

Via Potentia

Modern Self Defense Training



Self Defense
Physical Conditioning
First Aid & CPR
Conventional Weapons
Gun Safety
Traditional Ethics
Martial Arts

“Safe and Sound” Program
Beginning Student Handbook

Revised March 31, 2010

This book belongs to _____

This work is dedicated to my wife and children; Tyra, Sophia, Isaiah, Margaret, Joseph, Grace and Leopold. Thank you for your love and support, and for helping me to be a better person.

I also am thankful to the various friends, instructors and students I've worked with over the decades -- too many to name -- who have contributed to this work in a variety of ways. I've had and known some great martial arts instructors, but I've learned more from my students than from any master.

My goal in creating Via Potentia is quite simple: To help others improve or save their lives. If it does that for even one person, then it is worth it.

The pages of this manual have been purposefully formatted so that you have room to write your own notes, comments, additions and improvements.

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Some images are from Gray's Anatomy, published in the early 20th century.

Throughout this document we have utilized the English language in its proper and authentically-inclusive sense. That is, unless noted otherwise, masculine pronouns are generic, inclusive words that could refer to a man, woman or child. Feminine pronouns generally refer specifically to a female.

We are still working out some of the Latin terminology. If you have any suggestions for improvement to this manual, please contact the author.

All information is provided for educational purposes only, and as a supplement to in-class training.

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A letter of welcome from the developer and director of Via Potentia.

Via Potentia means "The Way (or path, or method) of Potential." In choosing this name I had two concepts in mind. First, a potential is a power, strength or ability that is *hidden* within. Unlike many martial arts, our primary techniques are designed for self defense – not sport, competition and demonstration – and they are intended to be hidden, only to be called upon when needed.

Potential also implies an *unrealized* capability -- something that isn't merely hidden within, but is not yet achieved -- and in that way refers to the capacity for good, truth and beauty within the human person. Each of us is similar in the sense that we have strengths, weaknesses, abilities and limitations, but we are also unique in our personalities and how our characteristics combine to make us who we are, and who we have the potential to become. Sadly, too many people never become who they can be, who they are meant to be. The causes are many. It may be something so simple as the family, country or neighborhood into which we are born. It might be a genetic predisposition, disability, or an injury or harm we've suffered. It might be an opportunity missed, an addiction or vice, or any number of our own seemingly-insignificant personal choices that led us to our current state in life. Fear of failure or criticism, laziness, or a lack of vision and motivation keep many people at their angle of repose.

Whatever the reason for our present states, and whatever obstacles we face, the reality is that there is a path to greatness hidden in the fog ahead of us. Maybe not greatness in the sense that the world portrays it -- becoming rich, powerful or popular -- but greatness in the sense of becoming authentic human beings who really make a positive difference; faithful friends, mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, workers, managers, business owners, good neighbors, etc. That is, people who become and do something genuinely good for others and the world.

This is not an easy path to find, let alone follow. It takes an immense amount of work, diligence, personal strength and even suffering. You have to be willing to try and fail, and try again, and to be as honest (with yourself) about your faults as you are about your strengths. It is much easier to stay where you are, get carried along with the throng, or to take the path that someone else wants you to follow. It is much easier to pursue the world's idea of success than it is to find authentic success. And, for better or worse, no one can find your path for you, though many claim otherwise and will be happy to charge you for doing so. You must find it, and follow it, yourself.

“Wait, I thought this was self defense and conditioning training. What does all this talk about potential have to do with self defense?” Unlike many martial arts, I won't delude myself or you by saying that learning the Via Potentia curriculum will *necessarily* make you a better person any more than would learning calculus, construction, basketball or chess. We won't fabricate a history to suck you in, sell you fabricated secrets, or present this as something it is not. Via Potentia is not your “path,” nor will it tell you what your path should be. However, it is designed to prompt, protect and encourage you in that endeavor; specifically, it is designed to help you develop personal conditioning and to protect your life so that you have more freedom and confidence to pursue your *finem perfectum*, or “perfect end,” whatever that may be for you.

We refer to the beginning, first-year curriculum as the “Safe & Sound” program. It is my honor to offer this program of conditioning, self defense and life saving skills to you. Your first term of training will consist primarily of learning basic drills, concepts, and about your own personal

strengths and limitations. These will include blocking and deflecting attacks, stances and fighting movement, hand and elbow strikes, kicks and knee hits, a technical form, sparring, grappling, a few take downs, and basic stick attacks. The rest of the year will be spent developing effective self defense techniques, improving your physical condition, and learning to detect and avoid dangerous situations. In regard to self defense, we believe it is most important that you learn to attack and defend with power and intuitively, so we spend *a lot* of time in sparring, grappling and heavy bag work. Strive to develop your own personal combinations from the many techniques – the combinations that feel natural to you, and that you can execute with the most speed, power and accuracy. If you choose to continue beyond the first year, we continue to add self defense moves, but focus more on developing skills for demonstration and tournaments; the physical conditioning requirements also get much more demanding.

Though we spend much time in sparring, grappling, forms and other drills, please recognize that the best thing you can do for self defense is avoid dangerous situations, travel in numbers, and carry an effective weapon like a handgun or pepper spray. Empty hand fighting techniques can be effective, but we see them as a last resort, and employed with an eye towards escape or allowing the deployment of a weapon.

Roughly half of our class time will be spent specifically on conditioning exercises. These are arranged in such a way as to maximize your progress while minimizing the chances of self-inflicted injury, and are intended to develop your flexibility, strength and stamina gradually. Start easy and go at your own pace, but always push yourself to do a little more each month, and you will eventually develop outstanding physical condition.

Whether you participate for three months, three years, or even longer, and whether you are here to improve your physical condition, learn self defense skills, or practice for fun and sport, it is my sincere hope that you benefit greatly from the principles and practices of Via Potentia, and that it encourages and protects you on your journey to fulfill your unique potential.

If you have questions, comments or suggestions for improvement of our curriculum, please speak with your instructor. Also, feel free to call me at home (McMinnville, Oregon) at 503-437-3450 -- reasonable hours only, please -- or e-mail me at director@viapotentia.org at any time.

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Noctem quiétam, et finem perfectum concédât nobis Dóminus omnipotens.

INTRODUCTION TO THIS TEXT

This manual supplements in-class instruction, and is intended for adults and mature youth. It describes the *principles* and *philosophy* underlying our various exercises for the first year of training, the “Safe & Sound” program. If you understand the principles, the techniques will come naturally with time and seem obvious. Though the techniques are listed herein, class time is best for learning them. Some topics like pedagogy, genesis and structure are not mandatory learning, and are included for informative purposes only.

There are many books on technique already available. Our techniques are not much different from those you'll find in most other martial arts. Technology has improved, but the human body -- its strengths and weaknesses -- hasn't changed much in the last several thousand years, and techniques that worked long ago or in a different country work just as well here and today. If you learned to do a front kick elsewhere, chances are that it will be useful here. The difference is in the order in which they are taught, how they are taught and applied, and their ethical/philosophical context (we might have some suggestions for improving a technique you learned elsewhere, or adapting it to self defense instead of demonstration or dueling, but the truth is that it is very hard to relearn a technique).

This book is way too long. An efficient, practical self defense text would hardly be 40 pages, would include at most a dozen techniques, some supplemental exercises, and basic advice. This book is way too long because Via Potentia, though we emphasize self defense, is much more than just a basic self defense program. It is literally the culmination of decades of experience and research. That being the case, just take what is useful and understandable, and don't worry about the rest.

We practice *basic* conventional weapons, stick, upright and ground techniques. Any one of these could be a life-long study, but our emphasis is on learning the fundamentals from each for the purpose of self defense – not competition, demonstration, military use or street fighting. Another way of saying this is that we aren't going to learn 63 different judo throws, 100+ different wrist locks and throws from Aikido, advanced jujitsu grappling, or various ways of eviscerating someone with a combat knife. We will focus on the basics that most people are capable of doing and that would be effective against a larger attacker.

There isn't an ideal phrase in the English vocabulary that succinctly describes what we do. We purposefully omit many less useful elements found in common martial arts, this isn't a martial sport, it is more than self defense, etc. I find that it takes a few minutes just to explain what we are doing, and then people go "oh, I'd like to do that." But for lack of a better term, we use the phrases martial art, self defense and personal protection program somewhat interchangeably.

Like everything else in Via Potentia (and life), this text is a work in progress. This handbook alone has gone through hundreds of revisions, and has been in

development for many years. Please don't be frustrated by minor changes in the curriculum in the future; these are intended and implemented for your benefit.

Key Points

Don't want to read the manual? No problem. If you understand and can apply the following points, you'll do fine.

- Above all, protect, develop and do something wonderful with your life.
- We recommend that you consult a doctor before starting a new exercise regimen, especially if you have any pre-existing conditions or are on medications.
- Do dynamic stretching and movement regularly to maintain your joint health, mobility and range of motion. Do dynamic stretching *before* dynamic activity.
- Learn only one new technique at a time. Once learned, practice it in combination with other known techniques for the purpose of developing both favorite and spontaneous combinations.
- Develop speed, power and accuracy with your combinations. Bag-work and contact sparring are good ways to do this.
- When working with a partner go easy with new techniques, but work up to the highest level of intensity that the two of you can handle without injuring each other. Be especially careful when working with someone of much different size, strength, age or skill than you.
- Do fatiguing calisthenics and static stretching only *after* dynamic activity -- never before.
- Start small and progress slowly in your stretching and exercises.
- Do not attempt stretches or techniques that are beyond your ability.
- Stop immediately and consult an expert if you experience pain or an injury while exercising, or an outside injury that affects your ability to exercise.
- Your life is a precious gift. Once you are an adult, it is up to you to protect and nurture it; until then, it is in the care of your parents and family.
- Others will impose upon and abuse you -- your person, liberty or property -- to the degree that you allow it. Sometimes they will use brute force.
- Live a life of virtue, be courteous and respectful, be aware of and avoid dangerous people and situations. Sometimes this isn't enough.
- Consider developing skill with and carrying a self defense weapon (or two). The presence of a weapon is often a deciding factor when it comes to preventing or prevailing in an assault.
- The best self defense technique is to be aware of and avoid potentially dangerous situations. Failing that, travel in numbers. Failing that, *run*.
- If you must fight, commit yourself 100% to causing an injury to your attacker(s) so that you can escape, drive him away, or draw (and use) a weapon. Primary targets are ears, eyes, neck, lower abdomen, groin, knees, ankles and insteps.
- After a physical conflict leave the area immediately, see to any injuries, and contact an attorney. Consider seeking professional therapy for any long term psychological harm.

- Anything you say to a government agent (or practically anyone else, for that matter) can be used against you. Never make a statement to or answer questions posed to you by police or any government representative without a written guarantee of complete immunity or the presence and protection of a competent lawyer (preferably both). If you don't want to answer a question, then just don't do it. This is particularly-important in matters of conflict or assaults.
- If you control and are responsible for yourself, then no one else will have to control you (nor should they try or be allowed to). If you do not control and take responsibility for yourself – especially if you harm others – then others will rightly dominate you.
- Don't be ruled by anything or anyone else. Don't try to rule anyone else. Attempt merely to rule yourself and your own passions. That is work enough.
- Do whatever you can to make your community a better place and positively influence your society and government.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Via Potentia is intended for people who wish to learn basic skills and principles like proper conditioning, CPR, First Aid, gun safety and practical self defense. It is our opinion that the principles and practices we teach are beneficial to *most* people and useful in *many* situations. In some cases they may improve or save lives. However, individual experiences may vary, in "real life" you can do everything right and still fail, so we cannot guarantee that every participant will benefit or that every technique will be effective.

Like any good thing, the skills taught in Via Potentia could be misused in very damaging ways. Participants agree that they will never use the principles or techniques learned in Via Potentia to harm another human being without justification.

Some people enter the martial arts or take self defense classes in an attempt to address (or under the influence of) psychological or emotional harm they have experienced, deficiencies or weaknesses. Our curriculum can help in many such cases. However, there are many cases in which it cannot, and anyone who is taking the course specifically to address a psychological or emotional harm should consult with a psychologist and the instructor to make sure that this is the appropriate action.

Class sizes are limited, and because of the way that the curriculum is structured, it is very difficult to bring in new students in mid-term. Consequently, your tuition reserves your space in the class for the entire term. Tuition is due, in full, by the first day of instruction for the term. *New students* who notify the instructor of their intention to withdraw within the first two weeks can receive a full refund of tuition less the value of any materials or equipment provided. *Returning students* who notify the instructor of their intention to withdraw within the first two weeks can receive a half refund of tuition less the value of any materials or equipment provided. These notifications must be made in writing. *After two weeks, tuition is not refundable.*

This program might not be appropriate for those with serious medical conditions, disabilities, injuries, communicable diseases, or who are seeking competitive, sport or advanced martial arts training. We urge you to discuss your goals and particular situation with the instructor, and consult your doctor before beginning this or any exercise program, especially if you are on medication or have any medical conditions.

Certain injuries, medical conditions, physical or mental disabilities may preclude your participation in some or all of the class exercises. For example, if you have limited use of your legs, many of the exercises and techniques will be impossible, and you won't be able to participate in them; however, you could still participate in the gun safety training, First Aid, and other subjects that do not require full mobility.

If you have a communicable disease -- any disease that can be spread by close contact, saliva, sweat or blood -- then you must not engage in sparring, partner drills,

or any exercise in which there is a chance of infecting someone else. If this is the case for you, then you must tell the instructor in advance that you will not be participating in contact drills; *you do not have to say why*.

Participation is "at will." Either you or your instructor (or Via Potentia) may end your participation, temporarily or permanently, at any time, with or without notice, with or without explanation, and without any further obligation. You are not obligated to stay in the class if you do not wish to, and your instructor is not obligated to teach you if he does not wish to. In addition, the instructor may withhold instruction in particular techniques from individuals at his discretion (e.g., we do not teach gun handling and disarming techniques to children, nor would we teach difficult or complicated techniques to someone who lacks the skill or conditioning to do them).

All physical activities involve various risks. The risks involved with physical conditioning and self defense training are similar to those found in other active sports. These risks range from minor scrapes, infections, bruises, sprains and similar injury to serious, long term or permanent injury or disability, to death. You may have physical limitations that are unknown to you or even your doctor that, when combined with certain physical activities like martial arts, could result in your injury or death. You authorize the provision of First Aid, CPR, AED or other basic assistance in the event of an injury. You authorize the calling for professional medical assistance for a serious injury, accept responsibility for any related expense, and understand that professional medical assistance might not be available.

All of the principles put forth, though deeply researched, merely represent our own humble opinion on how to best handle a particular situation or implement a specific technique. We recognize that in many human interactions there isn't a single best way of doing things, but that one has to develop and exercise his own judgment -- his own prudence -- in navigating life's challenges. In other words, we encourage you to adapt this material to your own strengths, weaknesses and particular state in life in the way that you believe is best.

You understand that much of the training is optional, and carries with it additional risks. For example, the risk of injury is greater with contact sparring than it is with non-contact sparring, and is greater with weapons sparring than with non-weapons sparring.

There is no guarantee that presented techniques will work in any particular circumstance. Choosing to fight, flee, submit or posture in a self defense situation is your decision.

We promote *ethical* behavior. Behaving in an ethical manner, though it is the right thing to do, may result in social and legal complications. For example, carrying a weapon for self defense is perfectly ethical and rational for mature, responsible people, as is protecting and exercising your liberty. However, some government agencies will discourage, penalize or imprison you for doing so. Also, it is ethical to

apologize for our faults and errors, to take responsibility for them, and attempt to improve, but many agencies specifically discourage or forbid any words or actions that could be interpreted as an admission of fault. And some people will take advantage of you if you rightly admit fault.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and by voluntarily participating in and receiving instruction, you acknowledge and freely assume *all* risk and responsibility for *any* related injury, loss or legal complication you may experience, now or in the future. You understand that you are free to stop at any time without any penalty or obligation, and that you are not obligated to follow any instructions, especially if you believe that doing so will result in harm to yourself or others. Further you agree to hold your instructor, Via Potentia and all related individuals harmless, and promise not to sue or seek any compensation for *any* harm you experience.

We encourage the sharing of information, but please give credit where credit is due. Participants agree that they will not duplicate or present the Via Potentia curriculum as their own.

Finally, you understand that all information offered in this training program is based on our own research, opinions and experience regarding what is useful for safe physical conditioning, self defense, and related topics. None of the information is or should be interpreted as professionally licensed legal, medical or psychological counsel, and you are obviously free to disregard some or all of what we promote. Laws and medical/psychological "knowledge" vary from place to place and time to time. If you have a specific legal, medical or psychological question, it should be referred to your personal attorney or doctor.

As the sole source and author of this material, the information presented in this manual and in class is subject to updating, interpretation and clarification exclusively by the Via Potentia Director.

By participating in any training or applying our principles or philosophy, you are indicating your understanding and agreement with the above as a condition of receiving instruction.

WHAT IS VIA POTENTIA?

One of the most common questions I field is “what is Via Potentia?” It isn't phrased exactly that way. It is usually phrased like, “is this karate, taekwondo, jujitsu, escrima, or what?” As adults we try to understand new things by relating them to those already known. The process is called assimilation. For example, to explain a platypus to someone who has never seen one, you might say it has the bill of a duck and a body like a beaver. Obviously, a platypus isn't actually a hybrid between a beaver and duck, but the ideas give people something to grasp, a way of understanding what a platypus looks like.

The key difficulty with answering the question as posed is that the person usually doesn't even understand what he is asking; that is, he doesn't understand the things to which he is trying to relate Via Potentia. Most people believe that martial arts are primarily about self defense. They are not, at least not most of them as practiced today. Martial arts have many excellent benefits, but practical, useful self defense skills are rarely their goal. Another problem is that there are hundreds or thousands of variations on common martial arts. One “tae kwon do” program can be very much different from another. Unfortunately, the general public misunderstands this, and even most martial arts instructors don't know the difference between what they do and actual self defense training. They don't realize that their art, even if it once was self-defense based, is now more about demonstration and competition scoring, rendering it less effective for use in violent conflict.

It is important that you, as a participant, understand precisely what Via Potentia is, and what it is not, so that you can get the most benefit from the program. Properly understanding Via Potentia involves understanding various genres of fight and combat training:

Military Close Quarter Combatives is the training received by soldiers for the purpose of destroying an enemy force as quickly and efficiently as possible. It primarily involves the use of tactics, weapons and numbers in an offensive posture (however, many modern combatives programs now include a substantial sport element). Techniques focus on those that will kill the enemy with the least effort and personal cost. The techniques are taught over a few days to months, depending on the unit, and then are expected to be implemented on the mission. The basic method is to close aggressively, establish and maintain a dominant position, and terminate the enemy swiftly. Physical conditioning is important, but secondary to tactics, weapons and aggression.

Martial/Fighting Sports include boxing, wrestling, mixed martial arts, kickboxing, and other programs where individuals (or teams) train to voluntarily fight others according to established rules with the goal of defeating the opponent and receiving recognition. Matches are run by a referee, judged, points are awarded, etc. An express goal is to make the matches as competitive and entertaining as possible, which means matching people of similar size and skill. Techniques focus on those that will score points, knock out or otherwise defeat an opponent without killing or

seriously injuring him. Techniques likely to cause serious injury are generally forbidden; small joint manipulation, gouging, groin hits, stomps and spikes to the body, etc. Top physical condition is critical, and a lot of time is spent in sparring and related training. Injuries are common. These endeavors are obviously not self defense training, but they are often effective in and easily adapted to self defense because the players are familiar with delivering power to an aggressive, strong opponent. Some martial arts are borderline martial sports as a consequence of their emphasis on sport/point application.

Martial Arts: There are many different kinds of martial arts, each with different philosophies, emphases, cultures and practices. Intensity of participation varies from pastime/hobby to a “way of life.” Some incorporate religion. Martial arts organizations encourage and expect life-long participation. Martial arts are primarily useful for personal development (physical and psychological), demonstration and amateur competition. Most programs study one or more of forms, no-contact sparring, contact sparring, grappling, historical weapons and board breaking. Techniques focus on those that develop or demonstrate strength, flexibility, endurance, self control, or that score points in sparring. Hierarchy, uniforms, and unique customs are involved. Common martial arts incorporate generic names like karate, kung fu, judo, taekwondo and jujitsu.

Injuries are less common than in full contact martial sports, but some studies indicate an average of four injuries per year for participants (e.g., sprains, torn muscles, broken bones, or similar). Many of these injuries are preventable, and related to the order of training or chosen exercises.

The line between sport and art is blurring for many martial arts, and though they claim to teach self defense, very few actually do. Martial arts can be adapted for self defense application with proper training.

Street Fighting / Dueling emphasizes fighting for the purpose of settling a personal dispute. Rules, if there are any, are informal. Weapons may be involved, and participation is voluntary. Tactics are rarely more sophisticated than hitting the other person in the head until he falls down, then hit him some more for good measure. Participants are sometimes seriously injured or die, especially if weapons or numbers were present. Structured training is rare; it is usually “learning by doing.” Street fighting and dueling is frowned upon in most cultures, and many techniques are referred to as “dirty.” Street fighting and voluntary dueling readily adapts to self defense.

Some martial arts emphasize principles and techniques more for street fighting and duels.

From one perspective, sparring in martial arts is a method of “friendly dueling” according to rules and with some safety equipment for personal enjoyment, awards and recognition. Sport fighting is “friendly dueling” according to rules and with some safety equipment for entertainment, recognition and money. That is, the two competitors don't (necessarily) have an actual dispute they are settling, but they

engage in a regulated competition to see which is the better fighter, and for whatever prizes or recognition may be had. They rarely intend each other harm.

Self Defense training prepares one to avoid, escape from or prevail in an assault – an attempted attack, rape, robbery, murder or related violent act – in which the victim is very likely to be at a severe disadvantage due to size, strength, weapons or numbers. The key differences are the disadvantages of the victim and the involuntary participation. It may focus on developing skills with a single weapon, or cover a wide array of principles and techniques. The fundamental philosophy of any self defense program is “save yourself,” and it emphasizes quickly injuring the attacker so as to end the conflict or facilitate escape. Techniques include those found in combatives, street fighting, and martial sports and martial arts. Physical conditioning is rarely emphasized, and effective training usually lasts a few days to a few weeks.

Having said all of that, Via Potentia is a self defense training program that emphasizes personal conditioning, classical virtues, the use of modern weapons, and the protection of human life. It incorporates upright strikes, elbows, knees, kicks and grappling with an emphasis on those techniques that are most likely to be effective on a larger, stronger, more aggressive attacker. If we choose to fight, our goal is to rapidly cause an injury to the attacker so that we can escape the situation. It includes and encourages First Aid, CPR and gun use training. The self defense segment lasts approximately nine months.

It incorporates drills found in many martial arts, sports and even combatives, including some that don't have a direct self defense application. For example, we include forms and board breaking – two activities that have very little direct application to self defense. The key difference is that we (try to) make it very clear when something actually is useful for self defense and when it is not, we try to engage in practice as realistically as possible, and we focus on those drills that do help with self defense, as opposed to training primarily for demonstration or sport.

Training for self defense means practicing and delivering power with techniques that are generally not allowed in either sports or martial arts. For example, in our sparring we allow neck and lower-abdomen hits, and we practice fish-hooking and other “illegal” grappling moves. Our techniques generally must be adapted for sport application, whereas most martial arts must adapt their techniques for self defense. This puts us at an advantage when it comes to defending ourselves from violence, but at a disadvantage when we participate in a tournament with people whose systems emphasize drilling for the purpose of demonstration and scoring points.

PARTICIPANT CONDUCT

Attempt to follow the Via Potentia ethics at all times. Adapt and apply them to the particular conditions of your life and relationships.

Treat everyone with genuine, deep respect, irrespective of societal status, rank, title or other arbitrary measure. That respect might be demonstrated differently, depending on the norms for your particular culture, but from your heart, your words and actions you should honor all people.

All participants are expected to arrive on time, prepared for class, and to conduct themselves with dignity during the class session. Attire, punctuality, overall attendance, preparation and conduct -- both in general and during the test -- are considered when testing.

When in class, wear clean, comfortable, loose-fitting, durable clothing that allows freedom of movement. A uniform is not required for beginners. Long shorts, sweats and the like are fine. No zippers or other items that might cause injury to yourself or others. Tight, restrictive, delicate or revealing clothing is not appropriate.

No street shoes in the exercise area or on the mats *ever*. Bare feet are recommended. Soft-soled footwear specifically for wrestling, grappling and martial arts is allowed as long as it is clean and will not damage the mats.

Keep toe and finger nails trimmed short. Keep your body clean.

Some techniques and drills require substantial strength, flexibility or coordination. Do not attempt techniques or use equipment without proper training and conditioning.

All jewelry should be removed during class, as should unnecessary eyeglasses. Those who require eyeglasses to function may wear them, but risk serious injury by doing so, and should consider athletic glasses. Those with braces are urged to wear mouth protection whenever working with a partner.

Sparring gear is not required for beginners. However, shin/instep guards, mouth gear and groin/lower abdomen protection are recommended while sparring and doing some partner drills, and proper sparring equipment is required for contact sparring.

No gum, food or drink in the exercise area. Place shoes, bags, clothing and other personal items in their appropriate place. Do not bring valuables to the gym. Via Potentia is not responsible for damage to, losses or theft of personal property.

Students may practice and warm up quietly before class. Once class is started, they should line up immediately and silently.

No unnecessary talk, "goofing around," or other disruptions during class. No sitting or laying down, leaning against walls, etc., unless instructed to do so.

Do not leave class until dismissed by the instructor. Once class has begun, do not enter or leave the class without checking with the instructor.

Salute the instructor and each other at the beginning and end of class; salute your training partner whenever you begin or stop working together. This salute may be the Via Potentia salute, or whatever the norm is for your culture.

Follow instructions and give your best effort with all exercises. However, it is your duty to *not* follow an instruction if you believe it will cause an injury to your or someone else.

Do not share sparring equipment or uniforms (to avoid skin infection). Sparring equipment may be shared if it is disinfected between uses.

Do not come to class if you are ill, travel is dangerous, or if you have an injury serious enough to prevent participation.

Get a drink and use the bathroom *before* class. Avoid drinking too much or eating immediately before intense exercise.

If you do not understand an instruction, if you feel that something is unsafe, if you have or see an accident or injury, notify the instructor immediately.

Depending on the totality of the circumstances, failures in terms of attire, preparation or conduct may result in a verbal correction or warning, additional calisthenic exercises, segregation, suspension or permanent dismissal from the program at the sole discretion of the instructor, local *peritus* or Via Potentia director. Readmission to training generally requires an apology, discussion of the events leading to dismissal, and demonstration of commitment to resume training.

No threats, intimidation, cursing or insults. Unethical use of the principles taught in this class, or unethical behavior of any kind, may result in permanent exclusion from the program.

No loaded firearms or live ammunition on the premises except by express permission -- this includes concealed weapons. Any personal self defense weapons should be left (locked) in your car during class. Any weapon not kept in your vehicle must be unloaded, cleared, and turned in for safe keeping or stored securely in a locker while on the property.

Never train with others using a live (sharp) knife or a gun that is capable of firing a bullet, even if you have confirmed that the gun is not loaded.

Demonstrate good sportsmanship in victory and defeat.

Higher ranks have no authority or honor over lower ranks. Rather the higher ranks should humble themselves and serve those with less experience. Everyone is equal in authority and dignity in Via Potentia (and in reality).

Assist with cleaning the gym before or after class as needed. Sweep floors, clean mirrors, scrub mats, pick up trash, and put away equipment, etc.

If you see any way that this program can be improved, *please let your instructor know*.

BASIC EXERCISES AND GENERAL CLASS OUTLINE

Specific exercises and techniques will be introduced by your instructor. See other sections of this handout for general instruction on the different topics.

Before class: Make sure that your exercise clothing is clean and that you are in the proper frame of mind to work with others. Arrive early and prepare yourself. Inspect the exercise area to make sure it is clear and safe. Some classes may have you warm up on your own before class. Don't eat or drink too much before exercising. Do not come to class if you are ill, seriously injured, or if travel is unsafe. Alert the instructor of any conditions that will affect your performance in class.

Assemble: Different instructors have different desires for the order by which to line up. Some might have you line up according to experience, age or rank. Others might have you interspersed for the benefit of beginners. Experienced students sometimes lead the introductory part of class, through the dynamic exercises.

Announcements: The leader will announce the learning objectives for the day, the emphasis for the class -- speed, power, precision or endurance -- and other relevant information.

Brief relaxation and peaceful meditation: Sit in a comfortable position, with your back straight and eyes closed or unfocused. Chin slightly down. Breathe deeply and slowly, quietly. Mentally focus on a peaceful scene, thought, one of our ethics, or pray.

Topical discussion: Some classes will focus on discussion of a concept rather than a physical technique. On those days, the discussion will usually come first so that it doesn't interrupt conditioning exercises. When the topic is not too complex, sometimes it will be presented and discussed *during* other exercises.

Joint conditioning and dynamic stretching: When there are enough experienced students present, they will be asked to lead the introductory and closing conditioning exercises. The order of the joint and dynamic exercises is not critical, but they should be done *before* dynamic activity, cover the entire body, and the movements should mimic the actions to come. Do not do muscle-fatiguing calisthenics or static stretching before dynamic activity. On the leg stretches, you can add elastic resistance bands to help with hip strength.

- Ankle circles and deflection (while seated, usually right after meditation)
- Knee circles and deflection
- Knee lifts
- Hip circles
- Waist twist
- Back arch side to side
- Back arch forward and back
- Trunk rotation

- Shoulder circles forward and back
- Arms back and forth, up and down
- Arm circles forward and back
- Small circles
- Pull elbow over head (back-scratch stretch)
- Pull elbow across chest to opposite shoulder
- Front deltoids/biceps stretch
- Elbow flexing
- Wrist conditioning
- Head forward and back, pivot side to side, tipping to shoulders, and circles
- Neck side stretch
- Forward or elliptical leg stretches (hamstrings, biceps, upper quadriceps)
- Side leg stretch (adductors)
- Back kick stretch (hamstrings, biceps, upper quadriceps)

Technical work: Introduction of new techniques, combinations, forms and supervision of sparring and grappling will generally be done by a certified instructor.

- Review new technique from prior session
- Combinations alone or with a partner, dummy- or bag-work, or breaking
- Sparring, Grappling, Forms or special topic
- New technique presentation and drilling

Calisthenics and Static Stretching: Always save calisthenics and static stretching -- muscle-fatiguing exercises -- for *after* dynamic activity. Experienced students are sometimes called upon to lead calisthenics. A personal progress record is included at the end of this booklet to help you track your own progress. The order of these exercise -- of the muscle groups being exercised, that is -- is important. Though other exercises may be substituted, try to maintain the general progression of beginning with extremities and working towards core stomach and back muscles.

- Grappling Drills: Breakfalls, rolls, sit out, reverse sit out, twist out, shrimping, knee-walk, defensive stand-up, throws, positioning, etc.
- Jump-rope, jogging (1-2 minutes per rank) or calf presses (10 per rank)
 - Calf stretch one -- locked leg
- Pull-ups (1+ per rank)
 - Calf stretch two -- bent leg
- Squats (20+ per rank)
 - Isolated femoral biceps and lower back stretch 1 (idle leg back)
 - Quadriceps stretch
 - Glute stretch
 - Repeat leg stretch series for other leg
- Push-ups (10+ per rank)
 - Lunge, hamstring, adductor stretch flow
- Sit-ups (or crunches, body curls, leg lifts, flutter kicks, etc. 10+ per rank)
 - Back arch stretch
- Back extensions/arches (5+ per rank)

Isolated femoral biceps and lower back stretch 2 (idle leg forward)
Back twist stretch
Butterfly stretch
Straddle stretches
Split stretches (intermediate and advanced only)

Brief relaxation and peaceful meditation

Repeat ethics

Secondary Topics: Topics that are appropriate only for a subset of the class -- usually adults or mature/experienced students -- are reserved for after class or other days. These include things like CPR, First Aid, self defense weapons, static stretching, etc.

After class: Avoid dynamic activity until your muscles have had time to recuperate. If you were learning a new technique, it is fine to repeat it, but don't attempt other new, complex techniques for a few hours, or it may impede your learning.

Images of some of the exercises mentioned in this section
(and some that are not)

**Tipping head
side to side**
(exercising neck).

Focus on curving
the neck from one
side to the other.



**Tipping head
forward and back**
(exercising neck).

Again, focus on
curving the neck.



**Turning head
side to side**
(exercising neck).

Go to the end of
your range of
motion and push
gently.



Wrist flexing



Wrist Twist 1

Keep the wrist against the chest, rotating fingers forward, away from body, towards the thumb. Keep wrist bent.

Tension is felt in the wrist and forearm.

If you end up with pain in the elbow (usually in the following days), don't apply as much pressure.



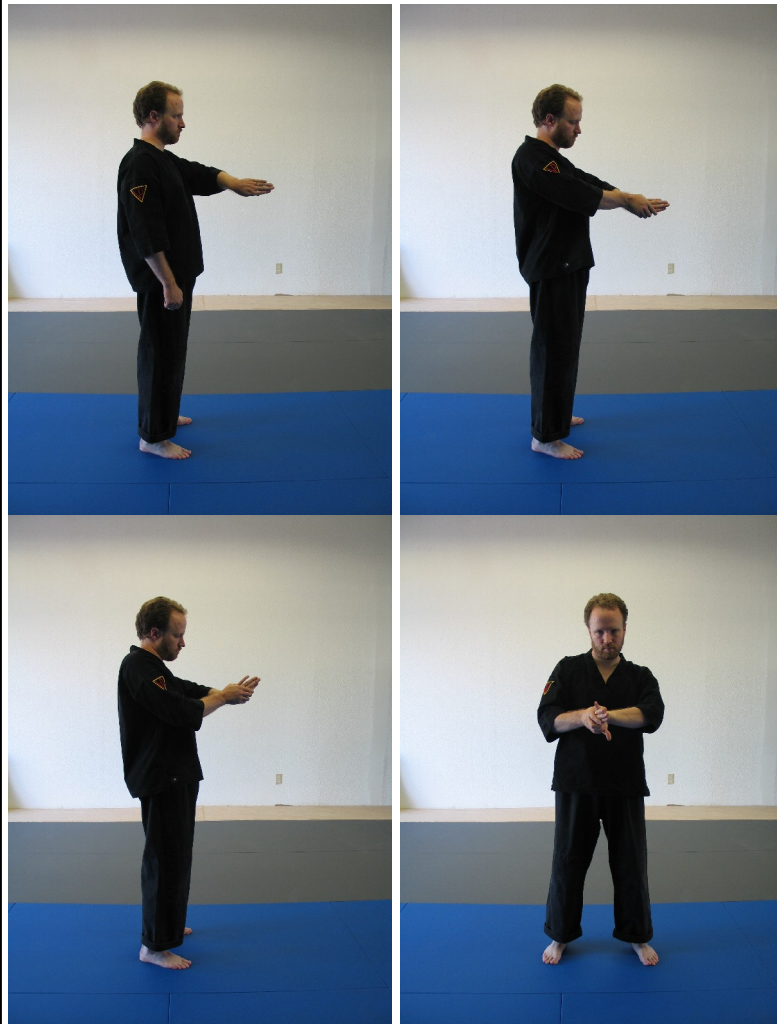
Wrist Twist 2

To get in the proper position, imagine you are inserting your hands – both of them – into elevator doors in an attempt to open them. Then take one of the hands and use it to twist the other hand up and back towards yourself.

Keep the elbow and wrist bent each at approximately right angles. This time you are rotating the wrist towards the little finger instead of the thumb.

Tension is felt in wrist and forearm. Be careful. The wrist and forearm are quite sensitive to being twisted in this direction.

If you end up with pain in the elbow, don't apply as much pressure.



Elbow flexes

Elbows generally get a fair amount of use during the day, but it can't hurt to make sure they are warmed up.

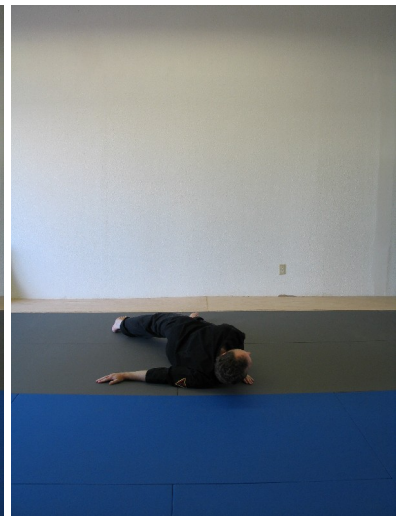
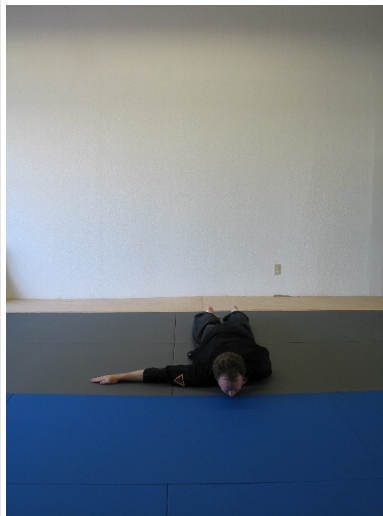


Front Deltoids and Biceps

Stretch or, "I fell on my face and can't get up" stretch.

Put your arm out, palm down, then roll your back towards that arm.

This can also be done against the wall or with an assistant gently pulling back on both arms simultaneously.



Other shoulder stretches

In the first one, the elbow is pulled to the opposite shoulder. In the second, it is pulled back over the shoulder.



This is actually a **neck stretch**, but we often end up doing it with the shoulder stretches.

Pull your elbow diagonally down across your chest and tip your head towards the opposite shoulder. You should feel the stretch along the side of the neck.



Swinging Arms Back and Forth

Also swing them in circular motions.



Shoulder and Back Stretches and Tension

1. Imagine you are pressing against the ceiling and the floor simultaneously.
2. Imagine you are drawing a bow, contracting the back and expanding the chest.



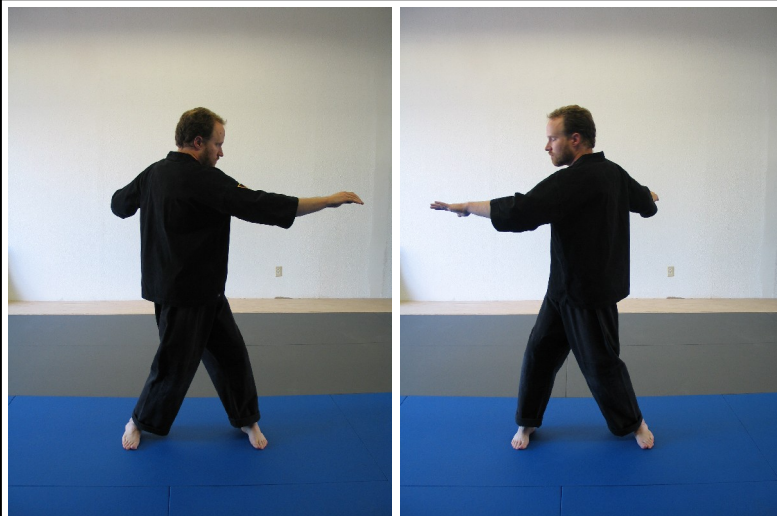
Trunk Rotation

Focus on bending/curving the spine, especially the lower back (“lumbar” portion of the spine).



Waist Twist

Some twist will translate to the hips, knees and ankles, but try to keep a lot of it in the back.

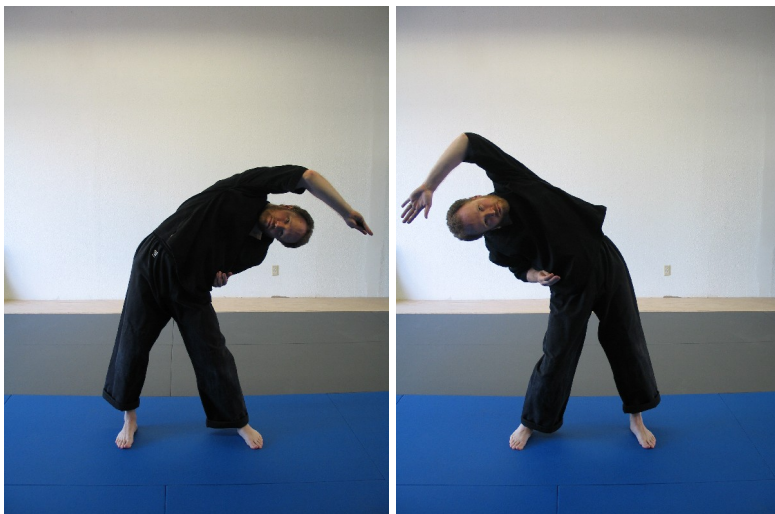


Back Arch -- Side to Side

To do this properly, imagine that you are sandwiched between two walls so that you can't twist your upper body, and do not support yourself with the lower hand.

Don't lift your hand over your head if you feel pinching in the shoulder.

Keep your knees locked, let your head tip in the direction of the arch and let your spine curve sideways.



Bend Forward

Breathe in deeply while reaching up. Slowly breathe out as you reach out and down, curving your spine forward.

Go down as far as you can while keeping your knees locked.



Back Arch

Point toes slightly out, bend the knees, breath in and arch back. Hands can be on hips or reaching back.

This can also be done against a wall. "Crawl" down the wall with your hands as you arch back. Or combine it with the forward stretch.

Allow your head to swing back and look back as far as you can.

If you are unsteady, have a partner spot you for safety, or you could support yourself on a nearby chair.



Hip Circles

Whereas with the trunk rotation you focus on arching the lumbar portion of the spine, with hip circles attempt to keep the spine straight. You should feel the motion in the hip joints, themselves.

Kids often enjoy doing this with a “hula hoop.”



Knee lifts

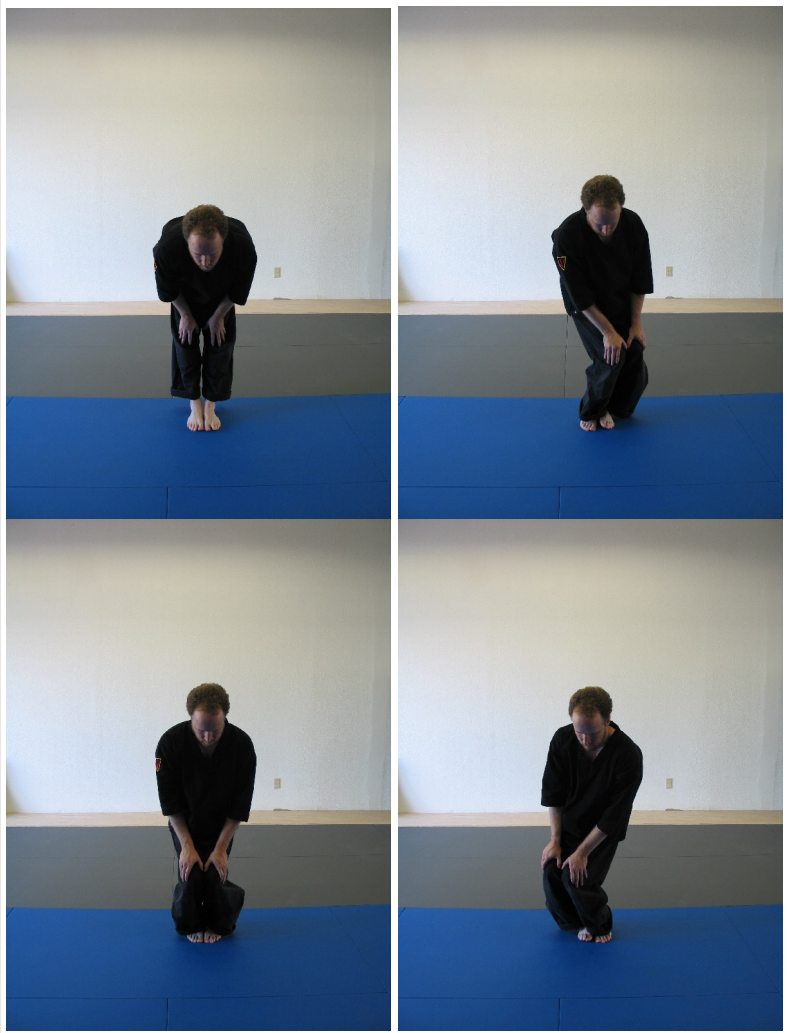
A good preparation for actual knee strike drilling, snap kicks and front kicks.



Knee Circles

With your feet and knees together, bend the legs slightly (at the knees), and move the knees in a circular motion.

Once the rotations are complete, lock your legs and push back gently on the knees.

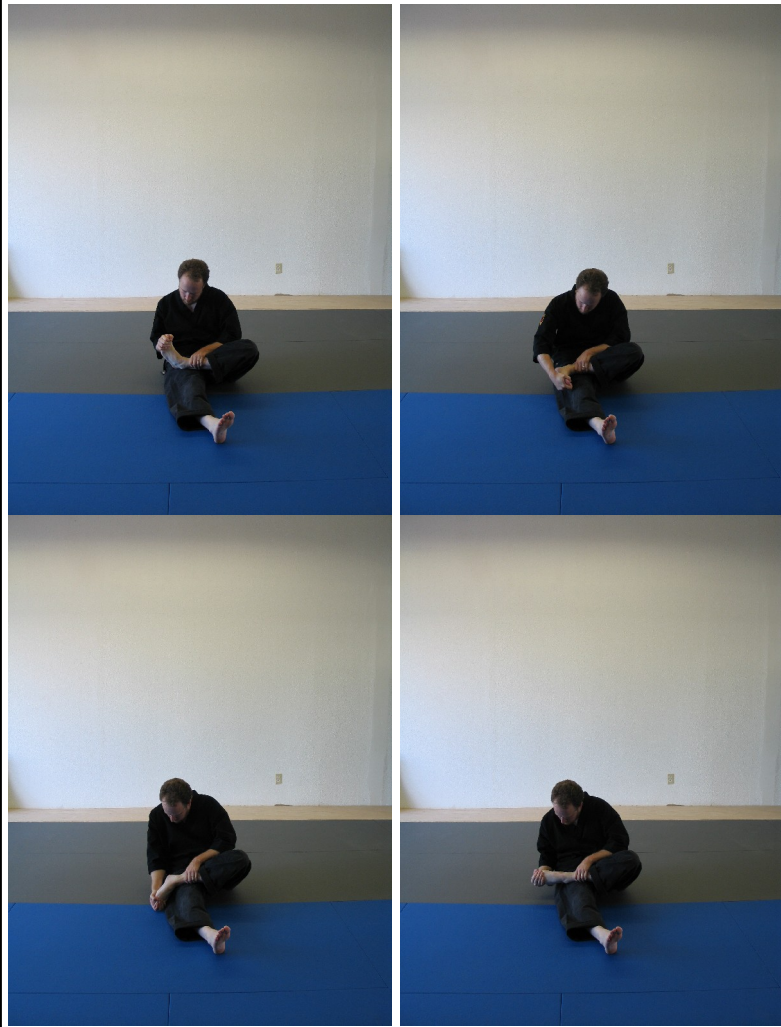


Ankle Circles

Crank your ankles through their complete range of motion several times.

When complete, pull your toes toward you (as if pointing your foot) to condition the tendons and muscles on the front of the foot, ankle and calf.

Optionally follow with toe movement and foot massage (same for hands).



Front Stretch

Swing your back leg forward, trying to keep it straight.

Do 8 – 12 of this and the following two stretches. Start low and gradually increase the pressure so that, by the last swing of each set you are going to your limit of motion.



Side Stretch

Begin with the feet angled out and turn your lead shoulder slightly back. Lift the leg to the side with the knee slightly bent and toes pointed slightly upward.

If you feel a pinching in the hips, turn them more so that your body is facing the direction of the stretch.



Back Stretch

Looking over your shoulder swing the leg back. You should be able to see the foot at the end of its swing. Most of this stretch is usually felt in the back of the planted leg.



Calf Presses

Don't bounce. Push up and hold for $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 second, then back down.

For more difficulty, stand with your toes on a step.

It is fine to use a chair, rail, wall or the like to maintain your balance.



Calf Stretching

Can be done standing, against a wall, or with arms supporting (as in this picture).

Keep the stretching leg locked and the heel on the ground with the toes pointing forward. The other leg can help push down on the stretching heel.

For the second calf stretch, slightly bend the knee of the stretching leg.



Squats ("Hindu")

These combine deep breathing, squatting and a rowing motion.

Begin with your arms out. Breathe in as you pull them towards your chest.

Breathe out as you descend into the squat and touch your fingertips to the ground at the moment of maximum exhale.

Breathe in as you stand back up.

Lather, rinse, repeat.

These are intended to be aerobic. Do them at the maximum speed you can without getting dizzy, a side-ache, etc.



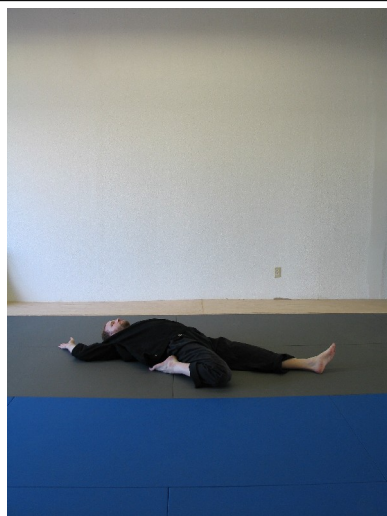
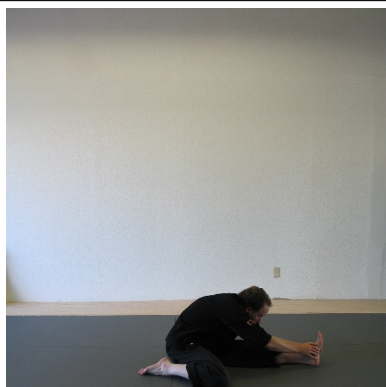
First Femoral Bicep Series

Begin with one leg extended and the other tucked beside/behind you with the top of the tucked foot on the floor.

Breath out and lean towards the extended leg.

Pull the knee of the tucked leg in and lean back as far as you can, keeping the knee of the folded leg on the floor. If you cannot lay back on the floor, support yourself with your arms.

Grab the knee of the bent leg and pull it to the same-side shoulder. You can also pull it to the opposite shoulder, followed by pulling the foot towards your face (“talk to the foot”).



Lunge Stretch Series

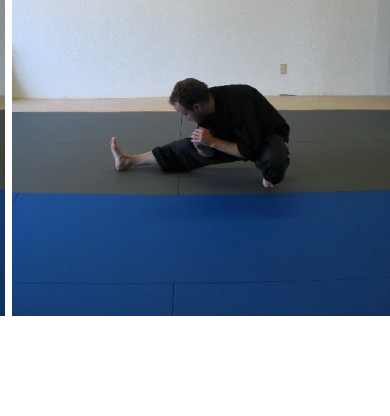
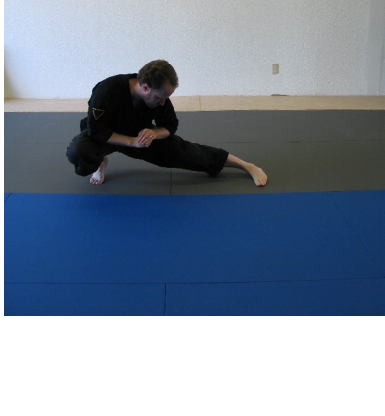
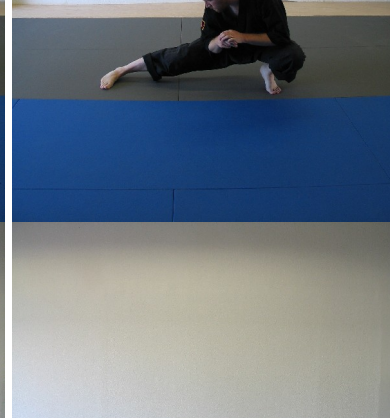
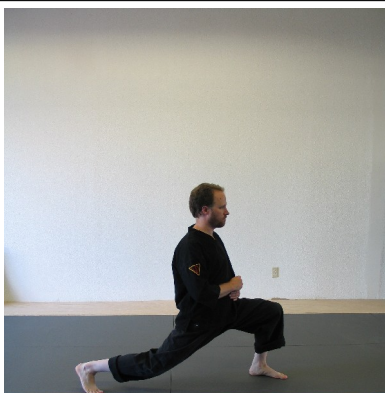
Begin with a lunge stretch. It is fine to start with your knee on the ground if you prefer.

Hold each stretch for five or more seconds. Your feet stay roughly in the same location on the floor throughout this series. At each step you'll be shifting your weight from one foot to the other.

Move your body back over the back foot, extending the front leg with toes pointing upward.

Turn the upward-pointing foot so that it is flat on the floor, and move your weight forward, over that foot. Keep the other foot flat on the floor, stretching the adductor muscles.

Shift your weight back to the other foot, stretching the adductors of the other leg.



Shift your weight again, this time pointing your toes upward, stretching the femoral biceps (hamstrings).

Shift your weight a final time, ending up in a lunge stretch opposite your starting one.

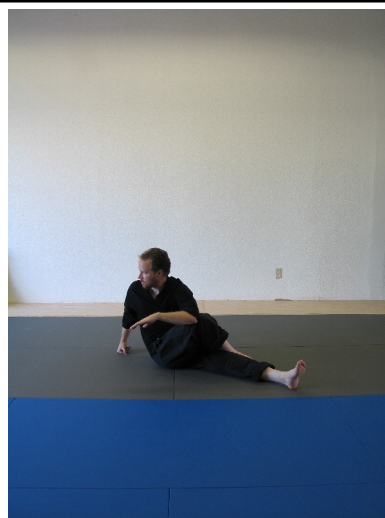
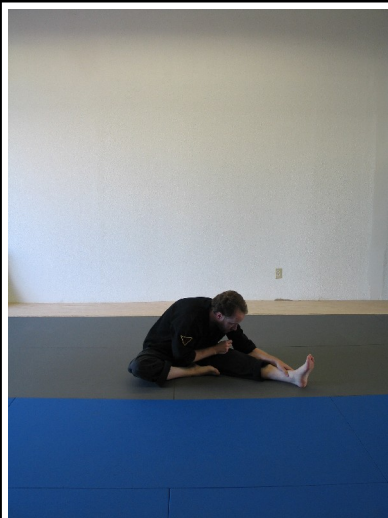


Second Femoral Bicep Series

This time, begin with one leg extended and the other leg tucked in front.

Lean towards the extended leg as you breath out.

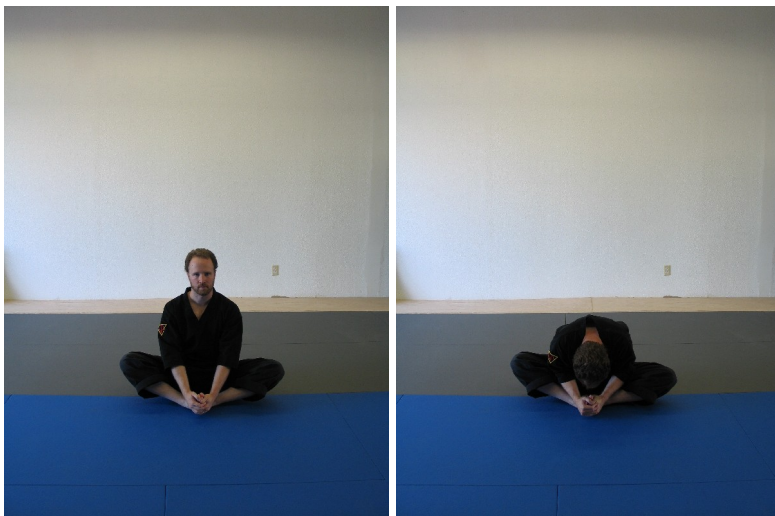
Put the foot of the folded leg over the knee of the extended leg. Place the opposite elbow against that knee so as to twist and stretch your back.



Butterfly Stretch

Place the soles of your feet together. Wrap your hands around your toes and pull your feet towards your body. Take a deep breath in.

Breath out as you pull yourself forward and down. You can extend your elbows and use them to push down on your knees.



Straddle Stretches

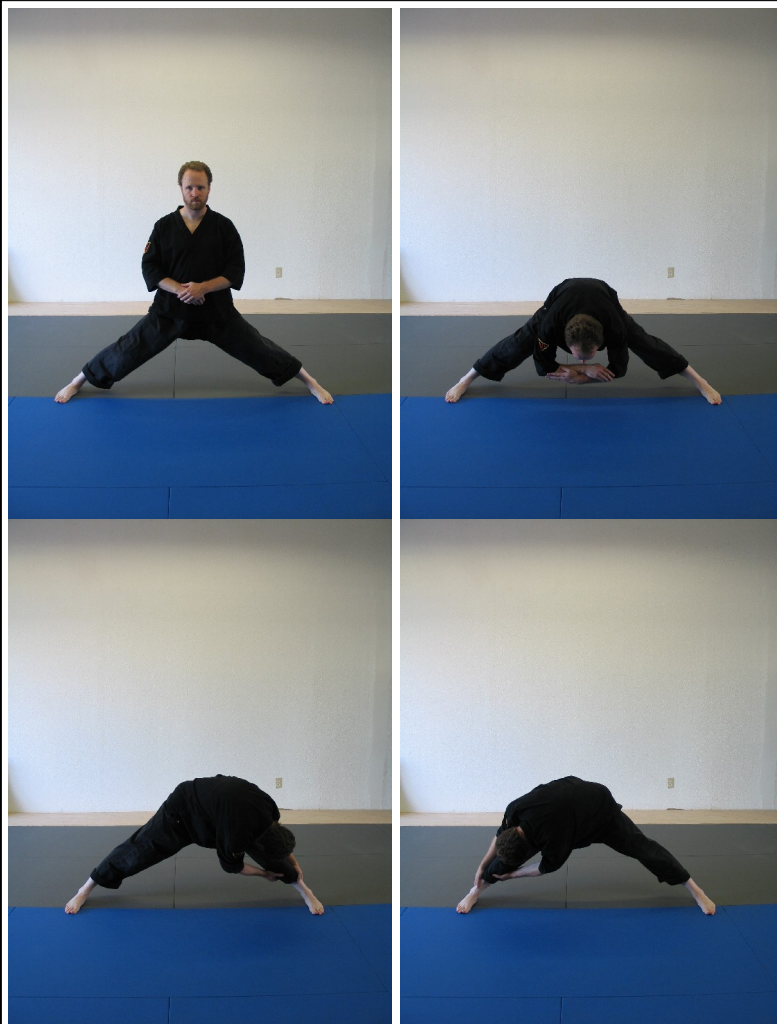
Begin by placing your feet a comfortable distance apart, legs locked, toes pointing forward. The geometry of the pelvis and hips will prevent going very far down with your body vertical.

Lean forward. In this position, you may be able to “walk your feet out” a few more inches. Hold this position for a few seconds.

Alternate pulling your body from leg to leg. You will feel the stretch in the adductors, hamstrings and lower back.

Go back to the center. Slowly walk your feet back to the standing position. End with a few hip circles to re-lubricate the hip joints.

Once you are more flexible, these can be done while seated on the floor.



FUNDAMENTALS

Though instruction in specific techniques is reserved to the actual class sessions, there are some fundamentals that we include in this manual as an introduction and reminder. The ones that can be described in a few sentences follow. Those that are more complex have their own sections in the following pages.

Stance and Posture

Most demonstration-based martial arts have a variety of precise geometrical stances or movements. We have one basic stance, which you are free to adapt as needed. We simply call it a natural stance. We aren't trying to stand or move like a different animal or machine, but in a way that is natural to the human body. Rather than learn different stances for different techniques, our emphasis is upon learning to deliver almost any technique from the natural stance, being aware of our balance, and adjusting as needed.

To assume the natural stance start with your feet about one shoulder-width apart, facing forward, knees slightly bent, heels barely touching the ground. Step *straight* back with one foot (usually your left) about one shoulder width. Turn the back foot roughly 45 degrees outward, and turn your body slightly sideways, 30-45 degrees. Keep your back straight, knees bent, and weight on the balls of your feet – not the heels. Keep your weight evenly distributed. Lift your open hands, palms facing forward, keeping your elbows in against your ribs. The hands should be at approximately shoulder level, and extended comfortably about half way from your body.



Above all the position should feel stable, comfortable and natural. Keep your head facing the threat, with your eyes directed slightly downward to his center of mass -- not his face or eyes. Your head should be tilted slightly down and chin tucked into your forward shoulder. Look at his hands, pockets and belt line for any weapons. If you cannot clearly see that both palms are empty and there is no obvious weapon, assume that he has a weapon. If he reaches towards a pocket, behind his back or under his shirt, assume that he is reaching for a weapon.



The stance is adapted by degrees by lengthening or shortening with footing, changing the alignment of

the feet, the amount of crouch, weight distribution and twist to the body. The closer the attacker is, the more advised it is to turn sideways, crouch, bend the knees, tuck the chin into the shoulder, etc.

In self defense the targets we are attempting to strike -- the eyes, neck, lower abdomen, etc. -- are fragile. It doesn't take a great deal of power to damage them. Speed and accuracy are most important. Consequently, we *generally* keep our strong, most coordinated side forward. For most people, this is the right hand/leg. However, be aware that there is a risk in this stance; it tends to expose the liver to hits. In most assaults that attacker is trying to rearrange your face -- not your body -- so it usually won't be an issue except in sport sparring.

This isn't necessarily the ideal stance for every possible technique, but an important element of self defense is surprise. You don't want your attacker to realize that you are preparing to defend yourself. The intention is to look as non-threatening and non-combative as possible, while being well protected and ready to spring into action, so we don't drop into an exaggerated "fighting stance" and put up our fists.

Uniforms

Wear durable, clean clothing for exercising. Uniforms are available but are not required for the self defense portion of Via Potentia training (the first year).

If you get a uniform, we recommend a pullover top instead of the more common Japanese-style martial arts top. The latter tends to flap open during training, has tie-straps that are constantly breaking with heavy use, and requires a belt to keep closed. Altogether one ends up spending too much time just adjusting his uniform.

Most martial arts provide flimsy "student" uniforms. Get a heavy-duty one, at least 12oz. Lightweight uniforms are just going to wear and tear out with the kinds of drills we do.

Eyes and Awareness

Never allow a known threat out of your vision or turn your back on him. It is better to see the attack coming and put up some defense than turn your back and have none. For example, as much as we don't want to get hit in the face, it is better to suffer a broken nose than to get hit with the same force in the back of the head and get knocked out.

We avoid looking a person in the eyes in self defense. His eyes can't hurt you, so there is no need to pay them special attention (though some people signal where they are going to strike by looking there first). Keep your vision focused on his center of mass and be aware of his hands and anything that is in them. Keeping your eyes there allows you to also see his feet, and head tilted down so that the top of his head is visible just under your eyebrows. I can detect and deflect almost any initial incoming attack by simply keeping my eyes on the center of mass and maintaining distance. A person can't move in and strike without giving off signals of intent.

Also be aware of movement in your peripheral vision, or sounds of people approaching behind you.

Control the Distance

If you are suddenly aware of an assault, the first thing to do is to jump back. If possible, just run. If you can't immediately escape, it is time to fight. Note the contrast between this and the principles of military combatives. In genuine combatives training one aggressively closes with the enemy, acquires and maintains a dominant position, and then finishes the enemy as quickly and efficiently as possible. This is fine for true combat, or when you are protecting your home or family; when retreat/escape is not an option. Otherwise, our focus is on fighting to escape.

Insofar as is possible, maintain a distance between you and your opponent so that your preferred weapons, whatever those may be, would just touch at their ends when fully extended. If unarmed, this means that you should attempt to keep (at least) two arms lengths between you. This allows you to discern whether your attacker is armed, has accomplices, etc., and may give you sufficient time to detect an incoming attack -- he will have to move his center of mass -- and respond. It also keeps you close enough that you can initiate an attack, as well.

Another approach is to establish the distance that gives you the most advantage based on your own skills. If you are great with kicks, keep that distance. If boxing is your thing, maintain a boxing distance. Elbows and knees? Go closer. Finally, if you are a good "dirty fighter" from the clinch, or prefer throws and grappling, close to that distance and execute. *Do what works for you.*

Controlling the distance is a two-way street. Your attacker will also be attempting to maintain his preferred distance (usually about one arm away from your face). Some people will close aggressively, or you might be surprised or in tight quarters where you cannot maintain distance. Also, once you have assessed the situation, you can then make a determination as to whether to close the distance and attack, or to flee if possible -- usually a good idea.

Different kinds of techniques work at different ranges and on different targets. Some arts work on understanding various ranges or specialize on specific ones. We do not. Whether you are two arms' lengths apart, tight against each other, rolling on the ground, or anywhere in between, there are always openings and your job is to figure out what technique to use to deliver power to those vulnerabilities.

Breathing and Relaxation

Various breathing exercises are performed in class, including deep, slow breathing for conditioning the lungs. For self defense breathing, keep your stomach firm, breath in through your nose, and out through your mouth. A common mistake during drilling is to not breathe enough (or at all), resulting in rapid exhaustion, nausea, dizziness or even passing out. When starting, breath in and out with each

move -- in as you begin, out as you execute. Some combinations can be performed in one breath.

Keep your stomach and hands firm, but try to keep the the rest of your body relaxed. Overly-tense muscles and held breath result in slow movements and a lot of extra expelled energy.

Yelling

Yelling is a critical element of actual self defense. A good yell will scare your attacker, cause him to hesitate, freeze or flee, and give you a sense of power for executing your attack. An effective yell – think “screaming roar” – will be heard for *hundreds* of yards (and probably blow out your voice for several minutes).

