Self-Defense Story: When You Least Expect It

My wife shook my shoulder gently. “I see strange lights coming from the kitchen,” she whispered. I opened my eyes and glanced at the clock. Four o’clock in the morning. I rolled out of bed and, wearing only my underwear, headed to the door. “It’s probably just Dave,” I reassured her. We had a friend staying over, sleeping in our dojo, an outbuilding separate from the house. I had left the back door open just in case he needed to use the bathroom. *He probably just got thirsty and wanted a glass of water or something*, I thought to myself as I headed toward the kitchen.

The dim light coming through the door was unusual. At first, I thought it was the light of the open refrigerator, but then it moved and the room went dark. A few steps later I entered the kitchen and flicked on the light just as someone ducked through the door into the garage. *What does Dave need in the garage?* I wondered. I followed close behind. Entering the dark interior of the closed garage, I turned on the light and scanned the room. I immediately saw someone trying to hide behind the trashcans.

Now, you have to understand that not only were David and I best friends, we were also martial arts brothers. This meant doing things that normal people usually don’t do, like playing

“Cato.” Cato is a game named for Inspector Clouseau’s sidekick, Cato, in the Pink Panther films. It is a running joke in the films that Cato is instructed to attack Clouseau unexpectedly to keep the inspector’s vigilance and fighting skills up to par. Cato often takes these instructions to the point of ambushing Clouseau in his own house or at times when Clouseau obviously would prefer not to be disturbed. With this in mind, I figured that Dave had been in the kitchen, heard me coming, and was now playing Cato. So, I call out in a jovial tone, “Good try! I see you back there. Come on out!” You can imagine my surprise when the black-clad figure that stood up wasn’t David.

“Who are you?” I barked.

“What can I say?” he replied sheepishly. I’m six foot two, and he was about my size. I didn’t recognize him.

“You can start by telling me what you are doing in my house!” I snapped back. He held a backpack and a big black flashlight. I saw the Maglite as a potential threat, so I said, “Give me your flashlight!” I was shocked when he actually held it out to me. I didn’t think that would work. I took it and felt a little better. “Get in the house!” I commanded. Is now a good time to remind you that I’m still in my underwear?

I herded the guy back into the kitchen and yelled to my wife, “Kathy, call the police!” Well, my guest didn’t like the sound of that at all and started to panic. He edged toward the back door, begging me to just let him go. I let him move because I realized that the kitchen was full of things he could potentially grab and use as a weapon, such as the rack of big knives on the counter. I think he was toying with the idea of fighting his way out, but I had his Maglite and was keeping my distance. He took advantage of that and suddenly made his move, bolting straight for the door. I grabbed the back of his collar with my free hand, but the thin material of his shirt stretched then snapped out of my hand as he ran out into the darkness. Without hesitation, I gave chase.

After a short pursuit through some overgrowth behind my house, I caught up and tackled him. We rolled over and I came out on top, pinning his body with one knee. With one hand, I grabbed the front of his shirt and with the other I brandished his flashlight, holding it high as though I were going to hit him with it. “Stop fighting me, or I’ll bash your skull in!” I warned. He called my bluff and struggled to free himself. I remember glancing at the heavy metal club in my hand before tossing it just out of reach. It lay in the grass a few feet away, the beam casting an eerie light on us as I poked a finger in his face and gave him a final warning, “I’m going to slap some stuff on you that ain’t gonna feel too good!” Unfortunately for him, he still wasn’t listening.

He pulled his knee up between us and, planting a foot on my belly, kicked me backward. But I saw it coming and was already moving to apply an ankle lock when he kicked. I pushed his foot under my arm, trapping it from underneath. As I landed, I wrapped my legs around his body and slapped my bare feet up on his chest, preventing him from sitting up. I then cranked the bony inner edge of my forearm against his Achilles tendon. It

all happened without conscious effort and in the blink of an eye. That's when the screaming started.