Step-slide Movement

A real self defense event is rarely graceful; it is nothing like the fancy fight scenes on television or in the movies. Trips, falls, misses and sloppy movements are common; fancy, precision moves backfire; this is partially due to the presence of adrenaline, but more to the reality of dealing with an uncooperative person who is actually trying to harm you in an uncontrolled environment. The last place we want to be in self defense is on the ground, especially if facing armed or multiple opponents. This requires moving in a way that, though not very pretty, helps keep balance, avoid trips and deliver power. (We also do not use high kicks or other fancy, show-off moves that are likely to end up with you on the ground in less than ideal circumstances.)

When moving for self defense, we do what is called a "step-slide." I jokingly refer to it as the zombie walk. If moving forward, the leading foot steps forward first, and the back foot slides forward so that you are back in your natural stance. When going backwards, do just the opposite. *The foot nearest the destination moves first*; avoid crossing legs or radically changing your stance/balance (on accident). Imagine that each foot is on a separate rail and must be set back down on the same rail, roughly a shoulder-length back from the lead foot.

For upper body techniques, movement is ideally coordinated such that the moment of contact coincides roughly with the touching down of the lead foot. For lower body techniques, the posture of the grounded foot and leg is critically-important and is unique to each technique -- this step-slide movement does not apply when executing most leg techniques.

See the technical reference section for an example of step-slide movement.

Falling and Rolling

Falling and rolling are important safety drills not only for self defense, but just for general protection. Many people are seriously injured or even killed every year simply because they fell improperly (many times more people die from falls than do from gun accidents). The goal in proper falling is to try to move such that the force of

impact is kept away from the head, spine and vital organs, and instead focused on tougher areas like the arms. This is usually accomplished by forcefully slapping down one or both forearms and palms such that they strike the floor just before the body.

However, a common mistake in falling is to try to catch one's self, resulting in a broken wrist or shoulder.

In self defense, one rarely *wants* to be on the ground. The complement to falling is getting back up. Yes, there is a "proper" self defense method for standing up, the goal again being to protect the head and organs from the attacker.

Blocking, Deflecting & Moving

If someone really wants to hit you, you are going to get hit. Probably several times. Painfully. The best you'll be able to do is to absorb or deflect some of the power with your arms, thereby protecting your more vulnerable targets.

There are several general principles to our deflecting and blocking:

1. Never attempt to block a weapon unless it is necessary to protect your body from getting hit. Better to dodge out of the way if possible.
2. Keep your elbows in and your hands up.
3. Attempt to use the edge or back of your forearm and hand to block strikes whenever possible. Heavy blows to the inside of the arm – let alone knife cuts – can be painful, severely damaging to muscles, nerves and arteries, and make you incapable of closing your hand.
4. Own the line between you and the attacker; always keep a defense up along that plane. This frustrates most attacks, making difficult to get direct, powerful blows into you without interference. The attacker has to resort to indirect strikes, or go through your defenses. Indirect strikes tend to be less powerful, are easier to block, and open him up to counterattack.
5. Keep your eyes on the attacker's center of mass – not on his eyes. This allows you to better detect his movement and see his feet as well as his arms.
6. Do not stand in one place. Keep moving, ducking, weaving, especially your head; it is harder to squarely hit a moving target.
7. Keep your body turned at the angle that makes it most difficult for the attacker to deliver power shots to you.
8. Keep your chin down and lead shoulder up.
9. Keep your stomach firm at all times. If struck, breath out forcefully with the hit.
10. Block and deflect and move so that you end up outside of the attacker's "pocket," the space squarely in front of him at punching range. By displacing to his side you still have many vulnerable targets you can hit, but his ability to defend himself and attack are diminished. The ideal is to move towards his weak side, which for most people is the left or whichever hand is forward.

Hand Posture

We rarely strike with punches or make fists in self defense. “Putting up fists” can be interpreted as voluntarily participating in a fight; fisted punches, especially to the cranium, often result in damage to the wrist or bones of the hand; doing so eliminates some of the element of surprise, which is important for self defense. However, fingers should generally be kept together. They are much easier to break when separated.

We do train with punches for purpose of learning to defend from common attacks. And people are obviously free to use punches if they wish. There are several different fist styles. For the most part, focus on curling the fingers as tightly as possible, place the thumb firmly underneath or beside them; never inside or behind. And keep the wrist straight; the back of the hand and forearm should be a straight line.

If you wish to use punches, you need to determine which knuckles you will focus on and develop your hands to handle the force. Some prefer the first two knuckles; some the first three; some the last three. Whichever you choose, whenever you work on a heavy bag practice punching with those knuckles. Also do knuckle pushups on those knuckles. If you do these on a hard floor it will help condition them; if you do it on a soft floor or mats it places more strain on and develops the wrists.

Time and Chance

There are “perfect” techniques – ones that will work on any person; the problem is getting into the position where you can apply them with power and precision. We rarely get to choose the position in which we find ourselves relative to someone else, so we have to select attacks that work from various positions; standing facing each other, from the side, on the ground, sitting, etc.

In any human endeavor, especially conflict, there is uncertainty. People respond differently and unpredictably to pain and injury, especially if on drugs or enraged. Don't be surprised or dismayed if strikes that you thought would be debilitating have little effect. A technique that works great on one person may not work at all on someone else. Consequently, you cannot rely on a single technique, but must continue to strike a variety of targets, sometimes causing multiple injuries, before the attacker is beaten enough that you can escape.

Learning a New Technique

Imagine that, when you are exposed to a new technique, you learn it to a degree represented by a number between 1 and 100. Our goal is to maximize that degree of learning. The technical word for this is assimilation or integration.

Maximizing assimilation requires that you observe the new technique properly, understand its purpose and mechanics, visualize it in your mind so powerfully that

you can almost feel yourself doing it, perform it properly and repetitively and without distraction, and then allow your body and mind several hours to restfully integrate the learning without interruption by some other, new, complex move.

In other words, learn one new move at a time, then wait at least a day before trying to learn another one.

Combinations

Individual techniques are rarely useful against human opponents. Once you've learned a technique, the next step is to train your mind and body to fluidly integrate it with other learned techniques so that you can spontaneously create effective combinations of techniques with power, speed and accuracy.

Whenever possible, always practice techniques *in combination with other techniques* and with speed and force against resistance like a heavy bag. In other words, if you already have down the front kick, don't ever just do repetitive front kicks. Instead, combine it with a variety of other techniques.

In fact, we urge you to develop your own favorite techniques; ones that incorporate moves that feel the most natural to you, and that you can execute quickly, accurately and with power. Ideally these will cover targets at a variety of levels. We don't have set combinations that we require all participants to learn. This is due to the wide variety of abilities and sizes in our classes. You need to develop combinations that work for you.

There is a time to practice techniques in isolation; that is when you are first learning the techniques, or there is a problem with the technique and you need to relearn or improve it.

Full Body Involvement

The ability to deliver force to a target depends on many factors. A critical one is the coordinated involvement of the entire body in the technique, especially the strength of the stomach and back. This is one of the reasons for our emphasis upon personal conditioning.

By way of example, let us consider a punch. An inexperienced striker will just use his arm; it is like getting hit by rock weighing a few pounds moving at 30 mph. An experienced striker knows how to involve his whole body; it is like getting hit by a 180 pound rock at 30 mph. Obviously, the latter will be much more effective.

As you learn different techniques, practice doing them in such a way that incorporates the strength of your entire body -- not just the arm or leg in question. The mechanics are unique to each move, and will be explained as you learn new techniques and advance in ability.

Full body coordination comes with time and practice.

Power, Speed & Accuracy

For self defense, knowing the moves is not enough. Being fast is not enough. Winning competitions and trophies is irrelevant. When engaging in violence for self defense, we are attempting to rapidly deliver force to the vulnerabilities of our attacker while protecting our own vulnerabilities, so as to injure him severely enough that we can escape. *This requires a specific progression of training:*

- Physically and mentally integrating the technique
- Inserting it into spontaneous combinations
- Practicing the combinations in the air (without resistance), with a partner using limited force, and at full force with a heavy bag or other object able to take the power
- Learning to (deciding to) overcome the natural psychological restraints that prevent us from harming another

Many people have decent form and speed (technical form) -- and many who lack one or both -- but no power. They can hit the targets, but it doesn't make any difference because they haven't learned *delivery*. On the other hand, some have great power (usually due to size), but lack technique. They can use brute force overpower a much smaller, weaker person, but are flummoxed by someone with good technique. You must have all three; accuracy, speed and power. Many smaller people never develop power because, frankly, it is uncomfortable. It positively hurts.

When you deliver a blow you actually experience as much power as the receiver. This is an oversimplification, but there is little difference between punching someone and them running into your fist. This is why, for self defense, we take tough, insensitive things like knees and elbows, and use them to attack sensitive areas. Nonetheless it does require some toughening, or at least a readiness for the discomfort.

We aren't "into" pain, but the truth is that it hurts to hit things forcefully. You need to know what that feels like, and how to deal with it. Hence our emphasis on heavy bag work. Also, if someone is truly trying to harm you, you are almost certainly going to get hit, kicked, etc. Yes, try to block it, but recognize that "blocking" a strike is more about deflecting its power rather than doing a clean block. You are still going to feel it.

And larger people generally need to develop accuracy and speed to match their power, rather than just rely on the power alone. (Size and power are huge advantages, but if assaulted, it will probably be by someone who is yet more powerful, or who has other advantages.) When doing drills, whether on the bag, in the air, or with a partner, always pick and strive to hit the target. Yes, power is great for self defense, and the fact that someone is large and powerful makes it much less likely that they'll be picked as an assault target, but developing proper technique is still important for personal perfection and application.

In an emergency you will instinctively fall back on how you have trained. "You will perform as you practice." If you train primarily in the air, without force or follow-

through, then your moves will be ineffective -- good for show only. This is why most martial artists, even good ones, wouldn't last five seconds in a real attack. However, if you train with full force, speed and follow-through, your strikes will have consequences for the recipient.

Attack with Ferocity

Defending is losing. It is only a matter of time – usually very little time – before you get injured if all you are doing is trying block incoming shots. To succeed in self defense you must attack viciously. Learn to strike simultaneously with a block.

Successful self defense sometimes requires striking *preemptively*, once you've decided that you are in danger. For example if an aggressor is approaching you in a threatening manner and you have the luxury of noticing it when he is still several feet away, you can step back, put your hands up defensively, clearly say that you don't want to fight, you are leaving, etc. At this point imagine a bubble or fence around you a little more than an arm's length away. This bubble represents the boundary at which you could easily attack him, and you are at risk of him attacking you.

If the aggressor backs away and leaves you alone, then there is no problem. But if he continues to close to (or through) your fence, that is the ideal time to go from appearing submissive and compliant to attacking aggressively. You don't wait for him to start swinging; once you get hit a few times you might not be able to put up a defense.

If he is already within your fence when you become aware of him and the danger, you'll need to make a snap decision on whether to immediately attack or jump back to evaluate the situation.

A common response to extreme fear or pain is to go into a mild level of shock, psychological numbness. The moves become weak and clumsy. This is a natural response, and there are good reasons for it, but it is something that we must overcome if we are going to fight. You must keep a clear head and attack, attack, attack until you have broken your attacker and can escape.

Adaptation

Form follows function in *Via Potentia*, and here our function is to protect our vulnerabilities while attacking the opponent's. There are many different ways of doing any particular technique or combination thereof. There is rarely a single, "right" way. Consider the deceptively complex roundhouse or chop kick. It can be done with the tip of the foot (toes pointed), the ball of the foot (toes pulled back), the top/instep of the foot or the lower third of the shin (which is the way that we usually do it). Then comes the orientation of the body, the planted foot, the position of the arms, etc. Each is appropriate in a different situation or target, and to your own abilities.

We fully expect you to adapt the techniques to your own abilities, limitations and the particular situation. Make it yours. This adaptation can and should work its way into your practice of combinations, sparring, forms and other drills. For example, in form one the first few moves include a hammer strike followed by an elbow strike. These are ideally directed at the opposite sides of the jaw, but they could just as easily be directed at the collarbone, sternum, chin, ribs, xiphoid, etc. -- whatever is open.

Another aspect of adaptation is the sense in which the entire curriculum must be adapted to your own skills. Different techniques will appeal to and work better for different people. Some will prefer kicks, punching, elbows and knees, infighting, throws, etc. Don't worry about trying to develop expertise with all techniques. We try to expose you to a lot of different ones so that you can find the ones that work best for your body type, skills and psychology.

We also understand that some drills and exercises are going to appeal more to some people than to others. If you really enjoy doing or are good at forms, sparring, bagwork, grappling or another drill, that is fine. We do not expect you to be able to do everything perfectly or equally well; we just want to make sure you are developing useful self defense skills.

Plain Clothes

You should practice in clothes that you commonly wear from time to time. Your typical clothing might limit your movement much more than our uniform or what you wear to exercise (sweats, shorts, etc.).

Explosive Commitment and Determination

The one who prevails in a conflict is often the one who was first willing to go the furthest (and did), the one who caused the first serious injury.

When a bomb goes off or a light switch is flipped, anything less than 100% is a dud, a failure. If you do choose to fight (or flee) in a self defense situation, your actions must be similar; they must provide no warning, be "explosive" in their speed and power, and be backed with 100%, all out, insane commitment. You can have no doubt, telegraphing or hesitation. You go from completely submissive, harmless and weak to rabid wolverine a fraction of a second. You are fighting for your life; to give up is to choose death.

To avoid injury we have to moderate this in class and when working with others, but it is something to practice whenever and insofar as is possible. Both this level of commitment and the willingness to cause injury to another person are very difficult for some people to generate.

Simplicity

Real self defense doesn't require exceptional strength, conditioning, speed or abilities. It does require maturity to know when to employ it and to accept the

responsibility for doing so. Any "self defense" technique that employs complex joint locks, jumping or spinning techniques, kicks above the waist or hand strikes to the torso is highly unlikely to work when needed. These are all show-off moves for martial arts demonstrations and competitions, and, with rare exception, they won't work on someone who isn't already beaten or otherwise submissive.

In the first year you will be introduced to dozens of possible techniques. Pick a few of your favorites and create your own combinations of two or three of them, and practice them over and over and over. Think of these as your personal "signature" moves if you like. Keep it simple: Eyes, ears, jaw, neck, abdomen, groin, ankle, instep. Strike any of these with enough force, and you'll create an injury that allow you to escape the danger.

Fighting to Escape

In class we practice techniques -- sometimes even "fight" -- for the purpose of developing skill, scoring points, winning or even just personal entertainment. No one here actually desires to injure others, so we hold back, and we play according to established rules and with respect for each other.

Not so in self defense. If you are attacked, you are fighting to escape and survive, not to score points or win a contest. People don't realize it until they try it, but it is much easier to fight to escape than it is to fight to defeat him; this is true even when facing a larger, stronger attacker. If you have reasonable strength and agility, it only takes a few seconds.

Weapons

Those who are serious about self defense carry a weapon at all times (some of us carry more than one). This adds another dimension to our self defense techniques. Many attacks happen too quickly to draw a weapon; in such cases, you are fighting to make space so that you can deploy the weapon without being stuffed or disarmed.

The Myth of Wrist Control

A lot of martial arts talk about getting control, especially wrist control, of an opponent. However, you will never get wrist control on someone who is a good match for you, let alone a likely attacker. If you get it, you got lucky, you are *much* more skilled and strong, he was already beaten/exhausted, or he was cooperating with you.

Compliance, soft training and cooperative training partners are the kiss of death for self defense training. A real attacker doesn't hold his punch out in the air while you strike him six times. He doesn't roll limply when you grab his wrist and twist. He doesn't lay on the ground (or sometimes go there at all) when you throw him. He doesn't grab you gently or give you time and freedom to execute your rehearsed

escapes. I'd have to say that about 90% of the drills I've seen in "traditional" martial arts simply wouldn't work in real life.

When first learning techniques, we do need to work gently and with a compliant partner. But once the general technique is down, it should be practiced with increased resistance and realism. Don't leave your punches hanging out there. Don't cooperate. Make your training partner work for – earn – every victory.

When sparring and grappling, work up to the highest level of intensity possible without injuring yourself or your training partner.

Grappling versus Striking

Grappling is a good approach when dealing with a single, unarmed opponent under controlled circumstances, especially if you don't wish to seriously harm him.

Grappling should not be your chosen tool if there is any chance that the attacker has an edged weapon or assistants. Nonetheless, an assault often will end up on the ground despite your efforts, and it is therefore important to know grappling basics, especially those that can help you improve a bad position, resist common attacks and escape.

Some points to keep in mind:

1. This isn't a one or the other choice. If someone has closed and is attempting to grapple you, you are still free to elbow, knee, pinch, claw, etc.
2. If a powerful person really wants to close on you and wrestle, you won't be able to prevent him short of simply outrunning him.
3. For self defense you must learn to do *both* grappling and striking with some proficiency.
4. Do not attempt to *defeat* an attacker on the ground – to pin or submit him. Focus on escape. Move, strike, improve your position, strike, improve, etc., until you can get up.
5. A strong, large attacker can hold you indefinitely on the ground in some positions. You must cause him discomfort or otherwise cause him to move so that you can change position.
6. When defending, keep your elbows in, your body turned sideways (never turn your back), and keep moving downward.
7. If you end up on the ground or clinched it is critical that you control the opponent's arms and prevent him from reaching into his pockets.

"What If" Monkeys

Don't be a "what if monkey" unless you like ridicule and pushups. The WIM constantly comes up with bizarre, unrealistic scenarios and asks what technique should be employed to get out of them. He routinely interrupts class and whatever topic is being taught.

For example, "what if you are attacked by three ninjas while walking out of 7-11; one has an Uzi, one has a spear, and the third is wearing an explosive device and got you into a rear naked choke?" The answer to most WIM questions is "that is ridiculous," or, "you should have never gotten into that position in the first place," or, "will you please shut up you twit." To which he replies, "yes, but, what if it happened?" The answer to which is, "you are screwed, now do some pushups and stop asking stupid questions."

That being said, if you *genuinely* don't understand something, please do ask. Just know that repeated questions about hypothetical scenarios, especially unlikely ones, probably will result in you become relatively disliked by the instructor and the rest of the class.

"I Learned it This Way" Monkeys

A close relative of the What If Monkey, and certainly deserving of equal disdain, this primate is an amateur that learned something at another school or out of a book and can't restrain himself from constantly informing the instructor or the rest of the class on how a specific move *should* be done. "Ultimate Grand Master Sifu Sensei So-n-so of the Phantom Dragon Style says your foot must be angled six point three degrees to the left!"

There isn't any single, right way to implement any self defense technique. Even the most basic moves have dozens of variations. We've merely picked the ones that are generally most appropriate to self defense, recognizing that everything is adapted to our own abilities and the situation at hand. Our emphasis is on basic, simple moves for use in an emergency. In Via Potentia, it is fine to do techniques the way you learned them elsewhere, and we are open to improvement to the curriculum. Indeed, it is usually difficult to do a move differently than the way we first learned it. But remember, almost every other martial art focuses on form over function -- on how things look or how to score points over how to actually defend yourself from violence. Doing techniques the way they are taught elsewhere may result in serious, even catastrophic, failure at the worst possible moment.

That being said, if you did learn a technique differently elsewhere, feel free to share that with the instructor *outside* of class, and leave it to him to decide whether it merits sharing with the group. But don't push it. Time is limited. If the instructor discerns that you are an "I learned it this way" monkey and you are eating up all of his free time, he may decide that you would be better off just returning to your old class and to Ultra Grand Master Sifu Sensei So-n-so of the Phantom Dragon Style.

"I don't get it" Monkeys

Sometimes you just won't get it. That is okay. Don't be embarrassed. Sometimes I don't get it either. We all have problems with certain techniques or concepts. It could be that the instructor failed to explain or demonstrate a technique well, that there was a distraction, or something else.

Look around you and try to figure out if everyone isn't getting it, or it is just you. If it is just you, talk to the instructor about it after class or during a break. If it is everyone, do bring it to the instructor's attention immediately.

Sea Monkeys

Sea monkeys are strange looking water creatures. Don't be a sea monkey. See a doctor immediately if you are becoming a sea monkey.

Monkey (in general)

For self defense, just be a monkey. They fight savagely, without concern for appearances or rules. They'll even throw their own feces at rivals. We don't recommend you go that far, but if you are threatened, it wouldn't hurt to just start picking up every loose object around you and hurl them at the threat.

Other Resources

You are *generally* welcome to incorporate other techniques into your training as long as it doesn't disrupt the class or cause an injury. We encourage you to learn as much as you want to from any helpful source. For example, there are many great (and free) technical videos on the Internet, and many excellent books and videos available that go beyond the basics we cover in class.

Rank and Other Fantasies

“Poor is the pupil who does not surpass his master.” ~ Leonardo DaVinci

In our program rank represents the amount of training you've done, and the conditioning and skills you've exhibited; it means nothing in a self defense event, and it means nothing in regard to your value or dignity as a human being. Your actual abilities might exceed or be beneath your apparent rank, and in many cases someone with a lower rank may be able to dance all over someone with a higher one, depending on factors like size, strength, experience, technical skill, flexibility, etc.

Never shy away from going against people who are larger, stronger, more skilled, of a higher rank, etc. This is how you learn. Do everything you can do to defeat him. Test every technique you know or are taught against as many different people as possible. A good instructor or high ranking student will be happy to work with you, even if you defeat him.

Class Customs

Some martial arts have rigid rules regarding how students interact with each other and present themselves (even outside of class). Via Potentia does not impose customs regarding attire or social interaction from one culture upon another. For greeting each other and general interaction, simply follow the customs of your

society for being polite, warm and kind. For example, if it is normative in your society to bow to each other, then do so in class. If it is normative to shake hands, then shake hands. If you wish, or it is the custom of your particular class, then you are free to use the Via Potentia salute, which will be demonstrated by your instructor (this salute should be used, if appropriate, during formal events such as tournaments).

The same principle should be observed for addressing each other. In Via Potentia we do not pride ourselves with special titles, or look down on those with lower ranks or less experience. Adults are free to address each other, again, in keeping with the norm for your culture and the customs for your class. If that means calling upon each other by first name, that is fine. If it means "sir," "ma'am," "mister," "miss," or another courtesy, that is fine, as well. The key here is to recognize and express that we are all equals in human dignity. If honor or courtesy is shown, it shouldn't be merely one-way, uphill.

Regarding dress, select exercise clothing that is comfortable and appropriate for exercise and exertion. For self defense, this may be your regular street clothing, but sweats, shorts or similar clothing that allow a greater range of movement and are strong enough to resist tearing are all fine. Uniforms are available but not required for the self defense portion -- the first year -- of the curriculum.

Via Potentia also does not impose a system by which new participants must be obedient to or follow the orders of more experienced, higher ranking participants. This is all voluntary and, if anything, more experienced people are there to serve, assist and act as examples to the newer participants.

Instructors should always set an example by their appearance and by treating others with equal or greater respect than they expect to be shown to them. They are to never require special obedience, submission or reverence from the students, but are to respect the person, liberty and property of every person.

Recommended Equipment and Space

These items are not required, but to get the most from this program, it is helpful if you have (and use) the following items at home for your personal exercise time:

- A friend or family member to work with you
- Striking target pads
- Heavy bag for power development
- Quality mats to practice rolls, falls, forms, take-downs and throws; also good for stretching and calisthenics
- Elastic bands (for use with dynamic leg stretch and rotator cuff exercises)
- Support stands (for splits and push-ups)
- Pull-up bar (or rings) and jump rope
- A clear area about 10' x 15'
- A sparring/grappling dummy to practice throws and positioning

We do not require uniforms at the beginning stage. Via Potentia can provide a uniform if you desire one. Or you can acquire your own. If you get one yourself, get medium weight or heavier, and a pullover top -- not the common, Japanese-style top that constantly comes undone during activity. The cheap, lightweight ones used in most martial arts won't hold up to grabs, throws and other heavy use. All white for beginners. Other tops -- blue, red and black -- will be provided by Via Potentia as you advance.

If you wish to do contact sparring get a good set of sparring equipment; make sure that the gloves are "sparring" or "training" gloves. Not "bag" or "fight" gloves; these do not have enough protection for you or your partner. Sparring gloves have additional padding to protect your hands and your training partner's body. On shin guards you shouldn't be able to feel the shin bone through the padding. And on the headgear, full face boxing style sparring head gear with chin coverage is best. The more of the face it covers, the less chance of a broken nose or an accidental knockout. Wear a mouthpiece. Men, wear a cup or foul guard.

If you do much grappling, ear protection can help avoid discomfort or permanent ear damage.

Rotating Emphases

Our classes have rotating schedules that place a roughly-equal emphasis upon technical development (new technique, combinations, partner drills, bagwork), review (forms), sparring and grappling. These and other topics are explicitly directed by the curriculum. Less obvious is the rotating emphasis upon speed, technical precision, power or endurance. Of course, the ideal is to simultaneously achieve all of these. But the reality is that we are limited human beings and are better at focusing on a single goal at a time.

When the emphasis for the evening is speed, concentrated on having your actual techniques be fast. This requires being relaxed, especially relaxing the antagonist muscles associated with a movement. Flexibility helps with speed, too, so pay extra attention to your stretching.

When the emphasis is on precision, concentrate on controlling your techniques so that they go precisely to their targets.

When the emphasis is on power, make sure that your moves have as much power as you can pack into them (without injuring yourself). Practice against heavy bags and resisting targets. Push yourself harder in the strength-building calisthenics.

Finally, when the emphasis is on endurance, push yourself a little harder, take fewer breaks, etc. Do extra repetitions or minutes of the exercises, especially ones like jump-rope.

Developing Advantages

An attacker will typically have several advantages over his chosen prey. At the very least these will probably include initiative, aggression, strength and sheer mass – almost insurmountable advantages without the aid of a powerful weapon or an assistant. Your training time is your opportunity to develop as many hidden advantages as possible.

You (probably) won't put on 60-100 pounds of muscle so as to be a “bigger fish” and less attractive to predators, but you can do everything in your power to educate yourself, maximize your strength and overall condition, and develop savage self defense techniques. Whether these are enough to overcome an attacker's advantages is hopefully something you'll never have to test. But at the very least you will have done all you can do to tip the scales towards your favor.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

Summary

- Your physical condition and development is considered when it comes to testing and advancement.
- Developing good general physical conditioning doesn't require a gym membership or hundreds (or thousands) of dollars of equipment. A variety of simple exercises lasting 30 – 60 minutes every day or two are all that are necessary.
- Start easy and go slow. If you are breathing so hard that you can't carry on a conversation, are feeling dizzy, or are getting a side-ache, slow down.
- If something hurts, decrease the intensity or get help.
- Do dynamic stretching daily, especially *before* dynamic activities.
- If done at all, do muscle fatiguing exercises and (static) stretches only *after* dynamic activities -- not before.
- Muscle-fatiguing calisthenic exercises should usually be done with the best possible form and at the rate of around one repetition every 4-5 seconds.
- Mix up your exercises from time to time. Do sets. Speed up. Slow down. Go to exhaustion.
- Drink plenty of water and eat a variety of healthy foods.

Detail

Our bodies are constantly, gradually adapting to their average levels of use, stress and nutrients (it is actually *replacing itself*, multiple times, throughout our lives). Without exercise, muscles thin and contract, joint tissues constrict and bones weaken. Insofar as caloric intake exceeds use, fat begins to collect on the body. If nutritional and caloric intake is too low, malnutrition sets in. For some people, their health gets so out of balance that their bodies become a kind of prison; the same can happen with our minds.

Via Potentia is unique among martial arts in a number of ways; one is that we set not only technical, but also physical conditioning targets for different ranks. The purpose of these targets is to help the person set and reach conditioning goals, improve his overall health, and make sure that he has the conditioning necessary to perform the more advanced techniques without injury. (I must add that the physical condition of many "black belts" and instructors in many martial arts is an embarrassment... or should be; I've seen too many black belts who can hardly do ten proper push-ups, or who look like they are one donut away from a heart attack.) At the beginning levels these are easily achieved, but require substantial effort at higher levels. Do not be intimidated by these; depending on your current shape, they may sound impossible now, but you can achieve them in time if you set yourself to do so and put forth consistent effort.

Note that our targets are proportional to the length of time you have been training and your own body weight. It isn't "must be able to bench press 200 pounds," which

would be all but impossible for a fit but small person, but "must be able to perform N push-ups."

Many martial arts students experience injuries due to a lack of general conditioning, some due to a lack of proper warm-up, some due to the kinds of drills they practice, and some are even injured by or because of their conditioning exercises. One sports injury study I read indicated that martial arts students experience the highest injury rates of any athletic endeavor, an average of four per year, with the most common ones being sprains, muscle pulls, significant bruising and lacerations.

Your conditioning exercises should be attempted *very* gradually. If you attempt too much, too soon, you risk an acute or chronic injury. An acute injury is signaled by a sudden pain, or pain that is clearly associated with a specific action. A chronic injury is one that develops over time, is usually caused by repetitive stress, and may be difficult to isolate or associate with a specific exercise; it is usually indicated by an ongoing and gradually increasing discomfort. In either case, acute or chronic, you should decrease intensity, repetitions and seek consultation with your instructor, a doctor or physical therapist. Other than occasional sore muscles or a sense of tension while stretching, you should never feel actual pain while doing these exercises; if you feel pain, then you are doing the exercise incorrectly, pushing too hard, or you have an injury or some other unique circumstance. Again, it will be much better for you to go slowly and avoid injury, than to push yourself too hard, get injured, and be set back for weeks (or permanently, as is the case with some injuries).

Some of the exercises and stretches may be too easy for you. Others may be too difficult. It depends on your own body and abilities. Either way, you are welcome and encouraged to substitute other exercises as needed for your own personal development. Just pay close attention to the order of the exercises and stretches.

We attempt to address several facets of physical condition with our training:

- Strength
- General flexibility
- Joint health
- Cardiovascular and respiratory capacity and endurance

Strength

Strength is important when it comes to self defense. On a practical level, self defense consists of a flurry of attacks designed to deliver power to vulnerable targets. This requires speed, strength, accuracy and coordination (along with a pinch of ferocity). Strength development requires gradually increasing the loads placed on the muscles. They respond by becoming stronger, and sometimes larger and longer. To facilitate gradual development we recommend the following targets for strength-building exercises. Obviously, you can go faster or slower, depending on your current condition and how your body responds to the exercises.

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Pull-ups | 1-2 per rank |
| Calf Presses | 10 per rank |
| Push-ups | 10 per rank |
| Squats | 10-20 per rank |
| Sit-ups | 10 per rank |
| Back Extensions | 5 per rank |

“Rank” is the number of terms you've attended. These are just rough guidelines which you are free to adapt to your present condition.

To get the best results and meaningful measurements, do calisthenics with proper form. I'd like to believe that people already know how to do this, but experience has demonstrated otherwise, so we include notes here.

Pull-ups: Begin with your arms extended and feet off the ground. Your hands should be a shoulder-width apart or a little more, with elbows pointing forward. Avoid grips that end up with your elbow pointing outward, which is often the case with wide grips. Pull your body up as far as you can. Try to avoid swinging your body. Breathe out as you pull up; in as you descend. Gradually let yourself down. Repeat. Your feet should not touch the ground until you are finished doing all pull-ups.

If you are too weak (or too heavy) to do any pull-ups get some assistance or use a stool. Get your chin up to that bar one way or another, then remove the support and just try to hold it there as long as you can, then let your self down slowly while gradually breathing out. Start with one or two, then work your way up over a few weeks. Once you can do several, you'll probably be able to do one pull-up.

Good alternatives and complements include lat-pull-downs (requires a machine), or rowing (can be done with rings or a low bar).

Calf Presses: Stand with your feet about one shoulder-width apart, feet flat on the floor. Contract your calf muscles, lifting your body up so that your feet are pointed and you are supporting yourself on the “ball” of your feet. Then gradually relax so that you go back to flat-footed. Don't bounce, and don't do the contractions too quickly. 1-2 seconds each is a good pace. Breathing is less important for this exercise, but the norm would be to breathe out as you contract/exert, and breathe in as you relax.

Jump rope, jogging and hopping are good alternatives for calf presses.

Push-ups: Support yourself on the palms of your hands (or knuckles, if you prefer) and on the balls of your feet – feet together, hands under your shoulders or slightly wider. Keep your back straight and head up. Allow your body to gradually descend

until your chin, stomach or chest is grazes the ground. Breathe in as you descend. Do not rest on or allow other parts of your body to touch the ground. Breathe out as you push yourself back up.

If you are unable to do a proper push up, pivot off of your knees instead of your feet. Once you can do ten or more good push-ups from your knees, you should be able to do at least one from your feet.

A good alternative is the Hindu push-up. Good complements include dips and push-ups with elevated feet or stands for the hands to allow deeper dips.

Squats: Feet about one shoulder-width apart. Keep your head up and back as vertical as possible. Extend your arms in front of you and pull your hands in towards your shoulders as you breath in. Allow your body to descend. As you do so, breathe out and drop your hands. Descend until your fingertips touch the floor outside of your feet. The ideal is to keep your feet flat on the floor; but that requires flexible ankles and calf muscles. As you stand back up extend your arms in front of you and breathe in. Repeat. At low counts these are primarily for building leg strength; it is fine to do them slowly. At high counts they are intended to be aerobic; try for one per second.

There are *many* squat variations. Burpees are considered among the more intense. Step-ups are also good alternatives.

Sit-ups: Lay on your back with legs bent and the soles of your feet on the floor. Cross your arms and place your hands on your shoulders, or lace your fingers behind your head/neck (the latter posture is a little more difficult and places more strain on your neck). Keeping your feet on the ground – you can place them under something or have a partner hold them if necessary – contract your stomach and lift your body so that your elbows touch your knees. Keep your hands in the proper position. Breathe out as you sit up. And in as you relax back to the ground.

Add twists at the top for more conditioning of the torso. Complement sit-ups with leg lifts, scissor kicks, crunches, etc.

Back Extensions: Lay on your back. Cross your arms on your chest. Pull your feet back towards your bottom, soles flat on the floor. Contract your back and legs, driving your hips and stomach into the air. Twist slightly onto one shoulder or the other, alternating. It is usually easier to breathe in (or hold your breath) as you arch up and out as you descend.

Goodmornings are a common alternative to back-extensions and arches, and are best if you can isolate your hips by leaning against/over something like a rail or back of a heavy couch.

Push-ups and pull-ups are very difficult for some people with weak upper bodies or weight problems. Alternatives to pull-ups include lat-pulls and bent over rowing (both require weights or a special machine). For easier push-ups, do them from your

knees, or substitute bench presses or dips on a machine that offers assistance. A great supplement or alternative to the pull-up is to use free-hanging rings at various heights for pull-ups, push-ups, dips, rowing, etc. A climbing rope is another option.

Once you can do 40 of any exercise (or 4+ pull-ups), incorporate variations of the exercises. For example, instead of doing 100 sit-ups, do 20 crunches, 20 sit-ups, 20 leg lifts, 20 body curls, and 20 twisting sit-ups. And it is fine to do them in sets of 20 or more, rather than 100 repetitions all at once. However, you should occasionally "go for it" and see how many you can do at one go. If you always just do 20, then rest, then do another set, your body gets conditioned to that.

Strength building exercises obviously fatigue the muscles. Fatigued muscles are easily injured during dynamic activity because they lack the energy to prevent over extension and subsequent tearing. Like static stretching, strength building exercises should be reserved to the end of class so as to avoid injury. They can be intermixed with static stretching; exercise the muscle group, then stretch it, then move on to the next muscle group, stretch, etc.

Bones, ligaments, tendons and joint-supporting tissues strengthen along with the muscles, but much more slowly. Suppose it takes you six weeks to reach a personal strength target; it might take six *months* for these supporting systems to adjust to the new loads. Just because you have the muscle strength and flexibility to do a technique doesn't mean your body is ready for it. This is one of the reasons that we reserve things like jumping, spinning kicks not for the third month, but the third *year* of training.

Push-ups may be done in a variety of ways, including knuckle push-ups. However, children should avoid extensive knuckle push-ups on hard surfaces. In fact, children should avoid any technique or exercise that might damage the growth plates on their bones (e.g., no fisted punches for breaking boards, no intense static stretching).

Participants are welcome to use different or supplemental exercises to build strength (e.g., weight training), but these calisthenics will be used to measure progress for rank and stage testing. And try to maintain a similar progression with respect to the muscles being exercised; begin with extremities and move towards your core stomach and lower back muscles. The core muscles are involved in and support many of the other exercises; if you fatigue them first, then all of the exercises will suffer.

If you want to build muscle mass, add resistance to your exercises so that you can only do roughly 6-12 repetitions before your targeted muscles are thoroughly fatigued (i.e., you aren't able to do another complete repetition). Weighted belts and vests are available at many sporting good stores, or you could just put five pound weights into a back pack. Gradually work up to three sets of 12. Once you can do that, add more resistance and repeat. However, if you want to build strength without additional mass, do lighter exercises with more repetitions.

Don't be in a hurry when doing the calisthenics. Each repetition should be done with the best possible form and take roughly 4-5 seconds. On speed days go for speed.

On some days try one very long set. On others do multiple, smaller sets. Some days do the exercises *very* slowly.

Rank 2+: Once a week or two it is good to exercise to muscle exhaustion -- until you simply can't do another repetition of the exercise. Don't follow this with an intense static stretch of that muscle. A very light stretch is okay. Like intense static stretching, the muscle may feel weak and trembly afterward. However, there should be no *acute* pain. There is a unique burning sensation that a muscle gives off as it fatigues; this is not an injury; this is the muscle telling you it is getting *really* tired and wants to stop and rest; *try a few more repetitions*. To avoid injury, wait at least a couple hours after exhausting a muscle before doing a dynamic activity.

General Flexibility

Flexibility helps you avoid injuries, increases your range of motion and, to a small degree, your speed, but really isn't very important for practical self defense. Being able to do the splits isn't going to make much difference in a no holds barred, assault situation. (Flexibility can make a big difference for competitive sports; I've personally seen smaller, weaker fighters beat much stronger ones on account of skill and flexibility.)

Our flexibility targets are measured by the height to which you can kick comfortably. These abilities will come automatically (over time) to those who exercise regularly and practice the dynamic stretching drills we teach. When practicing drills, forms and sparring, your kicks should be able to approach these levels.

| Stage | Kicking Level |
|--------------|---------------|
| Beginning | Lower Abdomen |
| Intermediate | Chest |
| Advanced | Head |

This doesn't mean that you always kick to these levels, but you should be able to do so when desired with speed and without strain.

Flexibility and joint condition are improved by two primary exercises; dynamic movement and static stretching. Obviously, the height to which one can kick isn't the only or the most important measure of flexibility. As long as you are doing the full set of dynamic stretching exercises, you should see flexibility in other areas gradually improve as well.

Good general measures of your own flexibility are the degree to which you can perform high back bridges, back twists, standing toe/floor touches, front splits and straddle splits.

Dynamic Movement and Stretching

When it comes to elongation, muscles are primarily sensitive to their current extension and the speed with which they are elongating. If a muscle's extension or rate of extension is too great it contracts involuntarily to avoid injury. This self-preservation mechanism protects muscles and joints from damage, but can also *cause* injuries when the body is moved in leveraged ways that it isn't used to moving. Each of these variables, rate of extension and overall extension, is addressed by a different method of stretching; dynamic or static.

Dynamic movement and stretching conditions joints so that they stay healthy and maintain a full range of motion. It tends to activate and prepare tissues for the activities to come, and over the long term conditions muscles to handle the dynamic loads placed on them, especially kicks, without unnecessary involuntary contraction and without injury (hopefully).

Unlike calisthenics and static stretching, the precise order of the dynamic exercises is not critical. Just be sure to be thorough. Also, dynamic movement and stretching should be done *prior* to dynamic activity, and should mimic the movements in the activities to be practiced. In our class outline you can see that the first set of exercises are all dynamic. Failure to do proper dynamic stretching prior to dynamic activity -- and doing muscle fatiguing calisthenics or static stretches instead -- is one of the common setups for injuries, especially among adult amateur athletes, and is an error made by a majority of (other) martial arts and similar programs.

Static Stretching

There are many different technical phrases to describe particular kinds of stretches, and there are entire books dedicated just to stretching. In our program, to perform a "static stretch" means to hold a position that extends a muscle and then focuses gradually-increasing tension on it for 15 or more seconds. It is often accompanied by controlled breathing, tensing and relaxation of target (agonist) and opposite (antagonist) muscle groups; only adults should add these facets, and only after doing "plain" static stretching for a few months with signs of progress. Kids can do static stretching, but probably shouldn't hold them for more than 10 seconds or apply a great deal of pressure to the muscle and related joints. (Their tendons and ligaments are more prone to elongation, which can result in destabilized joint. There is also a possibility of damaging a growth plate.)

While dynamic stretching prepares muscles for activity and conditions them to extend rapidly without injury, static stretching helps them increase the total length to which they can extend. However, static stretching fatigues, temporarily desensitizes and eliminates some of the muscle's "springiness." This can lead to foreseeable injury if done before dynamic activity. Consequently, heavy static stretching should be reserved until *after* dynamic activity. Light static stretching may be acceptable prior to activity, especially if the person already has exceptional flexibility and the movements to come are not going to approach or exceed those limits.

Static stretching is usually best done when muscles are already warm, and even *slightly* fatigued, like right after doing a calisthenic exercise that utilizes the muscle group. But it is okay to stretch when cold as long as you are very gradual and careful in doing so. The order of the stretches is somewhat important, especially with the legs. For example, we stretch the calves before doing a seated hamstring/biceps stretch. This allows for a better, isolated stretch of both the calf muscles and the femoral biceps. If you do the seated hamstring stretch first, then some of the stretch is absorbed by the unstretched calves rather than being more focused on the femoral biceps (if you are grasping and pulling on your toes). When combining static stretching and calisthenics, stretch the muscles only *after* exercising them.

Some static stretches place a lot of stress on joint capsule and related tissues. When you try to move out of the stretch, the joint may feel stiff, painful, or even stuck in the position. This is common in leveraged stretches like straddles and splits (hip joint). Mild rotation of the affected joints can re-lubricate the joint and free it up after such as stretch.

Rank 2+ Adults Only: You can occasionally focus on *intense* static stretching over strength building. To do so, first perform a normal static stretch for approximately 10-20 seconds, then relax for a few seconds. Take a deep breath. Stretch again, but this time contract the the target (agonist) muscle group for approximately 12 seconds. Relax again for a few seconds. Breath deeply. Finally, stretch again, this time gradually tightening the antagonist muscles and relaxing the agonist muscles, again for about 12 seconds. Relax for 20-30 seconds and move on to the next stretch. Do not follow this with intense strength building exercise of the same muscle group, and wait several hours before doing any dynamic activity so that the muscle can fully recuperate. Don't be surprised if the muscle is trembly afterward or sore the next day just from stretching. This is usually best done in the evening, shortly before going to bed.

Also, if your flexibility allows, you should begin to incorporate straight splits and back arch stretches into your workout. This is usually possible after about six months of conditioning.

Endurance

Physical endurance also is not critically important for self defense. Such encounters are usually over in less than a minute, and endurance really only comes into play if you choose to run and are chased for a long distance (which is very, very rare). However, endurance conditioning is excellent for your general health. Endurance is important in some emergencies; one example is a scenario in which you are called upon to perform CPR. It is a little like trying to do push-ups for ten minutes straight. Lighter push-ups, but push-ups nonetheless.

Most short-term exertions are anaerobic. They rely primarily upon energy resources stored in and readily-available to your muscles. As your body senses that those resources are being used it increases your pulse and breathing rate to try to bring new

energy to your muscles and clear away waste products. This aerobic energy generation can continue for up to a few hours, depending on your rate of consumption, general conditioning and total energy reserves. After extensive aerobic exercise, your body will run out of available energy and must switch to a third source: Fat. At that point your body begins to convert your fat to energy and use it to fuel your activity. It can take hours of exercise to reach this third level, it is deeply unpleasant, and we don't do so in our normal workouts.

Like building flexibility and strength, proper endurance training should start slow and build gradually. Begin by determining your target and maximum heart rates. There are many different formulas for doing this. A widely accepted approach is the Karvonen formula. Begin by determining your resting heart rate and your maximum heart rate. For your resting heart rate, HR_{rest} , use the average rate when you first wake up in the morning. Estimate your maximum heart rate, HR_{max} , using this formula: $205.8 - (0.685 \times \text{age})$. There is no perfect formula for this. We are dealing in approximations here. So, let's say you have a resting heart rate of 60 beats per minute (bpm), and you are 40 years old. That means you have a HR_{max} of $205.8 - (0.685 \times 40)$, or about 178.

This doesn't mean you can or should go out and immediately exercise till you hit your max rate! This isn't like the speed limit sign posted on the highway, which you are basically expected to maintain or exceed at all times. This is the maximum -- the dangerous maximum -- that your heart can probably handle for short periods of time *if and when it is in excellent condition*.

Subtract your resting heart rate from your HR_{max} to get what is called your heart reserve. Your resting heart rate is the average heart rate you have when you first wake up in the morning, before you even get out of bed. For our hypothetical 40-year-old, that is $HR_{max} - HR_{rest}$, $178 - 60$, or 118.

Now we establish a low and a high training range. We're going to use 85% and 50% for the high and low factors. Multiple the heart reserve by these values, and then add the results to the HR_{rest} to find your high and low training boundaries.

$$\begin{aligned}\text{High boundary} &= HR_{rest} + (.85 \times HR_{reserve}) = 60 + (0.85 \times 118) \\ &= 60 + 100 = 160.\end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Low boundary} = HR_{rest} + (.5 \times HR_{reserve}) = 60 + (.5 \times 118) = 60 + 59 = 119.$$

When exercising, if we want to improve our cardiovascular conditioning, this tells us we should be trying to exercise hard enough that it keeps our heart rate in this range. It is kind of like the temperature or oil pressure gauge in a car. There is an acceptable range, but too high or too low is bad. You could also equate it to weight lifting; too little weight doesn't help, and too much weight can hurt. If we are just starting out, we should stay on the low end. As we get in better shape -- over months of gradual work -- we can migrate up toward the high end.

But these are just *rough* guidelines. A couple other things to watch for is your perspiration and ability to talk. If you are so breathless that you can't carry on a conversation, slow down. If you stop perspiring, your heart rate spikes upward, or you suddenly feel dizzy or nauseated, stop immediately. You may be suffering from exhaustion or heat stroke. Take a break, relax, and cool down. Get some sips of water. Don't resume exercise until you feel normal again.

Jump-rope, sparring and squats are all excellent aerobic exercises. Some people also like jogging, brisk walking, bicycling or rowing. As usual, we recommend starting slowly and increasing very gradually. Just start with a minute (or less), and try to add a few seconds each time, ideally adding a whole minute every three months. In two or three years, you'll be up to 15 minutes of solid jump-roping, which is a good workout in itself. Of course, you can go faster or slower than this. It is merely a suggestion. Once you learn some forms, they can also serve as a good aerobic exercise.

| | |
|-----------|----------------------|
| Jump-rope | 1-2 minutes per rank |
| Sparring | 1-2 minutes per rank |

Here is a table of approximate max heart rates to help you get started setting your targets and boundaries:

| Age | HR _{max} |
|-----|-------------------|
| 20 | 192 |
| 30 | 185 |
| 40 | 178 |
| 50 | 172 |
| 60 | 165 |

Then just enter your resting heart rate and fill in the rest to arrive at your own personal training range.

$$\text{HR}_{\text{max}} = 205.8 - (0.685 \times \text{your age}) = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$\text{HR}_{\text{rest}} = \text{heart rate upon waking} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$\text{HR}_{\text{reserve}} = \text{HR}_{\text{max}} - \text{HR}_{\text{rest}} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Upper Bound} &= \text{HR}_{\text{rest}} + (0.85 \times \text{HR}_{\text{reserve}}) = \underline{\hspace{2cm}} + (0.85 \times \underline{\hspace{2cm}}) \\ &= \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Lower Bound} = \text{HR}_{\text{rest}} + (0.5 \times \text{HR}_{\text{reserve}}) = \underline{\hspace{2cm}} + (0.5 \times \underline{\hspace{2cm}}) \\ = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

Once you know the boundaries, check your pulse for six seconds from time to time while training. Add a zero to your count (i.e., if you counted 16 beats in 6 seconds, your heart is beating at roughly 160 beats per minute). For greater accuracy, use ten seconds or more, and adjust the multiplier accordingly. Then, if you are at or exceeding the upper bound, can't catch your breath, or feel like you are over-exerting, you should probably slack off a bit. If you are below the lower bound, you should probably push yourself a little harder.

A question that often arises is the relationship between calories consumed while eating versus calories burned by the body during exercise. First, much of the food energy we consume is used to maintain our bodies heat and organ systems. Some is used for physical activity. Excess food energy gets stored as fat. If there isn't enough, your body cuts back on its energy use, tells you it is hungry, and may begin to tap into stored fats.

An average-size hamburger (e.g., a 1/4 lb burger) contains approximately 500 calories. The rate at which our bodies burn calories depends on our relative sizes, individual metabolisms, health and intensity of activity. For generic aerobic activity, the calories burned per hour are roughly $2.7 \times$ your weight in pounds. For one hour of average aerobic activity by a 160 pound person, it comes out as follows:

$$\text{Calories Burned} = \text{weight} \times 2.7 = 160 \times 2.7 = 430.$$

Exercises of different intensities have different factors. Jump-rope has a larger one, walking a smaller one, etc. The point is this: *It is much easier to spend ten minutes eating a hamburger than an hour exercising it off.*

Speaking of losing weight, people sometimes wonder how many calories do they need to burn to take off a pound? The generally-accepted number is 3500. Suppose you want to lose ten pounds. What this means is that, assuming all other things remain the same, you need to add about an hour of exercise per day or reduce your food intake by the equivalent of an average hamburger per day. This may result in a weight loss of around a pound per week. Of course, restricting your caloric intake by this much will require substantial self discipline (and your body might adjust to it).

Because exercise builds and conditions muscle, and muscle weighs more than fat, weight loss from exercise is often slower and more difficult than was expected. It depends on the kind of exercises you are doing, your natural body weight, current state, diet, etc. And the results are different for different people. One adult in my classes lost about 25 pounds in two months. He started at almost 300. I exercise a little more than he and have lost nothing, but I'm starting at 180. Your mileage may vary.

Some cultures hold up unhealthy stereotypes for weight, especially for women. *A little fat is good for your body.* Also, while exercises can target muscles and supporting tissues in a specific body region, there are no known exercises that target fat in certain areas of the body; doing a lot of sit-ups isn't going to make the fat go away around the stomach any faster than doing jump-rope or another exercise of similar intensity.

Diet

Diet, rest, relationships, stress and other factors need to be considered when discussing general physical (and psychological) health. Nutrition alone is a complex topic to itself. The first issue is *what* to eat and drink, then we'll talk about quantity.

Dietary needs vary over the arc of one's life, and may need to be tailored to the individual. But like physical exercise, there are basic principles worth understanding and attempting to follow. These are adapted from the American Dietetic Association and other reliable sources for nutrition guidance and information:

- Roughly half of our food should be fruits and vegetables, mostly vegetables. The balance divided between meats, grains and dairy.
- Give preference to whole grain foods over processed grain foods.
- Choose lean protein sources, especially if you are engaging in muscle-fatiguing exercises.
- Drink plenty of fluids, preferably milk or water (in roughly equal amounts throughout the day). The more you exercise and perspire the more fluids you will need. Juice is good, but don't drink too much, and avoid sweetened, caffeinated beverages, or excessive alcohol.
- Calcium rich foods like yogurt, cheese and others can make excellent snacks or complements to meals.

There are several fine resources for dietary information on the Internet. You can get dietary suggestions customized to your gender, age, weight and activity level by visiting <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>. See the link for the "Personalized Plan." Another source is the American Dietetic Association at <http://www.eatright.org/>.

Like most other areas, we recommend variety and moderation. Don't feel bad about having some sweets now and then. Even eating healthy foods can become unhealthy if taken to an extreme. For example, I knew someone who loved cheese so much that he hardly ate anything else. His health gradually declined until his doctor finally commanded him to expand his food choices, because he was practically killing himself with an otherwise healthy food.

Next is the question of quantity. This varies substantially from person to person, depends on your general size, muscle mass, activity level and metabolism. The larger you are, the more muscle you have, the more active your life and the higher your metabolism, the more you need to eat to maintain your weight and energy level.

It is pretty easy to tell whether you are consuming enough calories. If you ingest more than your body needs, it stores the calories as fat, and you will gradually gain weight. If you ingest less than your body needs, it gradually depletes fat reserves – you'll get thinner and lighter. But gaining or losing weight alone isn't always the best measure. For example, you can gain weight from exercise, yet actually appear thinner, because you are building some muscle and burning off fat at the same time.

Just consider where you are now. If you are underweight and wish to put on some pounds – rather rare in western countries, but not unheard of – consume more calories. To reduce your weight, reduce your calorie intake while maintaining aerobic-style exercise. Change the *amount* of food you eat, while trying to maintain healthy choices and relative proportions in the particular foods. Avoid changing the types of food eaten so that you are eating unhealthy foods. For example, if you want to lose weight, don't change to eating just Top Ramen; if you want to gain weight, don't start eating greasy fast food hamburgers at every meal. Continue eating healthy foods, but change the portion sizes and therefore the total caloric quantities. If you are trying to lose weight and are having a hard time controlling your food intake, focus on eating more bulky, filling foods that have fewer calories, and on drinking more.

Thanks in part to the media, many of us have distorted views of our own bodies and how they should look. However, it isn't an exaggeration to say that about half of adults are overweight-to-obese. A *very rough* measure of general weight and health can be arrived at using a simple calculation called the Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is an attempt to determine your fat percentage using only your height and weight.

It isn't perfect. For example, not all 5'10", 30 year old males are the same. There are (obviously) different body types. Some are naturally thinner. Some are thicker. Some have larger bones, different proportions, etc. There are many online calculators available, and the results are interpreted differently for children and adults. The formula is:

$$\text{BMI} = 703 \times \text{weight (pounds)} / (\text{height (inches)})^2$$

So someone who is 5'10" (70") and weighs 180 would have a BMI of:

$$\text{BMI} = 703 \times 180 / 70^2 = 126540 / 4900 = 25.82$$

For adults the results are interpreted as follows:

| BMI | Category |
|-------------|-------------|
| < 18.5 | Underweight |
| 18.5 – 24.9 | Normal |
| 25.0 – 29.9 | Overweight |
| >= 30 | Obese |

So our 5'10", 180 pound person would be categorized as borderline normal-to-overweight. But BMI alone isn't necessarily a precise measure of fat or an accurate analysis of health and weight. For example, two people with the same height and weight (and therefore BMI) might have very different body fat levels. Perhaps one is much more athletic and muscular, while the other is much more, well, fat. They both weigh 200 pounds, and so would have a BMI approaching 29... almost considered obese. Yet one might be in just fine health, and the other one genuinely unhealthy. You know which you are; it usually doesn't require a trip to the doctor.

At the other end of the spectrum, the same 5'10" person wouldn't be considered underweight until his weight dropped below about 120! That is a span of about 60 pounds, or almost 50% from the low end. Let me assure you, my own health would be in serious question well before my weight approached 120. Long before that, probably around 160, I'd have good cause to suspect a medical problem and go get a thorough physical and blood screen.

Recent studies indicate that people who are in the overweight BMI category later in life actually live *longer* than those in the other categories. So the BMI number alone doesn't tell the whole story. Like so much else, it is just a general indicator to be aware of. You might wander into the underweight or overweight regions without there actually being anything wrong with you. Or it might be a sign that you need to check with a doctor, adjust your diet, or make other changes to your life.

Other Considerations

Do your best to get a good night's sleep each night and manage the stress in your life. If you find yourself needing to "self-medicate," are bingeing, having irrational outbursts, or veering into some kind of vice, it may be a sign that something is out of balance in your personal life and you need to make some adjustments.

One of the more interesting things that happens with time and improved physical (and psychological) condition, is that you become very aware of the state of your own body. For example, I can tell when my body is fighting off a cold or flu just by how it feels while doing dynamic exercises -- usually a day or two before any common symptoms appear. This is helpful because it gives you advance notice to take it easy or get medication.

Weaknesses

As you challenge your body you will discover one or more areas of deficiency. For example, some people have weak arms. Some have a bad back, or weak legs. Some of us have old injuries. Welcome to real life. We all have weaknesses and, to some extent, are defined by them and by how we cope with them. If you recognize a particular weakness, *come up with exercises to address it and work to do so*. Most human weaknesses can be overcome, or at least improved, with diligent effort. If you need help with selecting exercises or getting motivated, talk with your instructor, training

partner, nutritionist, doctor or physical therapist (and be prepared to deal with a dizzying array of conflicting opinions).

One approach to overcoming physical obstacles is to use sets. Suppose your desired target is 30 pushups, but you have hit a wall at 20 and just can't seem to get your body to do even one more. This is a common problem. Instead of trying for 30 each time and failing, do 20 or as many as you can do, rest for a half minute and perhaps even do a different exercise, then do a second set of pushups, doing as many as you can. Maybe on the second set you'll only be able to do 10, but try to do enough so that between the two sets you are doing more than the original target. Continue to push hard on your first set over the upcoming days and weeks, and eventually you'll begin to see increases in your first set again. It is just a matter of proper effort over time.

Testing

During testing students will need to demonstrate conditioning in keeping with the rank or stage for which they are testing. This is done primarily through the calisthenics. Students should also understand the purposes of and proper implementation of dynamic stretching, static stretching and calisthenics.

Staying Healthy and Avoiding Injury

- Consult a doctor before beginning this or any new exercise program, especially if you are older, take any medications or have an injury, illness or medical condition
- Every body is different. You may need more, fewer, more difficult or easier exercises to experience progress. If you find that a particular exercise is not beneficial, consult the instructor about adaptations and alternatives.
- Eat a variety of healthy foods; indulging now and then is fine; just don't make a habit of it. The quantity and quality of the food you eat is the primary factor affecting your weight. Exercise alone rarely has a significant effect on weight, but can improve strength, flexibility, endurance and overall health.
- Exercise at least every other day; dynamic movement and (light) stretching can be done daily
- Get good sleep every night. Most people need 7-9 hours.
- Drink plenty of fluids in general, but especially before and while exercising. Drink a large glass of warm water upon waking.
- Do not engage in dynamic activity when very tired or injured.
- If you are sore, go light; if you are injured, give the injury plenty of time to heal before placing any burden on it (usually 6+ weeks for typical muscle, bone or joint injuries).
- Don't attempt a technique for which you lack strength, flexibility or coordination
- Do dynamic movement and dynamic stretching before a dynamic activity; save strength building exercises for afterward; save static stretching for last

- Don't simultaneously twist, bend and load a joint, especially the knee or back
- Don't do a dynamic activity immediately after muscle fatiguing static stretches or strength building exercises
- Rotate your focus when exercising; speed/relaxation, strength/power, technical precision and accuracy, endurance. Don't try to do all at once.
- Do not have others push or pull on you when you are in a leveraged static stretch like straddles (unless you and they are experienced). Be very careful when using any training or stretching machinery.
- Children should avoid *intense* static stretching -- some suggest that it may damage skeletal growth plates. Light static stretching is okay.
- Knuckle push-ups on a hard surface are okay for adults. Children should only do them on soft surfaces. Also, children should not do board breaking with fisted punches.
- You should feel resistance and tension while stretching and exercising, but not pain. If you feel "pins and needles" in the muscle, or a sharp pain in the muscle or joint, release pressure immediately
- Mix up your exercises and stretches every few months
- Do not attempt highly leveraged stretches like splits until you are already very flexible
- Stretch smaller muscle groups before nearby, related large ones. For example, stretch your calves before stretching your femoral biceps.
- Start slow and increase intensity gradually, over weeks and months. Don't push yourself too hard at the beginning.
- Unexplained changes in weight, energy level, sleep patterns, etc., may indicate a serious underlying issue. Consult a doctor if they persist.
- Don't exercise with others if you are sick, have an injury, or a communicable disease. Stay home, rest and recuperate!

President's Fitness Challenge

For youth and children we incorporate awards from the President's Fitness program. Children and youth who exceed these targets during their training and testing receive a patch/award that they can put on their uniforms.

Following is the chart from the President's Challenge for the National Award, meaning that one is at the 50th percentile or higher:

| | Age | Curl-Ups (# one minute) | Partial* Curl-Ups (#) | Shuttle Run (sec.) | V-Sit Reach (inches) | Sit & Reach (cm) | One-Mile Run (min:sec) | Distance Option** (min:sec) (min:sec) 1/4 mile 1/2 mile | | Pull-Ups (#) | Rt. Angle Push- Ups* (#) | Flexed Arm Hang (sec.) |
|--------------|-----|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|---|------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| BOYS | 6 | 22 | 10 | 13.3 | +1.0 | 26 | 12:36 | 2:21 | | 1 | 7 | 6 |
| | 7 | 28 | 13 | 12.8 | +1.0 | 25 | 11:40 | 2:10 | | 1 | 8 | 8 |
| | 8 | 31 | 17 | 12.2 | +0.5 | 25 | 11:05 | | 4:22 | 1 | 9 | 10 |
| | 9 | 32 | 17 | 11.9 | +1.0 | 25 | 10:30 | | 4:14 | 2 | 12 | 10 |
| | 10 | 35 | 24 | 11.5 | +1.0 | 25 | 9:48 | | | 2 | 14 | 12 |
| | 11 | 37 | 26 | 11.1 | +1.0 | 25 | 9:20 | | | 2 | 15 | 11 |
| | 12 | 40 | 32 | 10.6 | +1.0 | 26 | 8:40 | | | 2 | 18 | 12 |
| | 13 | 42 | 39 | 10.2 | +0.5 | 26 | 8:06 | | | 3 | 24 | 14 |
| | 14 | 45 | 40 | 9.9 | +1.0 | 28 | 7:44 | | | 5 | 24 | 20 |
| | 15 | 45 | 40 | 9.7 | +2.0 | 30 | 7:30 | | | 6 | 30 | 28 |
| | 16 | 45 | 37 | 9.4 | +3.0 | 30 | 7:10 | | | 7 | 30 | 28 |
| | 17 | 44 | 42 | 9.4 | +3.0 | 34 | 7:04 | | | 8 | 37 | 30 |
| GIRLS | 6 | 23 | 10 | 13.8 | +2.5 | 27 | 13:12 | 2:26 | | 1 | 6 | 5 |
| | 7 | 25 | 13 | 13.2 | +2.0 | 27 | 12:56 | 2:21 | | 1 | 8 | 6 |
| | 8 | 29 | 17 | 12.9 | +2.0 | 28 | 12:30 | | 4:56 | 1 | 9 | 8 |
| | 9 | 30 | 20 | 12.5 | +2.0 | 28 | 11:52 | | 4:50 | 1 | 12 | 8 |
| | 10 | 30 | 24 | 12.1 | +3.0 | 28 | 11:22 | | | 1 | 13 | 8 |
| | 11 | 32 | 27 | 11.5 | +3.0 | 29 | 11:17 | | | 1 | 11 | 7 |
| | 12 | 35 | 30 | 11.3 | +3.5 | 30 | 11:05 | | | 1 | 10 | 7 |
| | 13 | 37 | 40 | 11.1 | +3.5 | 31 | 10:23 | | | 1 | 11 | 8 |
| | 14 | 37 | 30 | 11.2 | +4.5 | 33 | 10:06 | | | 1 | 10 | 9 |
| | 15 | 36 | 26 | 11.0 | +5.0 | 36 | 9:58 | | | 1 | 15 | 7 |
| | 16 | 35 | 26 | 10.9 | +5.5 | 34 | 10:31 | | | 1 | 12 | 7 |
| | 17 | 34 | 40 | 11.0 | +4.5 | 35 | 10:22 | | | 1 | 16 | 7 |

This chart is for the 85th percentile and higher, representing the President's Challenge Award recipients:

| | Age | Curl-Ups (# one minute) | Partial* Curl-Ups (#) | Shuttle Run (sec.) | V-Sit Reach (inches) | Sit & Reach (cm) | One-Mile Run (min:sec) | Distance Option** (min:sec) (min:sec) 1/4 mile 1/2 mile | | Pull-Ups (#) | Rt. Angle* Push-Ups (#) |
|--------------|-----|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|---|------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| BOYS | 6 | 33 | 22 | 12.1 | +3.5 | 31 | 10:15 | 1:55 | | 2 | 9 |
| | 7 | 36 | 24 | 11.5 | +3.5 | 30 | 9:22 | 1:48 | | 4 | 14 |
| | 8 | 40 | 30 | 11.1 | +3.0 | 31 | 8:48 | | 3:30 | 5 | 17 |
| | 9 | 41 | 37 | 10.9 | +3.0 | 31 | 8:31 | | 3:30 | 5 | 18 |
| | 10 | 45 | 35 | 10.3 | +4.0 | 30 | 7:57 | | | 6 | 22 |
| | 11 | 47 | 43 | 10.0 | +4.0 | 31 | 7:32 | | | 6 | 27 |
| | 12 | 50 | 64 | 9.8 | +4.0 | 31 | 7:11 | | | 7 | 31 |
| | 13 | 53 | 59 | 9.5 | +3.5 | 33 | 6:50 | | | 7 | 39 |
| | 14 | 56 | 62 | 9.1 | +4.5 | 36 | 6:26 | | | 10 | 40 |
| | 15 | 57 | 75 | 9.0 | +5.0 | 37 | 6:20 | | | 11 | 42 |
| | 16 | 56 | 73 | 8.7 | +6.0 | 38 | 6:08 | | | 11 | 44 |
| | 17 | 55 | 66 | 8.7 | +7.0 | 41 | 6:06 | | | 13 | 53 |
| GIRLS | 6 | 32 | 22 | 12.4 | +5.5 | 32 | 11:20 | 2:00 | | 2 | 9 |
| | 7 | 34 | 24 | 12.1 | +5.0 | 32 | 10:36 | 1:55 | | 2 | 14 |
| | 8 | 38 | 30 | 11.8 | +4.5 | 33 | 10:02 | | 3:58 | 2 | 17 |
| | 9 | 39 | 37 | 11.1 | +5.5 | 33 | 9:30 | | 3:53 | 2 | 18 |
| | 10 | 40 | 33 | 10.8 | +6.0 | 33 | 9:19 | | | 3 | 20 |
| | 11 | 42 | 43 | 10.5 | +6.5 | 34 | 9:02 | | | 3 | 19 |
| | 12 | 45 | 50 | 10.4 | +7.0 | 36 | 8:23 | | | 2 | 20 |
| | 13 | 46 | 59 | 10.2 | +7.0 | 38 | 8:13 | | | 2 | 21 |
| | 14 | 47 | 48 | 10.1 | +8.0 | 40 | 7:59 | | | 2 | 20 |
| | 15 | 48 | 38 | 10.0 | +8.0 | 43 | 8:08 | | | 2 | 21 |
| | 16 | 45 | 49 | 10.1 | +9.0 | 42 | 8:23 | | | 1 | 24 |
| | 17 | 44 | 58 | 10.0 | +8.0 | 42 | 8:15 | | | 1 | 25 |

Those who participate but do not meet the above levels are still eligible to receive a participant's patch, if desired.

We make the following adaptations to the targets:

1. Moderate speed rope jumping is equivalent in calories burned to running 10 minute miles, or 6 miles per hour. “Moderate speed” means approximately 100 cycles per minute. This means that 1000 jumps roughly corresponds to one mile. Time how long it takes to do 1000 jumps and substitute that for the mile run time.
2. “Curl Ups” is what we call a sit up. “Partial Curl Up” is what we call a crunch.
3. “Shuttle Run” is two cycles to and back from a line 30 feet away, usually with blocks set on the line (they must be picked up and returned to the start line).
4. Pull ups require motionless body. No leg pumping or swinging.
5. Push ups are not timed, but are simply how many you can do at roughly three second intervals before fatiguing out. Arms should go to at least a 90 degree angle at the elbows.
6. The V-Sit is one of our normal flexibility measures taken at the end of each term.

Other Resources

President's Challenge <http://www.presidentschallenge.org/>

American Dietetic Association <http://www.eatright.org/>

Customized Diet Plan <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>

PERFORMANCE TARGETS AND GOAL SETTING

Self defense does not require great physical condition. But it helps, and we still expect participants to strive to meet our technical, conditioning and ethical benchmarks. We rarely dismiss a student for failing to do so (except in cases of gross misconduct). Please be aware that, for your own safety, instructors can and will refuse to teach you certain techniques if they do not believe you have the necessary conditioning, control or coordination to perform them, and you will not receive stage certification unless you can demonstrate the required skills and physical conditioning (with some accommodations for special situations).

If you can exceed the following targets, then great. If not, just do your best. "Rank" refers roughly to the number of terms you've attended. In addition to the following, adults should choose and demonstrate proficiency with a conventional self defense weapon, and complete First Aid and CPR training prior to their final exam.

| | Beginner | Intermediate | Advanced |
|--------------------------------|---|--|---|
| General Emphasis | Basic Self Defense Techniques | Competition and Demonstration | Perfection of Techniques |
| Uniform | White (optional) | Blue | Red |
| Squats | 20-60 (20 per rank) | 60 - 120 | 120 - 200 |
| Pull-ups | 1 - 3 (1-2 per rank) | 4 - 8 | 9 - 15 |
| Other Exercises | 10-30 (10 per rank) | 40 - 60 | 70 - 100 |
| Flexibility | Kicks to waist level | Kicks to chest level | Kicks to head level |
| Endurance (2m per rank) | 1-6 minutes jump-rope or sparring | 6-12 minutes jump-rope or sparring | 12-20 minutes jump-rope or sparring |
| Technical Emphasis | Basic self defense techniques, combinations and forms | ... plus spinning <i>or</i> jumping techniques, trapping, joint locks and take-downs | ... plus spinning <i>and</i> jumping techniques, more locks and submissions |
| Grappling Emphasis | Positioning | Take-downs, Throws, Sweeps | Submissions |
| Sparring Emphasis | Non-contact | Contact | Weapons |
| Weapons | Conventional self defense weapons. Basic stick attacks. | Stick defenses and counters | Disarming |
| Breaking* | 1-3 boards | 4-6 boards | 7-9 boards |
| Typical Time to Achieve | One year | Two years | Three or more years |

- * There is a weight-based multiplication factor for board breaking.

Goal Setting

Set specific goals for yourself each term. A good goal is believable, achievable and measurable. “Do more pushups” is not a good goal. “Do 15 pushups in 30 seconds by the end of the term” is a good goal. It is specific, measurable, and must be completed by a specific date.

Come up with a plan for meeting those goals, and then execute the plan. Imagine you are presently only able to do a few proper pushups, and 15 pushups is your goal. Let's say you know you have three months. You might do as many good pushups as you can do once in the morning, then again in the evening, with the target of adding one pushup every week.

Track your progress. Keep a notebook that records how you are doing, and whether you are on track or not. Maybe you are exceeding your goal. If so, great. If not, try to figure out why and what you can do differently to achieve it.

Find a motivation. Reward yourself for achieving your goal. You'll probably have some satisfaction just in knowing that you set a goal and achieved it, but it can help to have a reward dangling out there; maybe a night out, or a gift for yourself. For example, I do investing for our retirement. Because it is for our retirement, I don't take any of the money out of the account. And, frankly, just having a bigger number the next month gets a little boring after awhile. I therefore establish another small prize for myself if I meet the goal. Just a little something special.

Don't despair if something happens and you are unable to reach your goal. Life is simply about doing our best under the circumstances and constantly trying to improve and learn from our mistakes. Perhaps your goal was too aggressive, or something happened in your life that made it less of a priority. That is okay.

Here are some suggestions for goals related to this program. Feel free to adapt them or substitute your own.

First Term

During the first term focus on learning to do the various drills, stretches and exercises as precisely as possible, and attempt to meet or exceed the calisthenic targets. Find your current limits in terms of strength, flexibility and stamina. Identify your strengths and weaknesses.

Some improvements in strength, flexibility and your sense of wellness are usually beginning to be experienced by the end of the first term.

Second Term

Having identified your strengths and weaknesses, set a goal to improve especially in one or two areas of weakness. Set a target, make a plan on how you will reach that target, and execute the plan.

By the end of the second term you will have learned 15 – 20 total techniques. Pick a few of your favorites and come up with one or two combinations that you will perfect. Practice these in the air until they are natural, fluid and fast. Then on a bag to develop power. Then try to apply them in sparring.

Third Term

Develop one or two more personal self defense combinations. These are just sets of moves that feel good to and work for you (and that would be effective on an attacker).

By the end of the third term you should be able to do at least 30 of most of the exercise in one set, and 60 squats. You'll have three forms, and should be able to jump rope, spar or grapple for 3 – 6 minutes without a break.

You may notice your body changing in response to the exercising. These changes are usually pleasing. Hopefully you are developing confidence and peace.

Usually sometimes between the 2nd and 3rd term improvements in flexibility begin to slow down. You may be approaching your natural limit or, more likely, you are still only pushing as hard as you did when you started. Your body has probably adjusted to your level of intensity. Try pushing harder on the stretches, and mixing in different stretches. Most people discover that, having improved their condition, they can now push harder in stretches without discomfort – and they must do so to continue to progress.

You should also consider adding the front split stretch as a regular part of your stretching regimen. Begin by using hand supports. In a few more months you may be on the floor and the hand supports will be unnecessary.

Once you complete the third term, you will have completed the self-defense focused portion of Via Potentia. You should not only be feeling pretty good about yourself, but actually feeling good in mind and body. If you choose to continue, you'll take a comprehensive examination. If you pass the examination you'll be admitted to the intermediate level and then begin on the fancier, competitive and demonstration techniques. You'll also be introduced to contact sparring (if you haven't been already), along with take downs, throws and standing joint locks.

PERSONAL EXERCISE IDEAS/SUGGESTIONS

To get the most benefit from Via Potentia (or any exercise program) you should exercise 3 or more times per week. In addition to class, we encourage you to exercise on your own and with other, like-minded people. But sometimes it is hard to know what to do. Here are some general ideas.

1. Follow the general class outline. The order of exercises in our general classes is not an accident. It is designed to reduce the chance of self-inflicted injury.
 1. Deep Breathing/Meditation
 2. Joint Conditioning
 3. Dynamic Leg Stretching
 4. Specific Drills
 5. Calisthenics and Static Stretching
2. Decide on your general focus for the exercise session: Endurance, Technical Precision, Speed or Power. This will dictate either the drills or the way in which they are done.
3. Measure your progress. Set targets and keep track of your calisthenics.

Feel free to incorporate other exercises of your own choosing. If there is a specific exercise you enjoy like jump-rope, weight lifting, jogging, bicycling, etc., there is no reason that you can't insert it in the "specific drills" area. By keeping the other elements, however, you will be maintaining overall range of motion, strength and condition.

Just remember to keep dynamic movement first, then drills, then muscle fatiguing exercises and static stretches last.

Specific Drills When Working Alone

- Ground drills – string different falls, rolls and ground movements together.
- Position flows on a bag or large striking target.
- Combinations in the air or against a bag or dummy; focus on striking multiple vulnerabilities in succession as quickly as possible and with power.
- If you have a throwing dummy, practice throws.
- Stick drills; again, striking vulnerabilities using sticks and improvised weapons of different sizes.
- Forms; to develop focus and good technique.
- Handgun and other weapons drills.
- Board breaking; for confidence.

Drills With Others

- Brief combinations against an opponent, counter attacks, etc.
- Defense from specific attacks and holds
- Non-contact, contact or weapons sparring
- Defense against weapons and disarms
- Find an area in which you are weak and drill it with your partner
- Resisting take down attempts
- Fighting from within the clinch
- Grappling for position, to escape from a position, for take down, throws, or for submission

ETHICS (PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONING)

The human person consists of (at least) two fundamental, intertwined facets; the physical and the psychological. Each affects and is affected by the other, for better or worse. Much of our class time is spent conditioning the physical facet, but the psychological facet or self is actually more important.

By “psychological self” we mean the internal, intangible elements that make you who you are; your personality, decisions, thoughts, emotions, mind, soul or even spirit. Different schools of philosophy, psychology, psychiatry and even religions vary in their definitions and distinctions of the human person. Classical natural philosophy asserted that your internal being – the unique manifestation of your human nature – was your essential “substance.”

It is not our purpose to argue these philosophies, present an alternative, etc. All we are doing is acknowledging that there is, without any argument, an intangible and unique element that makes each of us who and what we are, an internal life that is expressed through our words and actions. We believe that this internal, psychological self needs conditioning just as much, and in many cases more than, the physical self through which it is expressed. To condition the physical self we specify drills, set targets, and gradually work towards them through discipline and practice. To condition the psychological self we identify ethics, meditate upon them, and try to integrate them into our daily acts. For example, as one might make a habit of walking more or taking the stairs to condition his body, he might also make an effort to be grateful and respectful.

Many cultures, including our own, value knowledge, talk about the importance of ethics, but lack both on a large scale (indeed, knowledge and power in the absence of a genuine ethical compass is a dangerous blend in itself). There are complex reasons for this that have been addressed by some excellent philosophical studies; an interesting one is *After Virtue*. For our purposes let it suffice to say that the belief in and understanding of any kind of systematic ethical fabric natural to the human condition has been completely destroyed or lost... if it ever existed in the first place. So we start from a difficult position of there simply not being any useful general standard or cohesive body from which to draw (outside of religion). We have to pick up the pieces.

We begin with the goal to understand and respect other people as sovereign human beings, valuable in themselves. By sovereign we mean self-directing, self-possessed – not the property of another. In being valuable we mean that each individual human life is not expendable; it deserves our utmost respect not because of its utility, but valued in and of itself. We must treat others not as means to our ends, as tools to be used for our own benefit, but as persons whose lives are just as or more important than our own and who have the intrinsic freedom to direct their own lives without interference from others (at least insofar as they do not use their freedom to harm others). This attitude manifests itself in our words and actions; a person might be called virtuous insofar as it did so.

“Be virtuous” is easy enough to say, but generalities are rarely helpful in day to day life and growth. We need specifics. For example, we can say we want to improve our physical condition, but it becomes a useful statement when it becomes specific: “I want to increase my endurance and will measure my progress by how long I can jump rope without pause. The goal is 20 minutes.”

A most important aspect of our maturation is this growth in virtue. In its absence, little else matters (that includes our physical conditioning and self defense training). Training in virtue takes place primarily through family, participation in an authentic religion, good friendships, personal effort, etc. Most martial arts incorporate a variety of ethical principles and can act as good supports for our ethical formation. The virtues we promote are based upon traditional, western moral philosophy dating back almost two millennia (a school known specifically as "natural philosophy" which can be traced to Aristotle, and is compatible with most monotheistic religions).

Though we do use some "alternative" (herbal) remedies for bumps and bruises, we do not teach or engage in any kind of metaphysics, spiritualism or similar practices found in many martial arts. For example, when we talk about "energy" or "force" or "power," we will almost always mean it in the scientific sense, as one might discuss it in a physics class.

Another contrast is our rejection of dualism, though this would rarely come up in class. We promote balance and moderation – temperance – but we do not believe in dualism in the sense of real and opposing metaphysical forces. For example, I do not believe that there is a good force and an evil force, or light and dark, each having substance and independent existence. Rather, light is what exists and has substance, while darkness is a privation of light. Evil is a privation or perversion of what would otherwise be a good. And so on.

When we engage in brief meditation we aren't doing so in an abstract Zen Buddhist sense, but merely focusing our thoughts on a particular ethic or concept. Some people choose to pray during the meditation time. That is fine.

We do not have a method of objectively measuring ethical strength or growth. On the physical side we can set a target for jumping rope at least 100 times per minute over five minutes, but it would be questionable to have a target of “be courageous for 15 minutes in situation X.” Rather, these opportunities simply present themselves in our daily lives, and when challenged, it can help to consider an ethical principle which we've studied and understood, and attempt to apply it.

We expect participants to do their best to grow in virtue, just as we expect them to grow in physical strength and flexibility. In this sense we gradually move from being someone who attempts to do ethical things to actually being a virtuous person.

Our specific ethics are:

- **Humanitas** (humanity): Uphold the dignity of the innocent human person. We need to respect, defend and promote the humanity or "human nature" within ourselves and within others, especially the most vulnerable and those who are not able to protect themselves. Specifically, we need to respect the person in the sense of the physical and psychological being, and his reputation -- not do things to harm these without justification. We need to respect people's liberty, their freedom to make their own decisions regarding their lives and relationships, and reap the rewards (or even the unpleasant consequences) of those decisions. We need to respect people's property, and never damage or take that which belongs to someone else. Overall, we are free to *propose* ideas regarding improving the human condition, but should never *impose* our will upon others in a way that violates these facets of human life.
- **Profundo** (to pour out): Commit your life to a great good, and to helping others. Literally, "pour out your life for others." So many people simply drift through life, rudderless, never accomplishing anything of value for themselves, their families or the world. Set one or two big goals for your life... and achieve them.
- **Perfectum** (perfection): Strive to do your best in all things. Your perfection is found not in being perfect -- we all fail and make mistakes -- but in fulfilling your own unique potential for good. Make a little progress every day, and don't give up. When you do make a mistake, humbly admit it, apologize, try to repair any harm, and do what you can to improve.
- **Temperantia** (temperance): Maintain balance, "moderation." Do not go to extremes. Make your actions and reactions proportionate to the situation at hand.
- **Iustitia** (justice): Do your duty. Always give others what is due them. Be faithful and true to others and to your agreements. Never withhold what you owe to someone when it is in your power to give it, and never take what is not rightfully yours.
- **Fortitudo** (fortitude): Exercise courage and endure hardships. The harsh reality of life is that you can do everything right and still fail, and the difference between success and failure is sometimes found in having the courage to try what everyone else is afraid of, or in just never giving up, in trying longer than anyone else dared.
- **Prudentia** (prudence): Prudence is the practical application of combining knowledge, experience and ethics to arrive at good decisions. It is also called wisdom, good judgment or common sense. Don't play ethics against each other, but attempt to coordinate them in a harmonious way. Wisdom comes into play especially when there are competing alternative actions. Remember, the ends never justify the means, and when faced with multiple bad options, we have an obligation to choose the least of the evils.

This is not necessarily the best or the only way to present these virtues; someone can easily take issue with any list of particular virtues. “Why wasn't [my favorite issue/virtue] included?” “You left out X.” “Why are they in this order?” Our purpose, here, is not to provide a complete philosophy of being or course in moral philosophy, but to merely point out the virtues that we believe are critically important to human society and that, unfortunately, are often lacking.

Any ethic must be properly ordered in terms of its intensity and object. For example, most martial arts explicitly emphasize respect, loyalty and obedience. These are good things. We should show respect for others; we should be loyal and true to our friends, family and agreements; and, as children, we have an obligation to obey our parents (and as adults we have an obligation to be obedient to those we have agreed to obey). The problem is in the application, especially for mature adults. What some martial arts leaders mean when they say these things is that you should be respectful *to them*, loyal *to them*, and obedient *to them*. They rarely state it this baldly, but the truth is that the more martial the art, the more likely you will find yourself on the outs if the leadership believes you've failed to show them the expected respect, loyalty or obedience. Via Potentia is quite different in this regard. We do not ask for or require any special consideration from you. Our hope is that you will treat *all* people with genuine, heartfelt respect; that you will be faithful in *all* your relationships and agreements; and that you will show obedience to, well, whomever you are obligated to obey.

Any ethic (and any legitimate law) can be used in a distorted, erroneous way. People often purposefully use laws and appeal to ethics to manipulate others and justify wrong or even abusive actions. A common example of this is justice. Many social problems result from a lack of justice: One party taking the liberty or property of another without consent and compensation. In response to widespread social and economic problems, some people say that we need more “social justice.” We need to care for the poor, those in need, etc. It all sounds fine until you learn that social justice involves taking property from one group of people by force, giving some of it to the people in need, and retaining a hefty portion of it for the government or organization facilitating the transfer. As you see, the word justice is used to whitewash what is, in fact, a great injustice. (People are obviously free to contribute to the welfare of the poor of their own free will -- charity. Charitable action is good action. But it is evil to force them to do so using coercive tactics.)

Two ethics that some have specifically asked about in relation to Via Potentia are humility and mercy. Some perceive them as opposites to justice. Humility is a recognition of our actual importance or value relative to other human beings and the rest of creation. In fact, people who have a distorted, unhealthy view of themselves often have a hard time working with others and treating them with proper respect. It is a facet of *humanitas*, understanding and upholding the dignity of human life. We are simultaneously insignificant and very important. We are insignificant in the sense that we are each merely one of billions of human beings. But our words and actions affect those around us and travel forward through time, and may have profound, perhaps even infinite consequences. Hence the importance of wise, ethical behavior.

Mercy is also a facet of *humanitas*, and is built into our self defense principles. For example, if we are attacked, we would never choose to kill the attacker unless there was no other alternative, and if we severely injure the attacker, we believe we should attempt to get him medical assistance if it can be done without further risk to ourselves. Another manifestation of mercy is when someone has made a mistake and is seeking forgiveness. Sometimes justice would demand that they pay a price for their mistake that they are not able to pay, yet we have the opportunity to show mercy to them if we believe that is the better path. Some perceive mercy as a complement to justice, and they give as examples situations in some cultures where people lose limbs, are stoned or even publicly executed for various failings. However, to say that mercy is the complement to justice or “flip side of the coin,” is to misunderstand justice, itself. Genuine justice would never demand torture, dismemberment or execution in the cases in question; these are actually cruel injustices, themselves.

Some have questioned the use of the word "innocent" in our ethic *humanitas*. Shouldn't we uphold the dignity of *all* human life? Why be so specific? Doesn't the person on death row deserve just as much consideration and defense as the unborn or a young child that he killed? Doesn't his life have just as much dignity?

The distinction between innocent and guilty human life is an important one, and worth clarifying. With the exception of the unborn and young children, we are all guilty of something. We all fail and have done things that are shameful. By purposefully using the word innocent, what is intended is the recognition of one's moral state *in regard to the immanent circumstance or conflict*. For example, if one person is unjustly attacking another, then the attacking person is guilty of doing evil, and the other is innocent. We need to uphold the innocent person, and stop the attacker. This isn't to say that the victim has done nothing wrong in his life, but just that within the scope of the particular event he was less guilty of evil than the person who attacked him.

We do not wish the destruction (temporal or eternal) of *any* person, innocent or not. Nor do we have perfect knowledge that allows us to inerrantly know whether someone is guilty or innocent in a particular situation (or in general). Mistakes are made. We must humbly use our best judgment based on the evidence. Sometimes we have to guess. In any event, we wish the best for all human beings, irrespective of their moral states. But we can and do make proper distinction between who we will protect, and who we will use force against, if necessary, to protect ourselves or others.

We are careful in the proposal of these ethics to present them in generalities only. We do not proscribe students' social behavior, nor do we inquire into or micromanage participants' lives. The purpose of our ethics is to reinforce the good that people already know to do, not to replace, supplant or add to anyone's personal ethical beliefs. It is our experience that most rational people already believe and attempt to practice these ethics, though they may not have heard them described or categorized in quite the same way (it is also our experience that most societal

problems are a consequence of failures by people to behave ethically). It is up to the individual to reflect upon them and integrate them into his own life in a coordinated way; we encourage people to put these into their own words. To grow in psychological health and good character, one needs to try to regularly apply ethics to daily events.

Some think that this exhortation is good for children, and certainly children have more maturing to do than, say, someone in his sixties. But we all have weaknesses, fears and areas of immaturity, irrespective of our ages. I interact with thousands of people per year; my experience is that age really has very little to do with genuine ethical maturity (nor does education, career, religion or title). Whatever your stage of life, it is fine to humbly acknowledge your areas of strength, but try also to honestly acknowledge the parts of your character in need of improvement and do what you can to address these, one at a time, gradually. One way to do this is to admit your failings to someone who was affected by them, ask his forgiveness, explain that you are trying to improve, and ask if there is anything you can do to make amends for the pain or harm you caused. Also graciously forgive those who have harmed you and are genuinely seeking forgiveness.

If you examine almost any dispute you will find at its root a violation of one or more of the above virtues, often justice. We need to integrate virtues in our individual lives, families, communities, states and countries. We all make mistakes, and when we do, we have a duty to truly apologize for them, attempt to make up for them, and humbly ask for forgiveness. So much bitterness in our culture would be avoided if people (1) at least *tried* to behave ethically in the first place, and (2) genuinely apologized and tried to remedy the matter when they failed. You (and I) can be among those who attempt to improve our communities by being such people!

Many martial arts encourage you to be a good citizen by being obedient to your government. We take a different approach. We do not believe that you are a servant to your government, but that government is created to be a servant to man. To facilitate integration of virtue and culture, we strongly encourage you to acquire, read and understand your state's constitution, your nation's constitution, and the founding documents of each. For example, an Oregonian should read the Oregon State Constitution, the United States Constitution, and at least the Declaration of Independence. It would also be helpful to understand the relationship between the state and federal constitutions.

Governments and government documents are not reliable sources of ethical principles, and they often (usually) are not followed by the very governments that promote them, but they do demonstrate your society's understanding of the ethical role of government and its relationship to the individual... at least what that understanding was at some point in history by an influential group of people. This is worth knowing. Also, by understanding these founding documents, you can identify weaknesses in your own society and make efforts to improve it. Unfortunately, very few people study or know their country's fundamental documents and principles. And very few people

strive to be authentically ethical in the first place (and, sadly, few governments live up to them). The result is systemic ethical decay among critical societal bodies.

Part of being a good citizen is educating one's self on these principles, and doing what you can to live, promote and improve them. Other recommended reading on wisdom, economics, politics and personal goal achievement includes:

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Sirach (from the Bible)
The Law, Frederick Bastiat
Economics in One Lesson, Henry Hazlitt
The Road to Serfdom, F.A. Hayek
The Richest Man in Babylon, George S. Clason
Keys to Success, Napoleon Hill

Three common acids that eat away at our psychological and physical health are unproductive habits, bad relationships and poor money management. Always focus your efforts on what is most important right now (yes, that is *sometimes* rest, recreation or relationships). Do whatever is in your power to have positive relationships with psychologically healthy, ethical people who encourage you to be a better person, avoiding people who drag you down. Consistently save for your future and avoid debts. Diversify your savings. If you feel so inclined, learn to invest in keeping with your time and character. Bad habits, bad relationships and out of control debts will ruin the best of people. In doing just these few things, you will have much less stress and be much more free than the majority of people.

Once one begins down the path of attempting to be more ethical, a seemingly-insurmountable mountain of obstacles presents itself. Our culture is filled with calls and temptations to be unethical, to be unwise, and to destroy one's self. Sometimes the arguments are very clever, and actually appeal to one or more ethical principles, when they are, in fact, just using them to achieve a selfish end. A prevalent form of this manipulation is the pressure to be tolerant and non-judgmental.

People who are actively engaging in evil often do feel guilty about it on some level. This is a good thing and there is still hope as long as it is the case – guilt isn't the strongest of deterrents, but it helps. However, rather than curtailing the behavior, they will usually seek other people's support and encouragement to help them feel less guilty. But genuinely ethical people, though they might still care for someone who is doing evil, can't condone evil behavior. Those engaging in the evil will try to manipulate others into endorsing the behavior by claiming that they shouldn't be "judgmental," or they should be more caring or "tolerant." "Everyone is doing it." Sometimes they will even pick and choose verses from the Bible. Don't be fooled by these kinds of arguments. Any time you have to selectively choose which ethic or Scriptural passage you are going to apply (and which ones will be ignored), Something Bad is probably going on. Ethics ideally work in pleasant coordination with each other -- not in conflict.

However, the world is an imperfect place. There are two ethical conflict situations that often arise in human interactions that need to be addressed. If you learn to recognize these for what they are, it will help you know what the right thing is to do.

The Ends do not Justify the Means and the Intention is not what Counts... most of the time

Later in this text we explore the role of the government in the self defense of individuals and the people as a whole. We also explore the issue of defending yourself from the government, and the causes of the circumstances that make it necessary. Philosophically, the cause of the circumstances requiring people to defend themselves is usually confusion on the part of government personnel about their own competency and a mistaken belief that their goals or responsibilities justify trampling on the liberties, taking the property, and even ending the lives of others. That is, they believe that they have the legitimate authority to rule other lives and their "end" goal justifies any "means" they use to achieve it. They succeed to the degree that others cooperate.

For example, systemic poverty is a serious problem, and people are rightly concerned about and try different ways of minimizing it. There is nothing wrong with wanting to end hunger, homelessness or poverty and using *one's own resources* to do so. It is a different matter entirely to tell others what they must do and what they must give up in order to support my desired program. Or, perhaps a group of people believe that they should build a school in their town; people can obviously voluntarily group together to work or pay for such a project. But it is seriously evil to take others' liberty or property against their will to achieve your goals; it doesn't matter whether you believe they or the greater community will ultimately benefit, or how many people are in the group. In other words, it is wrong to steal irrespective of what you intend to do with the stolen goods. There is an excellent short story on this topic and the role of government regarding David ("Davy") Crockett called *Not Yours to Give*. It can be easily found on the Internet.

(Conversely, if you have sacrificed and contributed your own time, property and money for a project, it is only just that you should benefit from that -- receive a portion of whatever income results or otherwise be compensated for your contribution. Some people think that there is something wrong or evil about profiting from an endeavor. There isn't... as long as the endeavor, itself, was ethical the motivations were sound, and fraud wasn't involved.)

But this error is not limited to government institutions. It is a *human* error, and is very common in individuals, organizations and companies as well as government.

This talk of ends and means is all rather technical and academic. It is more often called intention (imprecisely). Without going into a complex treatment of ends, means, intentions, etc., suffice it to say that our position is, in keeping with traditional moral philosophy:

1. Good intentions cannot make an evil act good.
2. Evil intentions can make a good act evil.

The first point is just a rephrasing of the maxim that the ends do not justify the means. For example, there is nothing wrong with wanting to preserve one's life and reputation, but it would be grossly evil to take an innocent human life to do so. This may sound like an extreme example, but it is precisely what takes place with each and every abortion. A less extreme example might be someone who violates other people's liberty or property "for their own good." It is common among politicians and law enforcement officers to abuse and trample citizens' freedoms, claiming that they did it to promote some greater good.

The second point, though, is more subtle. It is possible to do something good while intending an evil outcome; this is usually related to vainglory, or giving something to someone knowing and desiring that it will bring about his downfall (i.e., "give him just enough rope to hang himself"). The actual act may be materially good, but the person acting is guilty of doing evil as a consequence of his evil intention.

There are two situations when one often employs the fallacy of the ends justifying the means. The first is when the end -- perhaps a hidden one or an anticipated consequence -- is something that he personally desires very strongly. The other is when he actually wants to do evil -- the means -- and doesn't actually care about the end; the end is just an excuse or rationalization for what he really wanted to do. Sometimes this is called a whitewash or red herring -- a distraction.

When we make ethical decisions, it is important that we do not make this mistake of ends and means, or allow our government or companies to do so.

Lesser of the Evils

Another common ethical error arises when all of the options are apparently unethical. This is vocalized by the exclamation, "what choice did I have?" It is true that situations sometimes arise in which none of the options are attractive, though this is less common than one might think. More often the reality is that the ethical choice just happens to be the most difficult or personally costly. The proper choice in this and other moral dilemmas is not necessarily the one that is most beneficial to me, but the one that is the most ethical (or least evil) overall. The right path in these situations is often to exercise fortitude and endure the hardship in question.

Emoting versus Thinking

(This is less a matter of ethics and more one of psychological maturity.)

Many conflicts between people -- even people of good will -- stem from errors in understanding, differences in communications styles, and differences in the ability to engage in disciplined rational thought or debate. When thoroughly studied, serious differences sometimes distill down to very fundamental (and usually unknown) philosophical differences.

On one hand you have people who loosely accept whatever floats by them without exercising any discernment at all; their motto is, "a mind is like a parachute and only operates properly when it is open." On the other you have people who are unwilling to even consider facts or concepts that differ from or challenge their own beliefs; their creed is, "how far do you have to open your mind before your brain falls out?" Each camp has a variety of derogatory phrases to describe people from the other camp, but they are both wrong. Our minds should be simultaneously closed to error and open to truth. And not merely what is "true for me," but transcending Truth.

It is fine to be confident in one's own understanding and beliefs, but we need to acknowledge that we have imperfect judgment (I make mistakes every single day, and I am probably unaware of many of them). We might be honestly uninformed, wrong or deceived about some matter, and should be willing to give other perspectives a fair hearing; then do our best to evaluate the positions and see which seems not the most beneficial or appealing for us, but which seems to be the most genuinely true.

In addition, some people allow their emotions to control what they think, do and say. Others lack proper emotional depth, or have emotional dysfunctions. You can point out all of the facts that you want; it won't matter, because the real issue is how they feel.

These are areas where temperance is especially important. Be moderate and balanced. Whenever possible, try to honestly discern the truth of a matter, and bring your emotions into control and accordance with the facts. There are situations in which powerful emotional expression is appropriate, but it is dangerous to allow your emotions to control your actions or thoughts. It almost always leads to error, harm and regret.

Failing, Weaknesses, Addictions and Vices

We are imperfect, relational beings. Our actions have consequences for our relationships with others and the world; they might create, strengthen, weaken or even destroy them.

We must strive to do our best, to try to know the truth and choose what is good. When we do fail at this and recognize our failure, we need to do what we can to repair any harm we've done to others, to ourselves, and to restore the proper order to our relationships. At the very least, this means apologizing to people we've wronged and doing what we can to make up for the harm.

Of course, sometimes that isn't enough. Sometimes nothing will be enough. But that is another topic.

Sometimes the failing was a matter of chance, or something that happened despite our best effort. It is something that doesn't happen very often. Other times, it may be a sign of an interior weakness, especially if it is a failing that makes repeat appearances in your life. A simple example is the difference between someone who drank too much alcohol one time and got into a fight or wrecked a car, as opposed

to someone who finds himself drunk and in fights every few months (or weeks). Or someone who once gambled and lost a lot of money, and someone who does it on a regular basis.

Gambling and drunkenness are “safe” topics. But for complex beings there can be many other areas of weakness; gossip, anger and bitterness, greed, selfishness, pride, lust, laziness, gluttony, dishonesty, and so on. Some have an “attachment” to certain material things, feelings or actions that is harmful to ourselves or others.

We all fail from time to time. Some of us more than others. I make mistakes by omission, if not commission, on a daily basis. But a weakness is something to take note of and guard against. If you become aware of a weakness in your life, you should either strengthen yourself in that area, or avoid situations where you are vulnerable to that weakness (or both). It is a little like defending yourself from dangerous people and situations, or addressing a physical weakness. Continuing our simple example, someone with a weakness for getting drawn into fights or getting drunk should avoid drinking and rough bars.

Focusing on the weakness alone is rarely helpful. It is like saying, “don't imagine a pink elephant.” All you end up thinking about is pink elephants. Rather, find an alternative activity. If you are tempted to go drinking, gambling, gossiping, etc., don't sit at home thinking about how much you want to do it, but won't. Find an enjoyable (and ethical) alternative to fill the psychological need. Try to identify why you are drawn to engage in your weakness, what leads to it, and either address it directly, or find a different, better activity that can satisfy the same appetite.

If we engage too long in a weakness or temptation, it can turn into an addiction. The body or psychology begins to need the experience just to feel normal, and one is drawn to it more and more. During the developing addiction one might experience temporary victories, then losses, in his efforts to fight his weakness. Becoming addicted is often accompanied by emotional highs and lows. If he does not succeed at breaking free of the addiction, it eventually turns into a vice – an act he has stopped resisting, to which he has given himself and gradually loses any sense of guilt.

If you can be honest with yourself, you will know when you have a weakness, when you have an addiction, and when you have a vice. If you can't go a month or more without falling into the same ditch, if you aren't making any progress against it, or if the attraction is a very serious, damaging one, then seek assistance right away. The deeper the problem, the more difficult it is to fix without assistance. At the weakness stage we can sometimes handle it ourselves, just as we might try to address a weak part of our bodies through exercise. But once something gets to addiction, it is usually time to ask for professional help. Don't be too embarrassed or ashamed to ask for help from an expert – a skilled therapist or religious. And then go through the slow, difficult, necessary steps of reform, healing and reconciliation. Addictions and vices can destroy your relationships and your life. Asking for help with these is no different than to going to a doctor or physical therapist when you recognize that

your body is becoming seriously ill, or has been injured beyond your ability to heal yourself.

Psychological Assaults

Later in this text we discuss assaults in detail. Physical assaults. But we are actually much more likely to experience psychological abuse and assault than physical. Psychological abuse is an important topic; people can literally die or be driven into self-destructive vices by the stress. Psychologically abusive people use circumstances and words to harm or manipulate others. Their statements usually have just enough truth in them to be damaging and hard to refute. Abusive people range from those who engage in consistent, small abuses, to those who are very aggressive and intimidating, to those who orchestrate masterful character (or career) assassinations.

Don't be surprised or shocked if you experience psychological abuse. Roughly half of people have substantial psychological weaknesses, and about one in thirty are sociopaths who will attack others without remorse or concern for what is objectively right or true. Abusive people are found in all social groups, all career fields, and all classes.

Interestingly, the principles and tactics of protecting yourself from psychological abuse are much the same as the physical tactics; awareness, avoidance, etc. No, we don't strike the neck of someone who insults us (usually), but we do have similar choices; submit, posture, flee or fight. Rather than going into great detail here, after reading through the manual – especially the section on self defense – I recommend that you re-read that section but think of it in terms of psychological assault instead of physical. And instead of fists, elbows and knees, the tools become truth, facts, words, tone and body language. Instead of doing push ups, squats and stretching to develop strength and flexibility, we try to practice ethics to develop strength of character, humility and confidence.

In my experience the best thing you can do with a psychologically abusive person is to flatly refuse to interact with him on his terms. This is the equivalent of refusing to box with someone who is a good boxer, grapple with someone who is a good grappler, etc. Don't get drawn into his arguments. Don't answer his questions. It might not make a friend of your attacker, but here are a few phrases that can stop most psychological abuses cold:

- “That simply isn't true, and I'm not going to have a discussion if we can't stick to truth.”
- “You are being manipulative and abusive. I'll be happy to talk with you when we can have a respectful conversation.”

Remember, men in particular are wired to deal with contention physically. If you feel yourself losing your composure, remove yourself from the situation. If you are arguing with a man and his language is becoming profane, abrupt, he has stopped talking, or is walking away, *do not pursue the matter at that time*. Give him an out. In fact,

it is generally wise to give your adversary an attractive out from any conflict, physical or psychological.

A word of advice: Though we condone the use of proportional violence to stop a physical assault on an innocent person, we do not condone physical violence, deception, abuse or manipulation of a psychologically-abusive person. For example, if someone is lying about you, defaming you, the appropriate response is not to fabricate lies about him. We don't desire his destruction, but his conversion (if possible). Utilize truth, openness and honor – three of the most effective tools when dealing with a psychologically-abusive person.

Finally, many of the people who engage in psychological abuse are psychologically dysfunctional, themselves, and need help – usually professional help. Be wary of trying to help someone who is abusive by yourself. It rarely turns out well.

For more details see the section on Psychological Assaults.

Doing Good

Make a special effort to do something good every day for someone else. Create the habit. Don't draw attention to it, or do it with ulterior motives (expecting something in return). If it coincides with your own larger life goals, all-the-better.

Finally, though Via Potentia is not a religious organization, and is neither affiliated with nor promotes a particular religion, the human reality is that we need to acknowledge God and try to conform our lives to his will. Via Potentia will never pretend to know what God's specific will is for any particular person (or whether that exists or is knowable); that is for you to meditate upon and discover on your own. However, we encourage you to make time every day to pray so that you can discover and keep yourself on that path. We specifically recommend that you learn to pray part of the Liturgy of the Hours, or some similar prayer that helps you remain open to God's presence and guidance in your life.

Financial Well-being

Not really a common topic for self defense or martial arts programs, financial “conditioning” is important to personal peace and well-being. In fact, many people point to financial stress as a reason that they fell into depression, vice, lost their job or marriage, or even engaged in criminal activity (financial problems, though, are usually symptoms of other issues, or other issues will become real problems in the presence of financial stresses).

My grandfather use to tell me, “money isn't the most important thing in the world, but it sure beats whatever is in second place.” Financial health is fairly simple, and being numerical, it is easy to measure your failure, success and progress. It takes discipline, but the basic principles are:

1. Earn more than you spend (or spend less than you earn, depending on how you want to say it).
2. Protect and Invest the Balance

Okay, everyone say “duh” together.

Spend less than you earn: Most people know how much they make, but don't keep track of their expenses. A good way to get control of spending is to deposit your paycheck, pay the necessary bills like rent and utilities, then divide the balance as cash into dedicated envelopes for food, clothing, fuel, entertainment, etc. When the envelope is empty, you stop spending money on that category for the month (or you take money from a different, less important envelope).

Do whatever you can to avoid taking on debt and unnecessary expenses. Don't use credit cards to make up the difference. If you use credit cards, always pay them off in full every month. Credit card interest is ridiculous. Carrying a balance on a credit card, especially an increasing balance, is a sign of a financial or lifestyle imbalance.

Common areas where people are overspend include entertainment areas like eating out, cable or satellite television, movies and subscriptions. People often spend more than they need to on auto, home and health insurance; competitive shopping usually brings these down substantially.

It is easier and more effective to chop away at a few of your largest expenses than to eliminate a bunch of little ones. To do this, make a list of your spending categories and amounts, sort them by size from largest to smallest, then spend time aggressively reducing each of them by any means possible, beginning with the highest ones.

Once you've chopped away at the biggest expenses, turn to those that are optional but habitual. For example, I am firmly addicted to hazelnut mochas. Yes, addictions aren't good, but I can think of worse and more expensive ones. I've been drinking these darned things for about 15 years. All this gradually adds up, and pretty soon you are talking about real money. Were I to buy from the local caffeine pusher, I'd probably spend \$8 per day, \$240 per month, or almost \$3000 per year!

Well, I like hazelnut mochas – yes, I could stop anytime I wanted to. Really. So I just found a way to feed the habit without blowing \$3000 per year. A quality home espresso machine cost about \$250, and a \$15 bag of coffee lasts me a month. Add the costs of the flavorings and milk and I'm spending about \$35 total per month, or \$400 per year. So my per-hit cost is now around 60 cents instead of \$4. It is still \$400 more than I'd spend if I only drank water, but it is much less than I'd spend for the exact same thing bought at the coffee shop.

Investing the Balance: There are two reasons that you must find productive uses for your savings. First, over roughly the last 80 years the dollar has lost about 97% of its value; this trend is likely to continue and accelerate. You should have a cash emergency fund, but beyond that, saved cash is wasted cash. Second, even if you are

able to save 10% of your income every year with the intention of living off of the balance upon retirement, you'll be lucky if it lasts you five years.

At the very least you need to save in a way that protects from inflation. This means a diversified basket of commodities, equities, or even inflation-protected bonds. Maybe some real estate mixed in. But that only *preserves* capital. It doesn't grow it. Finding a productive use for your savings means that it goes to work producing more capital to offset losses due to inflation, taxes and investing mistakes – yes, you are going to make mistakes.

There are many methods of investing. Find the ones that interest you and that you can manage. This is a massive topic unto itself. Personally, I prefer trading futures and futures options. Some people like to invest in businesses, collectibles, commodities, stocks, real estate, and any number of other “investment vehicles.”

Protecting the Balance: Insofar as possible, know and control your risks when investing. One uncontrolled mistake can clean you out just as surely as would a burglar.

Don't trust anyone when it comes to your savings; not even your bank. Never make investments based on tips from friends or family. Most people are clueless when it come to money, investments and business, but they all think they are geniuses. If you are going to take investment advice, only take it from trustworthy people who are more successful – much more successful – than you.... And they rarely give tips.

Medical and other emergencies can destroy your life savings in seconds. If you can afford it, get insurance to protect yourself from such risks. Also, there are many people who wouldn't hesitate to steal or trick you out of your savings. Never disclose your savings to strangers (and be wary of doing so with friends or family). Avoid investments and offers that sound “too good to be true.”

Lawsuits are another significant risk once you have a few assets. They can come from nowhere. In many cases retirement accounts have some protection from creditors and lawyers.

Protecting the balance includes paying protection money to those who will take everything you own if you do not. Yes, I'm talking about paying taxes to the government: Pay them, or suffer the consequences.

Testing

For the purposes of testing, students should know the Latin and English terms for our ethics, their general meaning, and attempt to practice them in their daily lives. During testing they may be asked to give a practical example of one or more ethics.

Suggestions

Just as we have general recommendations for physical health, here are some general recommendations for psychological health:

- Refuse to be a victim. You are where and who you are as a consequence of *your* decisions -- the older you are, the more true this is. Whenever possible, strive to take more personal responsibility for your choices, words and actions, their consequences, and for your life as a whole. Don't blame others for the messes you get yourself into.
- Set long term (lifelong) and short term (annual) goals for your life
- Take a few minutes of quiet time each morning to think about your day, what you are going to do, and how it corresponds to your goals. Try to do at least one thing on a regular basis that takes you a step closer to your goals.
- When you feel stressed, pray or meditate on a peaceful thought, and practice deep breathing. Get some exercise. Focus on a solution or a positive project, and try to avoid long term feelings of bitterness or anger.
- Be aware of and suppress strong desires for material things or others' approval; don't let things, people or your desires rule you or distract you from your good goals.
- Work hard
- Be faithful and honorable
- Never gossip
- Avoid debt, and save and invest for your future
- When in doubt or feeling aimless, stop and determine "what is the most important -- the right -- thing for me to be doing right now," *and force yourself to do it*
- Be kind, gracious, thankful and merciful. Give credit to others. Overlook and forgive other people's faults.
- Seek good mentors, role models or "heroes," and try to learn from and model what is good in them.
- Try to do at least one thing for someone else -- something selfless -- every day, and do not draw attention to it.
- Honestly apologize to and ask forgiveness from those you harm. Seek ways to repair this damage, if possible.
- Be humble in victory and gracious in defeat and failures
- Always fulfill your legitimate responsibilities promptly
- Avoid making important decisions when you feel angry, depressed, desperate or out of control
- Seek friends and activities that inspire you to become a better person. Avoid people, places and relationships that weaken, tempt or bring out the worst in you.
- Your physical and psychological facets are closely related. Each affects the other. If one is unhealthy, injured or out of control, it will be difficult to maintain good health in the other.
- Acknowledge your psychological vulnerabilities as well as your physical ones. Identify the bad habits and faults in your character (not all at once). Attempt

to improve these over time, and avoid circumstances that make you vulnerable. A good way to do this is not to merely omit or try to repress the bad habit, but to *replace* it with something better. Seek professional help if needed.

- Focus on a different ethic each day and try to make it more present in your choices and interactions.
- You can't legitimately change anyone else against his will, but you can resist (or ignore) his attempts to manipulate or harm you. Insofar as you can, avoid people who are manipulative, insulting or abusive to you or others.
- Remember, you always have a choice, and no one has any genuine authority over you that you do not consent to give them (this doesn't mean that they don't have or won't exercise brute force).
- Insofar as you are able, develop a good relationship with a banker, a lawyer, a police officer and someone in local, state or federal government.

CPR

CPR stands for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation. Its purpose is to keep oxygenated blood flowing through the body of someone whose heart has stopped working properly *in anticipation of professional medical assistance to restart the heart.*

The details of how to perform CPR will be taught in class, usually according to the practices of the Red Cross. Briefly, the steps are as follows (assuming an adult victim):

1. Assess the situation. If you walk into a room and see someone unconscious on the floor, first make sure it is safe to enter the area. A lot of would-be rescuers end up dead because they don't take the few seconds that are needed to do this.
2. If you find an unconscious *adult*, call for help immediately, before providing aid; if an adult collapses without another obvious cause, it is often due to a heart failure of some kind or another event that will require professional medical assistance. Ideally, assign another person call for help and acquire an AED if you have one on hand, then approach the person and look for signs of life.
3. Tap the person firmly on the shoulder and ask "are you okay?" If there isn't a response, check for breathing. One way to do this is to place the side of your face, your ear, near the person's mouth and nose, while watching the chest. Wait a few seconds; listen for sounds, watch for the chest rising to breathe, feel for breath on the side of your face. (Be aware that you may get vomited upon.) You can check for a pulse simultaneously, but if the person is not breathing, it is very likely that his heart has stopped as well, and whether the heart is beating or not, the next few steps are the same.
4. If necessary, move the person so that you can perform CPR. This usually means dragging them so that they are laying flat on the ground. Do so carefully if there is any chance of a neck or back injury. You may need to remove the shirt and undergarments, too.
5. Tilt the head back slightly -- lift the chin while pressing back on the forehead -- and attempt two short breaths into the mouth while pinching the nose. If the breaths do not go in, re-adjust the neck, and try again. If these do not go in, there may be a choking situation. Either way, you begin compressions to the chest. 30 compressions at a relatively fast pace, depressing roughly two inches.
6. If the person was choking, the compressions might eject the lodged object. Attempt to remove it from the mouth using a scooping motion with your finger. In some cases the choking person may resume breathing on his own

(anytime the person begins breathing on his own or shows other signs of life, stop compressions and rescue breathing, and reassess the situation).

7. After each 30 compressions, attempt two more breaths, then go back to compressions. Some agencies recommend against going back and forth between the compressions and rescue breaths, and to just focus on compressions. The ideal is to have a second person assisting. He can do the breaths while you do compressions. He should do a breath every 15-20 seconds.
8. After about two minutes -- five or six cycles of compressions and breaths -- check again for breath or other signs of life.
9. Continue this pattern until professional help arrives, and AED is applied, the person shows signs of life, or you are too exhausted to continue. If you have an assistant, change positions if you get tired. After ten minutes, the chances of recovery are basically zero (there has usually been too much damage to the brain and other organs due to lack of circulation).

There are minor changes to be made depending on the size and age of the victim. Also, there is nothing "magical" about the number of compressions, cycles, etc. The suggested numbers have changed over the years. If you do 29 instead of 30, it isn't as if you made some horrible mistake.

Do not feel like a failure if you perform CPR and the person does not live. CPR is much less effective than the general public believes. It rarely works in cases where the heart has stopped due to general trauma or illness -- medical technicians have told me that they only do CPR in such cases for the benefit of family -- and CPR alone is almost completely ineffective at addressing sudden cardiac arrest in adults. The statistics for the success of CPR alone when applied to sudden heart failure range from 2% to 30% depending on the study. Emergency medical technicians and even Red Cross trainers have uniformly confirmed that CPR *alone* rarely saves the person. One EMT stated that in 30 years on the job he had seen only one life saved by the application of CPR alone.

In any event, what is critical is to get an AED and professional help on the scene as quickly as possible, implementing CPR in the mean-time in an effort to reduce possible brain and organ damage.

FIRST AID AND COMMON INJURIES

[This is just a brief summary of common issues in martial arts, self defense and other athletic programs. Detailed instruction on First Aid like splinting joints and broken limbs, dressing wounds, etc., will be provided in optional classes.]

First Aid skills are genuinely helpful in two situations; minor injuries that do not require professional medical attention, and more serious ones that do require professional help, but the help and the person cannot be immediately brought together.

Remember, we are not medical professionals, and we are not offering "medical advice." We have simply compiled and are passing along recommendations and information that we've gathered from our own experience, our training with the Red Cross, and other sources. If you have specific medical questions or issues, you should consult a doctor.

Bumps and bruises are a part of life, and a part of any dynamic activity or sport. Injuries are quite common in the martial arts, with some studies indicating that the average participant experiences four notable injuries *per year*. Minor injuries can usually be self-treated, and heal quickly if properly attended. The two, common minor issues generally involve swelling -- bruises and sprains -- or broken skin. Minor muscle "pulls" (tears) often do not require medical attention, either. Any injury to the spine, head, a broken bone, a destabilized joint, pain in internal organs, an infection or injury accompanied by a fever, major muscle tears, chronic discomfort, or anything exceeding just a minor bruise, sprain or scrape should be immediately referred to a medical professional.

The First Steps

The first thing to do with any injury is to quickly (and accurately) assess the seriousness of the situation. At the very least this means identifying the most serious danger at the moment and addressing it. Most athletic injuries are minor and do not require immediate, emergency medical treatment. But if someone is not breathing, unconscious, appears to be going into shock, is losing blood rapidly, or has another circumstance that will obviously require professional medical assistance -- electrocution, burn, etc. -- the very first thing to do is to have someone call for professional medical help. *If there is any doubt, call for help.* Then make sure that the scene is safe to approach the injured person, and proceed to administer the appropriate aid. *Do not administer aid if doing so places you at serious risk.*

Sometimes it is necessary to move a person before medical professionals can arrive. If you have any reason to suspect damage to the neck or spine, do not move the person unless he is in immediate danger of further serious injury (as in life-threatening). Moving someone with a neck or spine injury can cause permanent injury, paralysis or even death.

Whenever possible, use protective devices -- vinyl or nitrile gloves, eye protection or a CPR breathing mask -- to avoid the transmission of body fluids and possible infection.

Never “Walk it Out”

Many people and athletic instructors, when an athlete complains of pain, replies with “walk it out.” This is *stupid*. I've personally known coaches who told students to “walk out” broken ankles, torn ligaments, damaged cartilage, torn muscles, etc. Just say no to anyone who offers such advice and go find a class led by someone who has a clue. Pain indicates that there is something wrong, and can be a serious injury. Never, ever follow such advice. What you need to do is diagnose the cause of the pain and address it. That requires some basic knowledge of anatomy and body functions.

Bruises and Sprains

Swelling due to bruising or a minor joint injury can usually be addressed by alternating cold and hot packs, and massaging the area. When tissue is damaged, fluids are released in the area, causing swelling. This is a natural response by the body that stabilizes the area. The released fluids and blood turn color. Over time, the body absorbs the fluid from the area as it heals. Applying a cold compress immediately after the injury can reduce initial swelling and diminish pain, but if held for too long can also cause fluids and damaged tissues to congeal and remain in the area longer than usual. This impedes the healing process and can cause long term problems.

Once the initial swelling is contained, alternate with very hot compresses – as hot as you can stand – for up to 20 minutes, massage and then let the area return to normal temperature for an hour or two before applying more heat. Applying too much heat can actually slow the healing process.

There are also topically-applied herbal "folk" remedies -- usually with an alcohol base -- that can help. Many people recommend application of arnica plant extract as an ointment, tincture or gel. See a doctor if the swelling is excessive, doesn't respond to treatment or is exceptionally painful.

Hard impacts can cause bruising as deep as the bone. A bone bruise is a situation in which the surface of the bone has been damaged and must be repaired by the body. If pain persists for more than a few days and feels like an ache deep within the limb, you may have a bone bruise. Unfortunately, there isn't much to do for it except to try not to stress the bone and allow it to heal. It can take a several weeks, much like an actual bone break. Be careful with it, as the bone is weakened while bruised and healing, and could completely break if strained.

Sprains are more complicated, and may involve damage to ligaments, tendons, muscles, bone and other tissues immediate to the joint. A sprain is an injury to the tendons, ligaments or other supporting tissues of a joint. It can be as minor as

painful stretching, some tearing, or even complete separation. Serious sprains may require surgery to heal properly. Mild ones can be self-treated to reduce swelling much like treating a bruise. Attempt to limit joint movement and provide additional support to avoid re-injury. This can be done using home-made or store-bought braces and may require several weeks of wearing the brace.

There are two steps here; the healing of the original wound during which damaged tissues are reconstructed and wastes are cleaned away, and then re-strengthening. Once the injury has healed and the pain is gone, go easy and gradually re-strengthen the joint through exercise over the following weeks.

Ibuprofen or aspirin are the most common pharmaceutical, over-the-counter treatments for pain with associated swelling. However, aspirin should not be taken by children, especially if they have a fever, due to a rare and fatal complication commonly called Reye's Syndrome. Acetaminophen is also effective for pain, but doesn't appear to help with reducing swelling, and it is associated with liver damage in some people or in high doses (it is one of the leading causes of liver failure and drug overdoses in the Western world). There are other medications for pain and swelling constantly being developed. Consult a doctor or pharmacist if you have detailed questions about these or other drugs for pain and inflammation.

Insofar as you can, avoid taking medication unless it is necessary to function, avoid spasms, and get sleep. Some pain will actually help you avoid re-injuring the weakened area. If you take medication that deadens the pain, it increases the chances of causing further injury to an already-injured joint.

Cuts

Your skin is your first and most important layer of defense against bacteria and viruses. Even a small cut or puncture can be serious, as it allows germs to pass directly into your body. However, barring other factors, most small cuts and abrasions can be self treated.

First stop the bleeding by applying firm pressure to the area using a clean cloth. Some initial bleeding can be a good thing, as it may wash foreign contaminants from the wound. Sometimes elevating the cut area above the heart can help reduce blood pressure and slow the bleeding, but if you have to choose between elevation and pressure, pressure is more important. (If you cannot stop the bleeding, call for professional medical emergency help; if it cannot get to you, have someone drive you to the hospital while another person keeps pressure on the wound. In a life-threatening situation a tourniquet can be applied above wound, but this risks complicating the injury and possible loss of the limb.)

Once the bleeding is stopped, allow a couple hours to pass and gently clean the damaged area using soap and water, tea tree oil, hydrogen peroxide, alcohol and/or other topical antibiotics. You need to gently remove any foreign debris and damaged tissue, as these could cause an infection. Tea tree oil and hydrogen peroxide need to be diluted for safe topical use. Some professionals now advise against using

hydrogen peroxide, claiming that it is too harsh on the exposed tissue and may impede healing. Some recommend allowing nothing except saline solution into the wound (emergency saline solution for cleaning a wound can be made by dissolving 1 tsp of pure salt and ½ tsp of baking soda with one cup of very hot – ideally just-boiled – water).

Whatever you use, keep the area covered to avoid re-injury and exposure to germs, but don't wrap it too tightly or seal it off from air. If it is a long cut, or in an area of your body that flexes frequently like a joint or your face, you may need to see about getting stitches. If it is a deep cut (puncture), if the cut was caused by a dirty object, or if it turns red, swells or you begin to get a fever, you may be getting an infection and should see a doctor immediately.

Once you are certain that the cut is clean, some people use super-glue-like treatments to adhere the skin back together. These are available under a variety of brand names, though some people claim that just plain super glue works fine for them. Make sure that the edges of the cut are aligned just as you want them to be *forever* before applying the glue.

There are a variety of topical antibiotic ointments and, of course, prescription medicines. Many medical organizations now recommend *against* applying an antibiotic unless you suspect an infection is already present or likely to set in. In addition, grape seed and olive leaf extract have been beneficial for some people when taken internally (orally) in proper concentrations to treat general viral, fungal or bacterial infections.

Pulled Muscles

"Pulling" a muscle means that fibers/cells in the muscle have been stretched to the point that they have become damaged or destroyed. Minor pulled muscles and minor joint sprains are not uncommon in dynamic activities. Once the injury has occurred, there is little to do except to stabilize the area and avoid putting additional stress on the muscle or joint for about six weeks. And even then, be gradual. Because muscles attach to and stabilize joints via tendons, a damaged muscle often also results in an endangered joint; a joint brace can help support the joint and take some load off of the damaged muscle.

As above, alternating cold, hot and massage can also speed recovery. Muscle injuries are usually deep enough that topical medications provide little genuine benefit, though the massaging associated with application can help. You must simply allow it time to heal and re-strengthen. Also, study what caused the injury in the first place so that you don't make the same mistake in the future (usually a lack of proper stretching or warm-up, placing too much stress on a fatigued muscle, or attempting new, difficult techniques).

A serious joint or muscle injury should be referred to a doctor.

Pulled muscles in the thigh and lower back are very common in martial arts. Muscles that are sore from general exertion can be massaged and given light exercise to help in the release of lactic acid buildup. A hot shower or bath can also bring some comfort. Sore muscles and stiff joints are common while just starting, after taking a break and resuming exercise, or while learning a new technique.

Broken Bones

Treatment for any broken bone should be referred to a medical professional.

Some breaks are (painfully) obvious. Others are pretty sneaky and confused for joint sprains. Bones usually break away from their ends, towards the center of the bone. Impacts followed by acute pain near the middle of a bone often indicates a break. Acute pain near the end is often a joint structure injury.

The seriousness of a broken bone depends on the particular bone, the degree of break, and related tissue damage. An incomplete fracture can be difficult to diagnose, and sometimes doesn't show clearly on an x-ray. It feels like a deep ache in the limb. Such situations usually require six weeks to fully heal, and can benefit from a brace during that time.

A complete fracture – a break completely through – of the bone is usually a little more obvious, accompanied by weakness in the limb/area, and sometimes deformity. But sometimes it isn't so clear. A complete break is typically followed by acute pain at the point of the break, and substantial swelling. Sometimes you can feel bone fragments floating around under the skin, or the edge of the break, depending on the location. If acute pain persists for longer than a day, or is accompanied by limb weakness, it is usually a bone break.

A compound fracture is one in which the bone is protruding through the skin. Both the compound and the complete fracture can be accompanied by serious damage to nearby tissue, perhaps fatal if a critical artery is severed. With a compound fracture such bleeding is obvious. Otherwise, it might be indicated by large swelling and discoloration in the area. Such bleeding is high pressure, deep, and very difficult to stop without expertise. Call for help and apply as much pressure as you can at or slightly above the apparent point of rupture.

Never attempt to reset a bone or adjust a deformed limb on your own. Immobilize the area. If possible, have medical professionals come to you. If not possible, being careful to keep the deformed area immobilized, take the person to the emergency department immediately.

For minor breaks – no apparent bleeding, no skin rupture or other serious damage – a temporary splint or sling can be applied. Methods for doing so are discussed in class. The splint can reduce pain during transport and reduce the chance of additional injury.

Some people go into shock after a serious bone break or joint injury, so keep an eye out for that, too.

Shock

Many people have a psychological response to injury, allergic exposure, or even just an emotional event that is called "shock." It is indicated by a feeling of sleepiness, dizziness, weakness, cold sweat, shallow or weak breathing, or a pale/ashen appearance. A person in shock may collapse, pass out or vomit. If it continues, his organs may begin to fail, and he could die.

If someone has a serious injury, or appears to be going into shock, the first priority is to get professional medical help notified and on the way. In general, you need to stabilize the person's blood flow, breathing, hydration and temperature. If he is hot, loosen his clothing and move him to a cooler area, and vice-versa. Have him sit down and place his head between his knees, or lay down on his back with his knees up or legs elevated (if he is unconscious, place him in the "recovery position" taught in the First Aid class). If he is conscious and not vomiting or seriously injured, giving him water -- preferably a mild salt, soda and water solution -- to gradually sip can help restore proper fluid balance. Try to keep him conscious and calm until he is feeling better or professional medical assistance arrives.

Concussion

"Concussion" is the word used to indicate an injury to the brain usually caused by an impact to the head, a hard fall, or similar event. Common symptoms include confusion, loss of memory, dizziness, loss of consciousness, ringing in the ears, slurred speech, weakness, blurred vision, nausea, headache or perseverating (repeating a phrase or question). The symptoms are usually temporary. You should contact a doctor whenever a concussion is suspected, especially if the symptoms persist. Depending on the circumstances, he might recommend home care, to schedule an appointment, or to go to the hospital immediately.

If any of the symptoms are severe, or if the injury is obviously serious (e.g., a fall from a height or extensive bleeding), do not move the person. There may be a neck injury, and moving someone with a neck or back injury without proper support can make things much worse. Keep the person calm and still, and call for professional, emergency help.

The treatment for mild concussions is usually just rest and perhaps some pain and anti-inflammatory medication. For concussions and any internal injuries you usually want to avoid blood thinning drugs like aspirin. As with other injuries, avoid activities that could re-injure the brain for at least a couple weeks.

If you observe these or similar symptoms in someone who has not had an impact -- especially an older person -- he may have experienced a stroke. Call for emergency help immediately.

Heat Stroke

Another serious event is heat stroke. This means that the body has lost its ability to regulate its temperature and is overheating. This is usually associated with activity on a hot day, direct sun exposure and a lack of water. Someone experiencing heat stroke may feel suddenly weak, confused, agitated, dizzy, nauseated or may pass out. They often have a rapid pulse, rapid and shallow breathing, and may stop perspiring. Heat stroke is potentially deadly. If you suspect it, it is critical to call for emergency help and get the person to a cooler place immediately. Remove heavy clothing, run a fan on them, and spray them with cool or tepid water. Apply ice packs under the arms and in the groin area (this cools the blood in the large arteries that are near the surface in these areas).

Heat stroke is usually associated with dehydration. If the person is conscious, have them take small sips of cool water, a sports drink or a saline solution.

Milder forms of heat stroke are called heat cramps or heat exhaustion. The symptoms of heat exhaustion are similar to those of heat stroke, but less intense and usually do not require emergency medical care. Also, someone with heat exhaustion is often sweating profusely, as opposed to heat stroke where perspiration has sometimes ceased.

Heat cramps are painful muscle cramps apparently due to a depletion of salt in the body, usually from excessive perspiration or a lack of sodium in the diet. Sports drinks with sodium and other electrolytes can help.

To avoid heat related acute illness, scale back your efforts in high heat situations, especially if you have direct sun exposure. Drink plenty of water and sports drinks. Wear light clothing. Monitor your pulse and breath rate.

Those with other health conditions are especially susceptible to heat stroke.

Skin Fungus Infections

An infection that is common to many sports and martial arts is a fungal infection of the skin (bacterial and viral skin infections are also possible, but less common). We all have a variety of bacteria and other things on our skin at all times, and it usually isn't a problem as long as your skin is healthy and relatively dry. But in the proper environment -- usually warmth and moisture (water or perspiration) -- the organisms can penetrate and infect the skin, especially if the skin has been cut, scraped or roughed up, exposing deeper layers.

These infections go by different names, depending on the type of fungus and location of the infection. The most common name is "athletes foot," as it is frequently found on the feet. Indications include redness, itching, swelling, discoloration or peeling of the skin. This is sometimes associated with an odd odor. In other areas of the body, it is generically called ringworm, and appears as a circular patch with a raised red border that looks kind of like a ring.

Such infections are rarely serious, but should be treated as soon as possible to avoid spreading on yourself or to others. They can spread *very* rapidly if the climate is just right. There isn't a single remedy that will work on all of them; you may have to try different ones. There are many over-the-counter cream, spray and powder medications for skin fungus. Look at the active ingredient; it is usually tolnaftate, clotrimazole or miconazole. There are others, too. Try one for a few days. If you don't have any improvement, switch to one with a different active ingredient. Some people suggest sea salt, tea tree oil, grapefruit seed extract, white vinegar, and a variety of other natural remedies. Some particularly harsh remedies include nail polish, bleach or alcohol, but we cannot recommend applying such things to your skin except in more desperate cases.