"You're breaking my leg! You're breaking my leg!" he bellowed. I knew I wasn't. The lock was painful but would have no lasting effects. I would ease up on him when he went slack, but whenever he started trying to escape again, I cranked on him as a reminder to settle down. I held him that way until the police showed up a short time later. The officer walked over to us with his flashlight, shined it on us lying there in the high weeds and thorn bushes, then started laughing.

Is this a good time to remind you that I was still in my underwear? Add that to the fact that my long hair was not tied back, and I must have looked like some kind of professional wrestler laying there. After a few seconds he stifled it to a chuckle, reached out to my burglar, and offered him his hand. I was reluctant to relinquish my hold. "Are you sure you have him?" I asked.

"Don't worry, I don't think he's going anywhere," the officer smiled. I released my hold on his leg, untangled myself, scrambled to my feet, and then followed them back to the patrol car.

Post-encounter Analysis: It was a good outcome, but I was lucky. That whole encounter could have ended badly in so many ways. Let's look at where I went wrong. First, living in the country, I assumed it was safe to leave my door unlocked. I was obviously wrong. Second, as soon as I identified the threat, the safest course of action would have been to retreat into the house and lock the door. He might have opened the garage door and escaped, but I would not have been in any danger. Third, I attempted to detain him. Desperate people do desperate things. Luckily, he did not have a knife or gun. Well, actually, he did have a gun, but it was back in his car. It was a commemorative firearm that he had stolen earlier from my neighbor up the street, an ex-marine. Turns out that my house was not this burglar's only target. The guy had already broken into several homes in my neighborhood and had a trunk full of loot.

Anyway, back to what I did wrong. Fourth, after he ran out, I probably shouldn't have chased him. Practically, I had no idea if he was alone or had a lookout waiting outside. I could have easily run into an ambush. Oh yeah, is this a good time to remind you that I was still in my underwear? Legally, I had no idea if castle law (see below) applied once we left the residence and I became the aggressor. Luckily, I had the good sense not to hit him with his flashlight, or we may have both ended up in jail. Thanks to my training, I instinctually read the situation and chose a technique that was low on the force continuum yet adequate to the task. That is something I actually did *right*. Since my attacker walked away unscathed, I did not have to go to court or face any costly legal ramifications for assault. Quite to the contrary, I was surprised when the local police contacted me to tell me I would be receiving an "Outstanding Citizen Award." I was honored, but I was also under no illusions. I know I got lucky.

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Phoenixville, Upper Providence, Schuylkill, Charlestown, East Pikeland and the surrounding communities

Homeowner nabs intruder

East Pikeland man subdues man now facing burglary, trespassing charges

By DENNIS J. WRIGHT
dwright@phoenixvillenews.com

EAST PIKELAND — A man got a little more than he bargained for when he happened to enter a home on the 1000 block of

North Chester Road on July 20. Upon entering the open back door of the block of D. Springs, Joseph Varady, 42, who has 17 years of law enforcement experience, was surprised to find an intruder in his kitchen. Varady, who is a police officer with the East Pikeland Police Department, immediately grabbed the intruder by the neck and threw him out the back door. The intruder, who was identified as David Burton, fled towards the garage to check on his friend. Varady, who is a police officer with the East Pikeland Police Department, immediately grabbed the intruder by the neck and threw him out the back door. The intruder, who was identified as David Burton, fled towards the garage to check on his friend.

INTRUDER

(Continued from Page A1)

hand on stop stru me and put som isn't goy grabbed hard int begging I think police East the sc into cu For Varady is said n't u need



Staff photo by Kelly Devine

Varady 'outstanding citizen'

An Outstanding Citizen Award was presented to Joseph Varady this week for capturing and detaining the alleged burglar who entered his home on July 20, 2004, until the arresting officer, East Pikeland Sgt. Ken Dobson, arrived.

Part 2: Self-Defense and the Law

When claiming self-defense, you are admitting that you are guilty of what would normally be a violent criminal action and that you did so intentionally and knowingly. However, you are also stating that your actions were justified under the given circumstances.