The problem in the martial arts is that a lot of practice is done barefoot, and if you have the infection, every time you take a step you are leaving trace amounts of the fungus on the floor or mats. If anyone else steps, falls or rolls there, then it is transferred to his skin or clothing, and can potentially infect him. If you are aware that you have athlete's foot, ringworm, or any similar infection of the skin, treat it immediately and thoroughly. *If you have athlete's foot, then we require that you purchase and wear wrestling shoes to avoid spreading it to others. If the instructor observes that you have ringworm he may dismiss you from the class until you have appropriate shoes or have cured the infection.*

Fungal infections on the feet and groin area are especially difficult to avoid or permanently eradicate. Above all, keep yourself clean and dry. Wash your clothes after each use (use bleach). Bleach your shower or tub before every use. Never, ever share clothes, towels or sparring gear with someone else. Don't use public showers or walk barefoot in public areas. If someone appears to have a skin infection, you are free to refuse to work out with him (I would refuse, too). Treat your shoes daily with spray or powder. Medicate infected areas once or twice a day. Don't scratch infected areas and always thoroughly wash your hands after treatment; otherwise, you'll just spread the infection. Be patient; the immediate infection may diminish in a few days, but continue treatment for at least a week or two or more to make sure that it is really gone.

There are skin viruses and bacteria that start out looking like ringworm, but won't respond to ringworm treatment (it can actually make it worse). If you have an infection and it isn't being controlled by treatment -- you should see/feel positive results in two or three days -- see a dermatologist. If you have similar signs, but also have a fever or other signs of general illness, you may have a serious condition and should contact a doctor for diagnosis and treatment.

Other Infections

Bacterial or viral infections can get very serious, very quickly. If you develop a fever, or have a cut that is not responding to treatment -- that is getting worse, more painful, swelling, throbbing, turning red, etc. -- get to a doctor *fast*. Untreated infections can result in permanent injury, lost limbs, or even death.

Poisons

For every person who dies due to a gun accident, roughly 28 die from poisoning. One of the most important phone numbers you can know is the poison help center phone number, 1-800-222-1222. Write it on your phone, refrigerator or some other central location.

Choking

Many hundreds of people die each year from choking and suffocation. Choking is often discussed as part of a CPR program because, well, "doing CPR" is one of the ways of addressing a situation where a person has fallen unconscious from choking.

Choking is pretty terrifying to the person experiencing it, and sometimes they will react wildly, making it difficult or impossible to assist them. In such cases you may have to wait until they go unconscious to help them. Be aware that the person might pass out while you are attempting to help him. He could fall on you or drag you down.

For this example we will assume the choking person is an adult or large child.

The signs of choking are:

- Inability to speak.
- Blueish color to the skin.
- Weak coughing, often associated with wheezing or a strange whistling sound.
- Claspings at the neck.
- Children (and even some adults) will panic, run wild and lash out, knocking things down.
- Some adults will rapidly leave the room without saying anything.
- All often associated with a wide-eyed look of fear.

If you see someone choking, the general suggestions are as follows:

1. Don't overreact or panic. Most choking incidents are scary, but the body is very good at ejecting/swallowing objects, and you usually have a minute or more before the person will pass out, and a few more minutes until the heart stops. In other words, time and anatomy are on your side.
2. Approach him and ask him if he is choking, look for some kind of acknowledging response or for any of the signs listed above.
3. If the person is coughing, encourage him to keep coughing. That is the body's attempt to expel the object, and it usually works. (Another common response is vomiting, so watch where you stand.)
4. If he stops coughing and cannot breathe, tell someone to call for emergency help. Tell the victim that you can help, and ask him if it is okay to do so.

5. Assuming he doesn't object, move behind him and stand in a stable stance. Tell him what you are doing as you do it so that he doesn't react with surprise or violence. Bend him forward at the waist and strike him forcefully in the upper center of the back with your palm or upper forearm about five times.
6. Check for a positive response, if he is still choking, move behind him again in a stable stance, one leg planted between his with your knee bent. Explain that you are going to squeeze his stomach. Reach around and find his belly button. Move your hand roughly one hand-width above the navel, make a fist with one hand and press it against the stomach. Place the other hand over it. Make sure that you are not over the xiphoid, and that you do not feel ribs under your forearms; you should feel only "gut" or soft tissue. Forcefully pull in and up in a curving motion. Do this three to five times.
7. Check for a positive response. If he is still choking, repeat the pattern, alternating between back strikes and stomach thrusts until the object is ejected and he can breathe, or he passes out.

Be very careful when doing the stomach thrusts. If done incorrectly, they can cause injury to ribs or internal organs. Also, if the person passes out while doing the thrusts, he could knock you down. See the section on CPR for how to try to help an unconscious choking person.

Sometimes people who are choking leave the area, go the bathroom, etc., and can end up choking to death in isolation. Stay around other people if you are choking. If you see someone leave the table or room unexpectedly and without explanation, *follow him and ask a question!* If you don't get a response, he may be choking.

Treating Symptoms versus Healing the Injury

Modern pharmaceuticals are awesome, and if you need some to relax and get sleep, then take some. Otherwise, avoid them if you can. The problem is that most medicine treats symptoms – usually pain and swelling. You end up feeling better even though the injury may be far from healed, still be weak and susceptible to further injury. All medicines also have side effects and risks. Sometimes these aren't known or clearly communicated and may affect you negatively later in life.

I don't want people to be in a pain, but a little pain will help you remember to take it easy. And remember to do so for at least six weeks for most joint or bone injuries. It takes that long for the damage to heal, plus another several weeks for you to re-strengthen the area.

Testing

Students should know the appropriate responses to common injuries and conditions. They should know how to address additional injuries covered in the First Aid class (e.g., choking, burns, electrocution and broken bones). Adults should know CPR.

CONCEALED CARRY AND GUN SAFETY

We teach people how to safely handle, load, unload, clean and use rifles and shotguns, but we really focus on handguns, as they are best for self defense and the most likely gun one is likely to face.

Like CPR and First Aid, Gun Safety will be taught through class and special seminars (usually according to the principles or directly from the curriculum of the National Rifle Association). But following is a summary of our principles, *especially as they apply to self defense*.

I don't like to carry a gun. It is heavy, inconvenient, and a big responsibility. I sincerely wish that we lived in a world where tools like guns were not necessary. But we live in this one, and having an effective, intimidating weapon like a gun can be the difference between preventing, surviving or being killed in an assault.

I have a wife and six children, and with the prevalence of violence in our world, I don't want to have to rely on my hands or harsh language to stop an assault, kidnapping, home invasion, or the like. Most attackers are going to be bigger, stronger and meaner than I am; more familiar with hurting people, and they don't mind doing it. They will probably have a weapon or accomplices. The only real chance someone has against a serious assault is a weapon. And when violence happens, the only tools that matter are whatever is at hand at that moment – not what is in the safe or closet, not how many pushups you can do or how many tournaments you've won.

Knowing martial arts or self defense won't prevent an attack. You *might* be able to fight your way out of them (or not), but the attacks won't be prevented. However, displaying a gun will *prevent* the vast majority of attacks before they are ever initiated. The handgun is simply the best tool of self defense in the world. Some studies indicate that a million or more crimes – assaults, robberies, rapes and murders – are prevented each year in the USA alone by citizens who defend themselves with a gun; most of the time, no shot is ever fired. Just wielding the gun is enough to spook the attacker.

There are several myths about guns. One of these is the number of deaths due to gun accidents. It is true: A few hundred people die from gun accidents every year, and each such death is a tragedy. Guns are dangerous tools, and are not the right choice for every person, but we must put this into proportion. According to government statistics, for each person who died in a gun accident, *roughly 4500 died from some other cause*; disease, other accident, drowning, etc. Car accidents alone kill roughly a hundred times as many people as gun accidents. In fact, some studies indicate that you are far more likely to be killed by an accident by your doctor or pharmacist than a gun.

In any event, *we do not teach children how to handle guns*. It is up to the parents to decide when their children are mature enough to learn about guns and to instruct them

accordingly. When it comes to guns and children, our instruction is simple. If you see a gun...

1. Stop
2. Don't touch it
3. Leave the area and go tell an adult

We provide *comprehensive* gun safety and use training to adults. The most basic principles are (from the NRA courses):

1. Always keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.
2. Always keep your finger off of the trigger until you are on target and are going to shoot.
3. Always keep the gun unloaded when not in use.

If you follow these rules, the chances of someone being injured or killed by an accidental shooting (with your gun) are reduced to almost nil.

These simple rules are fine for the hunting rifle that stays in the closet or safe all year until hunting season rolls around. They must be adapted to the particulars of keeping a gun for self defense.

Keep the gun pointed in a safe direction

For self defense, we adapt this to say "keep the gun pointed in the *proper* direction." First, the gun should be kept holstered except when you are faced by a serious threat. A gun is not the appropriate solution to every conflict; it isn't the appropriate solution to probably 99.9% of conflicts. It *may be* the appropriate tool to wield when your life is genuinely in danger. For example, I've never had a situation where I needed to draw my gun, but I've had many where I had had to exercise First Aid or some psychological agility.

A defensive gun is on you at all times, and this means you must be aware of where it is pointing at all times. A real gun capable of firing a bullet should never be pointed at an innocent person, loaded or not (in many places this is a felony). Never, ever allow the barrel to "sweep" people on accident. For example, suppose it is on a belt holster; don't bend over in such a way that it ends up pointing at someone behind you. This is a serious problem with shoulder holsters, and is one of the reasons that we don't recommend them, and that they aren't even allowed in some competitions.

Keep your finger off of the trigger until it is time to shoot

Some older gun designs could fire when dropped or pressure was applied to the hammer in a certain way, especially single action pistols. Modern designs simply do not fire unless the trigger is depressed (barring mechanical failure). The problem is that people instinctively place their finger on the trigger when they pick up a gun, resulting in a lot of accidental firings.

You need to train yourself to properly draw, aim and shoot. This starts with training your body to handle the gun in the proper, safe manner. For me, I set the gun in various orientations before me while watching television or doing something similarly-mindless. With the gun unloaded (of course), I then spent hours picking it up from different angles, setting it down, transferring it from hand to hand, etc., all in such a way that I ended up with it properly fitted in my hand *without my finger ever touching trigger*.

Once that is ingrained, work on sight profile, trigger pull, etc., all of which will be discussed in class. Finally, you have to learn to shoot under pressure, point shoot (without using the sights), from different positions, while moving, and how to handle gun failures.

Choosing to get and carry a gun is not a small decision. It is much more expensive, inconvenient and time consuming than just going out, dropping a few hundred dollars for something fancy looking, buying some ammo, and taking a safety class. It requires an immense amount of responsibility. Choosing to carry a gun requires a genuine change in attitude and *lifestyle*.

Keep it unloaded when not in use

My self defense gun is unloaded only when I am cleaning it. Otherwise, it is always in use, so it is always loaded. If needed, you probably won't have time to go to the safe or closet, retrieve your gun, find the ammunition, load it, then go back and use it. Rather, it must be kept on your person or be otherwise immediately-available for use without warning. This usually means in a holster on your body during the day, and in a quick-open safe by your bed at night.

Target Shooting, Hunting and Defensive Gun Use

I am a pretty good shot with a pistol. At 25 yards I can consistently hit a six-inch target. At 8 yards I can hit a quarter at will. However, these are under calm conditions, no pressure, standing steady. If I have to draw fast and fire, I have a hard time hitting a standard size paper at 8 yards. I'm not alone in this.

Some studies indicate that 80% or more shots completely miss a person within 10 yards when the pressure is on. This is good news for the person being shot at. This is very bad news for defensive shooters.

There are three reasons for this. First, movement, heart rate, adrenaline and other factors make it very difficult to hit the desired target. Yes, I can hit a quarter at 8 yards... unless it is moving, or I'm shaky, or I'm distracted. Second, any healthy person is psychologically conditioned not to shoot another person; you will instinctively pull the gun away from the target if it is a living human being. Some people actually close their eyes and turn their heads away while pulling the trigger. Finally, when training to use a gun the "proper" way, you draw it, align the sights, focus on the front sight, etc. None of this is going to happen in a self defense

situation; your focus is on the attacker, and you may simply not have time or discipline to get the classic "sight picture."

The difference between being a target shooter and being a good defensive shooter is a little like the difference between being a trophy-winning martial artist and being effective at self defense. They are related but different skills. One wins recognition; the other gets the job done under pressure.

Target shooting is fun and we encourage you to do it. It helps develop safe gun handling habits and good skills. But we also encourage you to work on fast drawing and firing under 10 yards from a variety of postures, with your weak hand, while moving, and other distractions. A great tool for defensive shooting is the Crimson Trace and similar laser systems.

Disarming and Resisting Disarm Attempts

Many martial arts have a variety of gun disarm techniques. I've seen too many fanciful defense and disarm routines that would not only never work in real life, but would almost certainly get you cut, shot or probably killed outright. I've actually heard instructors tell students to kick a gun out someone's hand, or that a semi-automatic pistol can't fire if you are holding onto the slide. Any martial arts instructor who teaches such things or other fantasy disarm routines is acting ignorantly and negligently.

As a rule we do not teach defensive or disarm techniques against any weapon until the person has demonstrated understanding and proficiency in its positive use. If you don't know how a semi-automatic pistol works, then teaching you to defend from or disarm someone wielding it is grossly irresponsible. However, once you have learned to use a gun, we will instruct you in how to defend from someone who is attempting to disarm you and how to attempt to disarm someone else carrying a similar weapon. For this training we use functional Airsoft replicas of actual pistols.

Our General Principles of Defensive Gun Use

You and you alone are responsible for the consequences of any bullet that leaves your gun!

Actual shootings are nothing like those on movies or television where people go flying through the air or drop immediately when shot. Most shots miss, and people who are shot often don't feel it immediately. The "drop," if it happens, is usually a psychological response to seeing one's own blood and realizing that he's been shot; it is somewhat voluntary, and not everyone does it, especially people on drugs or who are otherwise aggressive. Involuntary drops require hits direct to the central nervous system, or several seconds (or minutes) of blood loss.

- Don't carry a gun unless you are willing to use it and are skilled at doing so. You should also be trained in resisting disarm attempts.
- The ideal is to carry in a holster on your hip. Don't carry a gun in such a way that it can be easily taken away or is hard to access.

- You should be able to draw your gun, place it on target and fire 2-3 shots in two seconds at most. If it takes longer than that, you need to carry differently or practice more.
- Self defense shooting rarely uses the sights -- it is "point" shooting. This requires specific practice. Point shooting and common target shooting are entirely different skills. Practice both.
- We believe it is appropriate to reveal that you have a gun, even draw it, to protect your person, liberty or property. *This is not legal in some places.* Even where it is legal, police will often track you down and be *very* aggressive towards you if it is reported to them that you revealed your gun.
- Never point a gun at anyone unless you would be justified to shoot them right then and there. Since you are likely to miss a moving person, you must also be aware of who/what is behind the attacker. We believe it is appropriate to point the gun only at a person who poses a serious threat to your person. Such an action should be accompanied by a powerful command telling the person to, "Stop! Lay on the ground now!"
- The attacker will run, obey, freeze or continue the attack. If they do the latter, you shoot while evading/displacing.
- "Active shooters" – people who are actively shooting at others – usually just turn and fire at you if you warn them before shooting. People who have successfully stopped active shooters (without being killed, themselves), usually shot without warning.
- Our tendency is to focus all attention on the target. Remain aware of what is going on around you. Accomplices might attack you while your attention is focused on one person.
- Most shots miss in high stress situations, and of those that hit, the majority are not fatal. Unless the person is hit in the brain or upper spinal cord, he can continue to function and attack for several seconds or minutes.
- If he goes down, never, ever approach him or fire more shots (unless he is still shooting at you). As directed in our self defense section, your goal is to injure him so you can escape. Flee, see to any injuries, and call an attorney.

Choosing a Gun

For concealed carry we recommend selecting a single-stack semi-automatic pistol, 9mm or larger caliber (whatever the largest caliber is that you can handle and are willing to carry and practice with). For a detailed discussion of choosing a concealed carry gun and recent models, please see the web site.

Carrying a Weapon (of any kind)

We recommend that people choose and carry one or more self defense weapons at all times. You have an intrinsic right to protect your life, and an effective weapon that can prevent an attack is the best way to do that. However, there may be legal complications if you are discovered carrying a weapon in some places, especially if you reveal or use it. You should inform yourself regarding these laws and then make

your own decision about when and where to carry. Irrespective of the laws, our general principles are:

1. If you are on private property, you have an ethical obligation to follow the owner's wishes. If he has a sign posted or has otherwise communicated that no weapons are allowed on his property, then you should comply. Either just don't go on his property, or leave the weapon in your car when you do so.
2. Unless you like to spend time talking to the police, never ever reveal that you have a weapon. A sure way to cause a problem is to walk into a grocery store and ask the clerk if she minds if you are carrying a weapon in the store.
3. If anyone ever asks you if you own, are carrying, or have a weapon in your car, *don't answer the question*. What you own or are carrying is no one's business. Don't lie, especially if the one asking is a government employee. Just wish them a good day, keep your distance and walk away.
4. Never draw your weapon unless you or someone else is in serious physical danger. Avoid using a lethal weapon to protect property.

State of Carry, Holsters and Accidents

Assuming you are carrying a semi-automatic, different guns allow you to carry in different states of readiness. The higher the state of readiness, the easier it will be to draw, aim and shoot, but accidental discharges become more likely. The fundamental difference is whether to carry with a round in the chamber or not. It is impossible to have an accidental discharge without a round in the chamber. However, it means that you must cycle the slide when you draw the gun. This requires a second hand, which might not be available when needed.

Some gun models with exposed hammers allow you to carry with a round in the chamber, but with the hammer down. In most cases the hammer can be pulled back with the same hand that is holding the gun as the gun is drawn. Or, the gun may be “double action” for the first shot, which means that pulling the trigger will pull the hammer back and drop it, much like a common revolver.

Some guns have a variety of safeties that affect the state of carry. The primary one is the thumb safety. 1911-style guns are often carried with the hammer cocked and a round in the chamber, but with the thumb safety activated. As the gun is drawn the user slides the safety to the off position. With practice this becomes a very natural movement.

My own carry gun is single-action only, without any manual safeties. It is carried in the ready to fire state – round in the chamber, striker cocked – at all times, but held securely in a retention holster. For self defense this is the obvious choice, but it carries more risk of accidental discharge if I make a thoughtless mistake.

Many accidental discharges happen while drawing or holstering; these are related to the state of carry, human error, and random chance. While drawing the person places his finger on the trigger, and the natural action of swinging the gun can depress it (this is less common with revolvers having heavy triggers).

When holstering, the finger, clothing or another object can get trapped in the trigger guard, and depress the trigger as the gun slides into the holster. Irrespective of your state of carry, engage any safeties, make sure that your finger is clear of the trigger guard, and check the holster for obstacles when holstering.

Another cause of accidental discharge is simply having the finger on the trigger, then being startled or doing something with the other hand. Our hands are sympathetic with each other – when one clinches, the other does as well – causing a trigger pull.

Psychology of Carrying

When you first start to carry a weapon, especially a gun, you may experience a variety of emotions. The primary one I experienced was concern that someone was going to “make” me, call the police, or there would be some kind of disturbance. I was especially concerned regarding interactions with police (not without good reason, it turns out).

“An armed society is a polite society.” One thing that you should *not* experience is an increased sense of confidence or tendency to engage in confrontation. If anything, carrying a gun has made me even more polite and non-confrontational. First, I realize now, more than ever, that anyone could be carrying at any time... even the nuts. Second, the last thing I want to do is to engage in a confrontation that turns into a shooting that could have been avoided.

Over time you become more accustomed to carrying. I don't even notice it most of the time now. However, don't get too comfortable. I usually tell people that carrying a gun is like having a poisonous snake in your pocket. You have to treat it with the respect it deserves, and everything will be okay.

Testing

Students should know the basic rules of gun safety that are appropriate to their age. Adults who choose to carry a gun should be able to pass our qualification exam (adapted from the FBI's).

Utilize the FBI “Q” target for these drills. Any hit on or within the line counts. 85% is necessary to pass. 100% can be easily accomplished with practice. Decocking is optional and applies only to those guns with such functionality. Shooters should use their preferred carry holster. Holstering is not a critical part of the drill, especially for deep concealment holsters that make reholstering difficult without practically undressing. Breaks may be taken between stages. Stages do not have to be completed in the same day.

Stages I and II are impractical for most subcompact (and smaller) self defense guns. They are good skills to practice, but we recommend that one focus on his performance in stages III and IV for small self defense guns, and consider the first two stages more a long-distance semi-active target practice. Stage V is our own creation.

STAGE I: 18 ROUNDS

Starting Point: 25 yard line

Time Allotted: 75 seconds

Prep magazines for a total of 18+ rounds. Start from standing with a fully loaded, holstered weapon. On command draw and fire 6 rounds prone position, decock, fire 3 rounds strong side kneeling barricade position, 6 rounds strong side standing barricade position, and 3 rounds weak side kneeling barricade position. Reload as needed while shooting. Reholster.

STAGE II: 10 ROUNDS

Starting Point: 25 yard line

Time Allotted: 2 rounds in 6 seconds
4 strings of 2 rounds in 3 seconds each

Start at the 25 yard line. On command move to the 15 yard line, draw and fire 2 rounds in 6 seconds, decock, and return to low ready. Then fire 4 strings of 2 rounds in 3 seconds each, decock and return to low ready after each string. Holster the weapon.

STAGE III: 12 ROUNDS

Starting Point: 15 yard line

Time Allotted: 15 seconds

Divide 12 rounds into two magazines. Load one of the magazines. Start at the 15 yard line. On command move to the 7 yard line, draw and fire 12 rounds in 15 seconds, including a reload. Holster the weapon.

STAGE IV: 10 ROUNDS

Starting Point: 7 yard line

Time Allotted: 15 seconds

Place five rounds each into two magazines. Load one magazine. Start at the 7 yard line. On command move to the 5 yard line, draw and fire 5 rounds with strong hand only, reload, transfer the weapon to weak hand and fire 5 rounds weak hand only. Reholster.

STAGE V: 16 ROUNDS

Starting Point: 25 yard line

Time Allotted: 20 seconds

Divide rounds between two magazines. Load one magazine. Start at the 25 yard line. On command draw and move forward to the 15 yard line while zig-zagging and firing four shots, walk to the left while firing four more, to the right while firing four more, then withdraw to the 25 yard line while firing the final four and zig-zagging. Reload as needed. Reholster.

We also recommend that new gun users look into the NRA/Winchester pistol qualification. It is an informal, “honor system” measure of target shooting ability at relatively-close range (15-30 feet). A sample target that you can copy and use for these is at the end of the text.

Another alternative, if you desire more of a target-shooting challenge, is the more competitive NRA sanctioned matches, including the postal matches. Practice targets for these are also at the end of the text. There are also organizations that focus more on active shooting like IPSC and the like.

PRINCIPLES OF SELF DEFENSE

Some of the topics in this section are controversial. We have decided to include them in print in the beginning student handbook because we believe the likely benefits outweigh the possible controversy... and you deserve to know the truth (or at least our opinion). Remember, our principles and practices are based upon *fundamental human ethics*, that actual laws may differ, and that you and you alone are responsible for the consequences of your choices and actions.

Summary

- Human life in general, and innocent human life in particular, is worth protecting. It is your responsibility to do so. If you don't do it, no one else will.
- It is much preferred to avoid or prevent a violent confrontation than to voluntarily enter one with the hope of prevailing.
- The most effective "technique" of self defense is to live a life of virtue, to be aware, confident, polite and courteous, to apologize and make amends for your errors, and to avoid risky situations and people in the first place.
- The next most effective "technique" of self defense is to have a *trustworthy* buddy (travel in numbers), followed closely by carrying a *preventative* tool like a handgun; some studies suggest that a million or more crimes are prevented every year by people with handguns, usually without a shot ever being fired. However, a gun is not the best solution to every self defense event; you should also be trained in less-lethal techniques and weapons.
- If you are unable to avoid a conflict, and unable to prevent it from escalating to direct violence, then you (may) have a choice; flee, posture, submit or fight. Only you can decide which is the right, best path at the moment. Make it very clear (primarily for any witnesses) that you don't want to fight. If you choose to fight, you strike with ferocity to the point that the threat to you is ended and you can escape; this usually means inflicting one or more serious injuries by whatever means necessary.
- Some people will impose upon, take advantage of and use you *to the degree that you allow them to do so*.
- If someone is provoking, threatening or taunting you (i.e., a bully), the best course of action is *usually* to give them the last word and walk away.
- Virtually anything can be used as a weapon. Having and using a weapon is very important for self defense.
- Prevailing in an violent conflict may require striking *pre-emptively*. Doing so, or prevailing by other means is likely to attract law enforcement attention unless there are reliable witnesses or the circumstances are very clear that you were acting in self defense.
- After any such confrontation, leave the area, see to any injuries and contact an attorney.
- Don't talk to anyone except your attorney about the incident. Do not make statements to or answer any questions posed to you by the police except with the advice of a *skilled* attorney.

Terminology

Strictly/legally speaking, “assault” is *threatened* or *unsuccessfully-attempted* violence. You assault someone merely by threatening to harm them, assuming you have the capability to do so. “Battery” isn't the metal cylinder you put into an electronic device, but the actual violence carried out. Some regions use different words for these; “menacing” as the threat, and “assault” as the physical contact. The general public uses the terms equivocally and loosely, and we do so as well in this text. If we are referring to threatened harm, we will specifically use the term “threat,” and the physical contact as attack or assault.

Reality Check

Most of what we see on television, in the movies, and in many martial arts classes and demonstrations is impressive and exciting. The performers have outstanding skills. The same is true of many amateur and professional sporting matches. But these bear little or no resemblance to what takes place in a violent assault. A real attack in which someone genuinely wishes to hurt or kill you is savage, wild and unpredictable. *Horror* is the most accurate word, and going into a shock is a mercy. There are no rules, rehearsals, judges, weight or skill classes, points or warnings. You don't get a time out or second chances. You had no choice in the matter. The attacker would not be initiating if he did not have gross advantages over you and was fully confident that he can defeat you with little risk to himself. If you are lucky, he'll be drunk or drugged, and therefore incompetent and clumsy; this makes him more likely to attack you, but less likely to do so effectively. On the bad side, it also makes him less sensitive to pain or injury.

Your chances of escaping an actual attack unscathed (if at all) are very, very small, irrespective of your martial arts skills, certificates, trophies or physical condition. *Chances* is an important word to acknowledge. This is about chances and probabilities; there are no certainties in a violent conflict. Hence the importance of and our emphasis on avoidance. If you choose to physically engage an attacker, you must take every possible, ruthless advantage; give no warning, and strike as ferociously as you can, continuously, until you have caused injuries severe enough to allow your escape. In this sense, self defense is not about defending, it is about attacking, it is about inflicting violence on another human being and accepting responsibility for doing so.

You have to be willing to accept this and train for it. If you cannot, then it is better to acknowledge that now and plan and train accordingly. This means selecting a system of training that is most in keeping with your own personality, goals and abilities.

Detail

Self defense is for adults. Mature, capable adults are responsible for protecting and providing for themselves, others in their care, and those who cannot protect

themselves. Children are not strong enough to defend themselves from predators and do not have the maturity to handle the tools that would be necessary to do so; avoidance and fleeing are the appropriate things to teach to children (along with martial arts training for the purpose of personal development). Weak, disabled and other vulnerable people are often targeted by predators; because they lack physical strength or ability it is important that they learn to use appropriate tactics, tools and weapons to defend themselves.

We wish to live at peace with all people, in a spirit of mutual service and respect. Unfortunately, not all people desire to live this way; many do nothing fruitful with their lives, and instead prefer to take advantage of, prey upon or exercise power over others. Some people do this subtly. Some overtly. Some through financial, business means. Some through law or government. Some through psychological manipulation or deception. And some through intimidation, threats or actual violence.

Human life in general and *innocent* human life in particular deserves to be nurtured and sheltered from abuse and violence so that it can mature and achieve its potential. Specifically, you have a right to protect your *person*, and by extension your *liberty* and your *property*.

By "person" we mean your actual self -- your mind and body -- and your reputation. *No one* has the right to harm, coerce, deceive, manipulate or otherwise abuse you in mind or body. It is fundamentally, intrinsically evil to do so. Some philosophies argue that you are the property of your nation/government, your company/employer, your local society, or even yourself. I believe that all of these miss the mark (and some to a greater degree than others). Your life is a gift to you from the Creator, *entrusted* to you. When you are young and unable to care for yourself, your parents have the responsibility of caring for you to the best of their ability, but once you have matured, *you* have the responsibility to protect, develop and make the most good of your life that you can. In other words, you aren't someone else's property, nor are you really even your own. You are the trustee of a great treasure. Your life isn't some material commodity with which you can just do as you please. It is a precious gift, and it must be treated with the respect and care becoming such a gift.

"Liberty" is the necessary, rightful expression of your person; it is your freedom to do good and know truth, to enter into relationships and agreements, to travel and speak freely, to make decisions without coercion, to choose your work and arrange your life, to have privacy, etc. The fullest measure of liberty is a fundamental human right, realized in proportion to personal maturity, effort and exercised responsibility for one's self. Those who harm others, lack maturity or rely on others to provide for them whether due to age, infirmity or convenience necessarily lack liberty; they are obligated to and under the rule of those who provide for them. Those who have matured and provide for themselves (should) enjoy the fullness of liberty, and have no ethical imperative to seek someone's permission or approval for anything that does not involve them or their property. Stated another way, *no one* has a right to suppress your liberty except insofar as you are personally immature, depend on them

for sustenance, have engaged in unethical behavior towards and harmed others, or have freely agreed to such treatment. An illegitimate restriction on your liberty is an *indirect* attack on your person. Many individuals and institutions actively engage in attacks on other people's liberties.

By "property" we mean the material things of value that you have gathered to yourself through honest work or by gift, and which you use to provide for your needs and wants. This includes and is sometimes called capital. It may also include facts or information. The accrual of property is the natural consequence of hard work and wise financial management. The freedom to preserve your property and make decisions regarding its use are particular exercises of liberty. *No one* has the right to take your property against your will, except insofar as it was acquired fraudulently or to repay someone for harm you have done to them. The illegitimate destruction of, theft of or interference with your property is an attack on your liberty, and therefore also an indirect attack on your person.

There are four tangential concepts regarding person, liberty and property that, thought they are not directly related to physical self defense, are important and worth mentioning at this point:

1. Other people and institutions have an obligation to *respect* your person, liberty and property -- they cannot ethically impose upon them -- but they have no obligation to *provide for* a mature, capable adult. No one is obligated to provide you with a job, health care, transportation, education, etc. These are things that you can freely pursue, and people can assist you as an act of charity, but you have no "right" to demand them of anyone against their will.
2. You have the same obligation to respect another's person, liberty and property as they have to respect yours.
3. You do have the obligation and authority to positively provide for the personal needs, and protect the liberty and property of people in your care (e.g., children or elderly parents). This often involves a limitation of liberty on their part. But as they mature and are able to care for themselves, their liberty expands.
4. Responsibilities are exercised and related decisions are rightly made by the person or institution closest to the issue; other persons or institutions should never intervene unless their help is requested or in the event of a catastrophic failure by the responsible party. This is called subsidiarity. In other words, no one may legitimately interfere with your freedoms and related duties unless you are clearly failing in that duty to the serious detriment of your wards or others.

As participants in Via Potentia, our mission is to be prepared to act at any moment to protect human life in general, and especially *innocent* human life. This can mean many different things and take many different forms, including "self defense," which we define as ***the threat or act of harming an aggressor so as to prevent or halt a***

violation of your person, liberty or property (or those of people in your care, or of another innocent person).

Before addressing violent, criminal assaults and self defense, there are two other issues that should be mentioned; bullying and fighting. These are (usually) less intense self defense situations that call for tactics differing from those needed in a full-on self defense emergency. They are also more common.

Bullying

We usually think of bullying as a juvenile, schoolyard phenomenon, but for many it is a lifelong, soul-grating experience. A bully is someone (or an institution) that oppresses you or demands some kind of involuntary action on your part under the stated or implied threat of greater harm or embarrassment should you not comply. Another phrase is psychological manipulation or abuse (but it is easier to just say "bully," even if it sounds childish). In the adult world this is called extortion or coercion. It is very, *very* common, and bullies are found in all venues and at all ages. It might be a coworker, a neighbor, someone at your church, a boss, a government worker or institution, maybe even a member of your family. If you know ten people, at least one is probably a bully. You've been bullied recently, even if you didn't recognize it as such or don't want to admit it. We all have.

There is no single, best answer as to how to deal with a bullying event, as every situation is different. Bullies are skilled at isolating individuals and making them feel completely helpless, hopeless and defenseless. They are very good at manipulating people, situations and words. As adults they've had years -- sometimes decades -- of practice. Some institutions have literally turned it into an art. It is the psychological equivalent of a physical assault, and can have similar effects. People have died from the stress, whether by suicide, heart attack or related illness. Others struggle with depression, drug addiction or other disorders as a result. Sometimes people who are bullied take their pain out on others, even loved ones. We are conditioned, socialized not to talk about these things, feeling like we will come across as weak. But it is really important for your mental health that you do talk to an understanding, supportive person and try to seek assistance when confronted by intense bullying.

Fleeing is often a good choice in a self defense emergency, but there is simply no escaping bullies. If you leave your job, neighborhood or school (or country), you'll be victimized by an entirely new set somewhere else. It is an unpleasant reality of flawed human nature that a considerable number of people delight in and spend their lives bullying others (some organizations continue to exist solely on the basis of their success at bullying and extorting others). Consequently, you have to learn how to deal with such people and institutions, avoid and insulate yourself from them. *The first step is to correctly recognize when psychological abuse is taking place.* Sometimes we deserve a good tongue lashing for some foolish mistake we've made, or if we've actually done wrong, we need to correct it. Don't be thin skinned; admit your mistakes, but also recognize when things have left the bounds of appropriate criticism and entered into abuse. Bullies frequently use a very minor, inconsequential (or imagined) error on

your part as an excuse to dominate and abuse you, even destroy you. They also are clever about blaming you for their abuse, usually implying that it stemmed from a lack of cooperation or error on your part.

You have many choices available to you when bullied. But recognize that with bullies, especially adult ones, there really are no winners. They are warped people, and attempting to deal rationally or ethically with them is generally fruitless. You are dealing with someone who probably has a psychological disorder. They bully when they have control of the situation (and they are usually right about that observation) or to simply get their way. *Don't get drawn into their arguments.* Anything you say or do to try to deal with the situation will be twisted and used to beat you over the head. The choice, for you, is to try to find the way of dealing with them that causes you the least stress or harm, and ultimately, hopefully gets them to leave you alone. The options include ignoring them, quietly submitting, confrontation, mediation, diversions, changing the venue, posturing, challenging, counterattacking, etc.

The appropriate response depends upon the particular situation, and it takes a very level head to stay steady and find it while being bullied. Briefly, *if the bully is someone you are unlikely to ever have to deal with again, do whatever you can to keep your mouth shut and just give them the last word.* Smile and wish them well, or simply don't respond, don't engage. Walk away. If you can bring yourself to do this and move on, you will avoid a great deal of unnecessary contention.

For example, while revising this text I received a series of harassing calls from someone a few blocks from my home. He was rude and insulting... and persistent. After the third call, I simply blocked all future calls from his phone number, but I didn't call him any names, insult him, or do anything to provoke him. Similar things happen by e-mail, and can happen in person.

If it is someone you have to deal with on a regular basis, you may need to stand up to the person to get it to stop. Again, find someone whose judgment you respect and discuss the matter before it gets too intense. Perhaps together you can come to a solution, or at least a way to live with the heartburn.

Even otherwise good, stable people can demonstrate bullying, manipulative behavior if stressed, provoked and the circumstances are right. I've done so, and I am ashamed of it. Be aware of this, and of your own words and actions. Just because you have a disagreement with someone – perhaps a heated one – doesn't necessarily mean that there is something psychologically wrong with one of you. Always try to be respectful, polite and courteous, especially to those over whom you have any authority or influence.

Fighting / Dueling

Like it or not, the instinctive, natural male response to provocation, threat or attack, whether verbal or physical, is physical aggression.

For this and other reasons bullying, disagreements and other conflicts sometimes escalate into fights or duels (or directly into an assault). By "fight" we mean a physical conflict voluntarily entered into *not* primarily for the purpose of protecting your person, liberty or property. You had some other motivation, and there is usually a greater degree of voluntary participation on your part; you could have walked away. In a voluntary fight the goal is usually not to kill or severely injure the other, but to defeat or embarrass him. To prove a point. There is usually some restraint involved, and the participants follow some informal rules, even if they aren't spoken. Such encounters are common among children and even adult men. They are less common among women, who tend to use words to attack others; unfortunately, when attempted with a man, the man's response is often physical.

I'm actually not opposed to a voluntary physical fight (or intellectual debate, for that matter) between two people who have agreed to compete according to rules, who exercise restraint, and who don't intend to kill or seriously injure each other. Apart from the presence of a ref and judges, there is hardly any difference between that and a sporting match. However, given the reality of the world and the fact that people are unpredictable, a physical fight can easily and unexpectedly turn into something very serious, so we do not condone "street" fighting. For example, some predators will provoke you to fight; then, when you act aggressively, their friends will jump you, or they'll pull a weapon (especially if you are prevailing). In the end, they will likely claim self defense, that you attacked them. Others like to test their martial arts skills at the local bar, picking fights. This is unethical and irresponsible.

If someone is threatening, taunting and provoking you to engage in a fight, do your best to swallow your pride, walk away, apologize for any offense, tell the person you don't want to fight, or that you simply won't. Make it very clear, especially to any witnesses, that you don't want to fight and you aren't going to voluntarily do so. Don't push back. Don't put up your fists. Either move is going to be seen as an acceptance of the challenge and look like voluntary participation. I once avoided a fight after being pushed down several times by just standing back up each time and calmly telling the person, "I'm not going to fight you." Another time I purposefully defused what was rapidly becoming a physical conflict by just stepping back and sitting down. If the person attacks you anyway, then it becomes a legitimate self defense situation, and you do what you need to do, but at least you tried to avoid it. Another alternative is to offer to settle the quarrel in a regulated competition, according to rules of sportsmanship, if you have such a facility available and feel like doing that.

That all being said, becoming skilled with grappling can be an excellent pursuit for those who suffer from mild bullying from an individual (not a gang). If a child is experiencing mild physical bullying, applying grappling techniques in a controlled fashion can easily end the bullying once and for all without causing serious injury to the bully, and thereby decreasing the chance of law enforcement involvement against the victim.

Self Defense and Assault

Then we come to actual, physical self defense emergencies. Human life is assaulted in a variety of ways. One of these is through criminal violence. In general, by assault we mean the use or direct threat of physical force. This includes various assaults (simple, aggravated, kidnapping, sexual, etc.), robberies and murders. According to recent FBI statistics, roughly 1 in 200 people experience a violent, criminal assault each year. Projected forward over 50 years, this means that approximately one out of five people is assaulted. This is similar to the chances of getting cancer, diabetes, heart disease, or being in a serious car accident. In other words, the chances of being assaulted are significant, and should not be ignored any more than we would ignore these other issues. These statistics are merely for *criminal* assaults. The chances of being abused are actually much greater than this -- approaching 100% -- if we include extortion, coercion, psychological abuse and related actions, whether performed criminally, under the color of law (by those in government, banking or in the legal profession), or casually.

There are many misconceptions and conflicting statistics regarding physical assaults. Most people assume (rightly) that men initiate the vast majority of assaults. However, men are also slightly more likely to be a victim of assault. On average, for every 100 assaults, roughly 55 of them are against men, and roughly 45 against women (some studies indicate a greater divide than this). Men are substantially more likely to be the victim of a simple or aggravated assault, where women are more likely to be the victim of a sexual assault. Also, some statistics indicate that about 1/5th of assaults on women are initiated by known persons, where assaults on men are usually initiated by people not known by the victim.

In any event, one should go through life neither ignorant of violence, nor in constant fear (paranoia) thereof. All you can do is your best and deal with things as they come. *However, most physical assaults are foreseeable and avoidable*, and the steps are fairly easy to understand and implement. First, understand the nature of the people and organizations that abuse others. There are several different motivations for assaulting someone:

- Some people attack because they feel threatened or have actually been harmed or wronged. They do so out of a feeling of self defense or retribution. They are trying to protect themselves, their sense of pride, or their "turf."
- Some people attack because they are irrational, psychologically disturbed.
- Some people attack because they are predators and you are their prey -- you have what they want and appear vulnerable. They attack and abuse others because it pleases them. These attackers generally have a calculated advantage over their chosen victims that take several forms:
 - A. **Power.** People who abuse others usually have unusual power or advantage of one kind or another over the average person. This might be

personal strength, size, aggression, surprise, a weapon, lack of empathy, numbers, a sense of authority granted by an institution or the government, resources, selection of the time, place or mode of attack, or some other circumstance in their control. Another word for this is "ability." To amplify the advantage, abusive people also pick as their targets the most vulnerable people -- those who have the least power or have some kind of encumbrance.

- B. **Motivation and Opportunity.** To attack you, someone has to actually have access to you, be aware of you and believe that he has something to gain by doing so. If he doesn't believe that you have anything that is valuable to him, and it doesn't meet some other disordered psychological need to abuse you, or he simply can't get to you, then you probably aren't at a great deal of risk.
- C. **Lack of Personal Accountability.** Some people will harm others without any regard for their own welfare, or even knowing that it might result in their own demise. They are usually mentally or emotionally unstable, or have such a fervent belief in their cause that the personal consequences are irrelevant. However, most abuses and crimes are inflicted by people who believe they can get away with it without significant consequence to themselves. This is usually done by hiding their identity in some way, acting in secret, using overwhelming force, or having some kind of institutional immunity to retaliation. Even immoral people rarely do evil if they fear they can be discovered and held personally accountable for their actions.
- D. **Lack of Virtue.** Obviously, someone might have power, opportunity and a lack of personal accountability, but as long as he is highly virtuous, there is rarely anything to fear from him. This is actually one of the great risks within institutions like large corporations and some governments. An office might include a great deal of power and a lack of personal accountability. As long as an ethical person holds the position, it isn't a problem. But as soon as an unethical person gets the office -- which always happens eventually -- then bad things follow.

When you put these ingredients together, whether they be in an individual person, a group of people or an institution, you have a recipe for disaster and systemic abuse. Great evil almost always develops, sooner or later. I mention this because it is important to recognize what you are up against, but also be wary of finding yourself in such a position.

Effective self defense eliminates one or more of the above factors. You can't force someone else to be virtuous, but you can do your best to keep him unaware of you, keep your distance, make it less likely that he will perceive you as a good target, eliminate his power/advantage over you, or make him personally accountable for anything that happens to you. For example, if someone is breaking into your house,

wielding and cycling the action on your 12 gauge shotgun eliminates both the attacker's advantage (power) and makes it clear that you intend to hold him personally responsible for his actions.

Remember, *the best choice is usually to do whatever you can to avoid violent confrontations in the first place*. Violent interactions are very risky and unpredictable, and should never be entered into unless all alternatives appear futile. We recommend the following considerations regarding avoiding and defending against various abuses:

1. **Virtue.** Live a good, quiet, ethical life. Be humble, peaceful, kind, merciful and generous to others. Avoid drawing attention to yourself. Work hard. Do not attempt to *impose* your will upon others, but respect other people's liberty to make their own choices (and mistakes) -- to direct their own lives. If you harm or offend someone, apologize and do what you can to make it right. Don't provoke, insult or corner others. Insofar as it depends on you, strive to live at peace with everyone. If you have plenty and your neighbor is starving or has some other desperate need that you can meet, help him. If more people simply lived lives of virtue, self defense would be almost entirely unnecessary.
2. **Preparedness.** Educate, train and equip yourself to understand, avoid and deal with threats. For example, "harden" your home. Install a comprehensive alarm system. Keep doors and windows closed and locked. If you have valuables, keep them in a safe and never show or talk to anyone about them. There are two good choices here; invisibility, or appearing alert, prepared and capable. Also, get in contact with a good lawyer now, so that you are prepared if you ever do have a self defense event.
3. **Awareness.** Virtuous people tend to assume that others are virtuous and trustworthy; we give them the benefit of the doubt; in most cases, it is fine to do so. However, extending that same courtesy to some people -- people who have power or advantages over you, yet lack personal accountability or ethics -- can be a serious, even deadly, mistake. Be aware of dangerous places, situations and people. This includes *unknowns*; if the risk of a person or situation is unknown, then you should assume that it may be dangerous. Be aware of your own strengths and weaknesses. Be confident and alert. Be aware of the people around you. Be aware of how criminals think and of the opportunities they seek, then protect yourself accordingly.
4. **Avoidance.** The best self defense technique is "not being there." Another way of understanding avoidance is to just keep your distance. Do your best to avoid persons, places and situations where you are at unnecessary risk, especially risk of violence (again, this includes being wary of *unknown* situations and people). Some factors that increase your risk of being attacked are being alone, going out at night, passing through or stopping in fringe areas, being aggressive or confrontational, being around dangerous people, and engaging in unethical, unlawful or otherwise risky behaviors. When

walking down a street, give unknown people a wide berth; only in the most crowded situations should you allow a stranger to ever come within two arms' lengths of you. Travel in numbers. Be confident. Listen to your instincts; they are there to protect you; if you feel like you are in danger, you probably are, and you should move immediately to a safer area. *If you only practice these first four principles, your chances of ever experiencing a serious violent assault are greatly diminished.*

5. **Survival.** If you are unable to avoid an assault, you have a fundamental choice; fight, flee, submit or posture. You aren't limited to just one of these. You might start with one, then decide to do a different one. Your ultimate goal is to escape and survive the threat.
 - A. **Flee.** This doesn't require any special training or explanation. Just run as fast as you can, and don't stop running until you can't run any more! You go over, through or around anyone between you and the exit. This isn't "run and hide." This is "run for your life." Don't try to hide under a table, in a room, or behind a door. You keep on going. If you go into a building, you keep going right through it and out the other side. Only the most determined attackers -- those who have some personal reason to come after you -- tend to pursue someone who is running at full tilt. It is just too much work. This may be the best -- or only -- "defense" against someone who clearly wants to harm or kill you, personally. Running makes you a hard target and gives you a few extra seconds to draw a weapon if you have one. If your attacker has a gun, you want to run erratically, somewhat perpendicularly to him, and to put obstacles between you and the attacker. *Do not run in a straight line directly away from the shooter*; this is fine for other situations, but makes you a very easy target for a shooter.
 - B. **Submit/Endure.** It is usually best to submit if the attacker is just asking for your wallet, purse, or you anticipate that the other alternatives would have worse outcomes. This is especially true if the attacker has a weapon or the benefit of numbers. Submission is seen by some as weakness, but this is not necessarily so. Submission is a choice, and it takes great fortitude to do it willingly, especially when you are angry. The danger with submitting is that there is no guarantee that once the attacker gets what he wants he won't just push for more. Also, never allow yourself to be taken or transported to another area. There are multiple cases in which a simple assault turned into something much more serious, even a murder, when the victim submitted and didn't put up any defense. When you submit, the attacker may attempt to detain you by some method. We will cover methods of countering and escaping detention in class.
 - C. **Posture.** To posture means to display a threat in an effort to scare your attacker away. You are making it clear that there will be very personal, very serious consequences if the attacker does not back away

immediately. Posturing is rarely the best choice in a violent confrontation unless you have a "trumping" lethal weapon, are skilled in its use, are prepared to use it and the situation justifies it. Before posturing ask yourself, "is this hill worth dying (or killing) for?" At the very least, posturing escalates the tension and eliminates the element of surprise. However, wielding a gun is a proven method of posturing, and is documented to stop or prevent a million or more violent crimes per year, most of the time without ever having to pull the trigger.

D. **Fight.** If you are already being attacked, or believe you may be seriously harmed or killed anyway *and you have no escape*, then extreme violence may be your best chance of living. Many attacks end when the attacker realizes that he failed to select a submissive victim. Either way, it is your decision, and yours alone to make. If you choose to fight, you must strike without warning, furiously and continuously until you can create distance between you; the distance allows you to escape or draw a weapon safely so that you can continue to defend yourself; in most cases, when the defender draws a weapon, the attacker flees (but not always, so you must be prepared to immediately use whatever weapon you have drawn, and should not wield lethal force unless the situation merits it). Your attack should be proportional to the threat against you, but at the very least will need to cause injuries severe enough to allow your escape. This may require striking pre-emptively (once you suspect that an attack is immanent), *as the first person to strike and cause a debilitating injury usually prevails*. It is much easier to fight to escape than it is to fight to defeat someone. Never continue to strike your attacker once you are certain he has been disabled. Always assume that your attacker has a weapon or may be working in concert with others. Avoid deadly techniques or the use of deadly weapons unless your life is in danger -- your attacker is much larger, has declared or demonstrated deadly intent, is bearing a weapon, or you are outnumbered.

6. **Seek Safety and Recovery.** Leave the area of the assault and seek a safer place. Children should go to a trusted adult. Get medical help if necessary (even for your attacker). Consult an attorney immediately if there was any violence, threats, or a wielded weapon, and *speak to no one else about the incident, even the police*. In some cases you may need to seek psychological assistance to help work through emotional damage after an attack.

Many assaults are preceded by a series of obvious warnings, but others come as a complete surprise. You'll either detect the assault at a distance or you won't. If you are assaulted it is critical that you create as much distance as possible between you and the attacker so that you can evaluate the situation. This may mean simply jumping back as quickly as you can. About half of assaults involve a weapon of some kind, often a knife. Studies have demonstrated that even highly-trained people usually don't notice a knife, let alone address its presence, until it has already been

"used" on them. Again, this is a reason to forcefully push and jump away from an attacker.

You always have a right to defend life and liberty -- yours or another's. You also have a right to defend property -- yours or another's -- but with the exception of standing your ground in your own home, we don't believe that deadly force should generally be applied to defend property. However, saying "no" to someone who is trying to take your property or liberty may escalate into a situation in which he is threatening or attacking you, personally, at which point greater force may be justified.

Dangerous Situations and People

If you simply avoid dangerous behaviors, situations and people, the chances of being assaulted are greatly diminished. These include:

- Bus stops
- Laundromats
- Bars
- Parks
- Alleys (and most urban areas at night)
- Parking lots
- Stairways and elevators
- Hotels/Motels
- Rest Stops
- Hitchhiking or road-side breakdowns
- Parties with drugs or excessive alcohol
- Loitering around unknown people (or vice-versa)
- *You*, any time your judgment is compromised by alcohol or other drugs

The risks of any of these situations are amplified at night or when you are alone.

Preempt the Assault

Our suggestion to strike preemptively is problematic. It truly is necessary for self defense success -- the first person to inflict a serious injury is usually the one who prevails, and this is often the one who struck first -- but it is difficult to successfully claim self defense if you were the first one to strike or draw a weapon..

Obviously, we don't want to harm anyone who wasn't actually a threat. Once you have determined that you are in danger, create a mental boundary around you (or physical, extending your arms). This is your personal bubble, or "fence." It should be roughly one arm's length away. If someone is within that bubble, he can easily strike and harm you before you are able to respond. If someone is penetrating that fence, step back to re-establish it and tell him to stop or get back. If you can't step back or he continues to close, attack as soon as the fence is penetrated.

You will have the most physical power during your first 10-15 seconds of exertion while your body taps into the immediately-available-but-limited ATP fuel. After that, your body shifts to another fuel source – glycogen from your muscles and liver – to create ATP. Studies indicate that the energy production after the first 15+ seconds is often around half of your peak. Consequently, it is critical that you strike fast and end the conflict in the first few seconds. (This is without going into the effects of adrenaline.)

Just recognize that, if you do this and there is any ambiguity about who was the actual attacker, you are likely to get nailed by the court system.

Find an Attorney Now

If you are an adult, then we urge you to seek an *outstanding* attorney right now. Don't wait until after an event. Call some, meet with them. Tell them that you are studying self defense and ask them what their advice is if you are attacked and you defend yourself. Get references. It is really important that you have a good attorney in your corner if you are involved in a self defense situation because the police are likely to come looking for you, especially if you prevailed, and especially if you used a weapon to do so. Assuming the attacker is still alive, he will almost certainly claim to be a victim of your unprovoked attack. Barring clear witness to the contrary – and many times even if there are witnesses – the police will probably arrest you for assault (or worse). You want to have "your ducks lined up" if this should happen.

It is usually much better for you if you are never identified as a participant – willing or not – in violence of any kind. Many people who engage in completely justified defense of themselves or others find *themselves* arrested. Once arrested they get to spend a few hours or days in jail while they are questioned and the police actively attempt to collect evidence against them. One of three things generally happen:

- The person will confess to engaging in violence, in which case he may be prosecuted by the government for assault or manslaughter and it will be up to his attorney to prove that it was self defense. The majority of these cases and convictions are the result of a *voluntary* confession.
- In the absence of a confession, the police may gather enough evidence to bring charges against him, and depending on his plea and the outcome of a potential court case, he will spend several days, months or years in jail/prison.
- In the absence of a confession or sufficient evidence to get a conviction, he may go free.

In any of the above possibilities, civil charges might still be filed. I've read of cases where the person who was saved by another actually brought charges against a man who saved her from an intruder who said he was going to kill her. Sometimes police will say you are acting guilty/suspicious if you refuse to talk and ask for an attorney.

If you feel pressured, you could say you want to make sure you have proper protection from frivolous litigation like the above.

In any event, once you have calmed down after an attack, you will need to be able to articulate these issues, especially if you used a weapon, prevailed and/or struck preemptively:

1. What about his behavior or the total situation made you feel you were in jeopardy (about to be assaulted)? Was he advancing on you? Did he have clenched fists, a hidden hand or a weapon? Would a “reasonable person” have felt in danger?
2. What did the attacker say or do as he approached you?
3. What was his distance from you? Was he closing on you? Were you trapped or cornered in some way? Did you feel like you couldn't escape?
4. Did he use or threaten any violence? How?

If you can't articulate these – and sometimes even if you can – you may have a serious legal battle ahead of you.

Basic Combination

There isn't a perfect self defense technique that works in all situations or against all people. But anything beats fingernails: If you have a weapon and know how to use it, *do so before the attacker is upon you*. If you don't have a weapon, or don't have time to wield it, then one of the basic attack/self-defense combinations we teach is (see a later section for additional basic combinations):

1. Once you are aware of the danger, jump away from the threat and try to maintain or create at least two arms length distance between you. The more distance, the better. You are going to make a snap decision on whether to attack, flee, submit or posture. If you can create enough distance -- 20 or more feet -- and you have a clear escape route, it may be good to take it.
2. If the person just wants your wallet, purse, or some material object, it is probably best to just give it to him. If he appears to wish to harm you personally, that is a different matter.
3. If you cannot escape, keep your head slightly down, eyes looking near his center of mass, paying attention to movement in your peripheral vision. *Don't look him in the eye*. You especially want to see that both of his hands are clearly empty. If you cannot clearly see that both hands are empty, assume that he has a weapon of some kind. Also identify any possible weapons on his belt or in his pockets. These may appear as nothing more than a clip or bulge.
4. If you see a knife, gun or other lethal weapon -- or if you simply can't confirm that he does not have one -- you should usually submit or flee. The chances of surviving a fight with someone wielding a knife or gun are very

small. Fight only if you can't flee and you believe you are going to be seriously harmed or killed whether you fight or not.

5. Keeping your hands up protectively and slightly extended, turn your body sideways and move outside the hand that is grabbing you, the lead hand, or the weak hand (thereby moving away from his strong hand or weapon). Unless there is a weapon in it, the extended hand is not the one to worry about! In fact, grabbing it can work well in some cases.
6. Scream like a wild animal. This should be so ferocious and primal that it temporarily freezes the attacker. Ideally, the yell will last throughout your attack -- one long, terrifying exhale.
7. Attempt to deflect any incoming strike so that it doesn't hit a vital area.
8. Low strike: Stomp to the foot, grinding down the shin. You can start as high as the kneecap. If the leg is straight, you can do a kick to the knee instead and destroy the knee joint.
9. High strike: Simultaneously or immediately thereafter, claw to the face (eyes), strike the neck, upward palm to the chin, or slap the ear. Other alternatives include straight palm strikes, hammer fist and elbow strikes to the head or collar bone. Just hit anything that is sensitive and open with all the force you can create.
10. Mid strike: Grab the upper body, head, hair or whatever is most convenient, and drive your knee into the lower abdomen, groin, kidney or spine. If it is still open, hit it a second time.
11. Continue the flurry of strikes until the attacker is injured, retreating or otherwise going down.
12. Make space: If you know how, perform a throw or ankle sweep -- some kind of powerful take down -- or just push him away. *Don't go down with him.* You can follow this with a powerful kick or stomp, ideally to the knee, ankle or arm, breaking the limb.
13. Look for additional attackers and, if you have one, draw your weapon.
14. Escape. Keep moving! Fighting to escape from a situation is *much* easier than fighting to defeat someone.

This can be done in 1-3 seconds with practice. If any of these hit their mark, it can cause a painful injury sufficient to prevent him from continuing the assault, thereby allowing you to escape. If you are moving quickly, it will be difficult for any additional attackers to strike effectively in that time. In a self defense situation where there might be other attackers or your attacker has a weapon, you want to avoid getting knocked down or going down with him if at all possible.

We teach a lot of different self defense techniques. The "bread and butter" ones for the upper body are straight palm strike, inward and outward hammer fist, and elbow strikes. One of these can hit a vulnerable target from almost any orientation relative to the opponent. The basic lower body techniques are the stomp, front kick, side kick, back kick and knee strikes. If you learn to deliver power with all of these, can flow from one to the other spontaneously targeting human vulnerabilities, and can move on the ground, you'll be far more effective than most experienced, black belt martial artists.

Common Self Defense Myths

Some people assert, as do some laws, that a victim has an obligation to retreat from an attacker before he brings force to bear to defend himself. They go so far as to say that if you do not flee, that you got what you had coming, and that if you stand your ground and defend yourself that you are engaging in crime. This position usually goes hand-in-hand with one that states we shouldn't engage in self defense at all, but leave it up to the police to protect us.

We strongly disagree. As discussed elsewhere, it is precisely *not* the role of the police to protect any individual from crime of any kind. As long as you aren't trespassing on someone's property or otherwise provoking the assault then no one can rightly force you to leave, and we believe that you don't have any obligation to flee. *However...* retreating is often is the wise thing to do, and we advise all students to consider it as their first option.

A second myth is the idea that a defender is required to use the minimum necessary force to defend himself from attack. The problem is that this is all theoretical, and you have no way of knowing what the "minimum necessary" amount of force is. All one knows, after the fact, is whether the amount of force used was sufficient.

It is up to you to decide what amount of force you will bring to bear. This force would ideally be proportional to the threat; we believe that armed, larger or multiple attackers represent an obvious lethal threat and justify the use of lethal weapons and techniques. Otherwise, we suggest "less lethal" weapons and techniques geared towards causing disabling injury so as to end the attack.

Fleeing and Avoidance

It is almost always in your best interest to (1) leave the scene of the conflict as quickly as possible, and (2) without drawing unnecessary attention to yourself. Remember, our goal is to *escape*, so once the opportunity presents itself, you flee. Revisit point point 5A, above. Fleeing means you get as far away from the area as you can. There might be more dangerous people lurking around, perhaps your attacker will recover and come after you, or he has accomplices, etc. Even if you've disabled your attacker, there is rarely a good reason to stay in the area unless that is to protect someone else who cannot be moved. If you are lucky, no one will be able

to identify you, making it more difficult for your attacker to effectively claim that you were the criminal.

If police later catch up with you and ask why you fled, your first response is, "sorry, but as a general rule I do not answer any police questions without consulting an attorney." The answer that you and your attorney will (probably) give, if you are going to admit being involved at all -- which isn't always advisable -- is that you fled because you had just been assaulted, you frightened and thought you might be attacked again or killed if you stayed there, and so you left for your own safety. See the later section on self defense and police for more information.

Remember, it is up to you, and usually you alone, to avoid and protect yourself from assault, and to be prepared to help those in need at a moment's notice. Do not count on bystanders (especially strangers) to intervene in an emergency. Many people are too self-absorbed, afraid or confused to know what to do when they see violence; they are programmed from a young age to watch passively; observers often weren't aware of the events that prompted you to defend yourself, and if the victim is prevailing, it is hard for a bystander (or the police) to tell who is actually the initiating, criminal attacker.

Obviously, exercising the sense to avoid or escape an attack doesn't actually prevent the violence. It merely prevents it from happening *to you*. The attack will happen anyway; someone else will be the victim. If our goal is to protect life -- others' as well as our own -- then this is grossly irresponsible. For this reason we do recommend that, should you observe a suspicious situation such as someone who appears to be laying in wait, that you report it to police immediately. If you are concerned about interacting with the police, this can often be done anonymously. Let them take the risk of initiating the confrontation; that is what they are paid (handsomely) to do. If you see someone else behaving foolishly, or in a way that is likely to lead to their attack, warn them or offer to help. More than once I have waited in my car while a lone individual searched for hers (or his) in a dark parking lot or waited for a friend to come pick her up, just to make sure that she made it out of the lot; of course, you need to try to do this in such a way that the person doesn't become frightened of you.

If you see someone actually being attacked, you have the freedom, and perhaps the responsibility, to assist him. But remember that, depending on how you do so, this may bring you very much to the attention of the attacking party (or result in a citation from the police), and be prepared for the consequences that might follow.

Common Assault Tactics

If someone wishes to physically assault you they'll usually attempt to get within range and strike before you are aware of the attack and can defend yourself. The attacks may come from behind, or just as the person has faced you and then turned away. They try to injure or weaken you with the first, surprise blows, then shift into their preferred mode of attack, which generally takes one of these approaches.

- **Swinging Dukes:** This attacker flails punch after punch at your head or body without a pause. Left, right, left, right. Sometimes kicks find their way in, too. The punches are usually overhand. This attacker can often be beaten by closing quickly into a clinch, delivering knees and headbutts, and a forceful takedown.
- **Grab and Wail:** This attacker likes to grab with one arm while striking you with the other repeatedly. This is a common mode of attack for someone with a knife, or someone with a power/size advantage. Sometimes it turns into a clinch that includes low kicks and knee strikes. With this attacker you need to spin outside of the grasping arm – you may have a chance to break it in the process – moving away from the strong striking hand; then attack the head, neck, ribs, kidneys, knee, etc.
- **Ground and Pound:** This attacker attempts to knock you to the ground. He then either kicks you repeatedly from a standing position (usually with the help of some friends), or holds you down and punches at your body and head. He might try to strangle you from the mounted position. Learning to defend from take downs (sprawling) can help. The important thing here is to keep moving, and if you get knocked down continue striking at vulnerabilities and do whatever you must to get back up.

Again, it is vital to remain aware of your surroundings, people around you, and to not allow anyone within two arms lengths of you in a suspicious situation.

Adrenaline

During an actual fight, or even while leading up to it, both you and your attacker may be under the influence of adrenaline or other drugs. This is an involuntary response by your body to perceived danger. The results range from a loss of fine motor control, lack of responsiveness to pain, agitation, rage, lack of ability to think rationally, blackout, narrowed vision, nausea, a sense that time is slowing, loss of hearing, trembling, increased heart rate, etc. The net effect is that your awesome, fine motor control and ability to do finesse moves are gone. You will be reduced to clumsy, gross movements, *and so these are what you must practice for self defense*. You can forget about the fancy wrist lock move that worked great on the compliant partner in class when neither of you were under stress -- it isn't going to work in a real fight.

Second, both you and the attacker may have significantly-diminished senses of pain. What this means for you is that *you have to go beyond causing pain to actually causing an injury or engaging in some technique that positively debilitates the attacker*. Pain alone may not be enough -- he might not feel it. You have to put him on the ground or make him otherwise incapable of pursuing you.

The loss of rational thought is both good and bad. In many self defense scenarios, the rational mind suppresses your primal instincts, preventing you from taking necessary swift action to protect yourself. Allowing these primal impulses to take

over, if only for a short time, can save your life. However, the loss of rational intelligence makes you... irrational. You may say or do things that you later regret. You might go too far in your efforts to defend yourself. You might blurt out things after the fact that incriminate you. Once the situation is over, put the monster back in its box and get yourself under control.

~~Armed or Multiple Attackers~~

It is usually best to assume that the attacker has assistants or a weapon unless you can clearly see otherwise; that is, both hands are clearly empty and there is no one else around (especially right behind you). If you cannot see one of the hands, or he begins to reach into a pocket, it is critical that you either flee immediately, or attack in such a way as to simultaneously prevent the drawing of the weapon while critically striking the attacker.

It is risky enough to fight one unknown person. Contrary to all of the formal martial arts drills and the fancy moves on TV and in the movies, the chances of prevailing against armed or multiple attackers who are intent on harming or killing you is almost nil, irrespective of your self defense skills. For example, your only real chance against a skilled knife attack is to knockout, disarm or severely injure him in one strike; you'll probably only get one try at that. If you fail, he will clinch with you or take you down, at which point you might have about 30 very unpleasant seconds of life left. Or he may just hang back and slice away until you can no longer defend yourself. If you cannot avoid the attack in the first place, or scare him away by drawing a gun or engaging in some other posture before he ever gets close to you, then your only real chance at surviving an armed attacker who wants to harm you is to literally run for your life.

It isn't much different when facing multiple attackers. As mentioned earlier, if you weren't at a disadvantage (that you probably don't even know about), you wouldn't be targeted in the first place. If there is a weapon or multiple attackers in play, then you are at an almost insurmountable disadvantage unless you have a gun and know how to use it. Again, run if you can, as fast as you can.