School systems often institute a zero-tolerance policy where physical confrontations between students result in mandatory punishment for all parties involved. However, this same set of rules does not apply in the legal world. A basic understanding of the law will still help you make good decisions should you ever have to physically defend yourself.

While self-defense law differs from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, the procedural concept of self-defense is universal. Statutes commonly provide that the use of force against another person is justifiable only when you believe that such action is immediately necessary for protecting yourself from harm. Unfortunately, after the physical action of self-defense has concluded, the legal process of claiming self-defense often begins.

It is important to understand that a plea of self-defense is a justification defense. This will require that you adequately explain exactly *why* you felt threatened and *why* you had to engage in what would otherwise be an unlawful act. If you are physically attacked, the reason for retaliating with physical violence should be abundantly clear. However, in cases where you

anticipate the attack and strike preemptively, you may have to justify your actions in a court of law. This means articulating exactly what led to your fear in a way that demonstrates it was legitimate.

In *Scaling Force: Dynamic Decision-Making Under Threat of Violence*, Rory Miller and Lawrence Kane present the I.M.O.P. principle for self-defense.² This principle states that self-defense is legally justified only if an assailant demonstrates four qualifying factors: that the attacker had the intent, means, and opportunity to hurt you, and that you had no means of preclusion, or avoiding the situation. Let's look at each of these in more detail.



Intent

First, you must have good reason to believe you are in danger. When someone expresses, verbally or otherwise, an overt desire or willingness to do you physical harm, they have shown intent. While verbal threats are most common, intent may also be expressed in the form of a physical gesture, such as a pointed finger and an angry glare. However, merely expressing the desire to do you harm does not justify the use of physical violence.

Means

Your assailant must also have the ability to inflict serious bodily harm upon you. Means describes the way the attacker intends to hurt you, either with his empty hands or with a weapon. Unfortunately, you often do not know if your assailant is armed until he brandishes his weapon.

Opportunity

The attacker must also have the opportunity to actually employ his means against you. If he is unarmed, he must have the ability to get very close to you. Weapons can increase an attacker's effective striking range.

2. Rory Miller and Lawrence A. Kane, *Scaling Force: Dynamic Decision-Making under Threat of Violence* (Wolfeboro, NH: YMAA Publication Center, 2012).

Preclusion

Preclusion is an action taken to prevent something from happening, and it can be a crucial factor when arguing self-defense. A prosecutor will ask questions such as, “Were there any steps you could have taken to de-escalate the situation? Did you have an opportunity to leave?” The legality of your actions may ultimately depend on where you live. In jurisdictions under “Duty to Retreat” laws, you must be able to explain why you had no safe alternatives other than to resort to using physical force. In other jurisdictions, which follow a “Stand Your Ground” doctrine, this may not be required.

Duty to Retreat

“Duty to Retreat” indicates that you have a responsibility to take all reasonable steps to avoid a conflict prior to employing physical force, even in a situation where you are unlawfully attacked or defending someone who is being unlawfully attacked. The intention of this type of law is to encourage citizens to avoid situations where self-defense may become required. However, it can be argued that, instead, it puts undue duress on the victim to prove that they acted in self-defense.

Stand Your Ground

Under “Stand Your Ground” laws, you have the right to defend yourself so long as you are lawfully present (i.e., you have no ground to stand if you are trespassing). Also called “Line in the Sand” law, this type of statute provides that you may use deadly force if you believe it to be necessary to defend yourself against great bodily harm, kidnapping, rape, and, in some cases, robbery. Under this type of law, the burden of proof lies with the prosecution to clearly demonstrate that you did *not* act in self-defense.

Castle Doctrine

Even “Duty to Retreat” jurisdictions generally follow the “Castle Doctrine,” named for the concept that “a man’s home is his castle.” This means that the law considers deadly force to be a reasonable response to someone attempting to unlawfully enter your home, work, or occupied vehicle, or remove you from the same. Under the “Castle Doctrine,” you would theoretically be protected from prosecution even if you were to seriously injure or kill an unarmed intruder. Since the law already states that the use of deadly force is reasonable under these circumstances, it would be difficult for the prosecution to prove your actions to be otherwise.

The Force Continuum

The force continuum describes the levels of force you can employ in a self-defense situation. These can vary greatly from a low-level response, such as giving a verbal warning, to a higher, potentially lethal level of force, such as a throat punch. The law states that the amount

of force you employ in defending yourself has to remain commensurate with the amount of force with which you are being threatened. Appropriate force is considered to mean reacting in a manner consistent with how any reasonable person would react in a similar situation. That is, proportional to the amount of force with which you are threatened.

The law allows you to calibrate your response to the disparity of force the attacker presents. Several factors can increase the disparity of force used against you, including the size of your attacker, the number of attackers, and the weapons involved. If you are a one-hundred-pound woman facing a two-hundred-pound man, that is a clear disparity in size and strength that would justify your use of greater force. If an unarmed attacker who is about your size or smaller is assaulting you, the situation probably does not warrant counterattacking with a deadly weapon. However, if that same attacker were armed with a knife, even if he were much smaller or not yet within striking range, a potentially lethal level of force might be warranted to defend yourself. Similarly, it is more difficult for you to defend yourself against multiple attackers, justifying the use of more aggressive and potentially lethal force.

So, how do you know how much force you need to employ in order to successfully defend yourself? This question works from the assumption that the techniques you employ have been mastered at a high level, and that, when deployed, these techniques will actually do the damage they are intended to do. However, physical altercations are chaotic situations with many unexpected variables that could prevent your technique from having the full desired effect. With this in mind, it may be a bad decision to underestimate the situation and respond with “minimal force.” Once a violent assault is underway, you do not want to merely escalate the situation by further irritating an already aggressive attacker. You need to inflict enough pain or damage to instead discourage further aggression, thus ensuring your safety.

Legal Representation

What qualifies as a self-defense situation? Is an altercation at a concert a self-defense situation? What about a road rage incident? Or a kid who is being bullied in school? There are many cases of people who fought back and injured an aggressor, only to later find him or herself charged with assault. Just because *you* feel you were justified in using the amount of force you did is no guarantee that a judge and jury will see things the same way.

There is no such thing as a “legal” physical altercation. Should you ever find yourself charged with a violent offense, it’s important to have a lawyer who knows and understands the self-defense laws where the incident took place. Since the right lawyer can mean the difference between a prison sentence and an acquittal, you will want to be represented by an aggressive and experienced attorney.

When you say you engaged in physical self-defense, you are acknowledging that you may have broken the law in assaulting another person. You can argue later, in court, that your actions were required to ensure your physical safety; however, the amount of force used will have substantial bearing on the legality of your actions. You can only justify as much force as

is needed to prevent you from being harmed. The use of excessive force, force greater than the amount needed to ensure your protection, is assault and is against the law.

It is important to note that, even if you are exonerated in the criminal trial, civil suits could follow, at large expense of time, money, and emotional stress.

Responsibility to Educate Yourself

Since self-defense laws vary widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, you should find out what the laws are where you live, or in any places you may plan to travel to. A simple internet search should turn up that information. If you have any questions, contact local law enforcement for their opinion. Be aware that college and university campuses, key places where women often feel threatened, may constitute separate jurisdictions from local and state law enforcement. For example, mace isn't allowed on most campuses, and sexual assault is often investigated and prosecuted by campus police. This knowledge will help you make educated decisions as you analyze your options, allowing you to formulate effective yet legally appropriate responses to potential situations.