~~Ground Fighting~~

Many people act a little like fish out of water if they end up on the ground. However, a skilled grappler (or boxer) can easily defeat or escape from most individual, unarmed attackers, even one who is somewhat larger and stronger. The bad news is that the same skilled grappler has little or no chance against multiple attackers, or an attacker armed with an edged weapon. Luckily, it is much easier to fight to escape from a ground position than it is to try to defeat someone on the ground.

For self defense it is fine to execute a throw, take-down, sweep, trip, etc., but try to do so in such a way that you don't go down with the attacker. If you do get pulled or knocked down, the mantra to "constantly improve your position" as in "get up" suddenly takes on new clarity and importance:

1. Do whatever you can to land in an advantaged position. This is not time to "pull guard."
2. If the attacker has an edged weapon or reaches into a pocket, you must isolate and contain that arm.
3. Keep moving and try to keep your head and neck protected. If he has buddies, they'll have a harder time kicking and stomping on you.
4. Don't forget to strike! Do a variety of hand strikes, claws, pinches, etc.
5. Move to an advantaged position; get out from under him.
6. Deliver some elbows and knees to break his grip on you; if he has no accomplices, you can go to a fast submission technique but you don't stop at the tap -- you follow through and break or dislocate the limb in question.
7. Focus on escape. Get up, do some stomps or kicks, and flee.

This isn't an MMA or jujitsu competition. Never, ever remain engaged with an attacker on the ground. Depending on your experience, there is a temptation to remain locked with someone once you are on the ground, attempt submissions, go limp, or suddenly forget to use strikes, gouges and claw attacks. Every second that you are on the ground increases the chance of injury from a weapon or accomplice. You must immediately strike, move to an advantaged position and break free.

Pain and Injuries

Experiencing pain or receiving an injury may be the first and only warning you get that you are being attacked. For some people, they don't realize that they are being attacked (or were) until they wake up a few hours or minutes later laying on the ground or in the hospital with a throbbing head. Some never wake up.

If someone does attack you, you are probably going to get hit, kicked, etc., and it is going to hurt. It also hurts to strike someone else (unless your body is highly conditioned). You must learn -- you must decide -- to deal with that pain and press on anyway. Condition yourself to these pressures through strikes on a heavy bag and contact sparring.

Determination

"Attitude is everything." I despise this saying (and often those who say it), but there is an element of truth to it. If you are assaulted your survival attitude, your determination, is an important factor in the outcome. You will feel weak and afraid, but you must decide to be powerful, fearless and terrifying, no matter what happens, no matter how badly you are hurt. You may be severely injured, even mortally injured, but you must decide to fight on if only to prevent your attacker from harming others. You must be willing to fight to your death, to never give up or give in.

Second, you must have courage to close on -- take the fight to -- your attacker. If you choose to fight, that does not mean to hang back and play for points. You close, cause an injury, put him down, and get away.

Restraints and Abductions

It is critical that you never allow an attacker to place restraints upon you or otherwise abduct you. In many cases it would be better to risk death resisting abduction at the beginning than to comply and experience what comes afterward. Many murders, especially of women and children, begin with abduction and restraint. We each make our own choices, but this is one of those cases where, on average, the best choice is probably to fight for your life.

If you are unable to resist the abduction or restraint, then it becomes a matter of submission and compliance in an effort to calm the the attacker. You are really just looking for an opening, a chance to strike so that you can cause serious injury and escape.

Psychological Consequences of Violence

Violence harms not just your body, but your psychological self. Not only violence done to you, but violence that you do to others to protect yourself. This will need time and treatment to heal, often more than any bruises or cuts.

You may experience moments of fear, panic, anger or sadness, sometimes long after experiencing an attack. Nightmares are common. If you engaged in violence during the attack, you might also feel guilt about your actions.

These are natural responses. If you have any trouble dealing with them, don't hesitate to seek professional therapy.

Abusive Relationships -- Chronic, Ongoing Assaults

Sometimes I am asked what self defense techniques should be learned and employed when someone is in an abusive relationship (you can think of this like a chronic, ongoing assault, where our usual topic is an acute assault). The relationship might be between two friends, spouses, coworkers, etc. Choosing to stick around an abusive person is like choosing to swim in shark infested waters: It doesn't matter how well you think you know the sharks or that you believe you are on good terms; eventually you are going to get bitten. You really have two choices; make the water safe by killing or driving away all of the sharks, or just get out of the water. Anything else is uninformed (to put it politely).

Some people get into relationships unaware of the other person's abusive nature, or naively believe that it won't be turned on them. Let me assure you, if you know someone who is abusive to others, it is only a matter of time until he abuses you too. It has nothing to do with friendship, love or romance. People who abuse others are psychologically broken, and you can't fix them. The problem here is that you are already too close to the danger and so are left with the choices from an acute assault of fight, flight, submit or posture... but on an ongoing, perpetual basis.

Unless you like psychological and physical bruises -- receiving as well as inflicting them -- the most effective self defense technique to employ when you are in an abusive relationship is usually to *get out of the relationship*. Sever it completely and without any warning. This isn't easy, but is especially necessary if the issue is domestic abuse and children are involved; for their sake, if not your own, you must get them and yourself out of the situation. Staying with or anywhere near an abusive person is to break the most basic principles of self defense -- avoiding dangerous people and circumstances -- and ensure that you will be abused and assaulted over and over.

Escaping from an abusive relationship can require radical action. You may have to start an entirely new career, identity, leave your school or town, perhaps even cut off ties with all of your friends and family. Barring voluntary restraint by the abuser or an act by you that scares him into staying away (or forces him to do so), leaving the area may be your only rational choice.

Self Defense and Weapons

Having a weapon can easily be the difference between preventing an assault, prevailing in an assault, or ending up in the hospital or morgue. We urge participants to learn about, select and consistently carry a self defense weapon of their choosing. We also train in the use of improvised weapons through sticks of various sizes, ranging from one foot to cane length.

An effective weapon has at least one or more of the following functions:

- It focuses energy on a small area
- It increases range, allowing you to strike from a safe distance
- It intimidates

Good weapons for self defense are also concealable, light, easy to carry and easy to use. The problem with a weapon that is common and easy to use is that, well, many people will have and use it, and any weapon that can be used for self defense can also be used for criminal assault (and usually is). Be aware that many men -- especially the bad ones -- are armed at all times, at least with a knife.

This concept of focused energy is what makes edged and pointed objects (like knives and bullets) so effective. There is actually much more force and momentum in a powerful punch or kick than there is in either weapon. The advantage of the weapon is that it focuses energy on a very small area, allowing it to penetrate and cause internal damage. Consider the bullet from a typical 9mm handgun. It weighs 9 grams (0.009 kg) and travels at roughly 1000 feet per second (about 300 meters/second). It has a kinetic energy of $\frac{1}{2} \text{ mass} * \text{velocity}^2 = (0.009/2) * 300^2 = 400 \text{ Joules}$. For comparison, a powerful punch (delivered by someone who really knows how to strike) can easily have 1000 or more Joules of energy. *This is the same energy as an average car rolling at just one or two miles per hour.* The car would bump and push you. The punch would bruise and hurt, and probably knock you back; it could knock you out

if hit just right. The bullet will penetrate, cause severe internal damage requiring medical attention, and could kill if it hit you in certain areas. Again, the key difference is the surface area over which the energy is delivered. In the case of penetrating weapons, the small surface area allows it to penetrate the body and cause damage to very delicate internal structures.

Different weapons cause harm in different ways. A bright light may temporarily blind someone. A loud horn can hurt the ears and cause disorientation. Pepper spray causes stinging to the eyes and airways. Electrical guns cause involuntary contraction of muscles. Whipping objects sting the surface of the skin and can cut or bruise. Sticks cause pain, bruise muscle tissue and can crack bones. Piercing and penetrating objects damage internal organs. Knives sever tissue. Almost any object can be used as a weapon.

Most attackers will have a significant advantage over their victim, and having an effective weapon will probably be the only way to neutralize that advantage. We offer training in common self defense weapons -- kuboton, chemical sprays, stun "guns," sticks up to cane length, edged/pointed (knife and similar), and handguns -- and believe that they are a good option for most people. However, we recognize that it is a personal choice to carry or not. It is entirely appropriate for some people in some circumstances, and not in others. If you are going to carry a weapon -- and we highly recommend that you do -- the best thing to do is to select those that you are willing to use and are comfortable with carrying.

The same weapons that we might use for self defense or that police use in law enforcement are also used by criminals (along with several variations). We will cover specific defensive techniques in class, but there are a few principles to acknowledge now.

1. If an attacker has a weapon and is in range to use it -- usually within about 20 feet -- your best response is probably to submit (unless you have a better weapon and can wield it in time).
2. If the attacker is out of range and you have a *clear* escape route, run as fast and as far as you can. If the attacker has a gun, run erratically and in such a way as to put obstacles between you.
3. Attack or attempt a disarm only if you have no clear escape and believe you are going to be seriously injured or killed anyway.

We like less-lethal devices like stun guns, tasers and chemical sprays. However, they aren't very intimidating to attackers. If you choose to wield them, you generally just have to go straight to use without warning or posturing. These devices have a unique advantage in that, when effectively applied, they usually put someone down immediately and without killing them or causing permanent injury. The effect of pepper spray in particular will last many minutes, though a determined person can fight through the pain. The taser and stun gun will last only as long as you apply the power, but they can put the toughest of people down with one application.

However, recovery is fast -- almost immediate -- so you have to follow up with some other injuring technique to prevent pursuit.

A stick, knife or especially a gun are all substantial deterrents. Even so, they will very rarely stop a determined attacker *immediately*. There are many cases of people being knifed or shot in the heart, neck or other vital area, or being cut or shot multiple times, and still being functional for seconds or minutes afterward.

Other common, founded concerns about weapons include malfunctions, them being taken away and used on you, accidental use harming innocent people, inconvenience of carry and awkward social situations when people discover that you are "packing." These should all be considered when deciding on a personal weapon.

Home Safety

Make it obvious that your home is secure and well protected. If a burglar has a choice between ten different houses, and he doesn't already know what is inside, he is going to choose the one that looks like the least risk.

Get a good, thorough home alarm system and use it. A "good" system will monitor *every* possible entry point to your home, plus have motion sensors strategically placed throughout; the main unit will be hidden, secure and hardened to protect it from destruction; it will set off *very* loud sirens inside and out when triggered, and contact the police or monitoring service. Some can incorporate fire detection, too.

Don't get a cheap alarm system. They aren't worth the paltry money spent on them, and don't provide anything except a *false* sense of security. A burglar can break through the front door and simply smash the control panel. He then has free run of your home for as long as he wants.

Keep windows and doors securely locked. Get good deadbolt locks. Check *all* doors and windows daily, especially before leaving your home and before going to bed. A door or window won't stop someone who is determined to enter your home; any average sized person can easily kick in a door in seconds or just go in through a window. But securely-locked doors may slow down or deter less determined people.

Secure *all* doors and windows on all floors. Burglars will instinctively target doors or windows that are less likely to have sensors, likely to be left unlocked, or are out of direct sight.

Never open your door for strangers. Many crimes are committed by relatives or acquaintances, so you should be careful about opening the door for some of them as well. Instruct your children that they are not to open the door for *anyone* -- even friends or police -- unless you are present.

Some argue that the best overall weapon for home defense is a short-barreled shotgun; 12 gauge or 20 gauge. It is extremely intimidating, can cause a great deal of damage, and unlike the bullet from a rifle or handgun, the shot isn't going to go

through several rooms and accidentally kill someone (unless you are using slugs). However, a shotgun isn't convenient for carrying, and so isn't likely to be ready for immediate use in an emergency. It also has limited cartridge capacity and is time-consuming to reload (except for the AK-related Saiga). Consequently, a small carried handgun still has preference in our curriculum.

A well-trained German Shepherd or similar dog (or two) makes an excellent deterrent... and can be a good companion.

Stalkers

Stalkers are psychologically ill people. In some cases, stalking can morph into an assault. If you believe you are being stalked, you need to do a few things immediately:

1. Report it to the police
2. Get a restraining order
3. Get emotional support
4. If appropriate, confront and scare the *&^@#! out of the stalker (you can get into legal trouble for this)

Stalking is a kind of emotional abuse. Don't feel bad or weak for needing to talk to someone about it and the stress that it is causing you.

If you don't feel strong enough to confront the stalker, ask one or more friends -- preferably large, intimidating male friends -- to do so. If that doesn't work, involve the police, or get a restraining order. Don't respond to or engage the stalker's inquiries.

Defense from Dogs

First, have a weapon. It may not be a deterrent like it would with a person, but weapons are very effective on dogs.

Dogs are about as predictable as human beings, but are thankfully less intelligent. Most dogs, even aggressive ones, will halt an attack if you just don't move and don't challenge them. "Become a tree." Whatever you do, never run from a dog. You won't outrun it, and trying to do so will only trigger it to attack.

Don't stare the dog in the eyes, be aggressive or dominant. Keep the dog in your vision, but look slightly away. If possible, slowly back away from the dog without turning your back.

Some weapons are very effective against dogs; others are useless. Pepper spray is great, and firing a gun into the air will frighten all but the most determined. The good news is that many dogs are bewildered and scared by something so simple as an umbrella being opened up between you. If you have something large and unusual with you when confronted by a dog, try displaying it; it may confuse and distract the

dog. The bad news is that weapons that would *intimidate* a human attacker on sight mean nothing to a dog; it won't even notice.

If you are confident in your strength and ability to defend yourself from the dog, taking an aggressive, dominant posture can work. But it can also backfire and trigger an attack that could otherwise have been avoided. It just depends on the dog.

There are three general kinds of dog bites; a quick bite and release, rapid repeat bites, and the bite and hold. The first and most important thing to know is, if you are bitten, *do not yank away*. That can result in some serious tissue damage. And once bitten, do not get your other arm, leg or your head near the dog's mouth if it can be avoided. If possible, get your coat wrapped around your forearm -- ideally your weak hand -- and allow the dog to take that arm when it attacks. That leaves your strong hand free to strike or use a weapon.

Bite and release: Dogs that do this are often afraid of you. It is a defensive move by the dog that feels it is protecting itself, its territory, or someone else. You can usually slowly back away from dogs that do this.

Rapid repeat biting: Some dogs are actually trained to do this. They will bite, and anytime you move or another arm or leg gets near, they'll release and immediately shift the bite to a new target. This is very difficult to deal with unless you have a weapon.

Bite and hold: Dogs that bite and hold will usually tug and try to pull you to the ground. Once there, they may try to reacquire a bite elsewhere, like on the neck. Some dogs have incredible gripping power and can't be forced to release short of knocking them out. Sometimes they can be compelled to release by shoving the bitten hand down the neck, gagging and choking the dog. You can gouge the eyes (keys or a pen are good tools for this). You can stomp and break the front legs. Depending on the bite and the dog's size, there are choke holds that can strangle the dog, and some techniques that can break the dog's neck.

Many dogs are powerful -- almost indestructible -- in the neck and jaw, but have weak stomach areas. You can kick, palm strike or claw the stomach and cause enough pain or injury to the dog to cause it to release.

If a dangerous dog bites you, don't hesitate to use lethal force -- to kill the dog -- to escape. Once you have escaped from a dog, go immediately to a hospital for treatment. If possible, bring the dog, too.

Carjacking

Carjackings usually take place at stops or in parking lots. Try to arrange your trips so that they take place during daylight hours. Park in the open -- not in dark, secluded parking garages. If you feel at risk, ask a security guard or a trusted friend to escort you to your car. When approaching your car, watch for anyone loitering nearby. Have your keys already in your hand (and your other hand on your weapon if you

have one). See that no one is under the vehicle or in the back seat. Watch for people approaching you as you open the door. Enter the car and immediately lock the doors. Start the vehicle, begin moving, and put on your seat belt once you are clear of the parking stall and in an area where you could accelerate quickly if necessary.

Once driving, keep the doors locked. A common carjacking technique is to have one person knock on the passenger side window; when you look over at him, the attacker breaks in the driver's window with a rock or brick, strikes you, opens the door and drags you out. If you hear a knock on the passenger side, prepare for this; raise your left hand to guard your face/head and check the left side of the car. Leave enough room ahead of you at a stop that you can accelerate around the car if necessary – so that you aren't pinned in.

Another common carjacking/assault tactic is to bump your car with the attacker's car. You get assaulted when you pull over to check the damage. If you are bumped by another car, do not pull over if you are in a secluded area; instead, try to get the car's license number, manufacturer, model, color, driver's appearance, etc., then proceed immediately to the nearest police station. If you have a mobile phone, call the police station on your way there and give them the information.

Self Defense and the Government

[Via Potentia is apolitical in the sense that we do not, as an organization, endorse or promote any particular political party, candidate or the like. We believe that candidates should be evaluated based on their ethical character and commitment to uphold life and liberty, and that political issues should be evaluated on the basis of their ethical content, and especially respect for life and liberty. We also believe that participants should be actively, positively involved in government, and that we should be equally respectful of all people, including those in government positions.]

There are at least two issues about which a mature adult should inform himself regarding self defense and the government. The first is, "what laws are in place regarding my own exercise of self defense, use of weapons, etc?" In most cases "self defense" justifies actions that would otherwise be considered unethical or illegal. The problem, though, is just that. By claiming self defense, *you are admitting to doing something that is considered illegal* and, on its own, could result in years in prison. It will then be up to you to prove that it was self defense. Unless the circumstances are really clear -- and they rarely are -- this is not a determination you want to leave up to the police, a judge or a jury. I leave it to the reader to do this mental legwork himself and expand his understanding in this area.

The second issue is, "how does one defend himself when the source of the attack is an agent of the government?"

"What?! Is it okay to even ask that question?"

Self defense – the protection of innocent life – is a fundamental human right. It isn't a right that is fabricated or granted by government. Rather, governments are created

for the purpose of protecting this and other human rights. Unfortunately, many governments not only don't protect human life and authentic human life, but they and their supporters/members are the fundamental violators thereof.

Roughly half of people have psychological weaknesses or dysfunctions. They are easily manipulated or sometimes attempt to abuse others. A few – maybe one or two out of 30 – are seriously distorted psychologically; they could be rightly called sociopaths or psychopaths. They are evil, and actively seek out ways of controlling and abusing others. Evil people treat others not as human beings but as material objects and means to an end. This usually involves deceiving, manipulating, controlling or stealing from them – violating their liberty and property – and this is easiest to accomplish if the victim is unaware or tricked into cooperating. When evil people have enough advantages over their victims, they won't waste time with deception, but resort to open threats or brute force. If the victims resist or are otherwise inconvenient, evil people threaten, harm or kill them to bring about personal compliance, to make an example, out of anger or revenge, or even to prevent the victim from alerting others.

This behavior manifests itself in many different spheres of life; criminal assault, psychological abuse by a spouse, harassment on the job, etc. However, the most effective and common ways of using or abusing, controlling or plundering someone else is through the power of groups of people. These groups go by different names; gangs, mafia or government.

Government is a necessary human construct, and good can come of it, but governments in general, and socialist/communist ones in particular, are the most evil, murderous organizations in the history of mankind. They routinely oppress, kill or knowingly allow the same of millions of their own people, and they far surpass the evil done by any gang, mafia, corporation or individual criminal. *Well over 100 million people have died under the crushing boot of government in the last century alone* (and this is without going into politically-caused starvation, abortion and indirect killing, which has killed many millions more). The more powerful a government becomes, the more it oppresses and controls its people, and the more likely it is to “disappear” those who oppose it.

This tendency of government -- of the people who are attracted to and make up government – to oppress others was well understood by the founders of our country and by anyone who is a student of history. Extensive books could be written merely repeating and studying their many prophetic comments. We will limit ourselves to one. Thomas Jefferson wrote, "The two enemies of the people are criminals and government, so let us tie the second down with the chains of the Constitution so the second will not become the legalized version of the first."

Think about that; the founders of our federal government considered it a threat, an enemy, to the people. And that the only way to allow it was if it was restrained by law!

Sadly, the chains have not held. They lasted longer in the United States than in many countries, and a few battered links still cling together, but the chain is broken in many places from constant attack and lay in rusty ruins. Rather than having a Constitution that acts as a restraint preventing the government from oppressing the people, we now have a government that has chained (enslaved) the citizens with absurd laws, regulations, incomprehensible and unbearable taxes, a currency that has lost nearly 95% of its value in the last century alone, and leaders who ignore what is right or the will of the people, and twist the Constitution to mean whatever is convenient (when they aren't ignoring it outright).

When it comes to our interaction with each other in public realm, one doesn't have to over-complicate things. This single principle will do: *Ideas should be proposed, never imposed*. Participation in and payment for any public program should be voluntary, not compulsory. No one should ever be manipulated, deceived or coerced. If people want to support a candidate or program, they are free to vote and pay for it *themselves*. If some people don't want to go along with or support it, then their freedom to abstain should always be respected. But these days the majority of voters – usually a minority of community – don't respect others, and instead impose their will upon the entire city, county, state or even country. Those who don't agree or don't want to participate in or pay for a particular program are forced to do so against their will, under the threat of severe financial penalty, loss of home or career, destruction of their family, or even prison.

This is fundamentally evil, and it is rampant within our society. If you don't believe this, ask yourself what would happen if you chose to opt out of social security, federal income tax, state income tax, property taxes, medicare, medicaid, public education, unemployment insurance, or the myriad of other taxes and social programs? *You wouldn't be allowed to*. The government would take the money directly out of your bank account, your paycheck (they already do this), evict you from your home and sell it to someone else, assess various fines, take your children, and perhaps even place you in prison. If you used force to resist the tyranny, you could be killed. When you consider that treason, counterfeiting and similar crimes against the state result in capital punishment or mandatory life in prison, whereas murder or rape often result in a few years in prison, it doesn't take a genius to see that the people in government consider themselves and their control over others to be much more important than individual human life and freedom.

The painful truth is that you and I are unwitting slaves, revenue-generating machines, for the government, international banks, and those who utilize the government to implement their plans. If you live in Oregon, roughly 60% of your work (your life) -- seven months of every year -- goes to pay for interest to banks, and government and social programs in which you really have no say. If you follow the rules and are thorough, you would then spend tens if not hundreds of hours studying and preparing your taxes. *Together, you probably spend two-thirds to almost three-quarters of your life either preparing or paying taxes*. There is no other phrase for this except involuntary servitude, or slavery, and it is specifically forbidden by both the federal and state

constitutions, yet it is the same federal and state governments that do it to their own people.

Your challenge is to figure out how to make it on what is left. For the most part you'll be left to your own devices as long as you continue to feed the monster. But the government and its supporters are increasingly dissatisfied with you merely sacrificing over half of your life to support them. Not only is it never enough, but they want to control your other decisions, thoughts and beliefs, and silence anyone who won't be controlled. This sounds like an exaggeration, but you will discover that it isn't if you actually do some investigation of your own. Suffice it to say that the current situation is far beyond that which prompted the founders of this country to revolt against England.

As informed human beings who stand for the dignity of human life, we have a responsibility to oppose this situation whenever and by whatever means possible. It is up to each person to decide how he will do so in his own life, and what risks he can take. At the very least, we recommend these considerations:

1. Remember that genuine freedom is not the right to just do whatever one wants. It is the freedom to do what is right, to do what we ought to do.
2. Inform yourself about the legitimate functions of government and its fundamental documents like the Declaration of Independence, and the Federal and State Constitutions.
3. Recognize that government cannot and does not exist for the purpose of creating and granting rights, but to protect those fundamental human rights that you already have by nature.
4. Always support the plan or candidate that will respect the dignity and freedom of the individual, his liberty and his property.
5. Always oppose any candidate or plan that does not respect human dignity, liberty or property. Oppose any plan that limits the freedom of the individual to defend and provide for himself and his family, or to seek his own ethical path without coercion from others.
6. Get involved. Write (rational) letters to your local paper and politicians. Participate in town meetings. Speak the truth calmly and respectfully, and persuade others to your position.
7. Propose and support laws that hold individuals in government responsible for their actions and the actions of their office.
8. Propose and support laws that make government agencies and individuals directly and automatically responsible for the legal fees and losses of any person who hired an attorney to defend himself from the government and prevailed in court.
9. Whenever possible reduce the size, intrusiveness and tax burden of the government.
10. Organize with like-minded people.
11. If you have the skills and are so inclined, run for public office and use that office to promote human dignity and freedom.

But the question was what does one do when he is being threatened or abused by his government? By this I mean a letter in the mail -- or worse, a knock on the door -- from an official claiming that you've violated some arbitrary, arcane rule. Sometimes it begins with a notice from your bank that your recent checks bounced... because the IRS or another agency cleared out your accounts without your knowledge.

First, honestly assess your situation. When you are threatened by your government or an agent thereof, you are dealing with someone who has incredible power to harm you, who usually won't hesitate to do so, and who usually has little or no personal accountability for his actions.

I've gone up against local, state and federal government agencies more times than I care to count. I've won some. I've lost some. Here some general guidelines:

1. Government personnel are often wrong, violating the constitution or other laws on the books... and they don't care. They get paid the same either way and will destroy you using your own tax dollars unless you have clear and irrefutable proof that vindicates you, or they feel that there will be consequences for them if they abuse you.
2. Keep some savings in a place where it is unlikely to be stolen by criminals, including those in government. This means somewhere besides a bank or any institution that is beholden to the government. Banks eagerly turn all of your accounts over to the government if asked, even though this is a violation of the Constitution and of their fiduciary responsibility to you.
3. Have backup forms of currency like silver or gold, and have some food stored. Have a way of acquiring potable water, additional food, and of defending your food and family (this usually means a couple guns and an ammunition reserve).
4. Never open your door to a government agent or allow him into your house. Do not allow him to speak or have contact with your children or other members of your family. If you choose to talk to him – rarely a good idea – step out to your porch or yard and close the door behind you.
5. Keep comprehensive records of all relevant conversations and correspondence.
6. Do not ignore demands or threats from the government. You must deal with them promptly, or they will compound and be much worse later.
7. Just as with police officers, never lie to or threaten an agent of the government.
8. Remember, you are dealing with a human being. Probably not a very bright one, but still a human being. Things will usually go better if you can avoid provoking him.
9. If they are breaking the law, clearly and calmly point it out, and that you intend to defend yourself and press charges against them *personally* if they do not leave you alone. This has worked for me several times.
10. Never make any statement, admission or answer any question posed to you by the government without an attorney and/or complete, written grant of immunity. Don't try to negotiate or reason with them – that is like trying to

negotiate with a robber or rapist. They generally aren't interested in the truth or your rights; only in imposing their will upon you. Nothing you say is likely to change that. Your choices are flee, fight, submit or posture.

11. Ask to see the actual rule or law you are being accused of violating – not a summary or verbal statement, but the actual law as written. In my experience, most of the time you aren't actually violating the law, but what the ~~idiot~~ agent wishes/believes the law really said. In many other cases, the law or rule is, itself, in violation of the State or Federal Constitutions. In these cases the agent or office in question is most likely engaging in public misconduct or felony coercion – both are *very* common among public offices that have power over citizens. He probably has gotten away with it for years and enjoys his power.
12. Ask how the (alleged) violation came to their attention.
13. If you are actually violating a law and that law is not in obvious contradiction with a higher law, think very seriously about compliance, especially if you have a family or a lot to lose.
14. Don't be surprised if the person threatens your welfare or your family to get your compliance. Remain calm if that happens. Sometimes they will attempt to provoke you to violence so that you can be forcibly arrested. Remember, these people get paid to coerce and extract money from you, and they are promoted based on how effectively they do it.
15. Get support and good advice. Unless you have a great deal of competency in the matter at hand, I urge you to seek the counsel of a competent attorney, and then a second one, before deciding how to ultimately proceed. Millions of people have been impoverished, imprisoned or killed by their government. Adding your name to that list won't necessarily help anything.

Self Defense and Lawyers

If you are being threatened by a lawyer the best solution is usually to not respond in any way. If the threats persist and are escalating, consider contacting another lawyer. Never, ever try to negotiate directly with a lawyer who is threatening you. If the lawyer is engaging in a crime or obviously unethical acts, you might report his acts to his Bar Association or the the Attorney General of his state. Bar Associations usually just protect their own, but they at least pretend to have some ethical rules and *can* bring penalties against members who violate them.

Testing

Students should be able to articulate the practical steps of self defense and respond to one simulated attack for each rank level for which they are testing. For intermediate stage, some of the attacks should include weapons. For advanced stage, the student should attempt a disarm.

Students should demonstrate familiarity with conventional self defense weapons, especially gun safety. Students should be able to explain their local government's regulations regarding self defense and common self defense weapons.

Students should be able to articulate the concepts of person, liberty and property, and articulate the differences between bullying, fighting and self defense.

SELF DEFENSE AND POLICE INTERACTION

One of the goals of this curriculum is to help you avoid, escape or survive an assault. This includes understanding the role of the police, not getting wrongly arrested and charged after the event, and not saying or doing things that could result in your wrongful imprisonment.

Summary

- The law is man's flawed attempt to define what behaviors are prohibited, allowed, encouraged or required, along with the gravity and consequences of various actions. It is someone's opinion of what constitutes ethical or unethical behavior, and the degree to which (and circumstances under which) individual life, liberty and property may be controlled by others.
- The law does not prevent crimes or protect anyone or anything; it defines when a crime has (probably) occurred and what the consequences are for the criminal.
- All citizens are generally expected to uphold and enforce the law. Police in particular take this on as a vocation and get paid to do so. Enforcing the law entails general observation, responding to reports of crimes, and attempting to locate and apprehend criminals.
- The police also do not *prevent* crimes. Your safety -- your life -- is *your* responsibility. The police do not and cannot protect you from abuse or assault. They are not bodyguards or social workers. They might take notes and (sometimes) make an arrest *after* an assault has occurred.
- The law is imperfect, enforced and applied by fallible people, and violent situations are confusing, especially to those who were not directly involved. Police frequently arrest *victims* of assault who attempt to defend themselves, especially if they prevailed or used weapon. If you are involved in a self defense event, once you've seen to any injuries, contact a competent *lawyer* immediately.
- Police are no different than anyone else. Most are fine people. Some are just awful. Either way, they have a lot of power and a few won't hesitate to abuse that power, so you should be careful if you interact with them.
- Never answer any question posed to you by a police officer beyond your name (if even that). The answer to any question asked of you by a police officer or other government representative is silence, "I have nothing to say," or "lawyer." If you wish to be more cooperative, if an officer asks you a question or tells you to do something, you might ask, "which law obligates me to [do what you've asked / answer your question]?" If the answer is an unequivocal "here it is...." *and the officer is telling the truth* (the tricky part), then you had best do it unless you wish to be arrested, beaten or both, and not necessarily in that order. If the answer is anything else, then you have no obligation whatsoever to answer the question or do what you are being asked (though you still might be arrested, beaten, or both, if you don't comply).

- You aren't going to win an argument with the police, so don't waste your time trying to reason with them or talk your way out of something.
- Your children should be trained to never answer a police officer's questions.
- Never lie to or threaten a police officer (but recognize that they are *legally* free to lie to, threaten, intimidate and sometimes even assault you).
- Never run from a police officer. They will chase you and won't be gentle once they catch up.
- If an officer asks to search you, your vehicle or your home, state clearly that you do not consent to any search.
- Keep your distance. Keep your hands visible. Don't make sudden moves. Avoid touching a police officer and avoid resisting him physically unless it is absolutely necessary *and* has a possibility of success. Any physical action (or inaction) taken by you may be used by police as an excuse to arrest you for assaulting a police officer, resisting arrest, or some other trumped up charge.

Detail

[Much of the information in this section applies specifically to citizens in America and countries with similar police forces and civilian laws. Also, these concepts apply equally to interactions with all law enforcement personnel, whether they are local, county, state or federal. *We have repeatedly invited police departments to discuss these matters with us and address various questions; we have not received **any** responses.*]

Many people believe that the law or the police protect them. Insofar as keeping convicted criminals detained for a period of time protects the rest of society, this is correct. But when it comes to police and self defense, the situation is really well stated by this cliché: "When seconds count, the police are only minutes away," or "I carry a gun because I can't conceal a cop." An assault can be completed in a fraction of the time it takes for police to arrive. You simply cannot count on the police to protect you from an *immanent* assault (unless one is standing right beside you). Even then, he is under no obligation to protect you. If you have already been attacked or threatened, but the immediate danger has passed, it is usually prudent to talk to an attorney about reporting the event to the police. However, if you think you are about to be attacked, or are being attacked at this moment, trying to call the police simply isn't going to help you.

Some believe that the above paragraph is unfair or mean, but it is the truth. For example, there is clear drug distribution taking place from a house within a stone's throw of my own. On some days more than a hundred people come and go in a few hours. It isn't very discreet; I've personally overheard them talk about the drugs, making deals, and even how they've outsmarted the cops. Thefts and vandalism are up in this otherwise quiet neighborhood, and people like myself are concerned for the safety of their children. No doubt some of the people involved have been involved in assault or worse. This situation has been reported to the police repeatedly. They have done nothing (and have clearly said that they will do nothing). Instead, they spend the majority of their time writing traffic and parking tickets. And that is how it will continue until *after* something really bad happens.

Police departments serve a purpose in society; they enforce community laws by apprehending those who violate them *after the fact*. This can delay or prevent crime in the sense that a criminal often engages in a chain of crimes; by arresting him after committing some of them, he is prevented from committing additional ones, at least for awhile. The possibility of arrest and jail time also serves as a deterrent for some people -- I'd certainly like to avoid it. Sometimes they serve a positive purpose such as when trying to help a lost child find his parents. But police cannot (and should not) be everywhere and they do not protect individuals; they are not personal bodyguards and they are not social workers; their job is to enforce the law, and they can't rightly use force against someone until he has actually, *obviously* broken one.

Most police are decent people, and they don't intend to do evil or harm the innocent. However, they are also just like anyone else; that is, they make mistakes, and some of them aren't worthy of the trust we place in them; some are positively corrupt. Sometimes we make honest mistakes, or we find ourselves in a situation where it looks like we've done something evil, even though we haven't. Even when dealing with a good, ethical officer, the unfortunate reality is that he is part of a system that isn't necessarily interested in your personal good; his job is to enforce the law using his own powers of judgment, and the law is not always on the side of the ethical or the innocent. For this reason we recommend healthy caution when interacting with police, even those you may know personally, especially if you have been involved in an accident or self defense situation (in which case your first action, after making sure all immediate danger has passed, should be to call a skilled lawyer and seek his advice).

Rule #1) Never, ever answer police questions or make any statement without an attorney. Answering any question posed to you by a police officer is much more likely to harm you than it is to help you, no matter the circumstances. Simply state "I have nothing to say to you." Or, if you rather, say "I'm sorry, but as a rule I do not answer police questions without an attorney present." How you choose to phrase it is up to you, but try to keep it respectful.

To avoid possibly being arrested, prosecuted and convicted for a crime you did not commit, many attorneys and even police detectives recommend that you never, ever talk to the police or answer any of their questions without an attorney present, if even then. *You simply don't have to answer any question ever asked of you by anyone, regardless of his position.* Of course, there may be unpleasant consequences for that -- they might use threats, extortion or brute force to coerce you, or you might spend a few hours in a cell -- but the truth remains that no one can compel you to answer any question, especially questions posed to you by the government or its representatives. In some cases, such as when driving, the law requires that you show your drivers license (unless you wish to be cited or arrested for driving without one). However, you are under no obligation to say anything else to the police and generally should not, *especially if you are innocent of any crime.* If police ask you any other questions, such as what you are doing in the area, your whereabouts at a specific time, did you know someone, etc., then they are probably fishing for evidence that would justify arresting you. Do not answer their questions. Instead, ask "am I being detained or arrested,"

or "am I legally obligated to answer your question?" If the answer is not positive, then you should walk away and contact a lawyer.

Rule #2) No matter what they say, don't forget rule #1.

Police may attempt to pressure you into answering their questions a number of ways, including lies, intimidation and threats: They might say that someone else told them "the story," that it makes you look bad, and they now want to hear your side of it; they might say that, if you weren't guilty, you'd be willing to talk; they might say that they'll make things easier for you if you cooperate; they might say they just need to hear your story so they can rule you out as a suspect. Police will often "ask" you to do things or answer questions and imply that there will be bad consequences for you if you do not cooperate. No matter how much you are burning to tell your story, keep your mouth tightly shut. Remember, *if they had enough evidence to charge and convict you, they wouldn't be asking you these questions*. It can get physical; I've had friends who were threatened with beating, and have seen videos of people who were. Some died.

Remember, anything you say can and will be used *against* you. Even police won't answer questions posed by other police about a crime without legal representation. Why should you have less protection?

"But why shouldn't I talk if I have nothing to hide?" The fact that you are innocent is the precise reason that you shouldn't talk to the police! Innocent people have been arrested and convicted as a result of rambling on and ended up volunteering information that was later used to convict them of a crime they didn't commit or a lesser, irrelevant offense. Some have spent years in prison. Some have been executed. I'm not suggesting that the typical officer is going to purposefully arrest an innocent person. He is merely going to arrest whoever appears suspicious to him if he has enough evidence to support the arrest. Talking to police, answering their questions, can provide such "evidence," *even though you are completely innocent*.

An officer investigating a crime generally has the authority to detain you long enough to confirm your identity and determine whether he has probable cause to arrest you (e.g., there is a warrant for your arrest, he has some evidence that you committed a serious crime, or he personally witnessed you commit a lesser crime). If the officer says you are not free to go, then you are either being detained or arrested. You can ask which it is, and can also ask what crime is being investigated -- in fact, you are free to ask any questions you want.

Avoid touching an officer. Leave plenty of space between the two of you. Keep your hands in the open and don't make rapid or aggressive movements. Stay calm. Don't make any verbal threats. If you see him reaching for or preparing a weapon, make it clear that you are a peaceful person, and there will be no violence from you, and that there is no need for any weapons; *the last thing you want is for him to feel like he needs to draw a weapon*. I'm a gun safety instructor; other, experienced instructors I've talked with have routinely confirmed that the scariest places they've ever been -- the situations that prompted them to wear bullet proof vests -- were when training police

officers in gun handling. And never run away from an officer -- he *will* chase you, and won't be very gentle if he catches up with you.

One area of ambiguity is the "lawful order." Many states define it as a criminal act to fail to follow a "lawful order" issued by a police officer, and many police will use your refusal to follow their order as an excuse to arrest you. However, few states define what a lawful order actually is. Words mean things, and it can't be just whatever a police officer requests. For example, demanding that you wash his car or fetch him some donuts are not lawful orders; demanding that you lay on the ground so that he can handcuff you is (assuming he has legitimate cause to actually arrest you). If a police officer asks you to do something, you are free to ask whether you are being asked or ordered. If you are being ordered, you could always ask "*what law am I being ordered to follow?*" If there is no law, then it is not a lawful order (in our opinion). Nonetheless, refusing to follow an officer's "order" can and probably will result in you being arrested, whether that order was legitimate or not. I've personally seen officers issue unjustified orders to people, then arrest them when the people didn't follow the order, and charge the person with obstruction of an officer (for not following the absurd order). After beating the person, dragging them through the jail, and eventually releasing them, the bogus charges get dropped if a decent judge is involved, but a lot of damage is done in the process.

Sometimes police might ask to frisk or search you, your car or your house, even if you are not being detained or arrested. They may state that this is for "officer safety." This poses an ethical and legal problem. Your safety is just as or more important than theirs, and if you are an ethical person, then *the safest thing to do is to leave you alone*. In fact, they are supposed to be upholding *public* safety, even at the risk of their own. By attempting to disarm you, the police officer makes you, a member of the public, unable to protect yourself. You should always make it clear that you do not consent to any search. Whether you voluntarily turn over your legal weapon is up to you (as are the consequences of that decision).

Police generally cannot and will not *legally* confiscate anything of yours -- including a self defense weapon -- unless it is illegal, is needed for an investigation, or you are being arrested. This means, though, that if you brandish your gun in self defense it might be confiscated, even if you never pulled the trigger. This is a good reason to have... you guessed it... a second gun in a safe place.

Physically resisting the police, even if you are right in doing so, will rarely work out to your benefit. We advise against physically resisting a search, detention or arrest (legal or not). In fact, in some states it is illegal to resist even an unlawful arrest. Like many laws, it is a catch-22: Suppose an officer is trying to arrest you unlawfully or is simply assaulting you and you resist. As soon as you resist, you now can be charged for resisting arrest or assaulting an officer (which is an arrestable offense, even a felony). Yes, they really do that.

If an officer uses excessive force to detain or arrest you, we believe you are ethically justified to use necessary force to defend yourself from injury -- you aren't resisting

the arrest, but defending yourself from criminal assault (that would, in fact, be about the only argument you could bring to bear). But whether you are in the right, it could escalate into something very bad, like your injury or death. Police severely and unjustly injure thousands of people per year, and accidentally or unjustly kill hundreds. Police are generally authorized to use whatever force is necessary to complete an arrest. If you resist, their force *will* escalate to whatever level is necessary to defeat you. And the police will claim that the force was necessary because you were resisting arrest – they won't make the distinction between you resisting being assaulted and beaten, while being willing to cooperate with a peaceful arrest.

We are of the “don't tell, don't tell,” philosophy when it comes to carrying weapons. Some states require that you notify police if you are carrying a self defense weapon. Others do not. Some police will respond with agitation or violence if you notify them that you are carrying. Others will become agitated if you do not notify them and they later learned that you were carrying. It is your choice, but we advise against voluntarily telling anyone, even police, that you are carrying a weapon unless it is absolutely necessary to do so.

Whenever possible, you or others should record interactions with police. Honest officers will have no problem with this; dishonest ones may attempt to stop you or confiscate the recording in order to hide their actions. Even if it is illegal to make such a recording without their knowledge or permission -- and some will make such a claim -- having the recording may help you or another innocent person. I have a notice in the back window of my vehicle that I may be recording any police interaction; if they don't wish to be recorded, then they are free to walk away and leave me alone.

It is usually illegal for police (or anyone) to forcibly take your private property (e.g., your video recorder), unless it was used to commit a crime. Some will fraudulently claim that they were intimidated by the camera, or that they thought it might be a weapon of some kind. I've repeatedly heard police imply that filming them may result in the person being shot because the police will “mistake” the camera for a gun. This has actually happened – people were shot while holding cameras, wallets, keys, cell phones, and a variety of harmless objects that police later claimed looked like guns. In any event, such recordings have been used many times to vindicate people illegally searched, falsely arrested or unjustly assaulted or killed by police.

Finally, you never have to allow police into your home (or even open the door to them). If they have a warrant, or they have reason to believe that a serious crime is being committed, they are going to come in, irrespective of your consent or lack thereof. The only question then is whether you want a broken door.

Attempt to get and remember the name of any officer with whom you interact. If you have a complaint about how you are treated by a police officer, wait until you are able to calmly and clearly articulate it, then discuss it with a lawyer, the chief of police (or the sheriff), the city mayor, or the like. Police stations are pretty aggressive

about protecting themselves and their officers, so it is rarely effective to try to deal with them – the officer in question or front desk staff – directly.

The Exception(s)

There is at least one situation in which we believe it is useful to contact and involve the police: When someone is engaging in disruptive or illegal behavior *that doesn't pose an imminent threat to your well-being* – that is, the person isn't already attacking you, in your home, or something similar, and you don't expect them to do so in the next few minutes. For example, we live in a relatively-quiet neighborhood, but that peace has been disturbed by two issues; the resident of the house next to me has started dealing drugs and having foul parties late into the night, and another neighbor has also started having late parties and garage band practices at around 2:00 AM. I've tried to remain on friendly terms with both people, and have repeatedly asked them to keep it down, take it inside, etc., after I, my wife and children have been awakened in the middle of the night.

But it has reached a point where crimes are now increasing in the area; vandalism, car break ins, bike thefts, etc. A young woman at a neighboring house said that a man tried to trick her into letting him into her house. Another neighbor is worried for the welfare of his wife and children, as am I. Once it reaches that point, you can either take positive action against the people in question, which may not be socially acceptable, or you can involve the police. For my part, any time there is any disturbance at either address I now just pick up the phone, call the local police dispatch number, explain what is happening, and within about 5-10 minutes there is a policeman at their door and the disturbance stops. Most of the time, things are peaceful for several weeks afterward.

In some cases these complaints can be made anonymously, but recognize that the police may be capable of tracing the call back to a particular phone or address. If you really want to be anonymous, use a pay phone where there are no surveillance cameras, or just keep your face obscured.

If you see people loitering around your property and feel they are a potential threat, that might also be a good time to call police dispatch (make sure your home is secure, first, and that you are prepared). Most of the time, loitering people disappear before the police ever arrive, which can be embarrassing. Obviously, this wouldn't be useful if there was an assault already taking place, but it is sufficient for disturbances of the peace and similar misdemeanor-type acts.

Another time you might want to call or make a report to the police is when someone has threatened you with harm. This might be at work, over the phone, by e-mail, etc. If something then does happen to you, the police have something to go on. If you are attacked and defend yourself, there is also a record of threats being made against you that could be helpful if there is any ambiguity about the self defense situation.

Be aware that, should something unfortunate happen to a person or his home, the first thing police are going to do is go visit people who have complained about the

person. When the police initiate contact with you or ask any questions about your whereabouts, motives, relationships, etc., then immediately go back to the "keep your mouth shut" principle.

Getting Pulled Over

The most common interaction with police is getting pulled over for violating some traffic ordinance (or for nothing at all). Some people find it very stressful. I've been pulled over many, many times. Some advice:

1. If my experience holds true for others – if you are generally a safe driver and don't draw attention to yourself – the majority of traffic stops are unethical fishing expeditions. That is, the officer is engaging in harassment under the color of law, pulling you over for some ridiculous reason in hopes that he can get you for something more serious. Some will purposefully attempt to provoke you into saying or doing something so they can arrest you. I have friends who were pulled over because they merely *looked* at an officer. My wife was followed all over town because she smiled and waved to one. I've been pulled over because my "shoulder moved in a suspicious way," among other things. And, of course, there are those who get pulled over because they are the "wrong color." Whatever the origin, just try to remain calm.
2. Pull over someplace that is safe for you and the officer. Open and visible to the public, but not in the middle of the highway.
3. If there is anyone else in the car, instruct him to remain silent and motionless with his hands plainly visible in his lap.
4. As soon as you pull over, turn off the car, take out your identification, vehicle registration and insurance card, and place them on the dash board. Take the keys out of the ignition and place them in your pocket. If the police ask why you don't have your seat belt on, you always wear it when driving and only removed it to get your drivers license (right?).
5. Keep your doors locked, and roll down the window enough that you can talk, but the officer cannot reach into the vehicle and grab you or unlock/open the door. When the officer approaches, hand the license, registration, insurance and notice card (if you have one) through the window to the officer. If the officer asks why you won't roll your window all the way down, you don't have to answer that question, but you might respond that it is for your own safety.
6. Keep your hands on the steering wheel and do not make any sudden movements. In many cases there is a second officer in your blind spot on the right side of the vehicle watching every move you make. *Police will shoot you if they suspect you are reaching for a gun*; it won't matter that you weren't.

7. If the officer asks you to step out of the car (and you choose to do so), lock the door behind you. The keys are in your pocket, right? Maintain two arm's length distance (or more) from the officer. Keep your hands out of your pockets. Don't make large or quick movements. Remain calm.
8. If an officer says he is going to frisk or search you, and you are carrying a gun or other obvious weapon, this might be a good time to tell him rather than just letting him find it on his own. Some officers get agitated if you tell them that you are carrying. Others get agitated if you don't. Go figure.
9. Never, ever consent to any search of your person or the vehicle. Sometimes police plant evidence, or maybe there is something in your car or house that you weren't aware of but is illegal. By voluntarily allowing a search, you increase the likelihood of getting arrested and imprisoned for a crime you didn't commit or weren't aware of.
10. As discussed above, do not answer any questions posed to you and do not make any statements. Most officers have decided whether they are going to write a ticket, warn you or arrest you before they even get to your car; your chances of talking them out of it are pretty slim; it is more likely that you'll say or do something that only makes matters worse or simply extend an already unpleasant and unwanted conversation. In any event, your only legal obligation (usually) is to provide a drivers license, vehicle registration and proof of insurance. It can be psychologically very difficult to not answer an officer's questions when you are pulled over; you are in a stressful position of extreme vulnerability and we have a natural instinct to want to talk our way out of problems. If you have a hard time controlling your tongue, you might have a card prepared that you can hand to him which respectfully reads that you won't answer any questions without an attorney present. An example card is at the end of this section.
11. If at any time you see an officer place his hand on a weapon -- or worse, draw it -- do whatever is necessary to de-escalate the situation. Most of the time this means just submitting to whatever he is demanding. Sometimes police shoot and kill people even when they have submitted. Officers kill a few hundred innocent people every year, often with little consequence. The only way to ensure that you don't get added to that list is to make sure that an officer never draws a weapon and points it at you.

The Bottom Line

A police officer really has only a few (legitimate) options when dealing with a citizen:

1. He can *arrest* you if he has a warrant to do so, has witnessed you commit a crime, or has sufficient evidence that you committed a serious crime (felony). He will almost certainly search you and the immediate vicinity if you are arrested.

2. He can *detain* you for a limited amount of time necessary to confirm your identification, issue a citation for a violation/infracton, or determine whether he can make an arrest. If you are detained, the officer might ask to frisk or search you.
3. He can *order* you to follow the law. You must follow a lawful order unless you wish to get beaten and arrested.
4. He can *ask* you to do all kinds of things. You don't legally have to answer any of his questions or do anything he asks you to do unless he is asking you to follow the law; that is, unless he is giving you a "lawful order."
5. You are free to go.

Some officers will utilize the detention period to give you long-winded speeches, berate you, engage in intimidation, or try to get you to answer questions that would constitute a confession. Others are fairly professional and respectful. You, however, can ask all of the questions you want, can terminate the conversation at any time and, unless you are being detained or are under arrest, can walk away at any time.

Testing

Students should respond properly to simulated police interactions such as an unanticipated encounter, traffic stop, knock at the door, etc. Intermediate and advanced students should also be tested on how to deal with hostile police interactions.

Sample Card

If you wish to make a card to give to police or post in your window, it might read something like this. Some police will respect and respond positively to this. Others may not. Do so at your own risk. Feel free to adapt it as you see fit:

- I am a peaceful, non-violent person.
- I intend to act ethically and follow all laws.
- Please treat me with the same courtesy and respect that you expect from me. Avoid any action that might be perceived by me as aggressive, threatening or that make me feel unsafe.
- Please clearly identify yourself, why you have stopped me, and provide your card.
- I reserve and will defend all of my human rights.
- I may be recording our interaction. If you don't wish to be recorded, then you are free to leave me alone.
- I will follow any *lawful order* you give, but may require you to provide proof that it is a lawful order before doing so. I will generally not submit to other requests or answer your questions.

- I do not consent to any search of my person, vehicle or premises.
- As a general rule I do not answer any questions posed by a representative of the government without the advice of an attorney. Any statement made or signed by me, or any question answered without the presence of an attorney is made under duress.
- I will assume that I am free to go and may act upon that at my prerogative unless you clearly state that I am being detained or arrested and why.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SELF DEFENSE

(Lunatics and other Life Hazards)

Most adults are physically unfit, and according to FBI statistics, about one in 200 people are victims of physical assault each year. Between one in three and one in ten people will be victims of assault during their adult lives, depending on lifestyle and locale. But the truth is that nearly everyone will have to deal with psychological assaults in their lifetime -- probably many times over. Most people respond to psychological (and physical) assault by giving in, but I generally do not, and it has caused a great deal of conflict in my life over the decades. It has taken many years of study and reflection to understand the dynamics involved in these encounters, and it is my hope that this material can help others who have similar struggles.

The Person or Self

Learning self defense requires learning (and sometimes-painful honesty) about ourselves; how we are made, our strengths, our weaknesses, etc. As human beings, we each have at least two intertwined capacities that constitute the "person" or the "self"; these are the physical and psychological capacities. We relate to and understand the world and others through interaction via these and other facets of human nature. The physical brain plays a pivotal role in this connectedness between our capacities, but the truth is that there is not a clear line segregating the two; some philosophies believe that facets of our psychology are even tied to and spread throughout individual organs or parts of the body. Fill a room with psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists and the like, and ask them to discuss where the brain ends and the mind begins; you'll probably need actual self defense skills. Whatever the actual relationship, our physical and psychological capacities are similar to each other in the general sense that they can be healthy, unfit, or severely damaged. And though they operate according to their own rules, each affects and is affected by the other. People who are under intense psychological stress often exhibit physical symptoms. People who experience a physical trauma may develop related, psychological damage. Another way of expressing this is to say that both capacities are expressed through and affected by the experiences of the self.

By psychological capacity I mean the intangible element of human nature that encompasses awareness, thought, emotion, knowledge, wisdom, and virtue; those facets that collectively constitute our intellect, character and personality, and that drive our words and actions. Some might call it your particular soul or nature (please note that I am purposefully not going into one's "spirit" or essential being, or that relationship). Just as one can have overdeveloped arms but anemic legs, so one can have overdeveloped knowledge, but anemic emotions, wisdom or virtue -- a state that is quite common today. And it is not an accident that I have used the word capacity. One could substitute the word potential. We each have different levels of capacity and natural limitations. In fact, one of the defining characteristics of the human person is that he is limited. A healthy person recognizes his own limitations and weaknesses, and daily struggles to do what is right, to manage, strengthen and

overcome these. A healthy person takes responsibility for his actions, their consequences, and understands that his present state in life is, more than anything else, a result of his own choices. A healthy person has a developed, balanced psychology. This doesn't mean we are perfect and never make mistakes. Sometimes we fall, but we get back up, try to repair any damage we caused, apologize, and continue forward. This is the state of the human person attempting to live a life of truth. He is imperfect, how recognizes and forebears other people's imperfections, and he is able to deal with most difficulties that life may throw him, even if he still has a few sensitive areas and fails from time to time.

Unfortunately, many of us are not merely limited, but actually psychologically unfit, flabby or slightly out of balance, operating significantly below our potential. Think of it in physical terms: Many adults are physically unhealthy as a consequence of lifestyle, genetics or both. I would argue that a large proportion of us are psychologically unhealthy for similar reasons; lack of exercise in virtue, general laziness, a poor psychological diet (e.g., what we watch, listen to, say and do), and a society that does not reward and encourage ethics, etc. Quite the opposite sometimes. The psychologically unfit are otherwise functional adults who behave rationally under most circumstances. They may otherwise be very intelligent or successful. However, they do not have the psychological constitution to handle moderate psychological challenges. This kind of weakness can usually be helped without special treatment. For example, most adults cannot climb a 20-foot rope. Set the floor on fire and it wouldn't make any difference. They simply lack the strength necessary to lift their bodies that far off of the ground; they may even justify their weakness by saying "climbing ropes is silly." But if they genuinely recognize their weakness, make a plan for improvement and set their minds to it, they can overcome it. The same is true psychologically: If we aren't too far gone, in moments of clarity we might recognize our own shallowness. With disciplined effort, and perhaps help from friends, family or faith, we can improve our psychological health. Our minds, personalities and emotions simply need good food, character-building challenges, exercise, and rest just as our physical bodies do.

Some people have serious psychological weaknesses not through any fault of their own, but as a consequence of genetic problem, or serious damage that they received through an accident, illness, or physical or psychological attack. People with these kinds of experiences can be very difficult to deal with and deserve our patience and assistance insofar as we are able to provide it (without enabling further dysfunction). For example, while leading a youth group I had one youth who was constantly hitting and starting fights with the other boys. One evening he was literally on top of and hitting another boy; I grabbed him and pulled him off, at which point he totally flipped out. I'm not certain, but that event along with other clues led me to suspect some kind of abuse took place in his home.

But we then come to people who are not merely psychologically out of shape, but genuinely disordered, severely imbalanced. By disordered person I don't mean someone who is mentally retarded or severely unintelligent; I'm referring specifically to someone who has *given himself over* to serious weaknesses in character, who actively,

habitually, purposefully engages in unethical words and actions. In other words, one or more key elements of his psychology are really "out of whack." Yes, that is the scientific, technical term. You could also use "whacked in the head," which is among my favorites. To go back to the physical analogy for a moment, this isn't merely someone with weak arms -- this is someone with severely deformed arms, or no arms at all, or razor sharp claws where arms and hands should have been. Like the unfit, they may be intelligent and successful, but they lack the very capacity to deal in good faith with others, to be virtuous. It may or may not be that person's fault. He might be a victim of abuse or some other trauma, or maybe his state is the result of a series of personal choices on his part. And there are not crystal clear lines of demarcation between healthy, unhealthy and disordered personalities. Indeed, an otherwise healthy person may have a single, but serious weakness that can be triggered resulting in an unreasonable, even violent response.

It can happen that a psychologically disordered person is highly virtuous -- doesn't just talk about it, but actually is virtuous -- but otherwise immature or unstable. This is rare (and not too difficult to fix), so I'm going to focus on those who are more common, people who are highly functioning but ethically disordered in one way or another. Psychologically disordered people display traits commonly associated with what are collectively referred to as "personality disorders." The more acute ones are called psychopathic or sociopathic disorders (or worse). In general, they display many of the following characteristics and behaviors:

- They lack empathy and sympathy. They have little or no regard for how their words and actions affect others. There is rarely any remorse or guilt even if they completely destroy another person's life or career. Ironically, they will simultaneously pine about how hurt or offended they are by what someone else said or did, attempting to play on others' sympathy.
- They have a "Jekyll and Hyde" personality, often appearing professional, smart and friendly, but can turn quickly and without any apparent warning. They are good at hiding their abusive personality from others, thereby making their victims appear irrational.
- They make a big deal out of events that have little meaning. In fact "disproportionate" accurately describes most of their abusive actions and words.
- They blame their problems and failings on others, sometimes imagining or fabricating conspiracies against them, and often portray themselves as the victim.
- They add insult to injury. After harming someone, if that person responds, they will follow up with insults (usually implied) about the person's character or abilities.
- They benefit psychologically and materially from other people's failures. They are energized by the conflicts they create. They enjoy exercising power over, agitating or manipulating others.
- They must have the last word.

- They utilize policies, procedures and even other people's good character to achieve their ends. This usually means manipulating others into cooperation through various means, often complex appeals to outcomes, ethics or guilt.
- They present themselves as being on the moral/ethical high ground (and may actually believe that they are) while they simultaneously defame and harm others.
- Their complaints about others consist of many, long, nuanced arguments. The arguments either contain a very small grain of truth, or are reasonable but based upon a falsehood, making them difficult to refute. Their arguments are clever, and often irrelevant, distracting and confusing. Attempts to address the particular arguments are usually ignored.
- They can and will parse and twist anything you say or do and then beat you over the head with it.
- They engage in *patterns of behavior* that distress others.
- They believe that their unethical actions are justified and never genuinely admit wrongdoing, take responsibility for their actions, or make true apologies. Instead, if they feel it suits their purposes, they make convoluted statements that will sound like these, but really aren't. "I'm sorry that you were offended," is a common one.
- Some do their damage in private, but others are very skilled at orienting people against each other, creating disharmony. When possible, they will go to great lengths to create packs of people to isolate, attack, and hopefully destroy an individual. They won't hesitate to lie to others to do this.
- They are generally very self centered. They may talk about ethics and making sacrifices for others, but never *actually* do so themselves. Upon examination, their actual call is for others to sacrifice so that the disordered person's goal can be achieved.
- They may or may not be particularly intelligent or successful, and are found in all sectors of society. (I've known lawyers, psychiatrists, PhD's, and even priests who fit these descriptions.)
- They rarely develop true friendships or stable relationships with psychologically healthy people. Such people are intimidating, offensive and threatening to them. Others are necessary only insofar as they bring pleasure, entertainment or success.
- They insult your work, intelligence or character through implication, not open statements. For example, "an ethical person would not have done X," implying that you are an unethical person. When you respond to their criticism, they claim they never said it, that wasn't what they meant, that you misinterpreted or misquoted them, and that you are just being oversensitive.
- They claim that you are making them unhappy or threatening them -- that you are the problem and they are just trying to deal with your incompetence or bad attitude. This puts their target on the defensive.
- They have unspoken or unreasonable expectations, and then criticize you for failing to meet them.

- They criticize and suspect you of doing the very things that they routinely do (or would do if they had the opportunity) -- often things you hadn't even thought of. For example, they accuse you of lying because that is what they do. They accuse you of bad faith because that is what they have. They accuse you of trickery because that is what they do. And so on.
- They cannot be trusted to keep agreements or behave in rational, predictable manners.
- Their words and actions tend not to reflect reality and truth, but are oriented to what they think will cause others to help bring about their desired goals.
- They have a genuine skill for hitting other people in weaknesses, when they are down, or otherwise vulnerable. Their words and actions inflict psychological damage that can cause short term emotional instability, depression, and even long term illness or disease. Some victims go on to commit suicide.
- They repetitively assert known falsehoods about others; usually to defame the person in question or to justify the attacker's unethical behavior and attacks against someone.
- They are skilled at provoking a response from their target, their desire being to use that response to undermine the victim.

~~Anatomy of an Assault~~

Psychological and physical assaults are obviously two different things, but they operate according to similar principles, and both are attacks upon the self. If someone physically attacks you, he is not attacking "your body." He is attacking *you*. He is using you as a means to his end. It just so happens that the method of attack, the tools he is employing, and his targets are material, physical. A psychological attack can be just as devastating (or just as irrelevant) as a physical attack. Either can result in both psychological *and* physical wounds.

There are no "feelings police." Society has pretty clear laws established concerning physical assaults, and little or nothing to cover psychological ones. The truth is that the police don't actually prevent hardly any assaults, anyway. They simply investigate them after they've already happened. It is up to the defender to handle most assaults, physical or other.

People attack others for a variety of reasons, including:

- They believe they are defending themselves from a threat (fear)
- To fill a severe need (desperation)
- Retaliation for an offense, real or imagined (anger / hurt)
- Calculation (predatorial)

Even otherwise healthy and balanced people will attack when stress from the first three motivations is strong enough. If you do your best to be a good person, not to threaten others and back them into a corner, not to allow others to go without basic

human needs while you have plenty, etc., these are unlikely to be a problem. The real people to look out for are the predators -- those who actually seek opportunities to attack others. The predators will attack you if they perceive you to be weak and vulnerable, when they think they can get away with it, or if you are a threat to them.

There is an interesting quote by G. K. Chesterton. In his book titled *Orthodoxy* he writes briefly about people who are said to have "lost their minds." He writes that, actually, quite the opposite is true. What the person has lost is good judgment, emotional empathy, virtue. His "rational" mind is all that is left. "His mind moves all the faster for not being delayed by things going with good judgment." You have probably encountered this in others from time to time, and after their hit-and-run attack, find yourself bewildered that you didn't see it coming, that it happened so fast, and that someone would knowingly say and do such things in the first place.

A predator triggers upon perceived weaknesses and vulnerabilities in others. When he has the right advantages and is capable of striking without serious risk to himself, *he will strike*. It is almost involuntary. It seems sometimes like these people simply can't control themselves; they *have to* abuse others when the opportunity presents itself. They are simply not restrained by the things -- the good judgment -- that restrain you and I.

The initial attack usually takes one of three forms: Some kind of insult to your character or work, an illegitimate request of some kind, or even a legitimate request made in a demeaning way. It might be direct or implied. A few examples might help:

1. Insults: Psychologically disordered people derive a lot of power by breaking down other people. The insults can be about anything ranging from your appearance, performance, actions, etc., and are usually slights against your character. They usually have just enough truth in them to cut.
2. Illegitimate Requests: This is where someone makes a demand of you that he has no right to make. For example, a vice president of a different department once requested that I send him regular reports of my work for his evaluation. However, he had no authority over me. When I reported this to my supervisor, I was told to just go along with it because "Steve is a little crazy." I later learned that he had threatened the life of former executives in the company. He influenced a lot of company actions in weird ways; often through fear.
3. Legitimate Requests: In our various relationships we have genuine duties to each other, and sometimes we have to remind people of their duties (give them directions or commands). The psychologically healthy person does this for the benefit of the person in question and the company (or family) as a whole, and in a way that respects the other's dignity. The psychologically-ill person does it to feed his own need for power over others, and in making even legitimate requests ends up doing so in a way that demeans those over whom he has authority.

One of the key clues that you are dealing with a psychological predator (in addition to him demonstrating no sense of proportion), is when he accuses or implies that you are engaging in evil that you hadn't even thought of, when the situation departs from reality, and when the attack appears to come from nowhere. A customer called me some months ago to make a complaint. I'm usually pretty open to complaints because I see them as opportunities to improve, but this one was a little different. She pointed out that a year earlier, the prices on some of our gold items were significantly lower than they presently were. She openly asked me if we changed our prices depending on the season, in order to take advantage of people, to "gouge" them. Honestly, I was quite offended. First, I don't have any problem with a company chooses to set its prices. When demand for something increases, it is reasonable to increase the price. In our own case, we simple set prices according to a formula that recognizes our overhead costs and the cost of the materials we purchased. Though I don't see anything wrong with doing so, I don't think we've ever set our prices (increased them) with demand. In fact, we have discount formulas in place that decrease customer prices with the size of the order.