Part 3: The Art and Science of Self-Defense

***Art:** A diverse range of human activities involving creative imagination to express technical proficiency, beauty, or emotional power.*

***Science:** Systematic knowledge about the material world based on facts learned through experiments and observation.*

***Self-defense:** Protection of one's person or interests, especially through the use of physical force, which is permitted in certain cases as a response to a violent crime.*

The world can be a very scary place, and nothing feels better than knowing that you can protect yourself in the case of a personal attack.

Unfortunately, there are people in the world who prey on other people. These predators look for easy prey, weak victims incapable of defending themselves. Therefore, it is important that you invest some time in your personal safety and learn self-defense techniques.

Complex and sophisticated combat systems take years to learn. Self-defense is most effective when it is based on instinctual movements that are easy to remember and utilize in highly stressful, real-life situations. If techniques are based on your body's natural reactions, almost anyone can learn practical and effective self-defense techniques that increase their likelihood of survival in a relatively short period of time.

Any act of self-defense will be unique depending on the specifics of the situation. Despite the high number of variables that could occur, there are some things that can be predicted with a good degree of accuracy. When you know a situation has a high likelihood of occurring, you can take steps toward preparing for it by learning effective strategies and tactics.

The science of self-defense provides you with both a solid core foundation and a flexible framework you can build upon according to the situation or your personal preference. Learning how to identify and play to your strengths is the *art* of self-defense.

The most reliable way to protect yourself from injury is to avoid any situation that may escalate into a violent physical confrontation. In order to do this, you must know how to identify signs of danger. Therefore, the first step in learning how to defend yourself is learning how to be aware of your surroundings. Situational awareness allows you to identify signs of danger and to take active measures to avoid potentially hazardous situations.

Should an encounter become physical, you'll need to know how to navigate the situation safely. Physical encounters occur at predictable ranges such as verbal, striking, or grappling, and each has its own skill set. Therefore, it helps to be a "jack-of-all-trades." This book will teach you how to build an arsenal of dependable techniques and tactics that will allow you to contend with a variety of situations. Since you should be trying to keep distance between you and a would-be attacker, you'll want some long-range striking techniques, such as a few simple yet effective kicks. You'll need a different set of techniques for medium-range fighting, such as elbows and knees. At close range, you'll need some skill in clinching, throwing, and grappling.

Some of you may be thinking, "Do I really need all this? I just want to know how to fight off a rapist or mugger." This may sound like a lot right now, but don't worry. We'll go through it all slowly, step-by-step. In the end, your newly acquired knowledge of the basic strategies and tactics to deal with an aggressor in a self-defense situation will allow you to operate effectively in all phases of the encounter.

**A jack-of-all-trades may be a master of none,
but that is oftentimes better than a master of one.**

System Overview

Good self-defense doesn't just happen. It requires mental and physical preparation, providing you with the tools needed to ensure your safety. *The Art and Science of Self-Defense: A Comprehensive Instructional Guide* provides you with a condensed system of distilled skills and techniques, each carefully selected for its reliability in a high-stress environment. In other words, they work!

Level 1: Awareness: An ounce of prevention is worth a *ton* of cure. Develop the skills needed to spot danger before it spots *you*.

Level 2: Avoidance and Anticipation: Recognizing a bad situation early allows you to prepare yourself for a potential confrontation, maximizing your odds of survival.

Level 3: Building an Arsenal: From your head to your toes, learn how to use your whole body as a weapon as well as *where* to hit for maximum effect.

Level 4: Action: The only way to survive an ambush is to fight your way out. Learn how to protect yourself and turn the tables on your attacker.

Level 5: Dirty Tricks: When the going gets tough, the tough fight dirty. These typically un-sportsman-like techniques could save your life.

Level 6: Takedowns: An attacker who is on the ground will have a difficult time hurting you. Learn the secrets of sweeping the feet out from under an aggressor.

Level 7: Groundwork: If your attacker has you on the ground, you must know how to escape and get back on your feet or hold down and neutralize your attacker.

Level 8: Weapons: Weapons are a two-way street. You not only need to know how to find and use improvised weapons yourself but also what to do against an armed assailant.

Level 9: Multiple Attackers: Wolves travel in packs. Learn the strategies and tactics needed to survive a multiple-attacker scenario and escape to safety.

If you fail to plan, then you plan to fail.
—Benjamin Franklin

Keys to Success

There are many things you can do to help develop your self-defense skills and make them fully functional and effective. Any holistic training program must include:

Practice

The key to mastering any new skill is dedicated *practice*. Create daily personal challenges for yourself covering different aspects of self-defense. Life can be busy, but you have to make time for training and stick with it. Your life may depend on it!

Hard Work

Unfortunately, real growth occurs outside of your comfort zone. Self-defense training can be uncomfortable, both physically and mentally. Yet, through hard work, you will discover and expand your mental and physical potential. Persevere, and you can develop absolute discipline over your mind, body, and spirit.

Stretching

Your body must be prepared for action. A proper warm-up not only minimizes your risk of injury during practice but also keeps your body in good working order for living your everyday life.

Stamina Training

Self-defense is physically demanding. The aerobic component of your program, such as jumping rope or jogging, will increase your ability to sustain peak performance for as long as possible.

Strength Training

You need to be able to strike fast and hard. Anaerobic components, such as weight training, are essential to strengthen your body so your techniques will be effective.

Formal Instruction

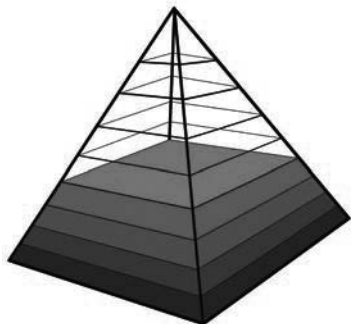
While *The Art and Science of Self-Defense* is based on the best available information, there is only so much you can learn from a book. It is beneficial to train with a competent instructor who can teach you in ways a book cannot.

Intensity

Success in any physical altercation requires intensity. Begin by adopting a look of determination, intention, and absolute seriousness. This will spark the right tone throughout your entire body. Focus your mind like sunlight through a magnifying glass, concentrating every fiber of your being on the task at hand. Visualize yourself completing your goal. When your mind is completely focused, your intensity will show physically through your body. Your moves will become quicker and stronger, reflecting your focused intent. Without spirit and intensity, your self-defense moves will be just that: rote movements that lack effectiveness.

Know this:

You are important.
Your life is worth fighting for.



LEVEL 4

Action!

Don't hit at all if it is honorably possible to avoid hitting;
but never hit softly.
—Theodore Roosevelt

The Four Rs of Self-Defense

Despite your best efforts, you have been unable to avoid or verbally de-escalate the situation. An aggressor has demonstrated clear intent to cause you harm. He has the means and the opportunity. Now is the time for action.

The next steps you take next need to be aimed at quickly ending a physical altercation. Your decisions and actions should be based on good information and sound judgment. The Four R's of Self-Defense encapsulate the wisdom that should guide your actions in a fight. They are:

1. Right Time
2. Right Place
3. Right Technique
4. Right Perspective/Run

Part 1: Right Time

Knowing the right time to strike is critical. You basically have three options: hitting before the attacker attacks, striking at the same time that your attacker attacks, or counterattacking after the attacker has already attacked you.

Preemptive Attack

By its very name, self-defense should be defensive. This is often interpreted to mean that that one should never strike first in self-defense. While this sounds good in theory, in reality it is impractical and unwise to wait until you are potentially taking damage before you can engage in active, physical resistance. Legally, you are permitted to engage an attacker once



Preemptive Attack: An aggressor has shown enough threat indicators that you firmly believe an attack is inevitable and your life is in danger, justifying you to strike first.

you have perceived enough threat indicators to justify your actions as necessary to protect you from physical harm.