Another customer once complained that we charge an additional "rush" fee to expedite custom orders. The reality is that custom, skilled work takes time, and so we estimate 2-4 weeks to complete custom orders due to this time and due to our attempts to complete orders in the order in which they were received. But we recognize that some people have an emergency situation and simply need the order sooner, so we offer the option of paying an additional fee, which will move their order ahead of all others and, effectively, "asks" us to focus our attention on that order alone, getting it done as quickly as possible. One customer decided that we actually complete all of our orders in a few minutes, and then sit on them for 2-4 weeks, and that our "rush" fee was a kind of extortion to get extra money out of people. It was something I hadn't even thought of, and wouldn't dream of doing, but it was what one particular person immediately assumed of us, and then took the time to tell us what she thought about it... and about us.

Disordered people see others as their adversaries, and imagine (or fabricate) complex conspiracies arrayed against them. They then attack people around them for no reason and, in doing so, actually make adversaries out of people who would otherwise have been friendly and supportive. In other words, they create the very problem that they fantasized about. They don't consider what good they can do for others, but how others can be used for their own good. Virtuous, healthy people don't go through life meditating upon the ways that they could take advantage of others, or even upon the ways that they've been taken advantage of. Their task is simple: What good thing(s) can I do today?

If you find yourself being psychologically pressured, you need to make a guess. If the attack is the result of one of the first three issues -- basically a misunderstanding -- do what you can to just smooth things over. Apologize for any offense. Make it clear that you only mean well and will do what you can to help or make things right. However, if you determine that the attack was a calculated, predatory one, then you have a very different situation on your hands. More on this, below.

Dealing with psychologically disordered people can be truly bewildering, and you risk becoming one of them if you engage them for too long. Because I deal with so many people each month, and a percentage of them are disordered and consume a great deal of my attention, I constantly have to remind myself that the majority of people are nice, good people.

As human beings we all have similar vulnerabilities, quirks, weaknesses, and sensitive points. The difference with abusive people is that they have had a lot of practice hitting others in these places, engaging in manipulation, and don't hesitate to do so; healthy, balanced people don't think about attacking and manipulating other people, rarely do it, and so are generally overwhelmed by people who do so regularly. However, there are some things to know and remember when you experience this:

1. No, it probably isn't you.
2. No, you are not alone.
3. No, you can't win.

It ~~probably~~ isn't you

Take a deep breath. It feels like quite the opposite, but when attacked by one of these people, it really isn't even about you. It is about a disordered person trying to dominate others; you just happened to be his chosen target.

By my count roughly one out of thirty people has some kind of personality disorder severe enough to potentially cause considerable problems for those around them. The worst of them actively stir up animosity through open bullying and other manipulative tactics. Others are, for all appearances, perfectly normal until something doesn't go just right. Then the inner monster reveals itself (often to be hidden again just as quickly as it was revealed). The former person usually justifies his actions as being necessary to achieve a desired outcome. The latter type is more subtle, causing harm through an incessant series of seemingly harmless events (which is how they will generally be seen in isolation). Both types of people are psychologically disordered and use a variety of unethical tactics to manipulate those around them, and show little or no real empathy for those they harm.

The irony, of course, is that the people who do these things claim to be the reasonable, honest, ethical ones. We've had many, many people threaten us with various unethical (and often illegal) actions for no reason at all, while simultaneously presenting themselves as holy, moral, and only acting in self defense. Earlier this week we had an unfortunate experience with a customer during which he threatened to falsely defame us. As is usually the case, while threatening his unethical action, he simultaneously presented himself as an innocent and virtuous victim, and someone who is "up the ladder" from us. I'll do whatever I can to resolve a problem, but as soon as a threat is on the table or lies are in play, all cooperation on my part ceases. Once he realized this, he changed his tactic, and actually wrote, "you get to make the decision as to whether you're an ethical business person or not." If I did what he was demanding, then I could consider myself "ethical." If I didn't, then I'm a Bad

Person. Similar reasoning was peppered throughout his correspondence. This is a common tactic used by abusive, manipulative people: They position the situation (and you) such that you either give into their abuse, or you are somehow a bad person. Both options are, of course, complete nonsense. But it can be bewildering when you are in the thick of it.

Which should make each of us ask ourselves, am I being irrational? Am I psychologically unfit? When dealing with such people, they will make you feel that way -- weak, guilty, embarrassed, enraged, irrational -- especially if you try to engage any of their arguments. Here is a good rule of thumb: First, take a break. Go for a brisk walk and clear your mind. If you don't manipulate and bully others, if you tend to overlook problems and failures -- or focus on finding solutions instead of pointing fingers and threatening others -- then you are *probably* okay. However, if you consistently find fault with others, even over little things, if you tend to compromise ethics under pressure, if you twist words or events to your advantage, or if you attempt to bully or manipulate others, then there is probably something wrong with your personality that you need to address.

Now, the fact that you and I have faults *does not* give anyone else the right to abuse us. *Don't ever forget that!*

I say "it isn't you," because disordered personalities will make you feel like you are the problem. If you are compliant, you will feel weak and beaten. If you resist, you will (probably) experience a new wave of attacks. *Most good people are compliant* if for no other reason than that we don't want to cause trouble (or bring more upon ourselves). Even though you know that the attacks are wrong, their statements and implications may eat at you for hours, days, even months. It can cause long term stress and health problems if you don't learn to deal with it. This is because disordered people are *very* skilled at targeting others' vulnerabilities, at manipulating others, and at injecting just enough truth into their claims to make them seem plausible. Their ability is the result of practice and a lack of empathy and conscience (though they may appeal to conscience to manipulate others).

You need to understand that, even though the disordered person may sound convincing, he might even be apologetic or sympathetic, he is actually trying to dominate you. He has no interest in truth or reality. His only desire is the feeling associated with controlling other people, with getting his way, with "winning." *In many cases, he isn't even aware of his own dysfunction, or that what he is doing is wrong*, and he'll couch his words and actions in talk about ethics, being a team player, sometimes even God, prayer or religion. I can't count the number of times that I've encountered truly disordered people who conclude their hit-and-run attacks with a "God bless you" or otherwise mask their actions in some kind of piety... even priests.

You are not alone

One of the tactics that the more aggressive psychopaths use is to isolate you through fear, threat of additional abuse, or risk of embarrassment. This usually takes one of

three forms. They either intimidate everyone, so everyone is afraid of standing up to them. They engage you in private, where no one else sees it, while having a very different public face. Or they may have such mastery of their chosen venue of attack that you are totally helpless, outmatched. If you bow to them, then maybe you won't get any more beatings... for awhile. For example, I had one manager at Intel who called me into a private office, threw one of the biggest screaming, cursing fits I've ever seen, threatening various actions against me and my coworkers, but in public always presented himself as 100% self controlled, ethical, etc. I wrote a complaint to his superiors about his behavior at the time. It was ignored, as his general public persona was so different from his actual private actions. In fact, they ordered me to have another private meeting with him in which he basically repeated all of his prior threats, but this time with a nice grin on his face.

Part of the risk of embarrassment is an implied or express statement that no one will believe you, that you will appear weak, silly, a whiner or a trouble-maker if you complain, or that there will be some greater retaliation. In the above experience at Intel, the manager told me in our second meeting not to waste my time making any more complaints, because he would deny making the statements, he'd see to it that people on my team lost their jobs, and that the factory management would just ignore me anyway.

There is another thing that sometimes happens. If they are able, disordered personalities will attempt to deceive others into attacking you, gang style. I've experienced this personally with a few of our customers (and even with owners of competing businesses). It usually begins with a private, personal attack of some kind. If you respond firmly, your response then gets used by the attacker to portray himself as an innocent victim. He'll twist and manipulate anything you said to make you look like a really bad person, pass that information on to others, and incite them to pile on. E-mail and the internet have made this very easy (along with any number of other unsavory things). The people who pile on are usually among psychologically unfit, and buy his story without stopping to ask whether or not it is true. As usual, there will be just enough truth in it to convince people who are too lazy to dig deeper, but reactionary enough to send you some hate mail or obscene phone calls.

You can't really "win"

It is our very nature as human beings -- psychologically fit or or not -- to have vulnerabilities. In fact, it would be a sign of psychological illness if you were not hurt by blows to sensitive points. For example, one day while practicing leg sweeps in a martial arts class the instructor came over and said that we were doing them incorrectly. He immediately slammed his shin into mine. I curled up on the floor in excruciating pain while he stood there, expressionless. He later explained that he had a knee injury that resulted in losing feeling along his shin, and wanted to make sure that I *knew* what it would feel like if I ever really tried to do a leg sweep incorrectly. Unfortunately, the most disordered are so psychologically deformed that they not only target vulnerabilities and sensitivities, but they lack the same sensitivities that you or I might have; trying to strike back at them in the same way is rarely effective.

Some people say that the most common physical assault is a finger jab or push. It can hardly be called an assault because, in and of itself, it rarely causes any physical harm; it is what I refer to as a precursor or a provocation, and how you respond to it may determine whether it turns into something much more serious. Most psychological attacks are the social equivalent of the finger jab or push -- they are attempts to taunt, intimidate or provoke you -- and how you respond will have a similar result. The "correct" response, if there really is such a thing, depends upon the severity of the threat; unfortunately, that often isn't clear until it is too late to respond usefully.

There are no winners in a physical assault -- only survivors. The defender's goal in a physical assault must be to escape by whatever means necessary with as little injury as possible, not to "win." If an attacker has cut off routes of escape, the defender may inflict serious, even mortal, wounds to facilitate escape or preserve his own well-being. But even those who have defeated attackers and escaped assaults pay a huge price, usually in deep psychological wounds if not physical ones as well. The same holds true in psychological self defense. It hurts to get hit. It hurts to hit back. Psychological assault can cause most of the same symptoms as a physical assault; elevated blood pressure, adrenaline dumps, loss of emotional stability, mental distraction, intense agitation, stroke, even heart failure. If you get caught up in the fight you can lose yourself momentarily and might say or do things that are not justified. It can lead to physical violence.

In a physical attack you have many choices, one of which is to aggressively defend yourself. This means that you attack right back (or even first), with greater force, skill, ferocity and whatever weapon you have available to you. If you succeed at this there is a very real chance that you'll find yourself *and not your attacker* in the back of a police car. The same is true of a psychological assault. If you take the steps necessary to end or confront the psychological assault, especially if you do so pre-emptively, you may very well find yourself perceived as the unjust aggressor. There are a couple reasons for this; if nothing else, to outside people it isn't always immediately clear who was "defending" and who was "attacking." As mentioned elsewhere, there aren't really any winners in such a conflict, but some lose more than others. The "biggest loser" is the one who first loses the will or ability to continue to fight. If someone attacks me, I have no desire to harm them, merely to do what is necessary to remove their will or ability to continue to fight. But every person and situation is different, and what works in one circumstance, time or with a particular person, might not work the next time it is tried. So what are your realistic options?

In violent conflict, four options are generally recognized: Fight, flee, comply or posture. I'm going to break these down further.

1. Ignore or dismiss them
2. Avoid them
3. Change the venue
4. Deflect
5. Call for Help

6. Apologize / Compromise
7. Give in / Negotiate
8. Stand strong
9. Posture
10. Counter attack

Ignore them: The less determined psychos will leave you alone if they don't get any response after a few testing pokes. Not getting the desired thrill, they move on to other food. The key here is *don't engage or answer their arguments*. If you do so in any way, it will escalate. Some people will push harder to try to get a response. Most give up eventually.

Avoid them: When possible, it is almost always the best option to just avoid people who would otherwise do you harm. Be aware of the people and situations that could get ugly and stay away. If you are never around someone, he can't directly affect you. However, some people can't be avoided completely -- family or coworkers -- or they surprise you.

Change the venue: Sometimes you can't avoid a person, but you can exercise some control over the context of your interactions. An abusive person usually acts that way when he feels in control. If someone is abusive on the phone, by e-mail, or in private meetings, but they aren't in public places and meetings, try to have any meeting be in public. Sometimes just the opposite is true -- someone who is abusive in public is less so in private. It depends on the person, his motivation and personality.

E-mail in particular is prone to misinterpretation due to the lack of tone and body language. Try to take any e-mails in their best possible light. If you find e-mails routinely being misinterpreted or offensive, try communicating by a different means.

Deflect: I've seen some people successfully deflect an aggressor by saying something like "well, I beg to differ," and then moving on quickly to another topic. You could also just ask plainly and directly, "why are you doing this?" If the person is only mildly disordered, this might make them recognize what they are doing and try to correct it. (It would probably have little effect on a seriously disordered person.)

Call for Help: Most people are psychologically unfit. Because of that they will stand silently while you are attacked, too confused or afraid to do anything. Sometimes, they are even more likely to be drawn into attacking you than helping. But sometimes they can be snapped out of their daze by a genuine call for help. But sometimes involving other parties can also just make things a whole lot worse.

Apologize: People who attack others *always* believe they had a good reason to do so (even if that reason only exists in their own personal fantasy land). If you've actually done someone wrong, you should genuinely apologize to them anyway. If you've not done anything wrong, and are being attacked without any reason, sometimes it can help to muster up an apology out of charity for them. Of course, you don't want this to become a routine occurrence.

Give in / Negotiate: Sometimes it is best to just give it up. Just as you'd give your wallet or purse to the man holding a knife to you, maybe it is best sometimes to just say "ya, you're right" to a nut and move on. A lawyer friend of mine says it this way: "Your first loss is your best loss," meaning that sometimes it is easier to take small hit than to put up a fight and deal with the possible consequences. But like apologizing, this isn't something that you want to have repeat itself. Sometimes people who see you as a pushover come back for seconds... thirds... fourths....

Stand Strong: Here you are not fighting back, just pointing out the reality of the situation. "What you are saying is not true." "Your actions are unethical. I will not cooperate with them." This is the psychological equivalent of looking a would-be physical attacker in the eye, making it clear that you are aware of him, and that you aren't going to be taken by surprise or easily. But be succinct and straightforward. Don't threaten or escalate. *Do not get drawn into any of their arguments or tactics.* Those are just traps.

Posture: Posturing is standing strong while issuing a threat display of some kind. This is not a bluff; never make a threat display that you aren't willing to immediately carry out. "What you are saying is not true. If you continue to do this, X is going to happen." I actually do this out of courtesy for others. Some people are used to pushing people around and I believe in letting people know what the consequences of their actions will be before I hit the "launch" button.

However, it can backfire. Posturing is sometimes not a good idea because it is a form of escalation, but with some people it works. I sometimes have to explain to lunatic customers what the consequences will be if they do not stop harassing us, or if they refuse to pay their bills. In almost every event, they complain that they were just being as nice as pie, minding their own business, and that I am a bad person for threatening them. But after that they usually snap into line and don't bother me any more (as long as I ignore the lies in their responses). The exception is the real nuts. Posturing will push them right over the edge and they may devote all of their attention to making you miserable for a very long time. Your posturing will be proof to them that everything they said about you was true; that you are an evil person who intends them ill, and that you did all along. They are unwilling or perhaps unable to see how it was their aggressive actions that caused and perpetuate the conflict, and that you are merely defending yourself. It is actually kind of pitiful.

As always, whatever potential consequences you are communicating need to be entirely ethical, justified and proportional. If not, then you are becoming the abuser.

Counter attack: This is the last option, and should be used only when the others have been tried and failed (or are certain to be useless), and the attack is serious. Just as it hurts to get hit, it also hurts to hit (if you are a healthy person). It takes an incredible amount of energy and restraint, and you risk becoming that which you hate. "Self defense," when all other avenues are exhausted, is not about defending; it is about attacking. If you take such a step, you must do so with the full knowledge that your words and actions may be interpreted by others as an irrational and

unprovoked attack in and of themselves. The person harassing you will do everything in his power to make himself out as the victim, and to make you sound absurd. Just expect and plan for it. Then you won't be surprised when it happens. Consequently, you should have a clear, detailed record of events ready should an authority be called in.

Speaking of recording events, the common venues for psychological abuse are in the home and at work. For workplace issues, it is important that you be able to show a pattern of repeat behavior, preferably affecting several people and not just you. The attacker will be able to explain away individual events: You misunderstood, it was such a little thing, it was taken out of context, it doesn't really matter, etc. If it is only you experiencing the problem, the attacker will be able to make it appear that it is actually you who are the problem -- not him. But a clear pattern of weekly (or daily) events affecting multiple people is less likely to be ignored or misinterpreted by managers.

You need to be proportional and rational in your response. For example, if someone calls you a name, you obviously may not break their kneecaps. Just walk away. But what realistic recourse is there against a psychological assault? In a real (physical) self defense situation, you *never* try to match strength for strength. Instead, you take your greatest, strongest weapon and drive it into your attacker's weakest, most vulnerable, sensitive point. We don't want to destroy anyone, even those who attack us; we merely want them to stop. You can't make them change -- you can't make them become different or better people -- but you do have the right and the ability to do what is necessary to compel them to stop harming you. The socially disordered use isolation, ambiguity, secrecy, distractions, deception, implication and half-truths to attack others. These are their strengths, their weapons. Because these are your attacker's strengths (not to mention entirely unethical) you will not use these to counter attack. Don't engage them on these terms. Rather, use clarity, simplicity, openness and honest truth -- their weaknesses.

In the workplace, report the pattern of events to your superiors, calmly, clearly and in brief. Don't refer to attitudes, but to specific words, actions or behaviors, and how those are preventing success or otherwise creating a hostile work environment. Get as many witnesses as possible. Don't wait until the tenth event, when you are totally fried and about to kill someone; you'll come across as irrational and unstable. Don't be surprised if you are ignored.

If allowable, place a tape recorder on your desk and clearly start recording when the person starts in on you. In some cases it might be appropriate to hide the recording device, but this can sometimes land you in more trouble. Call someone else into your office and explain "so-n-so wanted to discuss something with me; I just wanted to make sure someone else was here to witness it." These things alone may eliminate or dramatically reduce the frequency. In a small company either the behavior will change, or you or the perpetrator is going to end up unemployed, probably in short order. In a large company, it is hard to say. I've seen about one third of such problems actually be resolved through multiple complaints to a company's human

resources department. If it happens repeatedly, you've made accurate and reasonable reports, and the company does not handle it, you can sometimes sue the perpetrator and the company; maybe you'll get to spend the rest of your days recovering on a beach somewhere, but maybe the stress will kill you or your marriage. Choose carefully.

If the problem is the company owner or similar, then just leave the company and start over somewhere else; companies with leadership like that will run their own course and you don't want to be a part of that. If you are constantly around or subject to psychologically disordered people, you run a very good chance of joining them. Small business owners know, unfortunately, that customers are just the same as the workers (and the workers know that owners are just as crazy as anyone). We're all cut from similar cloth. I've had workers turn on each other. I've had workers turn on me. In one case it was just differences in personality. In another it was actual psychological disorder.

Some differences cannot be reconciled. As reasonable, honest people, we assume that other people are going to behave the same way and are unpleasantly surprised when they do not. When they don't we assume that there must be a misunderstanding, and if we could only work together to get through it, everything will be okay. We give them the benefit of the doubt, assuming that they are reasonable people, just like us. But there is a problem: The socially/psychologically ill don't work that way. They aren't reasonable, and they won't or maybe even can't work with others in good faith. They are incapable of doing so. They state, assume or imply that whatever you say or do is a lie not merely because they don't trust you, *but because that is how **they** work*. Honest people tend to expect other people to be honest. Liars and deceivers expect and assume that other people are liars and deceivers. When dealing with lunatics, you have to put aside your normal expectations. Instead, expect your attacker to behave without any regard for ethics, reason or truth, and they usually won't disappoint you. Expect them to lie, but do not join them in their lies. Their statements and accusations will contain just enough truth to make them almost impossible to contradict. For this reason, if you choose to stand firm or counter attack, be prepared to pay a heavy price; you could lose your job, your reputation, respect of your colleagues, or worse. Lunatics will feel no remorse about utterly destroying someone who stands up to them if they are capable of doing so. In fact, they'll feel it was totally justified and necessary to "make an example of you." They'll believe that they've actually done a good thing.

People generally don't attack you unless they (1) feel very, very threatened and backed into a corner (which you shouldn't do to anyone, anyway), or (2) have a huge advantage over you, probably ones you don't even know about. Maybe the advantage is a friendship with (or dirt on) the boss. Maybe it is just a willingness to say or do whatever it takes to destroy someone else. Maybe it is a total lack of connection with reality and too much free time. You usually won't know until it is too late, and it is very hard to win a fight with someone who has a big advantage over you, or is willing to go further than you are to win.

So what should I do?

1. Do what you can to develop a healthy personality. Try to be an honorable, balanced, virtuous person. Forebear and forgive others' faults. Exercise. Work hard. Seek what is in others' genuine best interest. Insofar as it depends upon you, try to be at peace and work cooperatively with others, demonstrating as much charity as you can.
2. If you are experiencing a stressful situation, try to objectively determine if you are in the wrong or have done something that caused it. If so, address that. If not you have to answer these two questions as objectively as possible. Does the other person demonstrate several of the traits and actions at the beginning of this article? Is this a repeat event representing a pattern of behavior? If the answers to both of these questions is yes, then there is a good probability that you are being psychologically assaulted (or are about to be). Either way, take a deep breath, relax, try to remain calm.
3. If the other person is a sociopath you probably will not be able to change or help them. To them, you are food, entertainment. You have to recognize that you are dealing with a mentally sick person. He deserves your pity as much as your anger. This sounds corny, but you need to try to transcend them and the situation. What I mean by that is, now that you actually recognize the reality of what is happening, of how disordered the other person is, and how he works, *and if you have developed a healthy personality*, you have incredible power! Much more than you ever had. More than your attacker has.
4. But not all of us have this luxury. If your sociopath is someone at work, he may be unavoidable. If this is the case, then you must study his behavior to determine his motivation, take a guess at which item from the list of options has the best chance of working (and is the least risky) and try it next time he strikes. See what happens. Maybe your response will be effective. Maybe not. If not, try something different the next time. The thing to realize is that you have options, you have truth, you have honor, you have power. You know his number. You know his game. He has none of these things (and it is probably why he hates you and wants to destroy these in you). Most things in this life are voluntary; no one has any power or control over you unless you give it to them. You might as well tell him, "I know exactly what you are doing, how you are going to try to go about it, and I really couldn't care less."

Don't be a baby

I say this only because some people take *any* criticism whatsoever as if they are being unfairly sliced and diced (itself a sign of psychological weakness). Quite often we deserve criticism for our failures. I sometimes get beat up by customers over things that I had absolutely no control over and choose, rather than to rattle them, to just accept the bruises as a kind of payment for other failings in my life.

Be Brief

Implication, nuance, and long, convoluted arguments are the play fields for the disordered. You are not going to win an argument with these people. When communicating with them it is critical that you do not engage them on their terms, but be as brief and clear as possible. Do not enter into lengthy, complicated arguments. Don't volunteer unnecessary details.

Recovery

It doesn't matter whether you are attacked physically or psychologically; both cause psychological wounds. If you don't allow these wounds to heal, or if you are repeatedly under attack, they can turn into physical illness or disease. Find a way to be at peace. Exercise, pray, have good friendships. Be very aware of and careful not to take your stresses out on your loved ones.

Institutional Disorders

Even when individuals are otherwise psychologically sound, the organizations within which they work may exhibit and bring out in them -- even encourage -- behavior that would otherwise be categorized as "antisocial" or worse. I don't have any statistics to back this up, but my personal experience indicates that this is more common in public, governmental and non-profit organizations that have little direct accountability than in common businesses, and it goes for small organizations as well as large ones. The sad reality is that when people know that they can be individually, quickly and easily held to account, they are less likely to engage in unethical behavior.

Religious, Non-Profit and Charitable Organizations

Strangely, you find an unusually high number of disordered people in the ranks and pews of these organizations. You'd think it would be just the opposite, but the reality is a painful one. A monk explained the reason to me like this: We all, on some level, recognize our own need for healing and wholeness. We, or some part of us, want to do and be good. In healthy people, this often manifests itself by involvement in the Church, or in other non-profit or charitable activities. *The exact same is true for dysfunctional people.* They are drawn, often by a subconscious awareness of their own disorder, to places and organizations where they can be closer to goodness and healing. The problem is that they do not acknowledge or attempt to counteract their disorders, and end up messing up the people around them because of all the baggage. Meanwhile, "average" people spend their efforts building careers in the secular world. Consequently, you end up with a higher percentage of very good and very disordered people in charitable organizations -- kind of polar opposites -- with fewer average personalities.

Stand up for others

Not every dispute involves dysfunctional people, but many do. For example, people of good faith and honor might respectfully disagree about a topic, event or matter, yet be able to continue to work together in a spirit of respect. They agree to disagree and go on with life. A sign that a dysfunctional personality is present is when such collaboration is made impossible (although such inability to work together might also result from the seriousness of the subject of disagreement). If you are a bystander in such a dispute, both the disordered person and the healthy person may ask for your assistance. It may be very difficult to tell which is which. The dysfunctional person will lie about the matter, but include just enough truth to make it difficult to detect the distortions. The healthy person may be *very* agitated from the abuse, making him appear irrational.

If you refuse to participate in any way whatsoever, then you leave the innocent person dangling in the wind. If you pile on, you cause more harm. The absolute last thing you want to do is to get deceived by the disordered person such that you end up piling on an innocent party. If you are able to do so, try to objectively determine the truth of the matter. Find the initial event that caused the whole problem. The dysfunctional person might not necessarily be the one who caused the initial event, *but the one who blew it entirely out of proportion*. Watch and listen for half truths. The dysfunctional, problem person will incorporate half truths and hyperbole in his accusations. The honest person usually will not, even though he may be very angry and desire retribution.

If you can determine which party is behaving ethically and with honor, you should do what you can to ethically assist them. Dysfunctional people isolate others and deceive groups into attacking the isolated person. Your assistance could make a difference for good. But it could also result in you getting attacked, as well, so make sure that your affairs are in order.

You can assist the innocent person in two ways:

1. Report to his superior that you are aware of the dispute but have observed that person X is not responsible for the problem; he is merely trying to defend himself from unjust and untrue attacks from Y, and that Y is actively disrupting the work environment with his behaviors.
2. If you are up to it, confront the agitator with a statement that you have researched this matter, concluded that the agitator is making false accusations (list them), and that the agitator is actually the one responsible for the problem. If you can do so truthfully, include comments that you appreciate the agitator's work ethic or various successes, but explain that the present dispute is harming the company and needs to come to an end. In any event, prepare to be the next target. You may want to have other people with you when you do this.

Pray for those who persecute you

In our culture there is a saying about "beating some sense into him." If that saying is true, I've personally been within arm's reach of a number of people who really, desperately needed a good beating. In fact, as I look back, that person was sometimes me. If you've been on the receiving end of someone's abuse, it might feel really good to take them out back and beat them with a stick for awhile (or retaliate in some other way), but that doesn't help anyone. Unfortunately, it usually takes a good friend or family member to help the psychologically weak, and people with genuine disorders often require professional therapy.

Remember, if you *ever* find yourself rejoicing in someone else's downfall, even if he had it coming in spades, you are demonstrating that it may very well be you who is becoming the sociopath.

You have a right to defend yourself and others from unjust harm. But, insofar as it depends upon you, you should do what you can to be at peace with everyone, even those who may not wish the same for you.

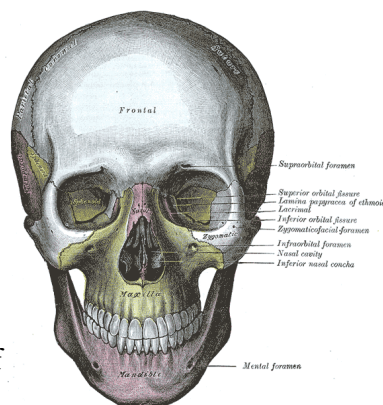
In the end, it is all about love

Love is a misunderstood and routinely misused word these days. But the truth is that a person's psychological health is directly related to his capacity to receive and give love -- that is, give of himself for other people's good. A person who, through neglect, abuse or other event, never learns to love is usually one who causes a great deal of difficulty for himself and others throughout his entire life. We have a responsibility to love people, even adversaries. This does not necessarily mean liking them, agreeing with them, or even putting up with their abuse. But it does mean genuinely desiring their well-being and doing what you can to bring it about.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE HUMAN BODY

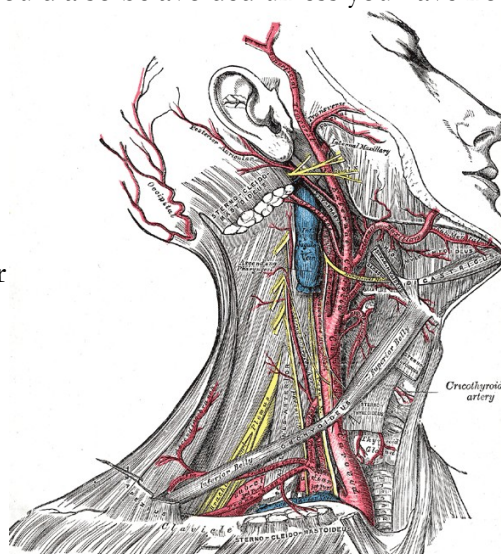
The victor of a physical conflict is usually the one who is able to cause the first serious, disabling injury. When in engaging in self defense, one must protect his vulnerabilities while aggressively targeting the vulnerabilities of the attacker. I don't know of any position in which you can find yourself, short of prone on the ground with your attacker sitting on your back, in which there are no vulnerabilities that you can strike. (Images are from Grays Anatomy.)

The skull is a remarkably-strong structure, designed primarily to protect the brain. Severe shocks to the head can crack the skull, or cause permanent or temporary damage to the brain. Strikes with sufficient energy can cause a blackout lasting anywhere from a fraction of a second to several minutes. Superficial cuts to the head bleed a lot. However, the crown of the head can be used as a "head butt" strike, which is quite effective against some targets. Even light strikes to the eyes can cause pain, disorientation and a loss of vision. Strikes to the nose can distort vision, cause pain, or heavy bleeding. Strikes to the mouth and jaw can break teeth, or dislocate or break the jaw. Strikes to the ears can cause pain, disorientation, and even rupture the eardrum. Strikes below the ears, to the jaw, can be extremely painful and result in knockouts. Upward strikes to the chin are less painful, but can shatter teeth and transfer shockwaves to the brain, also resulting in a knockout. Keep your head moving, and keep your hands up high enough that they can deflect incoming strikes; you don't want to take a solid hit to the head or get poked in the eyes.



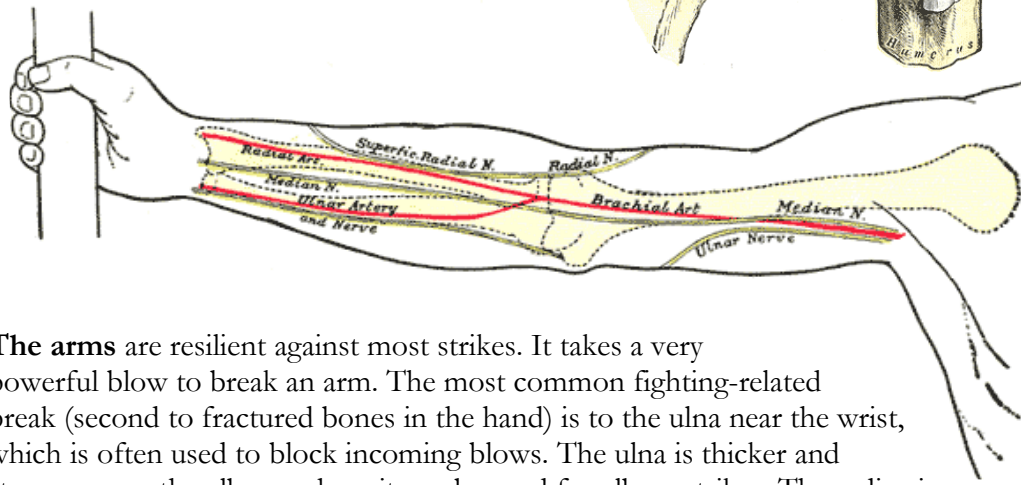
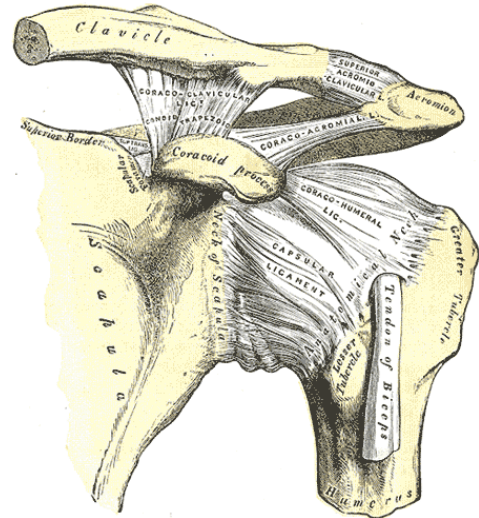
We advise against strikes to the mouth, as you can be easily cut by teeth and get a serious infection. Also, avoid fisted "punches" to the skull unless you've conditioned your hands for bare-knuckle punching, and instead substitute palm, hammer or elbow techniques. Biting is effective, but should also be avoided unless you have no other alternative (due to risk of communicable disease). Never strike someone in the head *with a weapon* unless your life is in danger.

The neck is *extremely* vulnerable to strikes and grabs from almost any angle. Strikes to the front or back can damage the trachea or spine, perhaps even causing death. Strikes to the neck are usually "knife" or "spear" type strikes, though others -- punches and hammer fist -- are possible. Pressure to the front quarters of the neck can stop blood flow to and from the brain, resulting in a black out in five-to-ten seconds. Extended

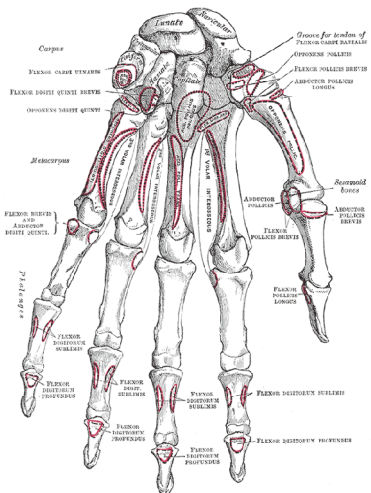


pressure can also result in death or brain damage. Punctures, cuts and heavy impacts can rupture veins or arteries, resulting in almost certain death. It is critical to block/deflect any attack coming towards your neck. And never strike someone in the neck forcefully or *with a weapon* unless your life is in danger and you are willing to kill him.

The shoulders are relatively-strong structures due both to the musculature and the fact that they are floating/sliding joints (the scapula). Strikes to the shoulder near the base of the neck can cause pain. Strikes to the clavicle (collar bone) can cause a painful break and disable the related arm; these are usually downward, hammer-like fist or elbow strikes. Certain arm locks and twists can cause pain to or dislocate the humerus from its proper location seated against the scapula.



The arms are resilient against most strikes. It takes a very powerful blow to break an arm. The most common fighting-related break (second to fractured bones in the hand) is to the ulna near the wrist, which is often used to block incoming blows. The ulna is thicker and stronger near the elbow, where it can be used for elbow strikes. The radius is stronger near the wrist, but sensitive. The elbow and the wrist are susceptible to joint locks, and the wrist is often damaged when punching. The arteries running on the inside/underside of the humerus carry a lot of blood; damage to them can be life-threatening. A large nerve follows a similar path. A powerful, fast strike to the biceps, pinching it against the humerus, and strikes to the back of the forearm can temporarily disable the arm. The elbow is easily hyperextended.

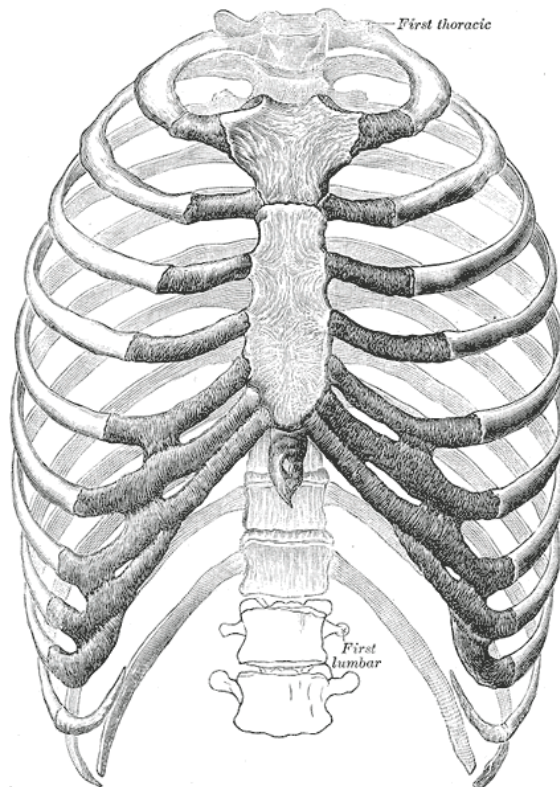


Hands are quite sensitive and fragile. The fingers and small bones are easily broken, and the wrist is easily sprained. The hands and wrists are excellent targets if you have something like a stick.

Again, we discourage fisted punches for self defense, especially to the head. With sufficient conditioning, hands can be strengthened to resist damage while punching, but this takes extensive effort and tends to deform the hand.

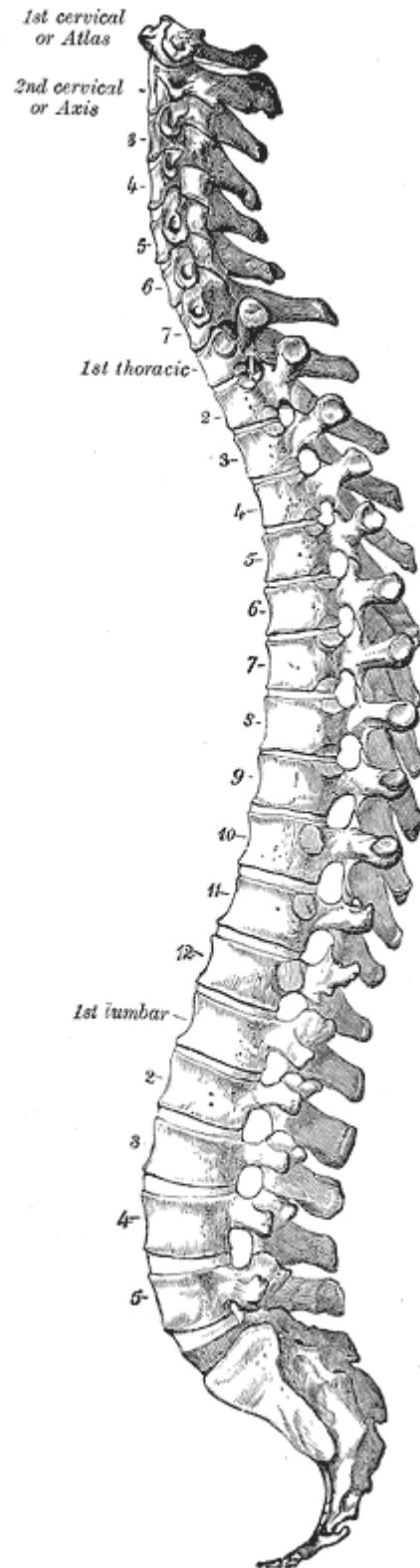
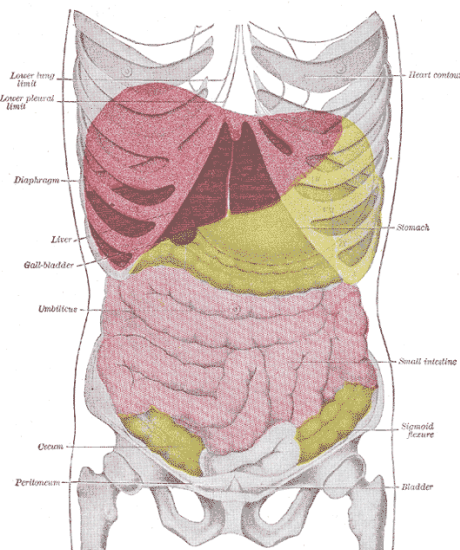
In large people **the rib cage** is protected by a layer of fat and muscle, and the entire trunk is fairly resistant to empty hand attacks due to its mass. However, *very* powerful blows to the ribs can break them, and they are least protected under the arm. Powerful strikes to the sternum and xiphoid can break those structures, or transfer shockwaves to the heart and other sensitive organs. Keep your body turned at an angle to avoid direct strikes to the sternum/heart. Under the lower right ribs and extended slightly into the abdomen is the liver. Powerful blows to that area can cause debilitating pain for many seconds.

Keep your elbows in to protect your ribs and liver. Keep your hands and arms up. Elbows, knees and some kicks are best against the trunk, followed by hand strikes if you are powerful.

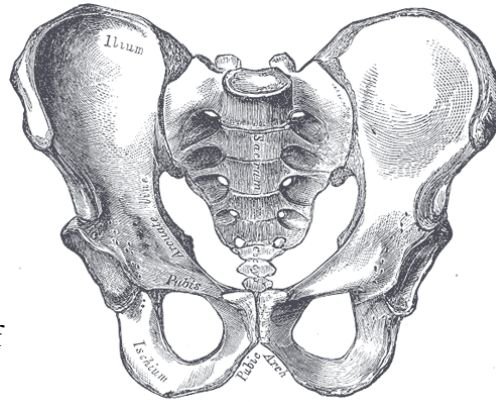


A healthy spine is quite strong and flexible, but a powerful blow (usually a knee, elbow or kick) can cause injuries ranging from a temporary stun to serious, permanent injury or death. Above the shoulders and around the waist, nerves leaving the spine and spreading into the body are exposed and more vulnerable to strikes. *Never expose your back to an opponent.* Never strike someone in the spine unless your life is in danger.

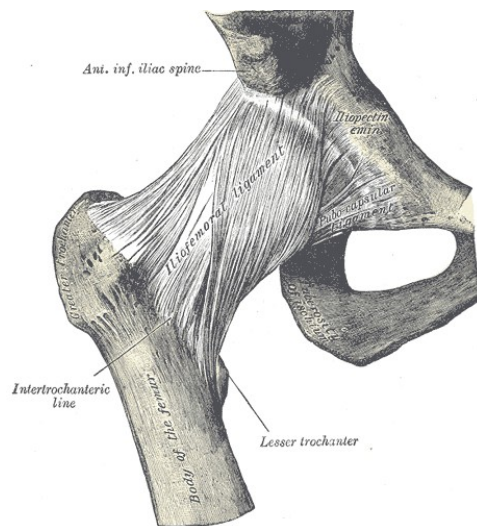
The abdomen contains the kidneys (towards the back), intestines, bladder and reproductive organs; strikes to the abdomen can result in severe pain and life threatening injury, especially if the bladder or kidneys are damaged. Strikes to the upper abdomen, just under the rib cage, can cause the diaphragm to spasm painfully, making breathing difficult for several seconds. Knees, direct kicks, uppercuts and downward palm strikes are effective. Keep your abdomen tight and turned at an angle. Don't hold your breath, and do breath out forcefully if you take a hit.



The pelvis is a very strong structure, and in healthy adults is rarely damaged directly except by the most powerful of blows. Keep your hips turned sideways to an attacker, thereby protecting the pelvis, groin and the lower abdomen.

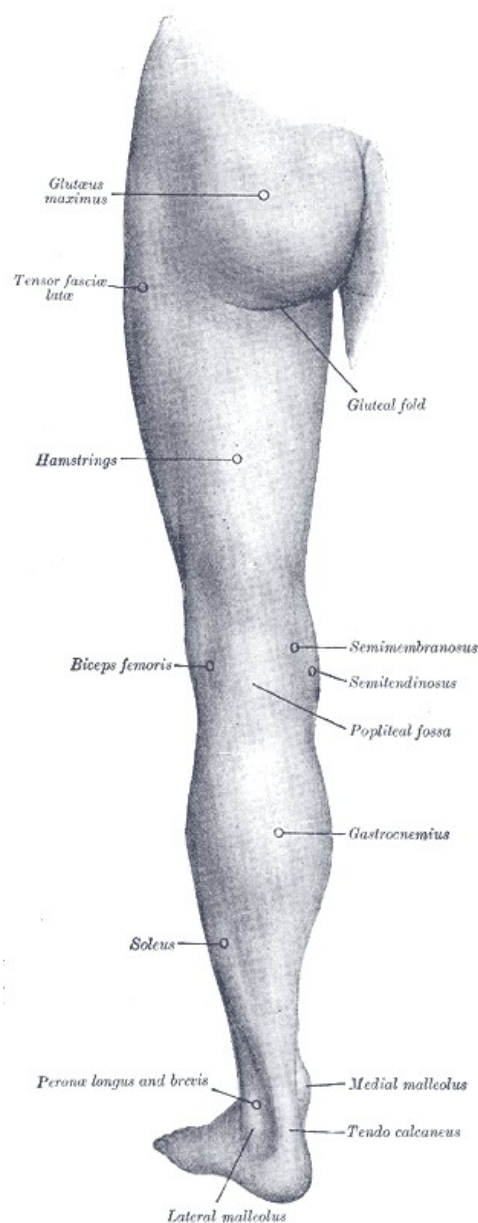


The geometry of the pelvis is different between males and females, and it changes as we age, especially in terms of the range of motion and relation to the hip joint and femur. The hip joint is a very strong joint; unlike other moving joints in the body, it isn't one that we pick as a target for attacks.



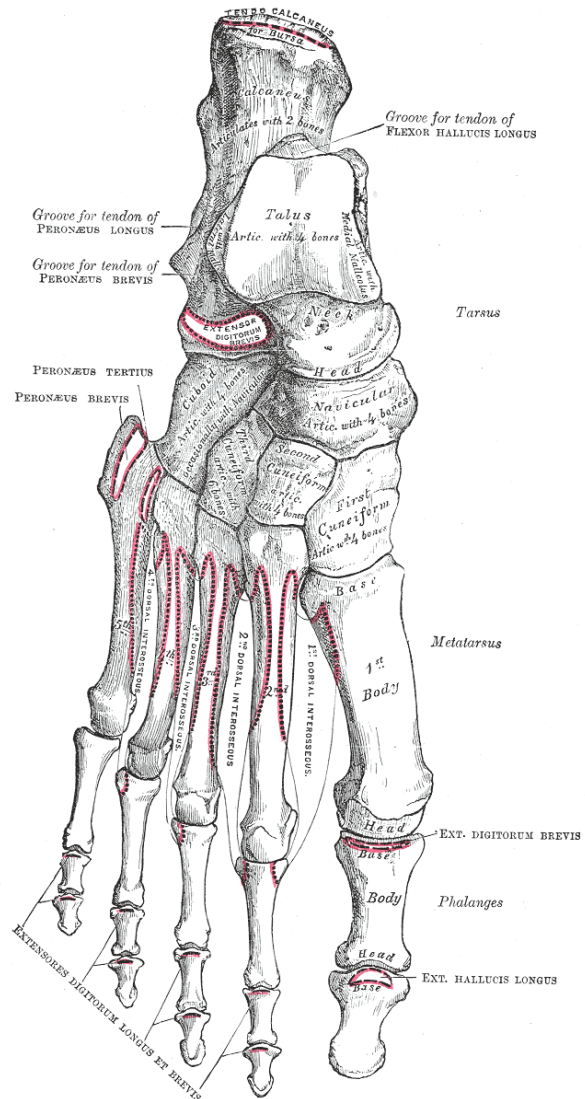
Like the arms, **the legs** are quite durable. Sensitive nerve and blood systems run from the inside front of the leg where it joins the pelvis (the femoral arteries and nerves) and another nerve system along the back and outside of the thigh to behind the knee (the sciatic nerve). Powerful strikes -- usually roundhouse kicks utilizing the tibia -- to the outside and back of the leg, or inside of the thigh can temporarily disable the leg.

The knee, itself, is a very strong joint. There are four primary ligaments supporting it; they are most vulnerable when the knee is locked or heavily loaded. Side and stomping kicks to the knee while it is locked can severely damage these ligaments, disabling the attacker.



The lower leg -- the calf -- is supported by two bones. The larger bone, the tibia, is quite strong and used for the snap and roundhouse kicks. The outer bone, the fibula, is much thinner and can be broken by an angled stomp or roundhouse kick. Keep the knees bent and weight evenly distributed. Keep your heels slightly off of the ground, supporting yourself on the "balls" of your feet. Doing this allows the calf to pivot if struck from the side, protecting the fibula, and keeping the knee bent protects it from strikes intended to hyperextend it.

Like the hands, **feet** are quite sensitive and made up of many, small, easily-broken bones. The foot is especially-vulnerable to stomps. Keeping your heel slightly off the ground can diminish the pain and damage. The strongest use of the foot are kicks that utilize the heel like the side, hook, stomp and wheel kicks.



GRAPPLING

Grappling is an important skill and makes up about a third of our training. By grappling we mean non-striking techniques that attempt to manipulate an opponent. These include grabbing, cranking, pushing, pulling, tripping or throwing the opponent (or parts thereof). It is usually associated with being on the ground, but includes upright techniques. We incorporate grappling for several reasons:

1. One or both parties often end up on the ground in an assault and it is therefore important to know how to move and improve one's position on the ground (ideally to get up as quickly as possible).
2. Grappling is an excellent way for children to deal with bullies, or for an adult to deal with an individual unarmed person that he does not wish to seriously harm.
3. Learning to fall and roll can help you avoid injury in ordinary life.
4. It is a good pursuit for those who wish to engage in tournament competition, is excellent for body conditioning, and can be a lot of fun for those who enjoy it.

Falling and Rolling

Grappling training begins with learning techniques to fall and roll while reducing the chance of injury. For falling, this usually means keeping the stomach firm, chin tucked in, and slapping down forcefully with one or both forearms just before hitting the ground. One should do a controlled exhale – do not hold your breath – when landing on the ground.

When rolling we are trying to minimize impact to the trunk and avoid striking the head or spine on the ground. Rolling is useful for escaping from some ground positions.

Ground Movement

Next we learn basic drills that can help one move fluidly on the ground:

- Sit-out and reverse sit-out
- Twist out and reverse (also called a capioera sweep)
- Shrimping
- Chest spin
- Shooting (primarily for competition)
- Arching (bridging)

These are practiced in isolation as they are being learned, then with a partner, and are incorporated in to larger drills and even forms, along with falls and rolls.

Ground Movement Combinations

These are just a few possible combinations of the previous drills. It is fine to incorporate strikes into these.

- Two sit-outs (right, left), right shoulder forward roll onto your back, right twist out, left shoulder forward roll onto your back, left twist out
- Capioera sweep right, right reverse sit-out right, capioera sweep left, left reverse sit-out
- Forward roll onto back, bridge and kickover to right, forward roll, bridge and kickover to left
- Back fall, shrimp right, defensive stand-up left, back fall, shrimp left, defensive standup right

There are many others. Feel free to invent your own.

Positioning

All attacks, whether standing or on the ground, require that you be in the proper position relative to the opponent.

Beginners focus on learning ground “positions” which means understanding and being able to change the relative orientation between you, your opponent, and the ground. A position is an orientation that can be held for several seconds (or indefinitely) and from which you can execute additional effective attacks. Martial arts that specialize in grappling have dozens of positions. We focus on a few basic ones (listed roughly in order of preference from best to worst):

- Back Mount
- Front Mount
- Side Mount
- Scarf and North/South
- On Back of Turtle
- Guard (its many variants) and Half Guard

For each position one person is in the clearly dominant or advantaged position – usually on top – and the other is not. The exceptions are the guard(s) and upright clinches, which we consider a kind of stalemate (depending on the arm positions and relative sizes). Positions are static in the sense that, once acquired, a strong, skilled person can often hold the disadvantaged person in that position indefinitely.

Remember that many attacks – clawing, twisting flesh, spearing, fist strikes, elbows, knees, etc. – are just as effective while grappling. Some techniques like big punches and kicks are less effective due to the proximity. Include these attacks in when drilling with each other, or you won't think to do them in a real fight. They generally

won't end the assault in themselves, but can cause enough pain or an injury that makes the attacker move or loosen his grip, giving you a chance to escape.

Learn at least two attacks and escapes from any position. As with upright striking, individual moves are rarely successful. In grappling, once an opponent has detected your intent it is fairly easy to resist and thwart it, so you must be able to fluidly transition into a different technique.

Most grappling systems teach getting the guard as an “escape,” and we encourage people to learn how to acquire guard and perform various attacks from that position. However, guard is not a good *self defense* position; it is better than many others, but for self defense we don't want to be on the ground *at all* if it can be helped. A strong attacker can pick you up and smash you down, or just beat you senseless, all from within your guard. Consequently, the ideal escape from a bad position is to move such that you break completely free of the opponent and can get up. If that is not possible, then attempt to acquire a better position than the current one (which often turns out to be guard or half guard). Once in guard, work primarily on escaping – there are a few escapes from the guard position that can work on larger people; failing that attack aggressively and hope for the best.

Learning these positions, how to get into them and out of them, involves working with a cooperative partner and moving from one position to the next with increasing resistance.

Attacking

Once you get a dominant position, do whatever is necessary to maintain it (in sport). For self defense, once you have a dominant position, just deliver some injuring strikes, get up, and run.

- Your primary advantage is your weight. Keep it on the opponent. He then has to move his weight and yours, plus fight friction with the ground. You only have to move yourself.
- Hold him tight and close, and don't give him any more space than is necessary for you to accomplish your technique or transition.
- Acquire and lock in a position before going for any submission.
- Avoid placing your hands on the mat if in your opponent's guard.
- In sport, put on submissions gradually to avoid injuring your training partner.
- Keep on attacking. Don't give him time to plan an escape.

Defending

No matter who you are, you are eventually going to find yourself in a bad position. For self defense, fight aggressively to escape. For sport, fight to improve your position while defending from attacks.

- Keep elbows in, hands up, and body turned sideways. Chin down and shoulders up especially if opponent has your back.
- It is generally to your advantage to be scooting downward. It frustrates almost all strangle attempts and makes it easier to escape. Upward migration works, too, but usually gives the attacker your body and legs to grab onto.
- If you can't completely escape from a position, fight to get him in your guard or half-guard. Then work to escape from there.
- If the attacker gets you into a bad position and you don't see any outs, relax. Once you are locked into a position, fighting it will just exhaust you. Wait for him to move so that you have an opening, then explode.
- In sport/friendly grappling, tap early and tap often. Better to tap (“lose”) than to blow out a joint or break a bone.
- Keep on moving, and try to keep your spine off of the mat (it tends to get stuck there).

Position Flow Drills

Try these or similar drills with a partner. There are many more escape and flow techniques that work on people of similar size, strength and skill. We've chosen these particular ones because, in our tests, they work adequately against larger opponents (most of the time).

From underneath a front mount, person on top simulates strikes or a strangle. Defend from the attacks...

... if person is low on hips, trap and roll, coming up within the opponent's guard. Pass guard using femoral attack into half guard. Clear locked leg into front mount.

... if person is low on hips, shrimp into half-guard. Post foot on upper person's hip and push into defensive standup. Alternately use one or both feet on hips to elevate and roll opponent, hang on and try to come up in front mount position.

... if person is high on chest, attempt to thread arm under hip, inside leg. Lever the arm up while arching and twisting, lifting opponent off chest and over head, so that you end up behind. Ideally, grab opponent's back with levering arm to help acquire follow-up position. Work to front mount.

... if person is in middle or high on chest, strike towards head, pushing it back. Hook with leg and drive into ground, coming up inside guard (perhaps). Pass guard into side mount and transition to front mount.

From underneath in a scarf position...

... reach around head with arm, fish-hook face (eyes, mouth, nose) or hook into the neck (grabbing the trachea), and peel the top person back, rolling

him off of you. Bring your legs and body in parallel and tight with him to help with the roll. Usually end up in a side mount (sometimes back).
Transition to front mount, then scarf, or go directly to scarf.

... cross-face with back arm – *not the front, trapped arm*. Hook the head with the leg and peel the person off. Follow into side mount, continuing as above.

... cross-face with back arm to create space around pinned neck and arm. Hook hips with top leg. Once your shoulder and elbow are pulled in and on the ground, you can usually get free. Keep a hold with what was the trapped hand to prevent him from turning to face you. Pull head free and go for back mount. See back mount series from there.

From disadvantage in back mount... protect your neck and...

... on stomach, go to turtle. As attacker tries to improve back mount, grab an arm and forward roll in that direction. Spin over to get within guard – if lucky you'll have side mount – then pass guard using any method, ending up in front mount. Ratchet arm to roll defender onto stomach and get back mount.

... on side, sitting up, or on back, try to keep body turned sideways. When opportunity presents, use foot or ankle as a lever to scoot downward. Continue turning sideways, usually ending up in opponent's guard. Pass using method of your choosing.

From disadvantage in side mount...

... thread arm near head into underhook position. Perform twist out. Usually end up in his guard or in a side mount. Can sometimes claw into a back mount. If in guard, pass into side mount.

... push his hips while threading knee to acquire half-guard, then work for guard or go directly to guard flows, below.

From guard (on back)...

... bring one knee up and across top person's chest. Other knee drops to the ground and hips shift. Scissor legs and roll into front mount. Bottom person now shrimps to acquire guard. (This one is hard to get if the person has a good base with his knees and is heavy.)

... post one or both heels on hips. Grab at neck or shoulders. Push with feet, elevating person into the air. Roll and dump him, acquiring front mount if possible. (Can be done on people up to about twice your weight.)

... post one heel on hip. Grab at neck or shoulders. Use person as support to perform defensive standup. Drop on person and chest spin to back mount.

Opponent goes turtle, rolls you off, etc. (The escape portion works on almost anyone.)

Grappling Sparring

Once the positions are learned, we then have ground-only sparring in which the two compete to see who can acquire a particular (or any) position first. Or they might start in a specific position, with the goal being for the disadvantaged person to escape. These drills typically begin on the knees or in a specific position.

For self defense the emphasis is upon moving from a disadvantaged position to an advantaged one so as to escape. The principle is simple: *Always improve your position.* For self defense, we want to do this (and stand up) as quickly as possible. Beginners also learn basic body, wrist, arm and head locks and simple methods of escaping therefrom.

At the intermediate level we introduce and practice upright clinch-range techniques and different clinch positions:

- Thai (neck) clinch – often used for knees and headbutts
- Double underhooks – often used for body lock throws, hip and shoulder throws, leg take-downs and knees
- Over/under – a matched, stale-mate position in the clinch. Can lead to a hip or shoulder throw
- Double overhooks – a disadvantaged position in a clinch, but hip throw is still possible
- Single and Double arm lock – used to nullify an opponent who has a double underhook. Can lead to a suplex/sacrifice throw.

Clinches are, in a sense, upright grappling, and lead into several basic throws, leg/ankle sweeps and take downs. We prefer moves that put the opponent on the ground without going down with him. The primary ones – the ones that allow you to most easily remain upright or at least in a one-knee-position – are:

- Hip throw (underarm, neck or biceps)
- Shoulder throw
- Ankle Reap (ideally from outside the ankle)

These are preferred because we do not wish to go to the ground with an opponent who may be armed or who has assistants, but we also practice the following take downs, which are useful in competition or less severe situations:

- Single leg take down and variations
- Double leg take down
- Back roll
- Body lock (suplex)

- Throws from various clinch positions

For the safety of the participants, we purposefully avoid take downs and trips that stress the knee. Obviously, there are many more take down methods, but our emphasis is on developing skill with a few rather than being mediocre at many.

These take-down techniques are reserved for the second year because the participant must have good falling and rolling skills, plus good strength and self control, to be able to perform the attacks without injuring each other. We continue to emphasize positioning skills during the second year.

At the advanced level basic submissions are learned from each of the major positions. These are useful for dealing with less dangerous situations and competitions. The submissions focus on applying pressure to key joints and sensitive areas.

The primary submission techniques we practice are:

- Achilles tendon compression
- Heel hook and foot cranks
- Knee bar (hyper-extension) and compression
- Elbow bar and compression
- Shoulder cranks (both directions)
- Wrist twists, extension and compression
- Various strangles and neck cranks

We may attack fingers, as well, but that is typically not a useful submission (or self defense) technique – it is useful for some practical escapes.

On the submissions, the emphasis is upon first acquiring a secure position and then, from that position, looking at “what is available to me?” There are always a variety of strikes and submissions available from any major position. If they aren't working, just attempt to move to a new position, with new submission targets, etc.

Contrary to popular belief, grappling submissions aren't very useful for self defense. Most submissions involve situations where the submitted person was grossly outmatched, one person just got lucky – you ended up in a position in which the submission could be implemented before the other person could respond – or were preceded by a thorough beating. As defenders we aren't likely to be on the good side of any of those scenarios. Plus, for self defense we always assume that the attacker has a weapon – perhaps edged/pointed – is substantially larger and stronger, or has assistants. One won't have time to wrestle him into a position, then apply a submission; that is suicide. However, the defender may have time to do a throw, stomp on an arm or leg (or groin), and then escape or quickly turn and defend from another attacker.

Suggestions

Once you are familiar with moving on the ground and basic grappling, decide what you are going work on before you begin a match with any person (sometimes this will be dictated by the curriculum). Here are some ideas:

- Striking from clinch/grappling positions
- Distract the opponent; make it appear you are going for one thing, then quickly switch once you feel resistance
- Using power, speed, proper technique (ideal), or just a flurry of attacks
- Defending/Surviving
- Achieving a particular position, take-down or submission
- Imagine he is armed and you must restrain/control a particular arm or prevent him from drawing a weapon
- Grapple with your eyes closed, focusing on feeling how you are being pushed/pulled
- Offer sacrificial bait; trick your opponent into going for a hold or position the you wanted him to get so that you could get an even better one
- Allowing yourself to be placed in a bad position, and then escaping/reversing

Avoid telling your training partner what you going for; being alerted he may thwart it or be overly-submissive.

Grapple with as many different people as you can. If the person is much more skilled or powerful than you, you'll have to focus on defending and escaping (or whatever he allows you to do). While defending – sometimes called “surviving” – be thinking about what openings are available to you. Try for one of them now and then. Be quick and follow through.

Pay close attention to how more skilled grapplers work and what they do to you. It is one thing to be grossly overpowered or outweighed, but a different matter if someone beats you using good technique. If your opponent does something clever, ask him to do it again and help you understand how he did it. That can help you both learn to do the technique, detect it and defend from it.

If your opponent is significantly less skilled, then do what you can to help him. This usually means playing defense for awhile, and helping him to see different openings, not responding/resisting *quite* as quickly as you normally would, etc.

BASIC SELF DEFENSE COMBINATIONS

There are thousands of possible self defense techniques, and when combined into combinations of three moves or more, probably a few trillion possibilities. This many possibilities can create a mental overload in an emergency, resulting in freezing under pressure. Consequently, we have a few “bread and butter” self defense combinations that we encourage all beginners to learn. Of course, participants are welcome to come up with their own combinations, too.

First, the basics:

1. Be aware of and avoid dangerous situations and people in the first place.
2. If you become aware that you are presently in danger, the best choice is almost always to just leave as quickly as possible.
3. If you cannot escape, make it very clear to the threat and any witnesses that you don't wish to fight. “I'm leaving. I'm sorry. I don't want to fight.”
4. If you are facing a weapon or multiple attackers, the best choice is usually to comply or run. Most people who threaten you with a weapon – rather than just use it on you without warning – want something from you. Never fight someone wielding a weapon unless you are confident you are going to be attacked anyway and you have no escape.
5. If you choose to fight, you must inflict serious injury upon the attacker(s) as rapidly as possible and escape. If he is closing on you, attack the instant he penetrates your “fence” (your mental or physical boundary). Give no warning. Do not make fists or tense up. Do not look him in the eyes. Alternatively, wait for the proper opportunity or moment of distraction. You might ask an odd question like, “what is your favorite color” to create a split second of mental hesitation on his part.
6. If the attacker has a weapon, especially a gun, attack silently and smoothly; never startle or provoke someone with a gun or edged weapon. If no weapon is apparent, yell ferociously during the attack – you want to startle and frighten him – and strike the attacker's vulnerabilities; eyes, ears, neck, lower abdomen, groin, knees, ankles, etc. Something is *always* open.
7. Fight differently from your attacker. For example, if he is holding you at arm's length with one arm while swinging at your head, kick at his knees and groin or close to clinch and strike with elbows, knees and claws. If he is clinching and trying to take you down, resist and strike from a distance (or elbow him in the back of the head, or guillotine him on the way down and end it).
8. Don't stop attacking until he is down, unable to pursue you, and you can escape.

Second, recognize what facet of your being is being attacked; person, liberty or property.

If someone is trying to steal or damage your *property* – burglary, mugging, vandalism – you generally aren't in immediate, severe danger. At least not as much if the person

was attacking *you* right now. The person just wants your stuff. The best option is usually to give it to him or get out of the way. There isn't much sense in risking your life to protect material things. By the way, a good way to avoid getting robbed, whether by criminals or the government, is to simply own as little as possible, keep any valuables that you do own hidden and secure, and stay away from the bad guys.

An attack on your *liberty* is when someone is telling you what to do or not do without any legitimate authority to do so. This usually falls under the term extortion, coercion, menacing, intimidation, etc. Such a person is just a bully. It is very common, and self defense in these situations is a difficult matter. The person or institution is usually threatening harm to you if you do not comply, but it can get complicated if you take physical action. For example, suppose a goon approaches you on the streets, says he doesn't like your shoes, and he doesn't want you to wear them in public; you have to go barefoot if you “know what is good for you.” Or maybe he tells you that you can only put compact fluorescent light bulbs in your house or he will fine you, arrest you, etc. Or maybe he says you have to allow him to inject something into your body, answer his questions about your personal life, or work for him so many days per week. Basically anything that you wouldn't do voluntarily. You could just say no and risk the consequences, but you had a bad morning and, in addition to not complying, decided to just jump to the end and break *his* knees rather than wait for him to catch you by surprise and break yours. There is a good chance that you'd end up in jail for assault. However, if you refused to comply and, when attacked, defended yourself and broke his knees, you might fare better in the justice system... or maybe not. Who knows. Either way, waiting for someone to attack you personally is a riskier path. I believe that threats to liberty are good times to posture.