Attacking before the attacker launches his attack gives you the element of surprise, throwing him off balance mentally and psychologically as well as physically. Since action beats reaction, the initiator will almost always have an advantage. If that person is you, you will have shock and surprise on your side. You may even cause your attacker to momentarily freeze.

Strike First. Strike Hard. No Mercy.
—Motto of Cobra Kai Karate

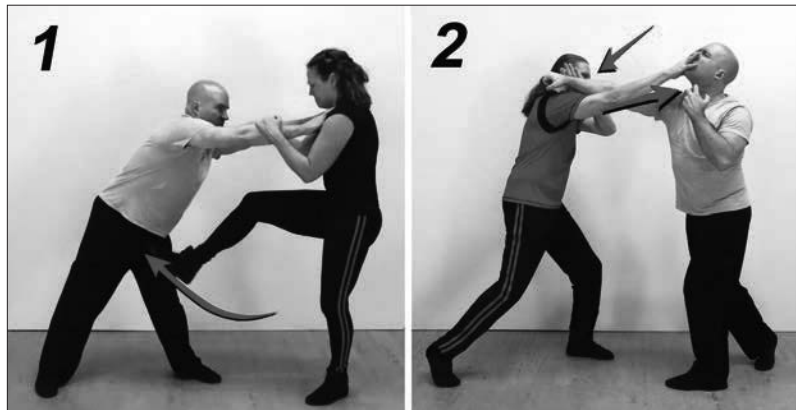
Do unto others before they do unto you.
—Terry Pratchett

Simultaneous Attack

If you are quick, you can counterattack at the same moment your attacker moves to strike you. Attacking at the same time as your attacker requires that you remain aware of his actions. This means closely monitoring and correctly interpreting the threat indicators that allow you to anticipate and mentally prepare for his attack. When it comes, your actions have to provide you with adequate defense against his attack while simultaneously allowing you to effectively counterattack him.

That sounds like a lot to accomplish in the heat of the moment. However, it need not be as hard as it seems. Thinking simply is the key. Your advantage lies in knowing what moves will give you the most bang for your buck and reliably deliver results. The key is to consistently train hard to develop and hone your self-defense skills, mentally as well as physically.

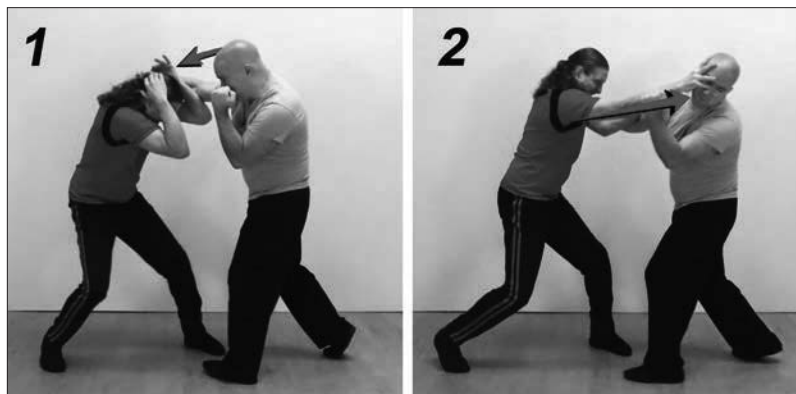
Grabbing attacks offer the easiest opportunity for simultaneous attack. Your attacker has grabbed you with one or both hands, presumably to restrain or control you. This strategy is his weakness. If he does not gain immediate and complete control of you, it gets him close and opens him up for an effective and unexpected counterattack.



Simultaneous Attack: 1) An aggressor has grabbed your shirt, bringing him in range and opening him up for a front snap kick to the groin. 2) Parrying a punch allows you to defend while simultaneously attacking your attacker's eyes.

Counterattack

A violent attack is basically an ambush. An assailant has caught you by surprise and attacked, leaving you no choice but to protect yourself. The best way out of an ambush is to fight your way out of the attacker's kill zone. This requires that you counter your attacker's initial attack before launching an attack of your own. Then, a rapid, efficient, and effective return of aggression is probably your best chance for success.