Assaults on property or liberty give you one advantage: You are aware that an attack on your person may soon come and can choose accordingly.

Personal attacks – assaults, kidnappings, slander, libel – are pretty clear cut. You know when they are happening. You aren't likely to talk your way out of them. The person has decided he wants to hurt you, *and you'd better do something about it if you want to minimize the hurt.*

The following combinations assume that you are attacking spontaneously against a larger, stronger person. We are omitting techniques that might be effective against a better match. We do not include blocks, assuming that you are already doing them or that they are unnecessary. The combinations are all very similar, usually involving an initial strike to the groin, neck or eyes -- these are all open-hand strikes -- followed by a stomp to the knee or ankle, or knee to the groin/abdomen.

If your attacker goes down we recommend stomping to the wrist or ankle (preferred), breaking it, to prevent chase. Never stomp a downed person to the head, neck or spine. Doing so can kill or inflict permanent nervous system damage. Also avoid stomping to the trunk, as it can cause mortal damage to internal organs.

Upright Combinations: General Model

Strike the open vulnerable target – primary targets are groin, eyes or neck – while moving outside of the pocket. This usually means moving outside of the lead arm. In some cases you will also be able to damage the attacker's lead arm. If possible, isolate the lead arm. Follow up with a disabling stomp to the knee or ankle, strikes to the jaw, or knee to the groin/abdomen. Knock the person down and get out of there.

Combination 1 (no current physical contact with attacker)

Strike groin, then neck or eyes while moving outside of the “pocket.” Stomp to the ankle or knee, breaking or spraining it.

Combination 2 (while being held by the shoulder or lapel)

Attackers grab to prevent your escape or to hold you at striking distance for their *other* arm (or weapon in the other hand). Don't worry about escaping from the grab or attacking the grabbing hand initially. Most attackers will gladly release once you attack *them*.

Pivot outside of the “pocket,” avoiding other arm. Hyper-extend the elbow with your own elbow or palm. Strike to eyes or neck. Strike groin, knee to abdomen, or stomp to ankle/knee.

The tactic is similar if grabbed from behind. Such grabs are usually “same side,” but glance over the grabbed shoulder to be sure. If so, turn quickly towards the grabbed shoulder, and therefore away from the free hand and outside of the pocket. Strike, stomp, etc.

Combination 3 (while being held by the wrist)

Wrist grabs are usually “same side,” as in the attacker uses his left hand to grab your right from the front. Pivot outside of the “pocket,” avoiding the other arm. Simultaneously move towards the attacker, pulling arm in and up towards your body. Strike groin, neck or eyes with free hand. Stomp to knee or ankle.

The combination in a cross-grab is similar, but you'll have a chance at hyper-extending the elbow early on.

The combination when grabbed from behind is also similar, but turn to face the attacker first, ideally to the outside.

Combination 4 (while in a hug from in front)

Get your arms free (if pinned) through stomps, grabbing at groin, headbutts, etc. Consider biting. If he still has a hold on you, you are now in a clinch, and what you do depends on what you have access to.

Overhook Clinch: Claw the eyes or attack the neck until the attacker loosens the hug. Sometimes you can drive the point of your elbows into his elbows. Hammer fist or downward elbow to break the clavicle. Shift to neck clinch, knee to groin or lower abdomen (or head).

Underhook Clinch: Strike to groin, stomp to knee or ankle, knee to groin/abdomen.

An effective alternative is a claw to the face while grabbing the hair and twisting the head, pulling the person to the ground.

Combination 5 (while in a hug from behind)

Sometimes one person will hold you from behind while another attacks from in front. Use kicks to attack the person in front of you while trying to get free of the one holding you.

Held over arms: Get your arms free (if pinned) through stomps, grabbing at groin, headbutts back, etc.

Held under arms: Tighten your stomach! Reach back and claw at the face or weaken the grip by striking the back of the hand with a hard object. If possible, reach through legs and pull attacker's leg through your own, hyper-extend the knee; alternatively, acquire a figure 4 hold on the arm and crank/dislocate the shoulder or hyper-extend the elbow.

Combination 6 (hands on neck choke/strangle)

The critical element is to get the hands off of your neck immediately. There are three common ways:

1. Grab and jerk at wrists/thumbs
2. Ulna strike towards elbow or biceps
3. Circular arm sweep

What you do will depend on your instincts and orientation to the attacker. Try whichever occurs to you first. If it doesn't work, shift to another. If the attacker is in front of you, do a simultaneous snap kick to groin.

Once the neck is clear, proceed with strikes to the groin, neck and eyes. Follow with the usual stomp to the knee or ankle.

Combination 7 (resisting a charge or take-down attempt)

A charging attacker will often drive low around your hips or thighs and attempt to knock you over backwards. To resist the attempt, forcefully kick your legs out behind you and drop your weight down on the attacker's neck. Strike downward to the spine and kidneys with elbow strikes.

If you do get taken down, try to end up with the attacker in your guard.

Combination 8 (on back, mounted)

Claw to eyes. Attacker will probably swing head back and/or attempt to control your striking hand. Simultaneously kick one leg up, trying to catch his neck, while drive an elbow into his quadriceps. If you catch his head, great – drive it into the ground. If not, capture his foot with your own foot. Pin hand(s) to your chest. Buck/arch to pinned side, reversing position (you'll end up in his guard). Elbow strike to abdomen, knee to groin, escape.

Combination 9 (on back, attacker in guard)

Claw to eyes. Shift hips. Hook leg over attacker's head/neck, driving him to ground. If able, acquire arm lock and break elbow. Heel/axe kick to abdomen. Backward roll to disengage (or move into front mount).

Combination 10 (on stomach, attacker on back)

This is easily the worst position in which to find one's self. Many things went horribly wrong to get here and the chance of recovery is quite small. The attacker can easily strike you in the back of the head, the neck, the spine, initiate a choke or arm lock and you have little or no defense.

If the attacker attempts a rear naked choke or otherwise moves his weight forward, you can sometimes scoot out the “back door.” Otherwise, you just have to do whatever is necessary to roll over and face the attacker. What happens next depends on whether he has you in a front mount or is in your guard.

Testing

Students should gradually learn the above – one or two per rank – or develop their own for each common scenario.

OUTLINE OF BEGINNING FORMS

A form is a series of techniques – usually consisting of 20 or more steps. Forms are included in Via Potentia to serve as a catalog of learned techniques for personal review, provide an intellectual and physical challenge, and allow for personal practice, demonstration or competition. The primary goal is to give the student a challenging series of movements that helps his body and mind maintain the ability to perform the individual self defense movements fluidly. Though we do endorse a specific view of the human person and ethical behavior, Via Potentia does not explicitly promote a particular metaphysical belief system, and we do not use forms to teach philosophy.

Forms and other drills and demonstrations are an integral part of most martial arts. They are really the “art” part of martial arts. They are also deeply misunderstood by about 99% of those who practice them, even many masters.

Several years ago I was watching a master-level martial artist practice his forms and I saw a move I didn't recognize. It was a very low, downward punch, too high to be punching someone on the ground, and too low to be an abdomen or groin punch. I asked him what the move was simulating, and he said that he was blocking a front kick coming at his abdomen by punching the shin, “*shattering* it.” Out of respect for him I said nothing, but the truth is that, were he or any person to attempt to block one of my front kicks by punching downward into my shin, I might end up with an uncomfortable bruise, but several bones in his hand – not my shin – would be shattered. (And I'm not picking out some rare instance; the complete series of forms in question contain numerous moves that just wouldn't work if ever tried. An earlier form, for example, has a “staff block” using the web of tissue between your thumb and first finger. But in reality that technique would be called “Ow! my hand!”)

Just because forms aren't directly useful for self defense or some of the techniques are overly-optimistic (to put it nicely) doesn't mean that they are devoid of utility or that they didn't have a rational genesis. The practice of forms appears to originate in ancient Chinese philosophical arts. The movements were *not* intended to be useful for combat – and generally are not – but to express a metaphysical belief, much like a kind of whole body sign language or representative dance. In some cases the movements did assist with personal conditioning, but the same could be said of nearly any whole body movement, irrespective of its utility. Over decades and centuries these first forms were observed, copied, adapted and new forms were added by new practitioners, but the understanding of any connection with an underlying metaphysical belief was apparently lost. It is like someone who watches sign language, copies the moves, but doesn't understand their meaning. Instead, the practitioners stated that the form simulated combat, sometimes even combat against multiple opponents.

But there was a problem: The moves were famously-ineffective in application (this problem is not limited to forms, but common to many martial arts drills absent a spontaneous, resisting opponent). The practitioners recognized this and sometimes said that the moves reflected an *ancient form* of combat. Fighting people with armor,

for example. That isn't correct, either, and isn't far from trying to block bullets. But the practice of forms remained and gradually became inseparably-identified with being a martial artist: "You say you are a martial artist. Show me your forms."

They began to adapt, add and delete moves, or add certain "signature" styles to the moves (often making them even less practical, if that were possible). It probably would have been better to just start from scratch. But the truth is that, no matter how frequently one does a form, there is little connection between doing a form and engaging in combat. Indeed, many people who are outstanding at forms wouldn't last five seconds against an aggressive attacker.

Gradually, forms became a way of demonstrating physical ability. High kicks, acrobatic moves, flips and other techniques that neither expressed any philosophy nor have any place in combat or self defense began to appear. Granted, the skills demonstrated and the conditioning necessary to perform the moves are incredible.

But my criticisms and observations do not mean that practicing forms has no benefit whatsoever. They can be a great physical exercise and help develop self discipline and precision. They provide a substantial mental challenge. They are useful for demonstration and competition, and to help the body retain the coordination for certain moves.

Compared to other styles, our forms are *very* complex and incorporate many more and varied techniques (including groundwork). For example, a beginning Tae Kwon Do form might include two or three different techniques repeated in a pattern of turns and steps totaling approximately 20 moves. Our beginning forms have about 20 techniques spanning 40-50 moves, including ground techniques (later forms have fewer new techniques and incorporate moves from prior stages, but they are technically more difficult).

This section lists the sequence of moves for the first three forms. The individual techniques that make up the form are gradually presented over the term of instruction. Because each form is a catalog of the techniques taught in a term, it can also be used to select techniques for developing your own personal self defense combinations, or for board breaking practice.

Please be aware that we do make changes to forms over time. The changes are usually small, and reflect attempts to improve learning or to incorporate changes to the techniques for a particular term. Once you've learned a particular form, we do not *require* that you relearn it with every change, but it is encouraged.

Form Demonstration or Competition

The practice of forms is one of the few areas where we do stress some formality. This is because it is one of the few areas where appearance is important.

If you have any confusion about which foot to be moving during the relaxed stance, attention, stepping back to ready, etc., just remember to keep your right foot in place, and move the left foot.

In a demonstration or competition scenario, you will usually be standing or sitting to the side. When your name is called you stand up, walk to the demonstration area, approach the judges and stand tall at attention. Salute and greet the judges/observers, change to a relaxed stance, announce your name, style, form and request permission to begin. For example, you might say, "Good morning. My name is [whatever]. My style is Via Potentia and the form is form one. With your permission I will begin." The judges will indicate their approval to begin.



Stand at attention, salute them, and then step back to your starting point (if you aren't already there) in the relaxed stance.



Take a deep breath in, and move your left foot back into the ready stance as you slowly breathe out, and then begin the form. All beginning forms start with the right foot forward in the natural, ready stance. "!" indicates a yell point. Unless noted otherwise, techniques are executed with the leading hand or leg.

Do the moves at your own pace, but no faster than you can do them properly. Maintain good posture, balance and stance. The moves should (eventually) flow gracefully and be coordinated with proper step-slide movements. Breath in and out with each move or combination. Imagine your target, strike accurately, and keep your eyes looking the proper direction. You should never find yourself looking one of the judges or any other person in the eyes during a form. At the conclusion of the form, take another deep breath in, and slowly drop your hands and resume the relaxed stance (moving your left foot up) as you breathe out. Resume the attention stance, salute any judges and leave the area without turning your back to them.

You can do the moves slowly, quickly, smoothly, forcefully, etc. Sometimes focus on just keeping a good stance and balance. Other times on your arm/hand position, or full body involvement in each move. Other times on speed, precision or power. Over time all of your techniques will improve.

Just as there isn't any one right way to do a technique, there isn't a single right way to do a form. However, there are wrong ways, and these are merely extensions of individual technical errors. These include:

- Letting the idle hand drop – not protecting yourself
- Not following through on techniques – always strike *through* the target, then retract your arms back to the natural defensive stance or flow directly into the next movement
- Leaving strikes and blocks suspended in air – always return to the natural, defensive stance
- Not maintaining good stance and balance – stance gradually becomes to long, short, wide or narrow
- Lack of accuracy and focus when striking

- Allowing kicks to drop, rather than pulling them back in and deliberately setting the foot down
- Failing to maintain good breathing
- Poor posture
- Weak technique and yells
- Being distracted by noise or movement

Because our forms are made up of moves intended for application, practice them in that way – in the way you would apply them.

Handouts for additional forms will be provided as they are taught in class. *Forms are subject to change.*

Testing

Students should be able to demonstrate one form for each rank for which they are testing.

Form 1

(As if responding to strikes coming from the front)

Outside high block step slide (s-s) back

Inside hammer fist to jaw or clavicle s-s forward

Outside elbow to head s-s forward

Down block s-s back

Stomp

Clear path with leading hand and reverse pincer strike to neck

Reverse side kick to lower abdomen (!)

(As if grabbed from behind)

Back leg stomp

Head butt back

Break out forward, elbow strike back s-s back

Back kick!

Breakfall forward

Two sitouts

Left foot back kick from kneeling

Forward roll

Stand up facing reverse, left foot forward

Reverse rising block

Reverse knife strike to neck/shoulder

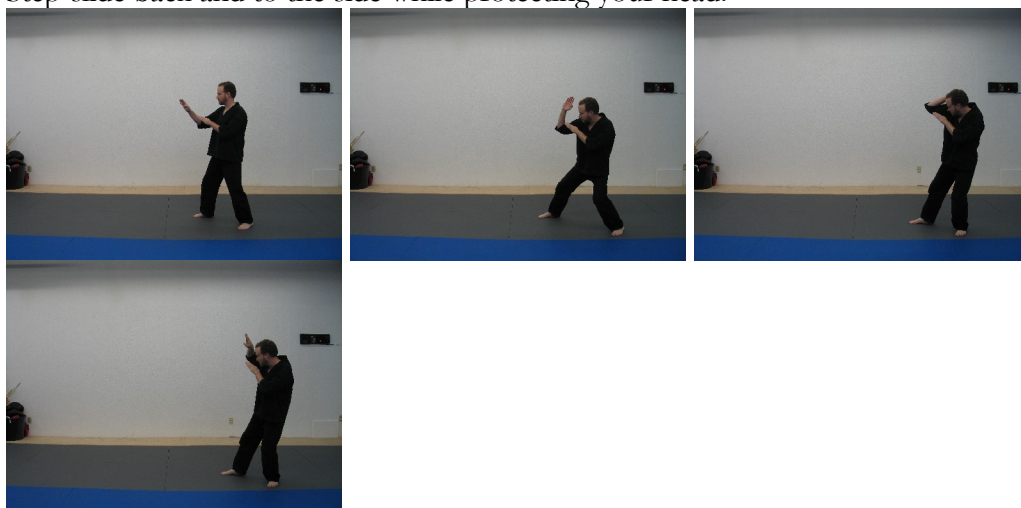
Reverse down block deflecting knee or kick

Rising palm strike s-s forward

Side kick!

Repeat

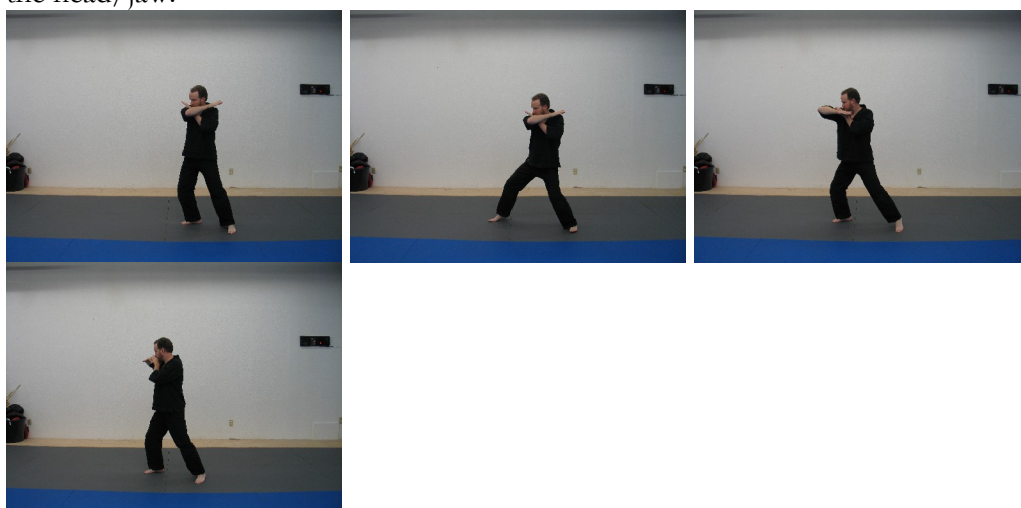
Step-slide back and to the side while protecting your head.



Perform an inward hammer fist while step-sliding in. The hammer fist should go through the jaw area (sideways) or downward through the clavicle.



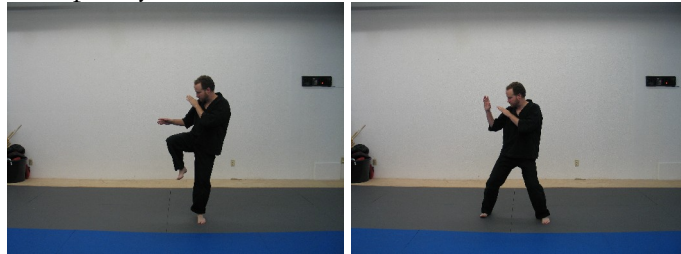
Flow directly into another step-slide and outward elbow targeting the other side of the head/jaw.



Deflect an attack coming towards your abdomen.



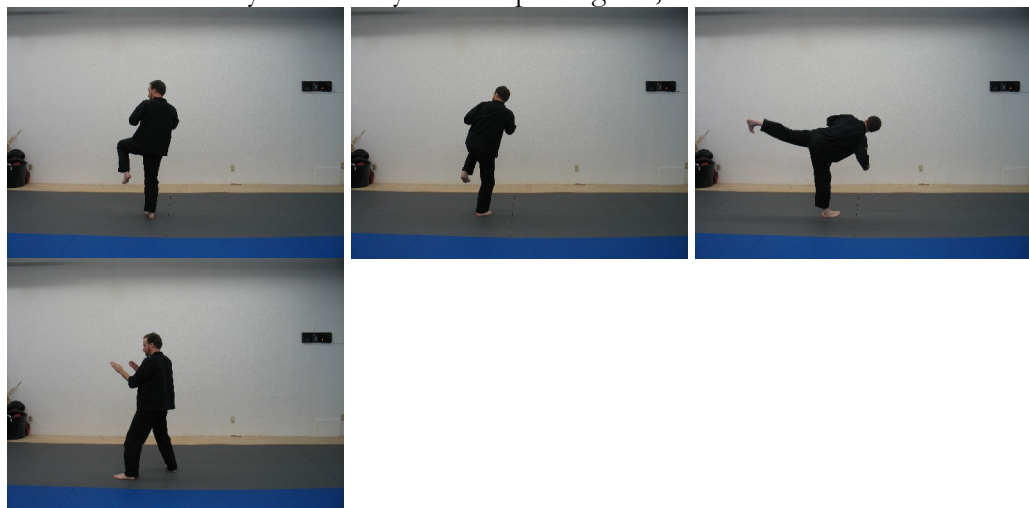
Stomp on your attacker's foot.



Clear a path with the leading hand and perform a rapid pincer strike to the neck using your back hand. Quickly retract it and flow into....



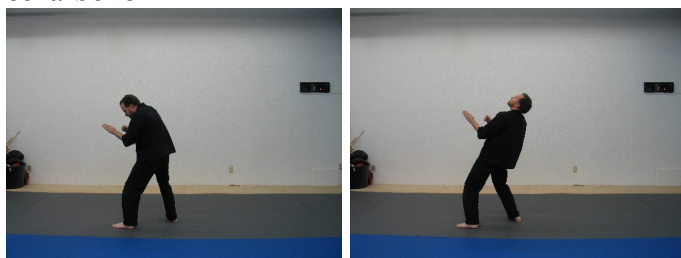
Bring your back leg all the way around and execute a reverse side kick. Yell as you do so. Side kicks are effective to the knee and lower abdomen. They can also be executed higher, but there is more risk in doing so. Retract the foot quickly and place it down in front of you so that you end up in a good, balanced stance.



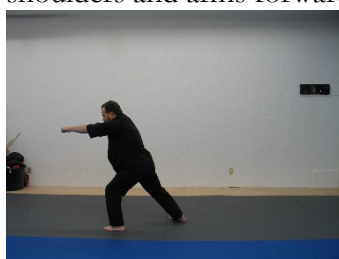
Imagine that you are grabbed firmly from behind, around the arms. Stomp back.



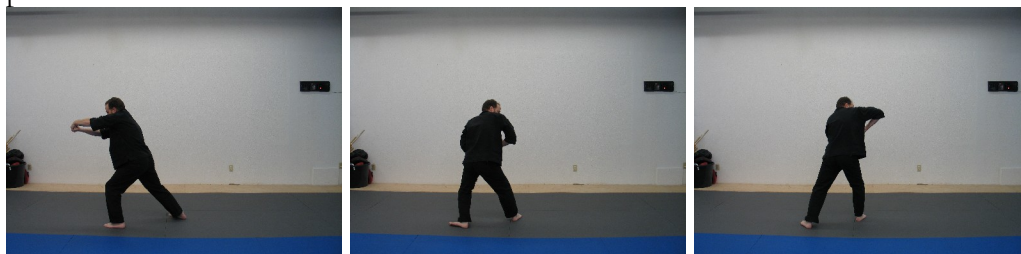
Snap your head back in a whip-motion, attempting to hit the attacker's face, jaw or collarbone.



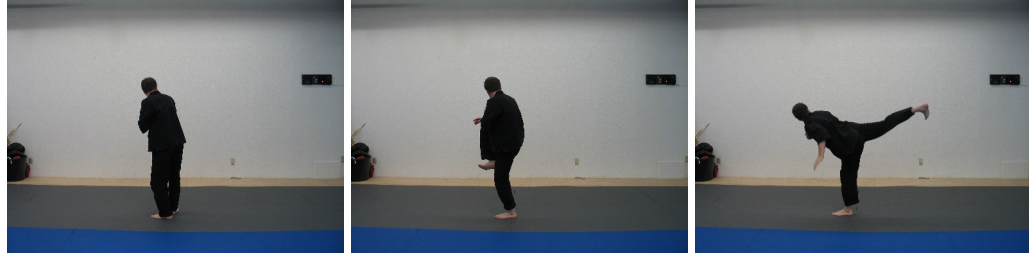
Attempt to break free of his weakened hold, driving your hips/butt back, and shoulders and arms forward.



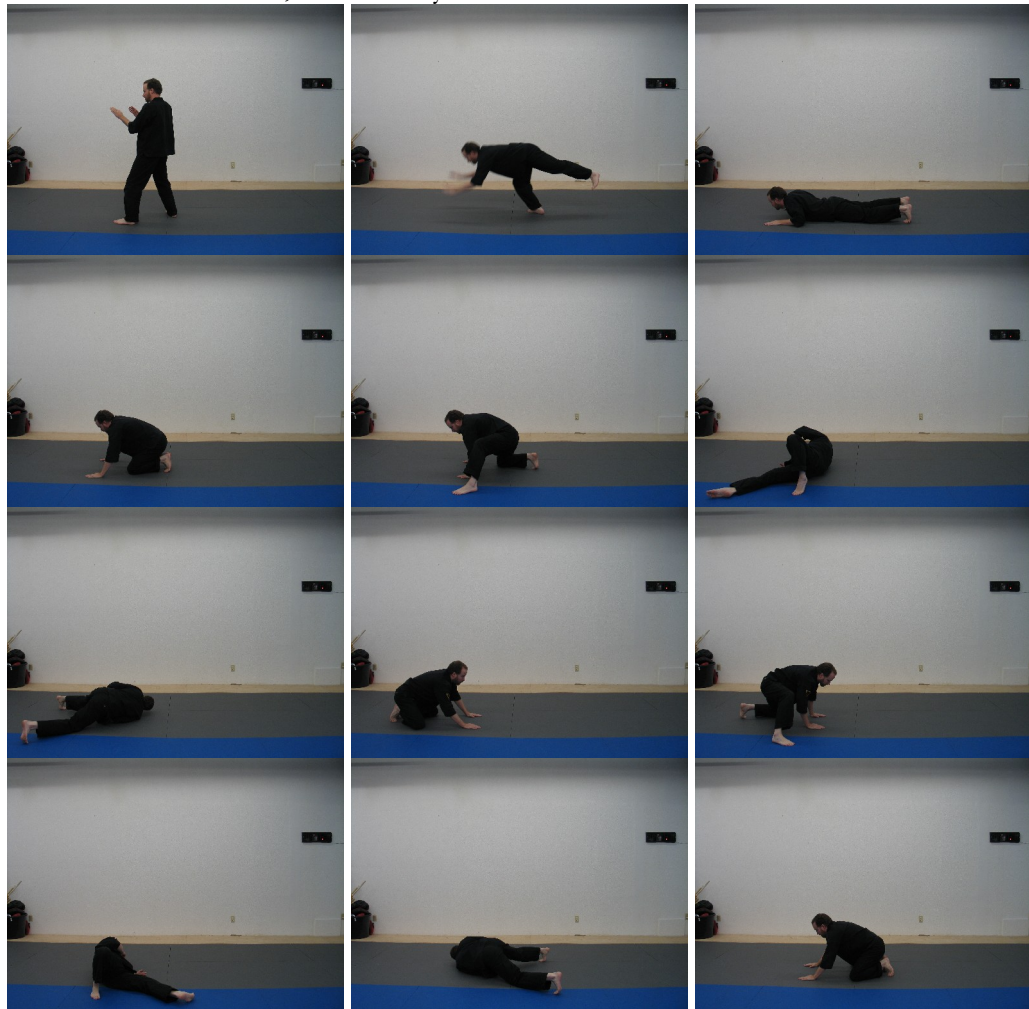
Turn your right palm up, make a fist, and grasp that fist with your left hand. Drive your elbow back into the xiphoid region of the attacker, turning your body to make a path for the elbow.



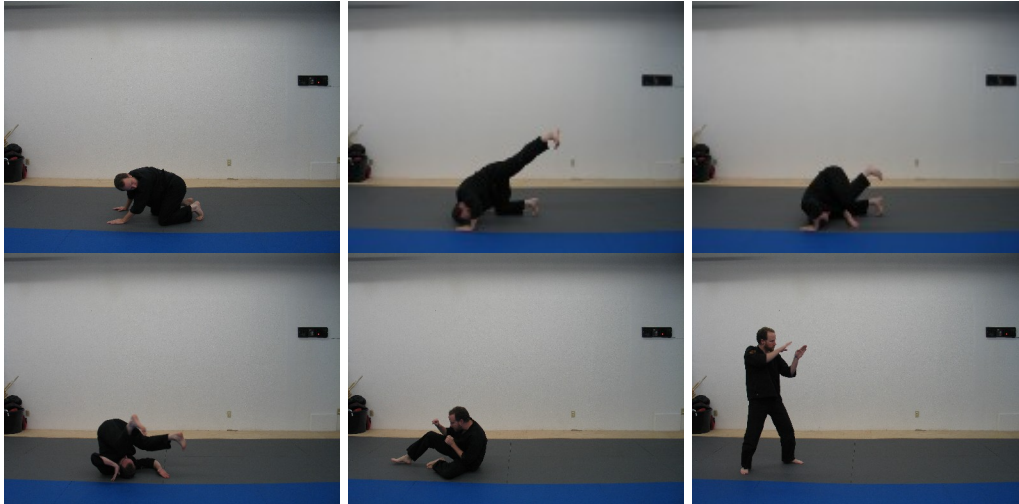
Having driven the attacker back, perform a back kick. Back kicks are difficult to aim; just go for the lower abdomen or center of mass.



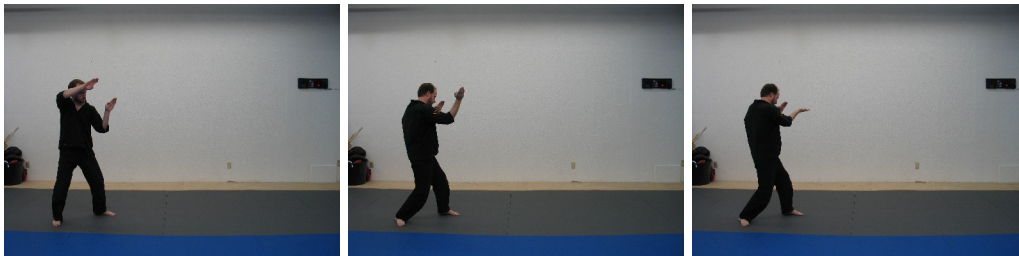
Perform a forward fall, followed by two sit-out drills.



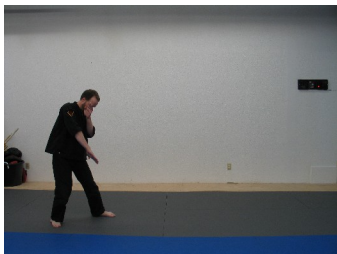
An attacker is approaching from behind. Glance over your shoulder (or under the arm), and execute a left back kick from the kneeling position. Flow into a forward roll, and stand up facing reverse with the left foot forward.



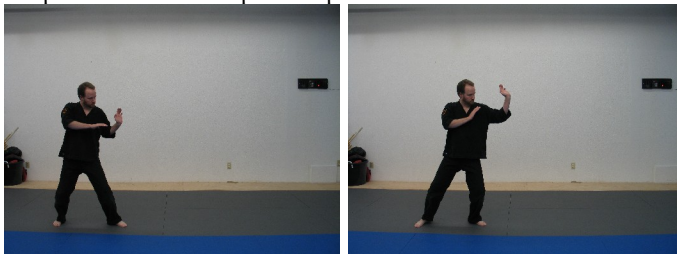
Perform an upward block with the back hand, flowing into an inward knife hand strike to the neck.



Deflect downward



Step slide into an upward palm strike



Perform a leading leg side kick and yell.



Retract the kick, go back to a good stance, now with your left hand/foot forward. Repeat the above moves beginning from this mirrored stance.



Form 2

This form has some ground techniques that are easily confused when first encountered. If you are confused about which foot/side to use on the ground techniques, do your right foot first on the first half of the form, then left foot first on the second half of the form.

Double hand outside block

Rising elbow strike to chin or xiphoid s-s forward

Right hand grab, left hand palm strike s-s forward

Two hand grab and reverse knee!

Two-hand push

Breakfall backward

Heel strike to instep, knee, lower abdomen (right, left, right)

Two inside blocks

Twist out (right foot going under)

Capoeira escape (right shoulder down, left foot swings over)

Reverse sit out (right foot steps out first)

Roll backward to right knee

High block and reverse spear to femoral nerve area

Stand up to palm strike

Snap kick (skipping)

Reverse front kick

Inside block s-s back

Low reverse palm strike

Clear path and spear hand

Front kick! land facing reverse

Repeat

For the sake of photographs, some techniques in this series were done on the left side (instead of the right).

Protect the side of your body by dropping the lead hand and bringing your rear hand across. Twist slightly into the direction of the block.



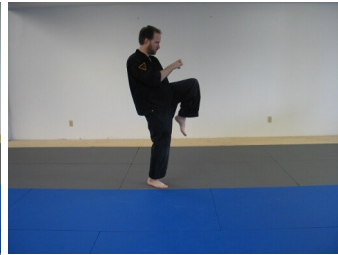
Step slide into a rising elbow strike with the right/lead hand. The ideal target is the underside of the chin.



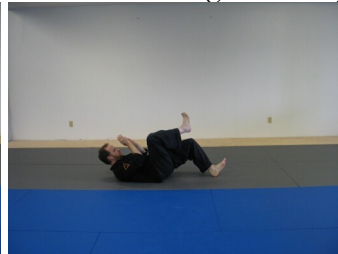
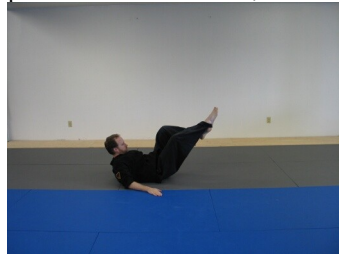
Grab with the same hand – collar, shoulder or hair – and follow with a reverse straight palm strike to the xiphoid.

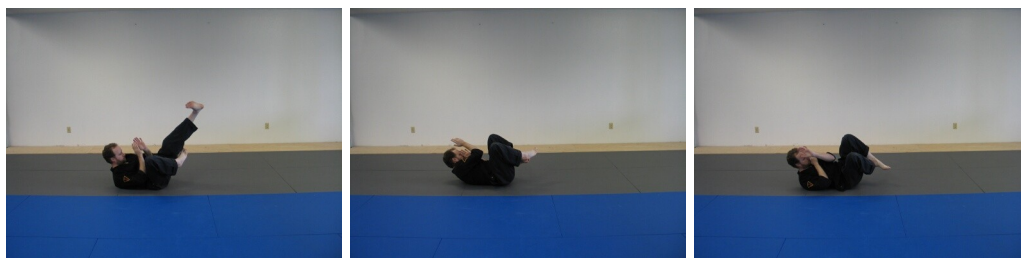


Now grab with both hands, and execute a knee strike, pulling the target into you as you drive the knee forward and up (yell). Target anywhere along the center line of body. Then push him away and resume the natural stance.

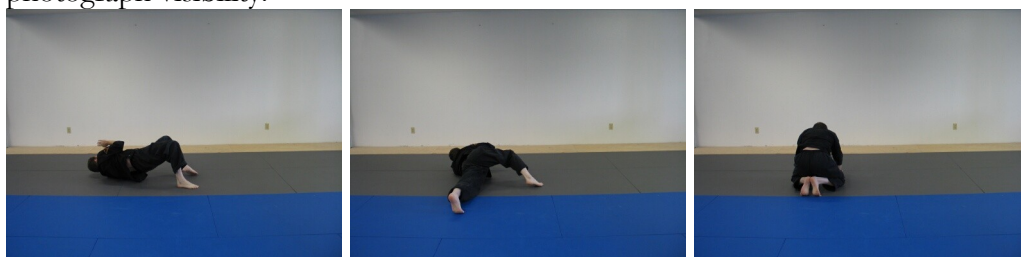


Fall backwards and perform kicks to the feet, knee and groin (right, left, right). Then perform two blocks, as if someone is striking towards your head.





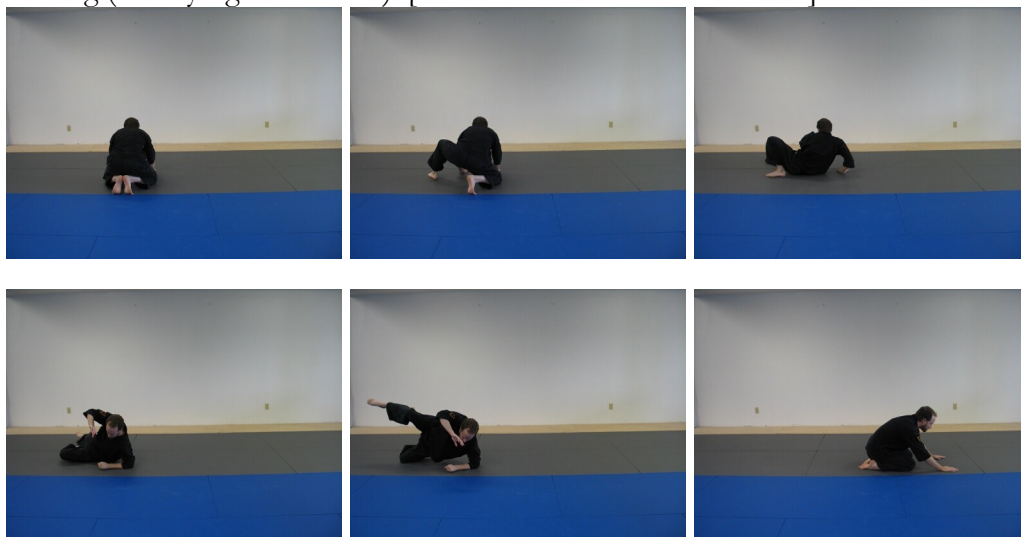
Execute a twist out (right foot going underneath). The direction of the twist out is unimportant as long as you remember to use the opposite leg in the second half of the form. In this case I have done the twist out using my left leg for the sake of photograph visibility.



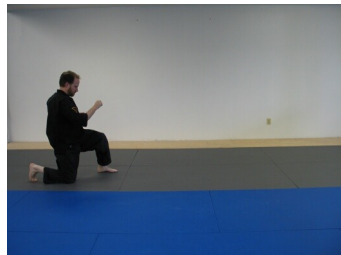
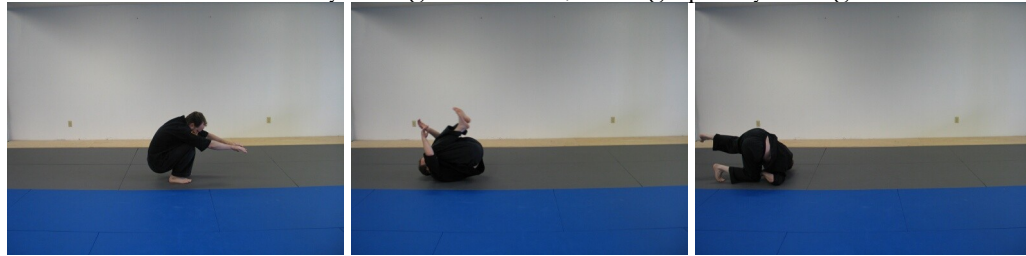
Perform a capioera sweep escape.

[INSERT PICTURES]

Reverse sit out. Begin by extending the leg in the direction from which you are coming (usually right foot first). [UPDATE THESE PICTURES]



Do a backwards roll over your right shoulder, ending up on your right knee.



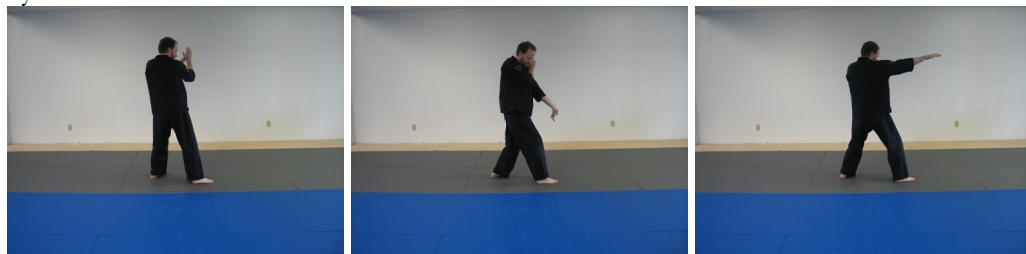
Execute a reverse spear hand (to the femoral nerve/artery area)



Do a leading straight palm strike while standing up, then skip into a leading-foot snap kick to the groin. Put that foot down and do a reverse front kick to the abdomen or higher.



Imagine a strike coming towards your head, and perform an inward block, followed by a downward palm strike to the abdomen, and a leading spear hand to the neck or eyes.



Step forward into a leading foot front kick (yell). Retract the foot, place it down, reverse your stance, and repeat the mirror image of the moves for the second half of the form.



Form 3

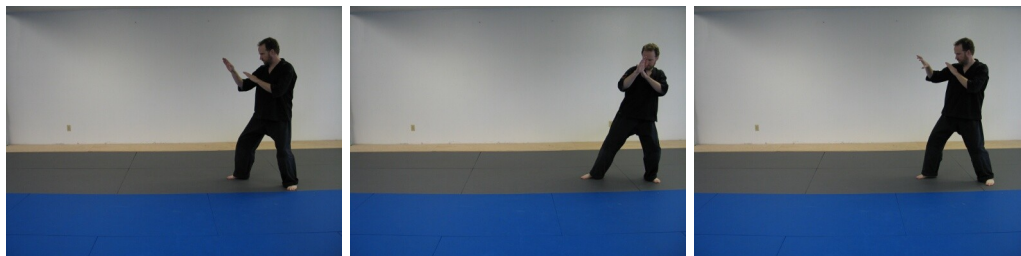
Inward block s-s back
Raking claw
Inward elbow strike
Reverse roundhouse kick to thigh
Outward knife hand strike
Reverse inward crescent kick
Inward elbow strike!

Block down
Reverse upward block
Breakfall to left side (back)
Reverse (left) roundhouse trip-kick
Two shrimp escapes
Push off and double leg kick-off
Defensive stand up with right foot forward

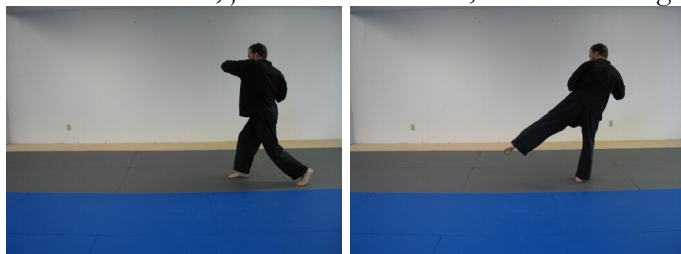
Outward crescent kick
Reverse roundhouse kick
Reverse outward block (grabbing)
Inward elbow strike (to arm)
Rising block
Reverse claw
Outward hammer fist
Reverse roundhouse kick! landing facing reverse

Repeat

Inward block with the leading hand. Change the hand to a claw, and rake it across the face of the attacker.



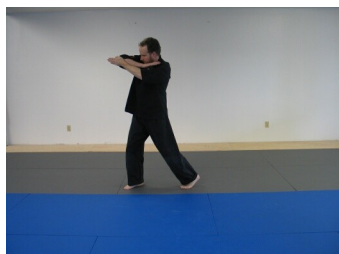
Flow into a reverse inward elbow strike to the side of the head, and a reverse chop kick to the fibula, just above the knee, or the mid-thigh.



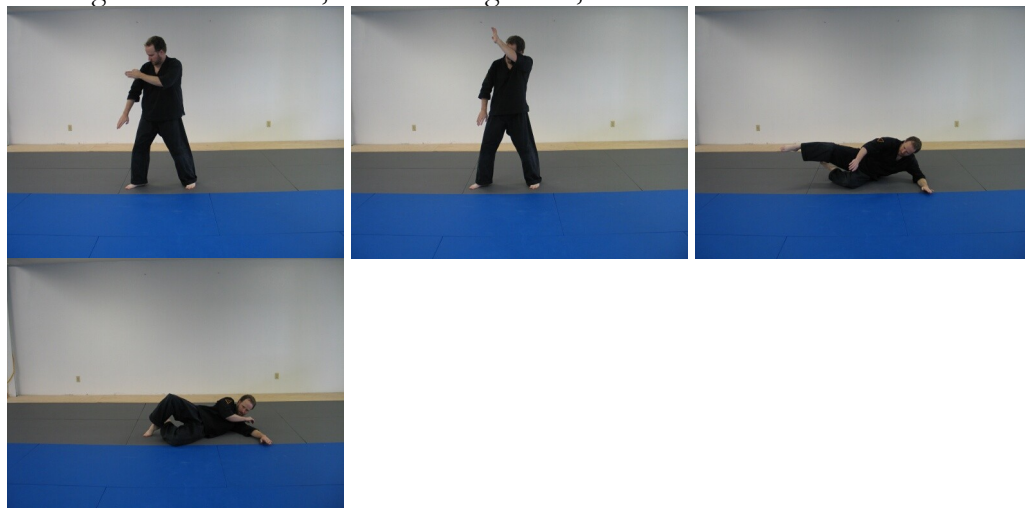
Leading hand outward knife strike to neck, then grab with the same hand (for the form, just open the hand with the thumb up) and do an inward crescent kick into the hand.



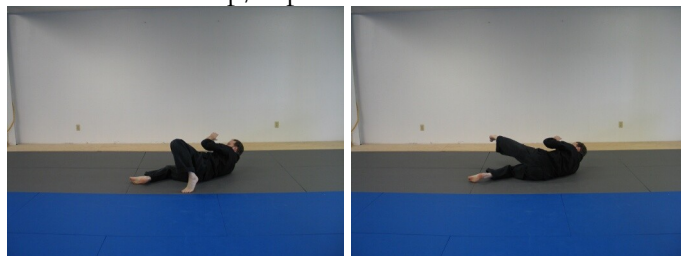
Follow the kick with a reverse inward elbow strike into your palm (yell).



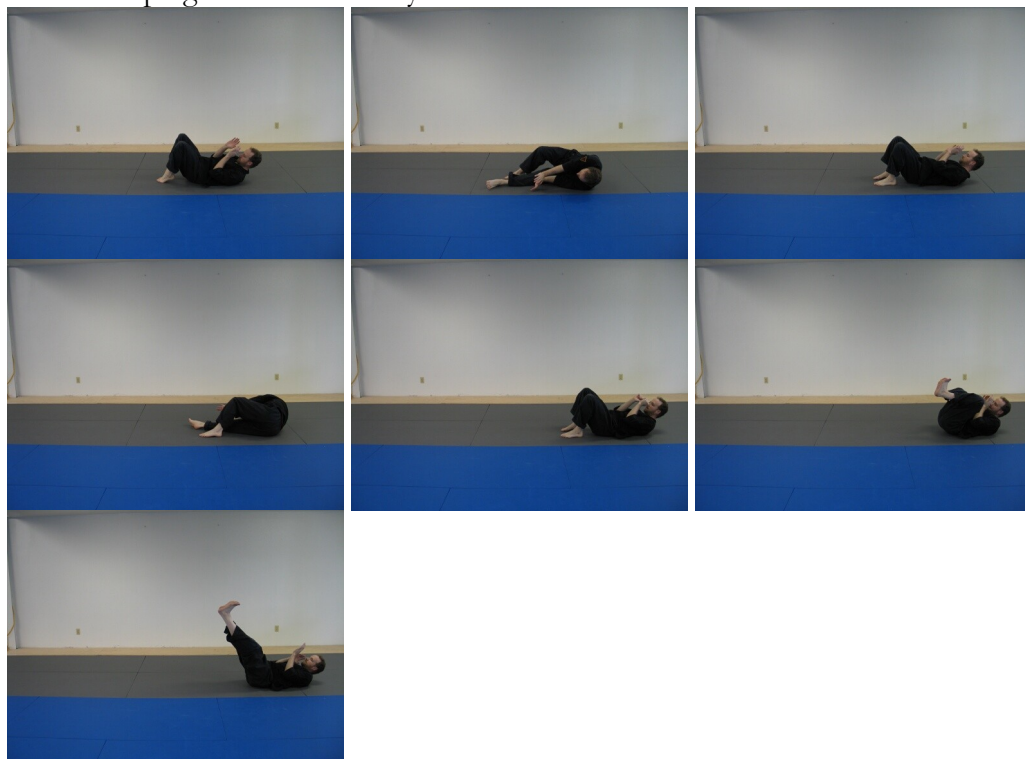
Leading downward block, reverse rising block, then a side fall.



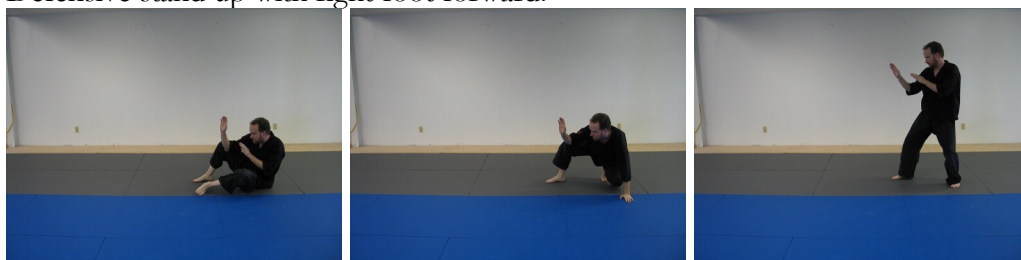
Roll and do a chop/trip kick.



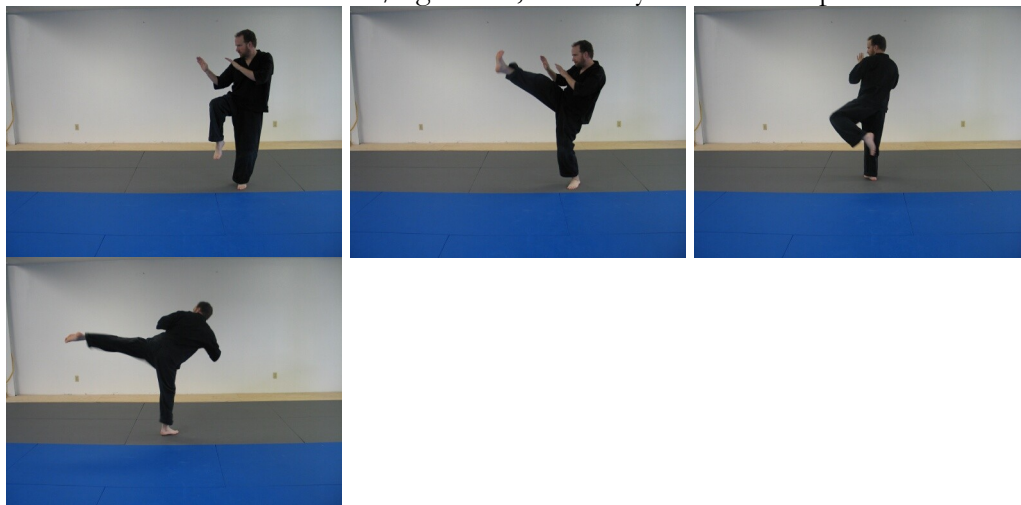
Two shrimping drills followed by a thrust kick with both feet.



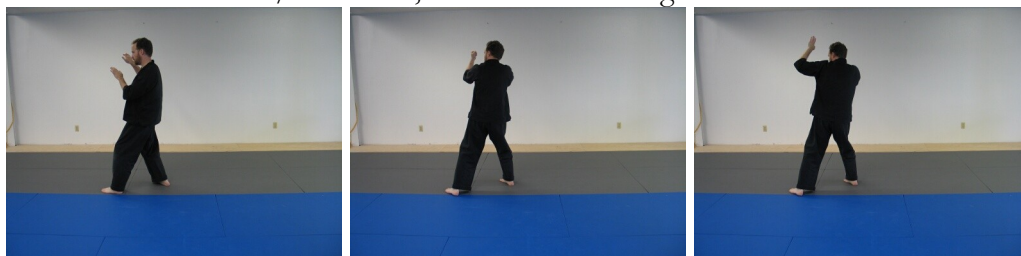
Defensive stand up with right foot forward.



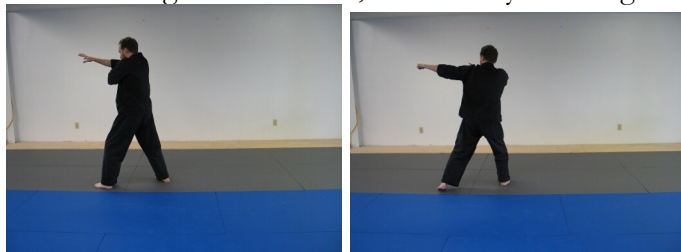
Inward crescent kick with lead/right foot, follow by a reverse chop kick.



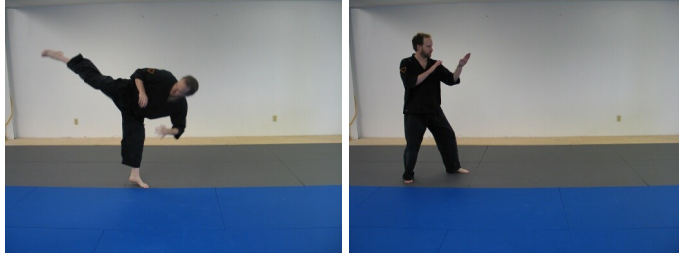
Resume the natural stance and do an outward block with the back hand. Grab with it. Strike with the lead/left elbow, and then do a rising block with the lead hand.



Reverse straight claw to face, followed by a leading outward hammer fist.



Reverse roundhouse/chop kick (yell). Place the foot down, reverse your stance, and continue the mirror of the form.



Form 4 (draft/preview)

Double rising block

Left hand grabs and pulls down as right elbow strikes down at clavicle

Double straight punch, right left with s-s

Reverse front kick

Reverse roundhouse kick

Spinning back kick land facing reverse with right foot forward

Inward block passed to left hand

Right outward elbow (to ribs or head)

Reverse low chop kick

Spinning outward crescent kick

Wheel kick

Fall back (as if pinned under a front mount)

Protect head, clamp/pin with left hand and arch, kicking over with right foot (into guard)

Right straight punch down

Left palm down

Right elbow against femoral nerve, opening guard

Right knee slide over leg

Left elbow downward strike

Forward roll out of guard land left leg forward stand up facing reverse

Reverse upward block

Knife strike to neck

Reverse palm strike/push to sternum

Reverse chop/trip kick into side kick

Jumping side kick

Reverse and repeat

SPARRING

Sparring is an important and enjoyable drill that teaches distance, timing, and how to defend from and create spontaneous combinations. It can be fun, and provides a competitive, sport element. Matches are usually timed from one to five minutes. Sometimes score is kept. However, the less contact and the more rules/restrictions, the less useful sparring is for developing actual self defense skills. Consequently, sparring is primarily useful for sport, demonstration and developing some skills, but participants need to remember that, for the safety of the participants, it is still far removed from actual self defense.

For safety, participants should be roughly similar in size, power and skill, especially for contact sparring; large discrepancies often result in injuries (with the larger or less experienced person injuring the smaller, more experienced one). If grappling, they should also be the same gender. They are sometimes segregated by age, too (as strength, flexibility and reflexes often change with age).

Participants enter the sparring area when called, salute the judges, the referee and each other, and then assume the sparring stances of their choosing. At the end of the match, the participants again salute the judges, the referee and each other. The victor is then announced (if score was being kept).

In general, "scoring" targets include all surfaces of the body except the arms, sides of the pelvis, butt and shins. You can still hit there, but the hit will not receive a point. Some targets are always no contact; these include strikes to the back of the head, spine, neck, lower abdomen, groin, and extended joints like the knee or elbow. Other areas are contact or no contact, depending on the skill of the participants and the protective gear. Some techniques are always forbidden in sparring; pinching, scratching, clawing, pulling hair, slapping or grabbing the ears, biting, and grabbing fewer than three fingers, or grabbing toes. No stomping *contact* on a down opponent.

Beginners usually spar upright only, striking techniques only, and with little or no contact. Light, defensive and accidental contact is not uncommon, but may be penalized if excessive. Beginners may not do trips, take downs, throws or leg sweeps.

Unlike many martial arts, our matches do not stop and restart with each scoring hit, but continue uninterrupted. A fall counts as one point for the one who remains standing, plus any points he scores against the down person. After two seconds down, out of bounds, in a clinch (or any other position in which no progress is being made), the referee separates and resets the participants and the match resumes. "Out of bounds" means that both feet are out of the ring area. The referee also resets the match if one party scores five or more points in succession without answer. A participant must have at least one foot in bounds to score a point. A person who is in bounds can score on someone who is out of bounds. The timer is not stopped unless the referee specifically calls for a time out, which he may do at his prerogative.

At the end of the match each judge individually decides who he believes prevailed. Each judge gets one vote -- ideally, there is an odd number of judges -- and the participant with the most votes wins the match. Each judge *must* vote for a winner; no ties. In the event of a tie, the referee casts the tie-breaking vote.

At the intermediate level take downs, ankle sweeps and throws are allowed, as is light- and medium-contact sparring (with gear). No spiking the head or shoulder on a throw; the thrower must make a genuine effort to control the thrown person so as to avoid injury. The thrower scores for the throw or take down if he remains standing, in one-knee position, or ends up in a dominant position on the ground.

Only those techniques that actually make contact count as points (except to the neck, groin and back of the head); contact may only be made with or to a padded, protected target. Two points are awarded for a throw, take down or reversal. One point is awarded to the dominant player for each of the following grappling positions held for three seconds.

- Front mount
- Back mount
- Side/cross mount
- Scarf
- North/South

Once a position is held for a point, there are several choices.

1. If he continues to hold the position for another five seconds, the referee will stand them back up.
2. He can shift to another dominant position for another point.
3. The defender can escape or reverse

No joint locks or other submission technique may be employed. Stomps are allowed to a down person *as long as there is no contact*.

At the advanced level the same rules apply, but submissions are allowed, as are weapons and mid-to-full-contact sparring (with proper gear). A submission ends the *round* in favor of the person implementing the technique. At the advanced level, participants who have the proper safety gear and training may also engage in weapons sparring.

When people from disparate stages are sparring, they spar according to the rules of the lesser stage.

A participant may voluntarily submit/forfeit at any time; the signal is three taps with the hand or foot on the floor, on the opponent, or a verbal indication of submission ("tap"). A participant may have one coach in his corner. The coach may interact only with the participant, and may not set foot on the competition area unless invited by the referee. Participants may be penalized or disqualified as a consequence of their

coach's behavior. The coach may forfeit the match on behalf of the participant at any time -- "throw in the towel."

Participants must follow the referee's instructions at all times. The referee moderates the match, tells them when to start, stop, break, etc. The referee stops the match for time, to reset the participants, or in the event of an injury. The referee may terminate a match and declare a winner (or a draw) on his own prerogative. This is usually done if there is a concern for the welfare of a participant, or in the event of a gross mismatching of skill. The referee may warn, penalize or disqualify a participant for using excessive force, prohibited techniques, gross misconduct or other issue of similar severity.

Sparring may sometimes be grappling only, in which it is a competition to acquire and hold a position for three seconds, get a take down, or a submission, and no striking is permitted. It may also be upright only (as is usually the case for beginners).

In the event of an injury, the uninjured party should go to the other side of the sparring area, the clock is stopped, and the referee will evaluate the situation. The injured person has up to two minutes to recover and resume the match. Either the referee or the injured participant may choose to end the match upon an injury. If the injury precludes continuing the match, the judges will determine the winner based on the performance of the participants up to the injury event. If the injury was the result of an illegal or reckless technique, then the attacker loses by disqualification and may not compete in sparring for the remainder of the tournament.

Alternative Sparring Rules

For some matches with experienced, mature, adult participants there will be no judges or awards. Participants might be chosen at random, by weight/size, by experience, or by personal voluntary engagement. The length of the match is 1-5 minutes. Side guards keep the competitors in the ring. The referee supervises to assist in the prevention of injury. Any technique is allowed except for contact to the eyes, strikes to the neck, ears or groin, or other techniques likely to cause serious or permanent injury. The purpose here is to defeat the opponent *without injuring him beyond bruising*. Bruises are okay; cuts, concussions, broken bones or injured joints are not. Participants may be armed or unarmed, and may be differently armed.

Appropriate safety gear is required as determined by the participants. Allowed weapons are sticks and staffs of various length and shock knives. If a weapon is used, at least headgear is required. The weapons can be chosen by various means; randomly, mutual agreement, etc. A participant may submit at any time by posture, statement or tapout. The referee may stop the match for the safety of a participant.

Suggestions

Like grappling, once you have a little experience sparring, here are some ideas to continue to improve your skills:

- Decide whether you are going to work on power (contact sparring), speed, technique or endurance.
- Pick specific techniques or combinations that you will focus on.
- Attacking a specific target.
- Keeping your eyes on the center of the opponent.
- Combinations of at least 2, 3 or more moves.
- Concentrate on defending or attacking.
- Control the distance between you and the opponent.
- Drifting to the side and slipping attacks.
- Counterattacking.
- Closing for take-downs.
- Maintaining a good stance.
- Classes of attacks (kicks, knees, hand strikes, elbows).
- Achieving and attacking from a clinch or restraining hold.
- Escaping from clinches.
- Resisting take-downs.

Spar against as many different people as you can; all different sizes, strengths and skills.

Testing

Students will spar for one minute, uninterrupted, for each rank for which they are testing. They will spar according the rules of their stage. Sparring may include weapons, multiple opponents, and grappling.

RECOMMENDED SPARRING GEAR

When it comes to physical, technical practice, we place roughly equal emphasis upon sparring, grappling and forms. Sparring in the beginning stage is primarily non- and light-contact. Its purpose is to develop distance awareness and control, along with the ability to defend from and generate spontaneous attacks. Non-contact sparring can be done without protective gear, but shin, mouth and groin guards are recommended. Contact, competitive sparring begins in the intermediate stage. Sparring gear is mandatory for students engaging in contact sparring. If you wish to participate in contact sparring earlier, your instructor may allow you to do so, but you will need to acquire sparring gear. This should be the most durable, highest quality gear you can find, and should cover the following areas:

- Knuckles and back of hands * (but allow freedom of movement so you can grab). These should be “sparring” gloves, not fight or bag gloves. Sparring gloves will have added padding for your and your partner's safety.
- Shins *
- Insteps *
- Groin -- cup and/or complete lower "abdo guard" (sometimes called a foul guard) *
- Mouth/Teeth *
- Full head coverage, including chin -- boxing style with chin and cheek protection is recommended, not the style with the separate metal or acrylic face mask *
- Body -- chest, kidneys, lower abdomen, spine and collarbones *
- Forearm (ulna)
- Elbow
- Knees

Items with an asterisk are required; you cannot participate in contact sparring without them. Others are strongly recommended. You will only be allowed to strike with or to a protected area. Most martial arts sparring gear is not intended for anything more than light contact -- it takes the sting out of hits, but bruising, "lost breath," knockouts and other serious injuries are still possible. Even with the heaviest of gear, intended for full-contact combat simulations, knockouts and injuries have occurred. For medium, full-contact sparring or weapons, heavier or specialized gear is required.

If you purchase gear through your school, it usually helps support the program. You may acquire sparring gear yourself, without going through the school, but it must meet the school's safety requirements. For example, the lightweight, cloth sparring gear that is cheaply sold from so many sources, is not suitable for contact sparring.

Patroni and above have discretion regarding their use of sparring gear when sparring other *patroni* (and are individually responsible for the consequences of exercising that discretion).

Never share sparring gear or uniforms unless they have been sanitized between uses. Even with good gear, contact sparring is prohibited between those having a large disparity of size or power -- participants should generally be within 10-15% of each other in weight. Otherwise, the smaller person is much more likely to be injured.

In the advanced stage we do some weapons sparring. Kali/Escrima-style gear is used.

STICK DRILLS

Beginners learn basic strikes with sticks of various lengths, first practicing in the air, then against bags and dummies. Most drills are single-hand with the stick forward. The defensive hand remains near the body or behind the stick.

We train with sticks ranging from roughly one foot to three feet as these approximate items often available in the environment:

- Rolled Magazine
- Knife
- Screwdriver and other stabbing tools
- Wrench
- Flashlight
- Hammer
- Compact Umbrella
- Small Tree Branch
- Chair Leg
- Standard Umbrella
- Walking Cane

If you learn to use (or defend from) various sticks, it takes little adaptation do so with weapons of similar size.

There is little or no drilling on blocking or defending from stick strikes at the beginner stage. The ideal is to stay out of range, and as someone moves in to strike, dodge away while hitting the extended hand, wrist or arm. If you are so close that dodging is impossible, close and take the person down.

Gripping the Stick

Most sticks should be grasped roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way from the end with the strong hand. The stronger you are, the closer to the end you can grab the stick. The last three fingers hold it firmly – not a strangle, but tight-enough that the stick cannot slip free from velocity or a shocking hit. The first finger wraps around, as well, but without as much pressure. The thumb wraps around in the opposite direction, also without great pressure on the stick; just enough to keep it from breaking out of the palm.

The stick should be able to pivot slightly in the palm, and the wrist relaxed.

For longer, heavier stick like canes, the weak hand assists by grasping the end of stick. This allows for more powerful strikes, but they are generally slower due to the amount of body mass – both arms – necessary to involve in the movement.

Slashing Strikes

For slashing strikes always follow through, attempting to hit about one quarter to one third from the end of the stick (for longer sticks). The wrist should snap so that the stick is traveling at the fastest possible velocity upon impact.

The stick is traveling faster at its end, of course. But in a live situation with both parties moving, trying to hit someone with the end of a swinging stick can be difficult. By trying to hit with the last third or quarter of the stick, the chances of actually hitting are improved.

Slashing strikes are effective to almost any part of the body. They cause painful damage to soft tissue and can break bone. Since our goal is to injure/disable our attacker rather than kill him, we want to avoid head and neck strikes. We encourage strikes to the limbs – hand, wrist, forearm, elbow or knee – or collar bone. With a stick this can easily cause sufficient injury to render the arm harmless.

A well-executed slashing strike will cause the air to crackle due to the speed of the stick.

Figure 8 (horizontal): Strike on the downward, diagonal paths. Also reverse, striking on the upward swing.

Horizontal: Strike while swinging back and forth.

Diagonal (NE-SW): Strike in both directions.

Diagonal (NW-SE): Strike in both directions.