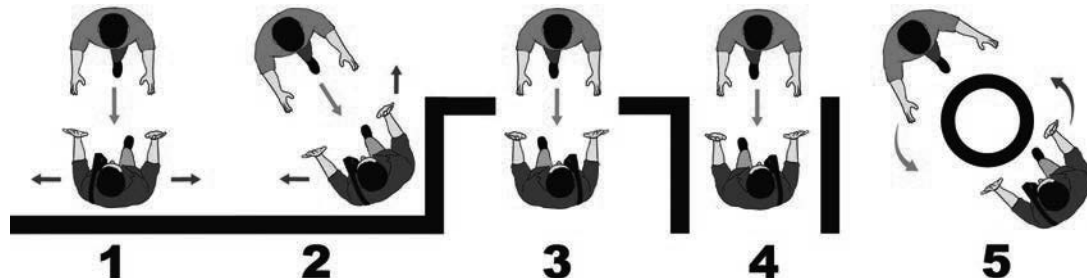
Counterattacking: 1) Cover up to block an attacker's punch. 2) Then drop his sensory grid with an unexpected strike to his eyes.

Part 2: Right Place

The term “right place” has two meanings. The first addresses targeting, knowing where to attack your attacker’s body for maximum physical and psychological effect. You already learned about your attacker’s most vulnerable targets in Part 1 of Level 3. The second meaning describes controlling the area around you and leveraging the environment to your advantage.

Location

If you have any control over where an encounter occurs, look for the most advantageous place to make your stand, such as high ground. High ground can be any area of elevated terrain, like up a flight of stairs. Being in an elevated position puts your attacker at your kicking level while limiting his ability to strike you. Walls, corners, doorways, and other obstacles each offer their own unique set of advantages and disadvantages. For example, a wall can be a detriment when it limits your mobility, but it can be advantageous if it offers you concealment, cover, or a solid base against which you can push. Strive to quickly identify and leverage the potential advantages of any given location while simultaneously mitigating the potential disadvantages.



Environmental Factors: Common architectural features you might encounter include 1) walls, 2) interior corners, 3) doorways, 4) narrow hallways, 5) or obstacles.

Walls

Since walls are such an integral part of almost any building, they are very common architectural features. Generally speaking, interior walls are of far lighter construction than exterior walls, which are made stronger to endure the elements. All walls have some advantages and disadvantages that should be considered for self-defense.

Advantages: You have lateral mobility, so an escape to the sides is an option. Before escaping, you could let the attacker rush in, then duck away and to the side to smash him against the wall, preferably face-first, by simply borrowing his own forward momentum.

About the Author

*Joe Varady, M.Ed.
Head Instructor, Satori Dojo
Black Belt—7th Degree*

Master Joe Varady began his formal martial arts training in 1986. Over the past three decades, he has cross-trained in Eastern martial arts, including karate, taekwondo, judo, wing chun, and eskrima, as well as various Western martial arts such as boxing, fencing, long sword, sword and shield, poleaxe, and various methods of armored fighting. In 2006, Joe became a certified Master Instructor in The Bao Way System of Self-Defense.

Joe currently shares his martial arts knowledge as the head instructor of two programs: traditional martial arts through Satori Dojo and eclectic weapons systems through Modern Gladiatorial Arts, both located in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. He is also an active member of the Universal Systems of Martial Arts Organization, a fellowship that provides practitioners of different styles of martial arts with an open forum for sharing techniques and principles. He was inducted into the Philadelphia Historic Martial Arts Society Hall of Fame in July 2016.

Joe holds a master's degree in elementary education. He is the author of two books on fighting with weapons, *The Art and Science of Staff Fighting* and *The Art and Science of Stick Fighting* (YMAA 2016 and 2020). He considers this, his third book, *The Art and Science of Self-Defense: A Comprehensive Instructional Guide* to be his most important work to date.