Whipping: The whip (or backhand) is a deceptive strike whose motion is similar to an inward hammer fist. Instead of hitting with the hand, you hit with the stick. The target for this strike is usually the side of the head, neck or collar bone.

Downward/Upward (less common): The straight downward slash is more common with longer sticks with a two-hand hold. The target is usually the head, collarbone or foot. The vertical upward slash is rarely seen, and would generally target the groin.

Many stick based martial arts include directly downward (vertical) strikes, or have numbers to identify each strike. For our purposes the listed strikes are more than sufficient, and a downward strike is almost always targeting the head, which we avoid unless trying to kill the attacker.

Thrusting Strikes

Thrusting strikes attempt to drive the long end of the stick directly into the target. Thrusting strikes are highly effective to the body, especially the ribs, solar plexus,

femoral area and neck. They don't have nearly the same bone-breaking velocity as a slashing strike, but focus a lot of force on a small area. The thrusting strikes correspond roughly to the starting and ending points of slashing strikes.

Straight

Upward

NW

NE

SE

SW

Hammer, Pommel and Reverse Hold Strikes

Follow the same pattern as empty hand hammer strikes; inward, outward and downward. These strikes usually have the same primary targets, as well; side of head and collarbone.

Parrying and Defensive Strikes

These are designed to deflect an incoming attack by striking the incoming weapon or wrist. They typically move in a circular motion, in a plane perpendicular to the line of attack.

Drilling

As strike patterns are learned, practice shifting fluidly from one to another. Create your own combinations of multiple strikes. Every pass does not have to strike, but keep the stick moving. Move around while drilling, incorporating step slide and other movements and techniques.

Develop combinations that begin with a parry, and combinations that have at least two rapid attacks – the first attack being designed to attack the attacker's weapon or weapon arm.

Learn to perform all techniques with the weak hand as well as the strong.

Learn to incorporate the power of the entire body into the moves.

Remember to do the strikes at different levels/targets; head, shoulders, torso, thighs, knees, feet.

BOARD BREAKING

Board breaking is emphasized in some martial arts. Not so much in Via Potentia. We do it from time to time and during testing for a few reasons.

- It builds confidence.
- Being able to break a board (or multiple boards) requires and demonstrates speed, accuracy and power.

However, board breaking has practically zero application to self defense and is much easier for larger, stronger people (or anyone who is used to “throwing his weight around”). Because of this it isn't a useful measure of skill unless the number of boards is proportional to the size of the person.

Anyone should be able to break at least one standard size pine board (i.e., a 1x12 board cut to eight inches wide). Multiply this by the weight factor:

| Weight | Factor |
|------------------|--------------|
| Under 100 pounds | 1 |
| 100-199 | 2 |
| 200-299 | 3 |
| etc. | +1 / 100 lbs |

Some techniques should never be tried on boards -- claws, spear hands, etc. Children should not attempt breaks with fisted punches ever. It can damage bones in the hand and result in deformity. Even in adults, fisted breaks and some foot techniques often result in chipped or broken bones.

Common mistakes on board breaking include: stopping at the board surface; a lack of speed, accuracy or power; having a loose hand (when doing a hand technique); lack of full body involvement; uncoordinated breathing.

Speed is more important than force in board breaking. Maximum force is usually available in the last couple inches of extension, but your body necessarily decelerates the limb as it approaches full extension, so strike such that your actual intended stopping point in a few inches beyond the surface of the board.

Testing

Take the rank for which one is testing and multiply it by the weight factor from above. That is the total number of boards to break. The student has as many attempts as the rank for which he is testing to break all of the boards. For example, if someone is testing to advance to intermediate stage, he is testing to complete rank

3. He weighs 160 pounds, so his weight factor is 2. He must break a total of six boards (rank x weight factor). He can use up to three different techniques.

When testing, for each technique the student gets one warm-up to gauge the distance and board position, and then must strike.

TOURNAMENTS

We encourage tournament participation (it is required for those wishing to complete the full, three-year Via Potentia program).

Every tournament is a little different and we have to adapt our techniques to the rules of the tournament we are attending. Sometimes this works well. Other times it places you at a significant disadvantage. For example, if you are used to a specific style of sparring – level of contact, referee style, targets, etc. – it can be quite a challenge to participate in tournament sparring under very different rules.

Recognize that tournament skills and self defense skills are related, but different. Tournaments are great for testing and demonstrating your technical abilities when matched “fairly” and playing according to rules. One can be great at tournament point sparring, forms or board breaking, but bad a practical self defense (or vice-versa). Do aspire to do well in tournaments, but not at the expense of your actual self defense skills.

Another challenge is that most tournaments have a limited scope and expensive entry fees. Perhaps the focus is on forms and non- or light-contact point sparring (areas that aren't very important to us). Other schools practice these exercises frequently and will be quite skilled with them. If you pay \$50 for entry into a tournament that consists only of events that you don't practice routinely it may end up being frustrating and even a little disillusioning. For example, our focus is on delivering power to human vulnerabilities in a disadvantaged position, for the purpose of causing an injury and escaping. There isn't any moral or legal tournament event (that we are aware of) that allows the demonstration of such skills.

The common events are sparring, grappling, forms and board breaking. Some will include weapons sparring. Divisions vary depending on the tournament and event. For example, forms are usually divided up by experience level, then by age. Board breaking *should* be divided by weight class and experience (but weight is rarely considered). Sparring and grappling also by weight class, experience, and sometimes age and gender.

Certain rules favor specific styles. For example, sparring with very limited targets and separating the competitors at each perceived point favors light, fast people who are skilled at no-contact sparring (but might be poor at contact). Continuous sparring without break favors those who are heavier, stronger and more familiar with heavy contact sparring. Board breaking events that don't take into account the weight of the breaker favor heavier people. And so it goes.

The most “fair” tournaments, if there is such a thing, will take into account general experience and skill; we do so by categorizing people as beginner, intermediate, advanced or black belt based on their years of participation or actual rank. We also segregate people by size/weight:

| Division | Upper Limit |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Flyweight | 125lb / 57kg |
| Bantamweight | 135lb / 61kg |
| Featherweight | 145lb / 66kg |
| Lightweight | 155lb / 70kg |
| Welterweight | 170lb / 77kg |
| Middleweight | 185lb / 85kg |
| Light Heavyweight | 205lb / 93kg |
| Heavyweight | 265lb / 120kg |
| Super Heavyweight | No upper limit |

Weight segregation is important for events where weight and strength can be significant advantages. Events that include grappling are often segregated by gender, too. If weight is taken into account, gender segregation may not be necessary for other events like upright sparring and breaking.

If there are too many participants in a single event division, it is usually advantageous and more interesting to the participants to divide them into subdivision by weight, skill, age or a similar relevant measure. However, sometimes there is a problem in the other direction – there are too few entries in a particular division. When that happens divisions are often combined, but every attempt should be done to make such combinations as fair as possible. For example, it is “fairer” to give entrants the option to move up and compete against people who are larger or have greater experience, but it poses a problem to unilaterally combine divisions so that smaller or less experienced people end up competing with much larger or more skilled people without any option. In our tournaments, if there aren't enough entries in a division, the participants have the option to move up and compete against a higher weight or skill class.

Some tournaments will have a championship round at the end. For example, if you took first in beginner grappling in the bantamweight class, there might be another match against the bantamweights of other experience levels, or an openweight event against the winners in the other beginner weight classes. There are a lot of different ways to go at it, and not necessarily a single, right one.

Pay special attention to announcements and ring calls. If you don't show up for your event when called, you lose. Some accommodation is sometimes made if you were competing at another ring when called. Also, immediately obey an instruction by the ref. Refs don't see everything, and sometimes show a lot of favoritism, but many are trying to be fair and impartial. If you don't like a call, just move on. There is (usually) no changing it once it has been made.

Forms and breaking are pretty straightforward, but sparring can be a real challenge. Once you've decided to participate in a tournament, try to find out about its events, divisions and rules well in advance. Maybe they allow techniques you don't normally practice, or disallow ones that you like to use all the time. Take time to specifically train and practice according to those rules before going in. Above all, the key with tournaments is to go in with a good attitude, a commitment to do your best, to show good sportsmanship and to be a good representative of your school.

Following are the general rules for various events at tournaments hosted by Via Potentia.

General Guidelines and Definitions

Administrator: The tournament administrator is usually the head of the hosting school. The administrator is responsible for all aspects of the tournament and is the last level of appeal in a dispute. Sometimes there are also administrators for specific events.

Admission Costs: Keep admission costs as low as possible to allow participation without financial constraint. Allow viewing for a very small fee or charitable donation.

Appearance / Attire: Participants should wear uniforms in keeping with the conventions of their particular schools and the particular events. No profane, suggestive or otherwise inappropriate attire is allowed.

Awards: To keep costs down we usually award ribbons for individual events/divisions, and trophies or medals for all-around champions.

Behavior: Respect, humility and good sportsmanship must be demonstrated at all times. Failure in this regard may result in a warning, penalty, disqualification or even expulsion from the tournament. Participants, viewers and coaches are welcome to offer supportive comments, but may not demean any participant.

Coaches: Each participant is allowed up to two personal coaches. Participants may be warned, penalized or disqualified based on the behavior of their coaches. Coaches may assist participants with advice on breaking, prior to forms, and during sparring. Coaches may not make public comments to or about other participants (except for positive comments). Coaches may not step into the competition areas.

Division: A subcategory of an event intended to improve the quality of the competition. Sometimes these are called classes (e.g., "weight classes"). If enough participants are registered for an event, they may be segregated into divisions. In general, at least three participants are necessary per division. If there are more than ten participants in a division, it is usually best to break it into subdivisions. Common divisions include gender, weight, height, experience/skill and age. Participants are free to compete against people in higher weight and skill divisions, but generally cannot move into lower ones.

Event: A major category of tournament participation. General events are forms, board breaking, sparring and grappling. These are, in a sense, the highest division levels.

Experience/Skill: Some events have divisions based on experience. “Experience” means *the participant's experience/skill in that particular event*, not his present rank in a specific style. For example, someone who is a beginner in a particular style but has black-belt level skill, experience or ranking in sparring would compete as a black belt in that event. It is better to think of this as actual competitive skill than years of experience, because some people have many years of experience but lack great talent or skill, while some people have little experience, but natural talents and skill. Misrepresentation of skill (or any other misrepresentation) will result in automatic disqualification. We generally ask entrants to rate their own skill on a scale from 1 to 10 as follows:

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|--|
| 1-2 | Beginner | Up to one year; white, yellow or similar belts |
| 3-4 | Intermediate | One to two years; mid-color belts |
| 5-6 | Advanced | Two to three years; high color belts |
| 7-9 | Black Belt / Professional | Four or more years, high level competition experience and success |
| 10 | Master / Top-level professional | Ten or more years, or high level competition, state or national champion |

Grabbing: In those competitions where grabbing is allowed, the grabs may only be directed to the opponent's outer clothing or gear, limbs, hands, feet, or three or more fingers at one time. No grabbing individual fingers, hair, ears, nose, skin, genitals, or the like. No grabbing the neck with an open hand.

Judges: Events may have one to three judges. Ideally an odd number. Judges score the participants' performance and determine the winner.

Penalties: Illegal techniques, unsportsmanlike behavior, fouls or excessive contact may result in a warning, penalty or disqualification, depending on frequency and severity. These are at the referee's discretion and may only be appealed to the event or tournament administrator.

Protective Equipment: Each event specifies required equipment. Lack of required equipment results in loss by disqualification. However, the more gear that is involved, the less skill that is usually demonstrated. Stick sparring is a perfect example of this; in some stick events the competitors continuously smack away at

each other without any apparent attempt to protect themselves because of the presence of the protective gear that dramatically decreases the impact of the hits. The minimum amount of gear that is necessary to prevent injury should be used.

Referee: The referee administers individual matches. He insures that the event rules are followed and the safety of the participants. He may stop play, warn, penalize and disqualify participants. The ref's orders must be followed immediately by the participants in his match. He may not engage in any coaching.

Resignation: A participant may resign at any time, forfeiting the match, by saying loudly "resign" or "submit." A coach may do so on behalf of a participant in the same way or by throwing a towel into the competition area.

Subdivisions: Additional segregation of a particular event. For example, suppose that in board breaking there are 20 participants in the over 200 pound division. These could be further divided into subdivisions by experience, thereby allowing for more interesting competition between participants.

Submission: A submission is indicated by tapping three times with the hand or foot, saying "tap," or by referee decision. The tap may be to the mat or to the opponent. For most sparring events a single submission does not end the match. The opponents are reset and continue.

Waiver: All participants and viewers must sign a liability waiver and assumption of risk agreement.

Board Breaking

Divisions: Weight/Skill

Required equipment: Pine boards measuring 3/4" thick by 8" wide by 11½" tall with grain running along 8" dimension. The participant may not use handwraps or other assisting gear. The boards may be held by a stand or by assistants.

General rules and scoring: The participant gets two break setups. One with an upper body strike (hand or elbow). The other with a foot strike. He gets one "warm up" for each break attempt, and may do up to three attempts per setup. His score is the total number of boards broken by his strikes, adjusted as follows:

| | |
|----|--|
| -1 | Each attempt beyond the first one |
| 1 | Spinning technique (e.g., spinning side kick) |
| 1 | Jumping technique (e.g., a jumping front kick) |
| 2 | Spinning, jumping technique |
| 1 | Other difficulty-increasing technique like a knife or ridge hand break |

Ties: Competitors for top placement perform additional single breaks until the tie is broken.

Alternate Rules: A "break" is as many different breaks as can be done in one second. For example, the first setup might consist of three different breaks, all completed within a second.

Forms

Division: Empty-hand or Weapon / Skill / Age

General rules and scoring: Participants wait in the staging area. When called, he enters the ring, addresses the judges, and begins the form. Upon completion he salutes the judges and leaves the ring. Each judge may use his own method of scoring, but does so individually. Once all competitors in a division have performed, the judges individually rank the participants from best to worst *without consultation with each other*. The top person gets 10 points. The next gets 9. The next 8. And so on. The judges' individual scores are summed and the winners are arranged from highest score to lowest. The precise score is irrelevant except as a tool to order the competitors.

Ties: Tied competitors in the top three perform their forms again and are evaluated by the judges in comparison only to each other.

Forms judging is highly subjective and difficult to do when there are substantially-different styles present, as each style has different emphases. There should be one judge for each style that is present. The evaluation should be based upon the degree to which the competitor demonstrated technical skill, strength, flexibility, mental focus, the complexity of the form, and properly represented the particular form performed.

The net result is that participants may have performed a form excellently according to a specific style, but someone whose overall technique was satisfactory to more styles may place higher.

Alternate Scoring Method:

Judges begin with a base score depending on the difficulty of the form

| | |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 10 | Master or Top Professional level |
| 9 | Black belt or Professional level |
| 8 | Advanced Amateur level |
| 7 | Intermediate Amateur level |
| 6 | Beginner Amateur level |

For each error in the form, poor technique, mis-step, off-stance, etc., the judge reduces the score by a fraction. 0.1 or greater. Scores are then averaged between the judges and immediately communicated after performance of the form.

Sparring

In Via Potentia sparring is a drill used to assist in the development of practical fighting and self defense skills. This includes the ability to fight at a disadvantage of size, strength, skill or other. However, the purpose of *tournament* sparring is the *testing and demonstration* of technical skill and personal conditioning on a pound-for-pound basis and according to set rules. Gross mismatches in size and skill make such demonstration difficult. A larger, stronger person can defeat a more skilled one (or easily injure him) using his strength alone. And a disparity of skill often results in a match in which neither person is able to improve or truly demonstrate his abilities under pressure. Consequently, opponents are matched by size and skill.

A realistic competition also requires using as much power and as many techniques as possible. At the same time, we do not wish to injure each other, and so must restrain our techniques and power employed while engaging in friendly competition. This requires limiting “legal” targets and the power delivered to them.

Divisions:

1. No-contact sparring / skill / height / age / gender
2. Upright only sparring / weight / skill / age / gender
3. Sparring with grappling / gender / weight / skill / age

Required Equipment: Safety gear as described in the divisions.

General rules and scoring: The matches run for 2 minutes (time may be increased or decreased depending on experience, and multiple rounds are allowed). The referee directs the match. Each judge scores on a 10-point must system, wherein the winner of the round/match receives 10 points, and the loser receives 9 or fewer. 9 represents a fairly good match with a slight edge to the winner; 8 a definite advantage to the winner; 7 an apparent mismatch of abilities. The judges' scores are summed at the end of the match and the winner is determined.

Participants must have at least one foot in the competition area, defend himself at all times, and make consistent effort to attack the other participant.

Match administration: A time-keeper will monitor the clock. He will start and stop it as directed by the referee and announce when time is up. Judges will observe both competitors and score the match in accordance with the adopted rules. The referee regulates the match; calls the competitors into the ring, checks their gear, makes sure they understand the rules, confirms that all players are ready, start and stops the match as needed, and enforces the match rules.

Referee may reset participants if they go out of bounds, neither is making progress, or similar situation. Referee may pause the match at his prerogative.

Ties: In the event of a draw an additional round is engaged.

No-contact division: Allowed techniques are those that *would* strike with the hand (open or closed), forearm, elbow, knee, shin or foot. No contact may be made to the face, head, neck, spine, lower abdomen (below the navel/belt), groin or to or below the knees. Light contact may be made to the torso or the thighs. No grabbing, biting, pushing, scratching, tripping or take-downs. Scoring areas are all surfaces of the body except the arms and butt. Scoring techniques are those that were not deflected or blocked and would have hit and been effective if extended and followed through *in the judge's opinion*. A mouthpiece is required. Men must also wear a protective cup. Other protective gear is allowed but not required.

No-contact participants must exercise special restraint with regard to advancing on the opponent. Constant advancement by one participant may result in a warning or penalty. In addition, contact against an opponent who “walked into it” may be allowed without penalty.

If there is a fall, the upright participant has up to three seconds to follow up with attacks. The down person should defend and attempt to regain his feet. After three seconds the referee will reset the opponents if the down person has not regained his feet on his own.

Upright Only Contact division: Same as no-contact, but with these modifications. Moderate contact is allowed to the head and face, to the torso above the belt and thighs. Catching and grabbing of limbs is allowed for purpose of executing an immediate offensive technique or counterattack -- not for takedowns. No joint locks. A clinch may be held for up to five seconds. Strikes are allowed in the clinch.

Protective gear is required on the striking or receiving surface, or both. A mouth guard, head gear, fist gear completely covering the face and posterior surfaces of the hand when in a fist, and foot gear covering at least the instep are required. Gloves must be high quality “sparring” or “training” gloves with one inch or more padding, not “fight” or “bag” gloves; sparring gloves will have additional padding in the striking areas. Kicks using the shin require a shin guard; shin guards must be thick enough that the shin bone cannot be felt through the padding. Chest/torso coverage is required for non-black belts.

Contact with Take-Downs and Grappling division: Same as no-contact, but with these modifications. This division is intended for advanced and black belt participants. Participants may engage in take-downs as long as these do not spike the head or shoulder, torque the knee toward hyper-extension (some hip throws) or otherwise slam the opponent to the ground. Sweeps/trips must be at ankle level. Striking is allowed once on the ground, but downward elbows (spikes), knees, kicks and stomps may not make contact. Once on the ground, participants may fight for position, submission or escape, depending on skill and the match agreement. Two submissions by one party end the match as a technical knockout (TKO).

In the event of an injury, the clock is stopped and the ref, coaches and any attending medical professionals assess the situation. If the ref, participant, coaches or medical attendant believe the match should not continue, or if the participant is otherwise

unable to resume competition within one minute, then the injured person loses by disqualification due to injury. If the injury was caused to by an illegal technique or excessive contact by the other competitor, then the other competitor is also disqualified from further competition in that event and is not eligible for placing in that event.

Placement: Overall sparring placement is determined on a double-elimination style bracket modified as follows (similar to Judo):

- Wait until the second round in the W bracket is complete to fill the L bracket first round. First round W bracket losers advance to L bracket only if those who defeated them also win their second round matches. Otherwise they are eliminated.
- The winner of the W bracket takes 1st place.
- Third place challenge: If the L bracket winner has already faced the W bracket 2nd place winner, then he takes third. Otherwise, he and the W bracket 2nd place winner compete for 2nd place.

Disqualification: Any participant causing an injury as a consequence of unauthorized technique or uncontrolled implementation of a technique will be disqualified for that match and forbidden to participate in sparring for the remainder of the tournament.

Alternate Rules:

- Participants find their own opponents and individually agree to the terms of their match. Judging is optional.
- No-contact sparring: Ref/judges call individual points. Points must be affirmed by a majority of judges. Match stops once a set number of points are achieved. No time limit (optional).
- Some techniques worth additional points; head kicks, jumping or spinning techniques, etc.
- Use simple, single-elimination bracketing – especially for kids.

Grappling

Divisions: Gender / Weight / Experience / Age

Required Equipment: Cup for men. Appropriate uniform. Must consist of at least MMA-style fight shorts.

Grappling for Position (beginners): Participants begin on their knees and may not stand up during the match; there must be three points of contact on the ground at all times. No throws or take downs. Participants attempt to acquire dominant positions on the opponent, and hold those positions for at least five seconds. At that point they must attempt to acquire a different position. The goal is to acquire positions, escape and perform reversals. The ref will reset the participants if a position is held more than 10 seconds. The recognized positions are front mount, back mount, side/cross mount, scarf, north/south. Guard is also a recognized position, but not a scoring one.

Grappling for Position with Take Downs (intermediate): Like beginners, but participants start upright and may do throws and take downs. No spiking the head or shoulder, or takedowns that torque the knee (as in some hip throws), or slamming the opponent to the ground.

Grappling for Submission (advanced): Like intermediate, but the following submissions are allowed; elbow extension and compression, wrist attacks, finger attacks holding three or more fingers, shoulder attacks, sleeper holds, hip attacks (e.g., electric chair), knee extension and compression, achilles compression and toe holds (ankle cranks). Gi submissions, heel hooks and neck cranks may be allowed in some situations.

Prohibited techniques: Pinching, contact with eyes, grabbing ears, nose or groin, grabs of fewer than three fingers, open hand holds on neck, gouging, scratching, kinetic strikes of any kind, submissions not expressly listed. Submissions involving the uniform are not allowed unless expressly agreed to in the division or by the participants.

Like sparring, scoring is the 10-point-must system, with the fundamental consideration being technical dominance. Two submissions results in an immediate win by way of TKO. Placement is usually by modified double elimination as described under sparring.

Any participant causing an injury as a consequence of unauthorized technique or uncontrolled implementation of a technique will be disqualified for that match and forbidden to participate in sparring for the remainder of the tournament.

Alternate Rules:

- Participants find their own opponents and individually agree to the terms of their match. Judging is optional.
- Referee calls out points for positions, take downs, escapes, and reversals. Winner is the first to a set number of points. No time limit (optional).
- Go until first or a set number of submissions. No time limit.

Stick Sparring

We use WEKAF rules as a general guideline for our stick sparring.

Divisions: Weight / Experience / Age

Required equipment: 28 inch stick weighing 200g or less. Helmet, body armor and hand protection as generally accepted by WEKAF. A cup for men.

Recommended: Elbow, knee, thigh and forearm protection. Shoes.

Allowed techniques and target areas: Only single-handed swinging strikes – hits with the side of the stick – are allowed to make contact. Thrusts may make contact with body only. Butt strikes may not make contact anywhere. Traps and disarms are also allowed. The allowed contact targets are the thighs and any point above the belt *where there is protection*. However, no strike may be made to the back of an opponent who has turned his back to you. Force must be high enough that the strike would be effective in the absence of armor, but not be excessive to the point of attempting to cause injury to the competitor.

A competitor can stop the match by backing up with both hands up; he then clarifies whether his intent is to address an injury, fix his gear or resign. Turning your back to the opponent will result in resignation of the match.

Blocking the opponent's stick with your (free, padded) hand counts as a hit for the opponent.

No more than two successive hits to the same target.

Participants may tie up (clinch) for up to five seconds. If still clinched after five seconds the referee will call a break; break *cleanly*.

In the event of a fall fighting stops and the referee will reset the participants.

The opponent's stick may be grabbed for the purpose of executing an immediate disarm. It must be released within two seconds. Anytime your stick ends up out of your hand, it counts as a disarm, even if you simply dropped it. Three disarms by one person results in a TKO.

No joint locks, strikes, kicks, pushing, take-downs, grappling, etc.

WEKAF-style matches typically run three, one minute rounds with 30 second breaks. Each round is scored on the 10 point must system, as described under sparring. Overall placement is also by modified double elimination, as described under sparring.

Factors considered for scoring are:

1. The number and power of strikes to proper targets, especially those that would be most effective in an actual confrontation without gear.
2. Disarms and weapon drops
3. Use of defensive techniques as opposed to reliance on protective equipment (a lack of which can result in penalty or disqualification)

Some alternative rules:

- Allow hand, elbow, knee and foot strikes, as well as grabs, take downs and grappling, as agreed to by participants.
- Follow rules for falls as in sparring.
- Count points for clean hits and end match at a given number of points. Reset fighters on each point scored. Similar to conventional point sparring.
- Allow differing weapons or gear, as agreed to by participants

SELF DEFENSE AGAINST CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

I long debated on whether to include this section in the manual. After reading about increasing, horrific crime against people by the use of modern weapons, I've decided to do so.

Criminals use weapons in two ways; to compel compliance or to directly attack (they also use them to deter attacks from other criminals). Compliance is sought when the criminal wants your wallet, purse, car, or to take you to another place. "Another place" is sometimes referred to as the secondary crime scene, but more often it is "where the body was found." If someone is threatening you with a weapon, it may be wise to give him what he is asking for, but it is critical that you never, ever allow yourself to be tied up or taken to another location.

Guns, Knives and Other Annoyances

We generally don't offer training in defense against weapons like knives or guns, especially not to beginners. There is a huge disconnect between many self defense / martial arts drills and real violence. That disconnect is rooted in the method of attack, and the intention of the attacker. Responding to a friendly training partner who moves in an anticipated, scripted way, without deadly intent and without an actual weapon (and usually without any knowledge or experience with the real weapon) has little or no resemblance to an actual armed assault.

You'll rarely be wrong if you assume that most men, and almost all bad guys, carry a weapon of some kind, often a knife. A knife doesn't have to six inches long to be worth concern. Something so simple as a gumstick-sized razor-blade box knife is practically invisible... and deadly in determined hands. To defend yourself from someone wielding a blade you have to literally be able to *prevent him from touching you*. This is practically impossible. His knife isn't going to jam, run out of ammunition, and you can't grab and struggle over it.

There is one best defense, and it goes by a variety of names; "track and field defense," "nike defense," or just "run as fast as you can." Anyone who threatens or attacks you with a knife is a very, very dangerous person, for it takes a unique and severely deformed psychology to aggressively use a knife on another human being. (Though I think it would be personally horrific, I don't have any problem with someone who utilizes a knife in self defense to save his life.)

A knifer *can* be defeated; the only question is whether you will live to tell about it. Your best chance is if you have a gun (or some other very intimidating and powerful weapon). Only a lunatic will close on you with a gun pointed at him. If he attacks anyway, you either have to keep your distance and shoot him repeatedly, hoping that he'll drop before he can cut you too badly, or close aggressively and try to disable/disarm him before you are mortally wounded. Neither has great odds in your favor. If you have pepper spray you might get lucky and disable him at a distance.

Guns pose similar problems. Any idiot can point his finger at someone and push a button at the same time; that is about all it takes to use a gun. The good news is that the majority of shots miss, and of those that hit, only about one in five is fatal. The flip side of that coin is that modern guns carry a lot of rounds – mine carries 17 – and are easily and quickly reloaded.

The presence of a weapon, a much larger attacker, obvious violent intent or multiple attackers presents a very serious danger. An idiot with a knife or a gun can easily injure or kill very experienced fighters. The chances of success against someone with an effective weapon are simply too small, and the best choices are usually either flight or submission. Someone who points a gun at you (or deploys a knife) is either a murderer or potential murderer. I don't care how tough you are – our advice is to run away from murderers. Don't run and hide somewhere. Run and run and run, erratically, through buildings and out the other side, over the river and through the woods, until you can't take another step and collapse from exhaustion, so far that you get lost and when you ask where you are you discover you are in the next county or state.

Two other modern weapons are being increasingly-used by criminals to incapacitate their victims, at which point they often abduct them or perform additional attacks. Those weapons are chemical sprays and tasers.

These aren't really “non-lethal” weapons. They are *less*-lethal. Some people still die from their use, related injuries or complications.

If you ever find yourself tasered or sprayed without any warning, you are in a life-or-death situation and should choose your actions accordingly.

Defending Against Chemical Weapons

Mace and pepper (OC) spray are the two most common kinds of chemical sprays available. In most places they can be carried by anyone without raising suspicion. They are small, easily hidden, can be deployed quickly, and cause debilitating pain for up to about 30 minutes. It is a highly effective tool, and as such is carried and used offensively by both criminals and police, and defensively by many people.

Some dispensers issue a stream of liquid. Others a spray or mist. Some a sticky foam. Upon being sprayed in the face the eyes clamp shut involuntarily and begin tearing. The sinuses burn and drain. The skin may burn, as well. The person usually drops to the ground from the pain. *Intense* pain. Sometimes they will begin screaming.

We actually carry and recommend the ASP Defender and similar models to our students, as it acts as a slashing key flail, kuboton and OC mist dispenser all-in-one.

As with any weapon, the best form of defense is to not get hit by it. Most pepper sprays have a range of up to about ten feet. If you think you are going to be sprayed, you must immediately choose between fleeing and attacking; whatever you do, *move*. Chemical sprays are directional weapons and if you hold still you are an easy target.

If you are going to flee, just turn your head away, run, and don't look back. If you are going to attack, bring your arm up tightly over your eyes so that your eyes are sealed tight and the bridge of your nose is in the crook of your elbow; as you do this, charge the attacker while breathing out and keeping your mouth closed, *and take him down and finish him*. He is highly unlikely to dispense the spray once you are on him, as he will be hitting himself, as well (but that doesn't stop some people).

Most dispensers can fire multiple shots, so don't assume that you are in the clear if the first one missed. If you do get sprayed in eyes, prepare for intense pain, and to fight for your life. Blink. Blink. Blink. Don't stop blinking. It will be like fighting in a strobe light situation. You *can* fight effectively if sprayed, but it takes incredible will to do so through the pain and limited vision.

Defending Against Tasers

Tasers operate by firing two barbs into the victim. The barbs are connected by wire to the device which then electrifies the wires when the trigger is pulled. They are effective up to about 20 feet, depending on the model. Only one barb has to hit for the shock to work, but it is more powerful if both hit.

The voltage causes major muscles to contract involuntarily. People who are struck by a taser lose some or all control of their body, and usually fall to the ground. The trunk contracts, too, as do the vocal chords, resulting in the high-pitched shriek emitted by the tasee. Some people go into cardiac arrest when tasered, or shortly thereafter. Injuries are often experienced in the fall, as well.

If you suspect you are about to be tasered, *move*. Most tasers have a single shot, and if that one misses, you can attack and end the fight or be far away before he can reload. Similar to the chemical defense, move one arm up over your eyes – you don't want a barb in the eye. Your arm doesn't have to be tight over your eyes, though, so you have a better chance of attacking or running without falling or running into something. Turn sideways to reduce your size, and therefore your chance of getting hit, and then either attack or flee.

If you are hit, you will experience pain, loss of control, and will almost certainly fall to the ground. When you fall, do whatever you can to entangle the taser's wires in your arms and log-roll. This will break the wires. The attacker can easily close on you in this time, so be prepared for kicks, stomps, etc.

Unlike chemical sprays, the taser's debilitating effects cease almost immediately. If you have a clear head about you, determination, and weren't seriously injured in the fall, you can get up immediately and make a choice about what to do next. Of course, if the wires are still attached to the taser, the attacker will simply shock you again, and again, until he has your compliance. If you choose to attack, be aware that many tasers also function as stun-guns – they fire the same voltage across their contacts. Due to the proximity of the contacts this isn't as debilitating as the deployed wires, but it can sting all the same and drop you.

CHI/QI/KI TECHNIQUES

The human body has surprising abilities. It is self healing. It can be supple and flexible, or rigid and hard. It can survive tremendous injury and adapt to extreme situations. With dedicated effort – exercise and diet – it can be practically reformed to the point that the same person is barely-recognizable. Yet it is also very delicate and sensitive. Modern medical science is amazing, but even it does not fully understand some of the subtle ways in which the body functions.

Some people believe that the body has the ability to harness and control a force called chi (it goes by different spellings, including qi and ki), and that this force travels along pathways in the body called meridians. They believe that chi is actually a natural energy or force that resides in all things, even the air, and that a trained person can direct it, not entirely unlike the “force” from the popular Star Wars movies; some martial arts go so far as refer to their current members as modern day jedi (yes, really).

The idea that one can harness an invisible force is an attractive belief, and goes back hundreds or thousands of years. Some people specifically seek ways of controlling their own chi or others', both to heal and to cause harm. This is most often attempted by touch or the use of needles to release, block or redirect the flow of chi.

Those who believe in chi are sometimes deeply influenced by those who claim to be able to affect it. This belief in chi is critical to its effectiveness. I've seen people apparently thrown back, struck and knocked out with light contact and sometimes even *without being touched*. Some claim to feel and react as if they received something akin to a force, heat or an electric shock. Many people seeking self defense or martial arts training become interested in the idea of chi, and the ability to disable an attacker with little effort or risk. Some with chronic illness or natural aging pursue it out of a desire for healing.

The belief in chi is not entirely irrational. The history of science is little more than a series of successive theories attempting to explain the things that we experience. For every theory or “law” that exists today, there are hundreds or thousands that have been believed at one time, then discarded. Most theories are useful for explaining certain narrow aspects of nature, but over time it is discovered that the theory, as dead-on as it seemed at one time, fails to explain some events.

Via Potentia takes no position on whether chi is a real property, entirely imaginary, or merely a mental construct. It isn't electromagnetic – it doesn't register on modern measurement equipment. There have been plenty of studies that debunk particular chi-practitioners or give perfectly-plausible natural explanations for the reactions, and it is a problem for the “chi-huggers” – the derogatory term applied to those who believe that chi is effective for defense – that their techniques are uniformly ineffective on non-believers. A martial skill that only works on those who believe in it isn't a very useful skill to have.

But this does not prove that chi, itself, is false. For example, we recently saw a video that demonstrated how someone could simulate pyrokinesis and spontaneous wounds using chemistry. The amateur scientist went on to imply that, because these could be effected chemically like parlor tricks, that all such manifestations were hoaxes. Such an assertion is neither scientific nor logical. In fact, I'm rather annoyed by such smug and obviously-ignorant pronouncements from people who think that, because they know basic chemistry and how to handle a volt meter, they have the answers to all of life's mysteries. I happen to have *two* voltmeters, myself, and still find life quite mysterious.

But I digress. What we do know is this: Whether chi is real or not, when people believe in something, they behave according to that belief. For example, many people believe that when you are shot or stabbed, you drop to the ground and die. They've seen it over and over on television and in the movies. They hear about it in the news. Their minds are positively conditioned to believe that this is how one reacts when shot or stabbed... *and that is exactly what they do*. But there is little reason to do so. Most shots miss. Of those that hit, only a small percentage are necessarily fatal. Of those that are fatal, only a small percentage would cause immediate disability or death.

The vast majority of shootings and stabbings are not fatal in and of themselves. And people who have had obviously-fatal wounds sometimes survive for minutes or hours, apparently on will alone. Some have a complete recovery. They refuse to give in.

In both situations the wound is real. The difference is the persons' belief about how the wound will affect him. Granted, in some cases belief is irrelevant; if you get shot in the brain by a large or high velocity, destructive caliber, game over. But belief and determination do matter in most cases.

Indeed, if you believe that a certain wound or event will kill you, you can put yourself into shock and die.

If chi is real, its manipulation doesn't work on all people. In fact, it doesn't appear to work on *most* people – only those who believe in it. It also requires rather precise striking and intense, long-term training (decades, hours per day). Whether it is real or not, these elements together make it inappropriate for practical self defense training.

However, even if chi manipulation is false or impractical, it is based on a truth: We do have vulnerabilities, nerves, arteries and organs. These are complex, interrelated and can be affected. Strikes or injuries to nerves and certain structures can have effects elsewhere in the body. Some injuries can not only take a long time to heal, but may take hours, days or weeks to bring about death.

A few months ago some boys were playing touch football in a nearby field. One of them kicked the ball and it struck the other squarely in the chest. He dropped to the ground, unconscious. It turns out that the hit caused him to have a heart attack. He died within a few minutes. A strike that concusses the heart at the right instant, or

even an electrical shock of the right voltage, amperage and frequency, can cause a properly-beating heart to go irregular. And in some cases can cause an irregular beat to correct. This is true, and is the basis for using electrical shock to resuscitate someone, but the information is really useless to the martial arts or self defense practitioner. It is practically impossible for someone to detect the heart's rhythm and, in the midst of conflict, time a properly-placed strike to stop an attacker's heart. There are, in fact, much easier ways of stopping an attacker.

Several of our self defense strikes are aimed at areas that are either known to be sensitive due to the presence of nerves, are easily broken, or are otherwise disruptive to body functions. Eyes, side of the head (jaw and ear region), root of the neck where it meet the shoulder, lower abdomen (below the naval), sciatic nerve, femoral nerve and arteries region, etc.

The strikes to the lower abdomen are worth pointing out. Many people think of strikes to the groin (testicles) as a key self defense technique, and it is useful. However, the front of the lower abdomen is an equally effective target, and often easier to hit. This area is also considered by many chi-believers to be the home of the personal chi.

If you watch (or engage in) boxing or kick boxing, you know that a strike “below the belt” is incredibly painful. This area is difficult to condition. It is also a dangerous area in which to receive strikes. There are documented cases of people dying after receiving kicks to the lower abdomen that ruptured the bladder or intestines – another possible source of the belief in a power centered in the area. It is the pathway for large nerves, arteries and veins feeding not only the lower organs, but both legs. Unlike the upper chest, the region is not protected by a sternum and ribs. It is extremely vulnerable.

In any event, as a beginner we recommend that you not become distracted by chi or nerve strikes. Focus on learning to deliver powerful combinations to vulnerabilities.

PEDAGOGY

[This information is included for the benefit of those who might wish to become instructors.]

"Pedagogy" refers to one's philosophy and method of instruction; the overall strategy and particular tactics employed. Our pedagogy was developed with respect to the strengths and limitations of human learning -- especially adult learning -- the nature of the human body, and the primary topic being taught, self defense.

Physical self defense requires learning to effectively deliver powerful attacks to vulnerable parts of the body in rapid succession. Though we can learn and assimilate multiple intellectual concepts in one sitting (and this becomes more difficult with age), studies indicate that we are not able to effectively learn new physical movements in rapid succession. Instead, new physical techniques should be taught one at a time, via repetition, and apart from distraction. After a new technique has been introduced and practiced repetitively, several hours should pass without any additional new techniques or complex movements. This allows the brain to assimilate the new motion.

Also, though you can basically just throw information at youth and children, adults have more difficulty learning new concepts because they have to integrate it with their greater knowledge and experiences. They need more information, details and examples, and they need more time to do this.

Once a specific technique has been taught and assimilated, it should no longer be practiced in isolation, but only in combination with other known techniques. This helps one learn to create spontaneous combinations, which is important, because individual or repetitive moves are rarely effective.

Some people and martial arts differ with this point. But consider writing. Once you learn to write the letter "a," you don't spend time each day of the rest of your life just writing a's. You incorporate it into words, and words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, etc. If you practiced writing a's every day, you would be wasting time, preventing yourself from developing truly useful skills, keeping your abilities at a childish level. There are only two times to do this:

1. When you are teaching another beginner.
2. When you discover a defect in your techniques and have to go back, break them down, and rebuild.

As mentioned earlier, to maximize progress and prevent injury, only dynamic stretching should precede exercise; static stretching and muscle-fatiguing calisthenics should be reserved for after exercise.

Finally, it takes substantial time for the body to adjust to exercise, and to grow in strength and conditioning sufficient to handle new movements without injury.

Techniques that require above-average conditioning or coordination should be reserved until much later.

For these and other reasons, we teach our curriculum as follows:

1. Techniques are presented individually and in order of simplicity, effectiveness for self defense, and lack of necessary physical conditioning. For example, complex joint techniques, or spinning and jumping kicks that are primarily for demonstration, are reserved for later.
2. Explain the concepts behind a technique; why it is necessary, when it is employed, its strengths and weaknesses, etc.
3. Demonstrate the technique
4. Learn the technique through isolated repetition. Allow the mind several hours to assimilate the movement. Do not interrupt the assimilation by attempting to learn additional techniques or concepts for at least one day.
5. In the next class, review the new technique
6. If properly learned, begin to practice that technique in combination with other techniques already known (once learned, a technique should no longer be practiced in isolation)
7. Practice combinations with a partner, learning when and how to apply the technique in spontaneous situations to another human being
8. Practice the technique (preferably as part of a combination) at full power on a heavy bag, against padded targets, pine boards, or an armored sparring partner, thereby learning to apply power
9. Review the technique from time to time via form practice

The ultimate goal of the technical curriculum is to be able to spontaneously deliver power to a variety of specific targets in rapid succession, to be able to move well whether upright or on the ground, and to be able to deflect and receive attacks well. Because the focus is on self defense, the techniques and targets cover nearly every surface and weakness of the human body, including those that are normally "off limits" in martial arts. Technical practice is complemented by whole-body conditioning; dynamic movement and stretching before technical practice, and strength building and static stretching afterward.

We do not expect students to master every technique. Some will appeal to certain people, and others will not. Techniques can be adapted to the student's unique abilities, and students can incorporate techniques and modifications that they have learned elsewhere.

GENESIS

To understand how Via Potentia was developed, one must first understand general martial arts and self defense programs.

There are many different kinds of martial art. In general, they have a hierarchical structure, a cultural expression associated with a particular country and period, an ethical perspective regarding moral behavior and citizenship, and combat-related physical techniques (at least in appearance or theory). Some are simple. Some are very complex. Some have weapons (usually ancient ones that are not used in the modern world). Many have "forms," or set combinations of moves developed for personal practice, demonstration or to express a philosophy. Some include sparring (contact or no contact). Some focus on sport competition, some on philosophy or personal development, and some on practical application. Some have fanciful or even blatantly fictitious histories. Most martial arts are nationalistic and associated with eastern cultures, but that has changed in modern times as people have learned more about other countries and their own unique martial systems. Martial arts tend to be long term pursuits, and can last decades if one so chooses.

Self defense programs generally revolve around practical fighting techniques that include modern weapons and instruction on how to deal with likely criminal scenarios. Some include a sport component; for example, there are many "reality-based" defensive shooting competitions. They tend to be short-term programs, and omit about 99% of the structure, cultural, philosophical and ethical material found in comprehensive martial arts.

Via Potentia was developed after about two decades of experience in (and in response to) conventional martial arts programs. Most commercial martial arts have excellent benefits, talented instructors and sincere students, but many also have some serious shortcomings:

- Teach impractical techniques to beginners (e.g., high kicks, complex combinations and techniques, fisted punches, etc.).
- Teach in a linear fashion that makes it difficult to integrate new and experienced students in the same class
- Teach via scripted combinations in which the moves are all known in advance, are overly-formal, and the partner is too compliant
- Claim to teach self defense, but fail to impart useful or realistic self defense techniques, principles and habits
- Exercise in ways that cause rather than avoid injuries, especially for adults
- Exercises are oriented to children, and can harm adult bodies
- Have events (like frequent belt testing) with little purpose beyond fleecing the students
- Have a variety of hidden fees and questionable financial practices
- Encourage or require ridiculous, lifelong exclusive commitments
- Treat students as inferior and demand their humility and obedience

- Promote unsound ethics, philosophies and mysticism (usually dualistic or pantheistic)
- Impose militaristic structures and anachronistic, foreign cultural observances
- Teach unrealistic weapon defenses and use impractical weapons (if any at all)
- Fail to teach drills that could prevent or assist someone in a real assault
- Are structured as financial pyramid schemes or even cults of personality

There are two authentic, historical sources for modern martial arts; competitive sports (boxing and wrestling), and dualistic metaphysical philosophy. Any connection with actual military action is remote or imaginary (legendary) at best and fraudulent at worst. Ironically, most “traditional” martial arts schools perpetuate the historical military fiction, perform forms that are rooted in metaphysical expression but without any understanding thereof, and then practice for the obvious purpose of demonstration and sport, all-the-while claiming that they are teaching self defense.

Self defense programs address some of these deficiencies and fallacies, but have some problems of their own, usually omitting personal conditioning, interesting and useful drills, and lack authentic ethical frameworks; they throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Seeing that there was little chance of reforming current schools to reflect better physical and ethical practices -- they (rightly) require that you teach according to their directives, and the leaders are generally, uniformly unwilling to cease the above practices -- we stepped out of those systems and developed Via Potentia as an independent endeavor to teach safe and effective conditioning and self defense.

This isn't Tae Kwon Do or some other martial art blended, reordered and repackaged. We literally started from scratch, investigated and drew upon best practices for adult physical conditioning and practical self defense to create a new program that is not beholden to these unhelpful practices in other systems. This resulted in some technical, coincidental similarities with common martial arts, but a very different pedagogy, different emphases, different organizational and financial structures, and a different order of instruction.

Philosophy of the Human Person

A fundamental difference between Via Potentia and other programs – the invisible difference that prompts all of the other apparent differences – is our philosophy regarding the human person and society. We believe that every human life is not property or a happy accident, but a precious gift. You didn't create your life. You don't have the power to do so. Your government didn't create your life, nor did your society. Life ultimately comes from God, and your particular one through the cooperation of your parents.

Our parents are initially entrusted with and responsible for helping our lives to get off to a healthy start. But life, even from the point of conception, is highly uncertain. The mere chance of being born and surviving childhood are frighteningly small. Even those who survive often don't do so fully intact, and spend much of the

remainder of life trying to recover. Sometimes it just doesn't work out the way it should, and the innocent pay the price.

Assuming we are able to enter into and survive childhood in one piece, the responsibility for our lives gradually shifts from our parents to us until it is fully in our hands, to do with as we will. We believe that each life has a unique potential for good, and that we are all called to be virtuous human beings.

In Via Potentia we refer to the primary facets or components of life as your person, liberty and property. Our principle in regard to these facets is generally referred to as the principle of non-aggression in the sense that we do not behave aggressively or violently towards others except as necessary to prevent them from doing so:

- By person we mean the physical and psychological capacities that make up you, your unique being or self. We also mean your reputation. We must never threaten or harm an innocent person. We may threaten or harm someone not for retribution/vengeance, but insofar as it is necessary to compel him to stop harming others. We value life, even that of the aggressor. We will never voluntarily take someone's life unless it is necessary to protect the innocent from his aggression.
- Liberty is the freedom to do good and know the truth. It is the necessary expression of your person and the choices that make up your chronological life; your relationships, conversations, what you read, career, privacy, education, where you live, etc. It. We must never impose on another person's liberty, except that of a person who is using his liberty to harm others. For example, we believe it is acceptable to limit the liberty of someone who is assaulting, coercing or manipulating others. However, people may knowingly, purposefully limit their own liberty through voluntary agreement with others (e.g., employment and contractual agreements).
- Property is the things that you learn, make or legitimately acquire throughout life as a consequence of your responsible exercise of liberty. This includes information and immaterial things in addition to material goods, and may range from savings to frivolities to genuine life necessities. We must never take or damage another person's property unless it did not actually belong to him, was acquired fraudulently, or was used to commit a crime or the like, and only for the purpose of restoring the proper order (e.g., preventing the theft or returning it to its proper owner).

Life is more than the sum of its parts, and certainly more than these meager facets, but it cannot be less. If someone is wrongly stripped of his property, of his liberty, or of integrity of person, then he is deeply wronged. We have a responsibility to protect these facets of life, not just for ourselves, but for others as well.

We don't protect life merely for the purpose of protecting life, but with the understanding that it is a precious gift given with the hope that we will do something

marvelous with it. Self defense training is therefore not an end in itself, but merely a supplemental exercise in support of our greater mission, a mission that each person must discover and choose for himself.

Our beliefs regarding human life have radical implications regarding our relationship with our society and government. Specifically, we do not believe that human beings can rightly be treated as pseudo-slaves of their government (or their employers). Rather, each person should be individually free regarding his choices to participate in and financially support or benefit from various government programs, most of which are merely forms of extortion/coercion by one group of people against another. We also believe that all forms of abuse, manipulation and violence against innocent human beings is fundamentally evil, and must be opposed.

Organizational Structure

We do not emphasize hierarchy in our practice, but every program and organization requires some structure. In terms of participants, Via Potentia consists of *discipuli* (students), *patroni* (black belts), *magisters* (instructors), *periti* (masters) and a *rector* (administrative director). Training is offered via clubs, schools or by long distance methods. The distinctions between these are unimportant, but a "club" is a less formal group that meets at a home, church, community center, academic school or similar location. A "school" or center is a gym specifically dedicated to Via Potentia study. Schools can be independently owned, or owned by Via Potentia.

In person, group instruction from a certified instructor is the ideal, but we also wholeheartedly encourage individual and small group study and practice. We are in no way opposed to practice in garages, basements, churches, community centers, parks, etc. Via Potentia does not and will not regulate how or where you practice; we propose -- never impose -- methods for practice.

A *discipuli* is anyone who is learning the basic curriculum. Students are generally recognized as beginners, intermediate or advanced. Students study informally with a *patronus*, or officially under the direction of a *magister*, *peritus* or headquarters. *Discipuli* are encouraged to attend a local club or school, if available. Otherwise, long distance learning methods are in development for individuals and groups.

A *patronus* is one who has been tested and certified by headquarters as having passed all student curriculum, including First Aid, CPR and gun safety. These skills can be taught and certified by most *magisters*, but also may be acquired from outside education or experience. *Patroni* may continue to participate in classes, and usually develop a personalized progress plan if they wish to continue in Via Potentia. *Patronus* is Latin for "defender" or "protector" and indicates someone who has chosen to dedicate himself to the preservation (defense) of human life. This is similar to what is called a "black belt" in many martial arts. *Patroni* are expected to be always prepared to assist in emergencies where their skills may be called upon, be it in their homes, neighborhoods, schools, workplaces or larger communities. A *patronus* may assist in class instruction, tournament judging, teaching and examinations, but cannot

certify ranks or learning. A *patronus* is advised by a *peritus* or headquarters, rarely a *magister*. A Via Potentia group led by a *patronus* is generally called a club.

A *magister* is a *patronus* who has been licensed by headquarters to teach the curriculum; this license must be renewed every four years. A *magister* must be certified in the *use* of an Automated Electronic Defibrillator (AED), and to *teach* First Aid, CPR and gun safety; these special certifications are normally provided by an outside organization like the American Red Cross or the National Rifle Association. A *magister* may conduct and grade rank examinations, and is advised by a *peritus* or headquarters. Substantial training in teaching and business management is necessary to be licensed as an instructor. Unlike a *patronus* who needs familiarity with only one self defense weapon, a *magister* must have working familiarity with all. Special, week-long workshops for *magisters* are generally offered in the summer. A Via Potentia group led by a *magister* is generally called a school.

A *peritus* is one who has been recognized by headquarters as a genuine master of Via Potentia. This is not merely someone with exceptional skill, but one who embodies our principles and philosophies. This is an honorary title, a lifelong recognition, and does not need to be renewed. One does not have to be a *magister* to become a *peritus* (though that is the normal progression). A *peritus* may teach and conduct rank and stage examinations. A *peritus* is relatively-independent, but should continue to work in cooperation with headquarters insofar as he continues to participate in Via Potentia. *Periti* are often authorized to train and certify instructors in special fields like First Aid, CPR, AED and self defense weapons -- they are "instructor trainers."

Headquarters administers the entire Via Potentia program, manages its own local school, supports long distance students, conducts examinations for *patronus*, trains and licenses *magisters*, and grants the title of *peritus* (headquarters may also perform any function or service that would otherwise be performed by a *peritus*, *magister* or *patronus*). This is run by the *rector*. Headquarters may suspend or strip ranks, licenses and titles. Clubs and schools may be opened only with the written authorization from headquarters (but there is no fee). Clubs and schools may receive resources, discounted supplies and support from headquarters. Headquarters may adapt and amend the organizational structure as needed.

Paradigm Shift

In most martial arts the students are subject to the instructor/master. They pay for instruction, tests, belts, uniforms, etc. – for services and products. They follow commands and instructions.

In Via Potentia we are all equals in human dignity. Rank, experience and honorary titles are unimportant. The instructor has no authority over anyone or any legitimate claim upon others' obedience, but is a servant to the participants/students, who also serve and support each other. It is less that the students are paying the master for his training than it is that all of them, together, are covering the expenses of the school. For example, at the present time our own gym costs \$1700 per month for the lease,

taxes and utilities. This does not include any wages for instructors. The income that I receive from the students does not go into my pocket as the instructor/director, but gets added to my own personal payment and investments for the gym which we share.

In this sense Via Potentia is structured more like an apostolate or monastic order than a military unit.

TESTING, RANK, STAGE AND CERTIFICATION

Ranking and formal testing is optional. One is not required to pass a formal test to continue to attend class. All participants are treated with equal dignity irrespective of rank or stage.

Participants are loosely categorized by stage; beginner, intermediate, advanced or *patronus*. There are three terms of material – three ranks – within each stage. After *patronus* there are two more formal titles, *magister* and *peritus* (which mean instructor and master, respectively), but they are beyond the scope of this document.

| Stage | Average Time to Complete | Emphasis |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Beginner | One Year | Self Defense Physical Conditioning Basics Grappling Positioning Non-contact Sparring |
| Intermediate | One Year | Throws Tournament Skills Contact Sparring |
| Advanced | One Year | Joint locks Submissions Perfecting Skills Weapons Sparring |
| <i>Patronus</i> (Black Belt) | N/A | Personal Goal Development |
| <i>Magister</i> (Instructor) | N/A | Instructing Others |
| <i>Peritus</i> (Master) | N/A | Independent Mastery Curriculum Contribution |

There is a testing opportunity at the end of each term. Testing for rank is not a critical or required part of this curriculum, but it has its uses. The purpose of these tests is to provide an opportunity for you to publicly demonstrate your progress, skill and conditioning, to identify areas for improvement, to develop the ability to perform under pressure, to evaluate your preparedness for upcoming courses, and to provide a symbolic right of passage. Instructors are not required to conduct a formal test after every course, but typically do so in a few circumstances:

- If it is the convention of their particular program -- some instructors test everyone after every course as a general rule
- When teaching in an academic setting where a grade or pass/fail evaluation has been requested by the administration
- When you have completed your third or sixth course (when you are advancing to the next stage)

- If the instructor has any doubts regarding your course participation or assimilation of the course materials, but wishes to give you the opportunity to prove yourself

Testing, whether for rank or stage, generally consists of the following:

- Character observations and evaluation of in-class effort, attitude, consistency, punctuality, etc., and out of class behavior (if known)
- Oral or written questions regarding the names and meanings of our ethics, the principles and practices of proper personal conditioning, and the principles and steps of legitimate self defense (including the differences between martial arts and self defense)
- Demonstrate N* technical combinations and forms
- Break a total of N x weight factor boards in N or fewer attempts
- Spar for a total of N minutes without break
- Demonstrate conditioning in accordance with your rank (strength, endurance and flexibility)
- Other items as determined by your instructor, test judges or headquarters

* N = the rank number for which you are testing.

Testing may take place individually or as part of a group, and is usually done in public. We attempt to keep testing as objective as possible, but it does contain some subjective elements. Observers are welcome as long as they do not interfere with the testing; family members or friends who can vouch for your character and development are specifically invited.

The tests after your third, sixth and ninth (final) classes are important, especially if you intend to continue in Via Potentia. To be certified for your new stage, you must pass every section of the test. If you pass these examinations, you receive a certificate of advancement and the uniform for your new stage. For your own safety you generally cannot learn techniques from the next stage unless you pass the stage examination (or otherwise demonstrate to the instructor that you have the conditioning and skills necessary to proceed).

Some have difficulty with one or more of the physical conditioning requirements. Suppose you only do 75% of the required push-ups for your stage or rank. This means you were short by 25%. You can still pass the calisthenics portion of test as long as you do an additional 25% of some other exercise. You need to be able to do at least 50% of the required calisthenic, plus make up the difference in others.

The test after your ninth class is your final, comprehensive examination. It is conducted only by headquarters. In person testing is preferred, but long-distance testing (by video) is allowed. In addition to the usual requirements, *patronus* candidates must demonstrate the following:

- Participation in at least two competitive tournaments (both forms and sparring)

- Skill with one or more conventional weapons
- A personal form
- Articulate a personal goal for his life and steps he is taking toward achieving that goal

If you intend to travel to headquarters to test, we strongly recommend that you pre-test with your instructor, video-tape it, and send the video to headquarters for review before in-person testing.

You will be notified regarding the results of your examination within one week. The evaluation will specify whether you passed or failed, and what areas require improvement. If you fail the examination, your report will explain what steps are necessary to earn a pass, and whether you may continue to take the next courses under the circumstances. If you fail, you can usually re-take the examination in part or in full when it is next available at no additional cost.

PERSONAL PROGRESS CHART

Use this or a similar tool to help measure your own development. To do so, simply enter the week on which you achieved the conditioning target. You don't necessarily need to be able to do all of the exercises at once, but should be able to do them within the same exercise session. However, jump-rope is a measure of endurance, and should be done without break. Empty rows are included so that you can enter your own exercises and targets.

If you are trying to lose (or gain) weight, enter your current weight in the first column of the weight row, and target weight in the last one, then divide it into equal steps and write them into the intermediate columns. Remember, the primary variable affecting your strength, flexibility and overall condition is exercise, but *the primary variable affecting weight is usually food consumption*. It is particularly important to consult a doctor if you are attempting to lose weight.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Jump-rope | 1 m | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Calf Presses | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pull-ups | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Squats | 20 | 40 | 60 | 80 | 100 | 120 | 140 | 160 | 180 | 200 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Push-ups | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sit-ups | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Back Extensions | 4 | 8 | 12 | 16 | 20 | 24 | 28 | 32 | 36 | 40 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Body Weight | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
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LATIN TERMINOLOGY

The use of Latin in Via Potentia has a few motivations. Among other things, Latin is the prime language of classical philosophy, especially moral philosophy (from which are ethics are derived), and most parts of the human body still use their Latin names in western medicine.

The use of Latin in our curriculum is presently in its infancy. More will be added as time and experience allow. Beginners are not expected to know or use the Latin terms. Intermediate and advanced students should. Spanish words are included here, as well, as we often have Spanish speaking students.

Counting (we usually only count to 10 and then start over at 1)

| | Latin | Spanish |
|----|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Unum (unus, una) | Uno |
| 2 | Duo (duae) | Dos |
| 3 | Tres (tria) | Tres |
| 4 | Quattuor | Cuatro |
| 5 | Quinque | Cinco |
| 6 | Sex | Seis |
| 7 | Septem | Siete |
| 8 | Octo | Ocho |
| 9 | Novem | Nueve |
| 10 | Decem | Diez |
| 11 | Undecim | Once |
| 12 | Duodecim | Doce |
| 13 | Tredecim | Trece |
| 14 | Quattuordecim | Catorce |
| 15 | Quindecim | Quince |
| 16 | Sedecim | Dieciseis |
| 17 | Septendecim | Diecisiete |
| 18 | Duodeviginti | Dieciocho |
| 19 | Undeviginti | Diecinueve |
| 20 | Viginti | Veinte |
| 21 | Viginti Unus | Veintiuno |

Directions

| English | Latin | Spanish |
|------------|------------|----------------|
| Forward | progressus | adelante |
| Back(ward) | recessus | reves/espaldas |
| Left | leavus | izquierda |
| Right | dexter | derecha |
| Up(ward) | sumus | arriba |
| Down | deorsum | abajo |
| Diagonal | diagonalis | diagonal |

Body Parts

| | | |
|---------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Head | caput | cabeza |
| Neck | collum | cuello |
| Hand | manus or palma (palm) | mano |
| Fist | pugnus | |
| Arm | brachium | brazo |
| Elbow | ulna | codo |
| Chest | pectus | pecho |
| Abdomen | venter / ventris | abdomen |
| Leg | crur(is) | muslo (thigh) |
| Knee | genu | rodilla |
| Foot | pedis | pie |

Action

| | | |
|---------|---------|--|
| Fall | cado | |
| Roll | volvo | |
| Sit | sedeo | |
| Stretch | extendo | |
| Push | impello | |
| Pull | traho | |

| | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Grab | prehendo (grasp) | |
| Strike | ferio | |
| Grapple | luctatio | |
| Spar | pugno (fight) | |
| Rest | laxo | |
| Start / Begin | incipio | |
| Stop | pausa, statio, desisto | |
| Block | defendo (defend) | |
| Kick | calcitro | |

TECHNICAL REFERENCE

Following are examples and descriptions of all basic techniques, positions and drills from the first year, beginning stage. These will be taught according to the order of instruction over the first three terms.

Remember, just knowing the moves isn't enough. You must learn to apply them with power in rapid succession to an attacker's vulnerabilities while defending your own. This requires training with a partner – preferably multiple partners – and applying power on a heavy bag.

First Term

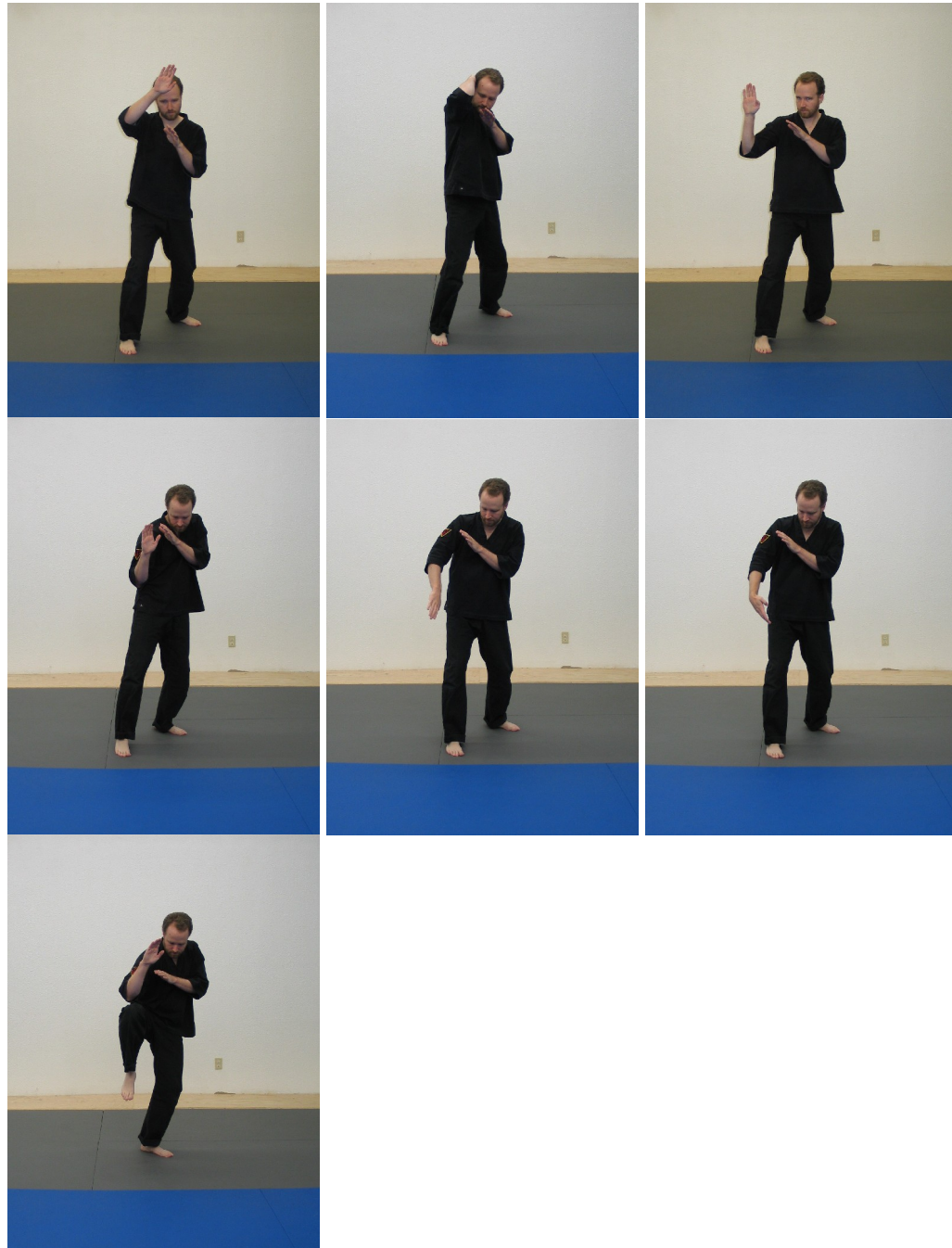
We attempt to introduce these techniques in your first term, no matter which season – autumn, winter or spring – you start.

Step Slide: Maintain your stance; it is the foundation for your balance, defense and ability to move. When moving in a physical conflict, first move the foot nearest the direction of movement. Then slide the other into position so that you are back in the proper stance. When executing an offensive upper body technique, the ideal is (usually) to time the strike to correspond with the setting of the lead foot.



Blocking / Deflecting: If someone really wants to hit you, you are going to get hit. Few strikes can be completely blocked. Our goal is to deflect the strike away from vulnerabilities and try to absorb as much of the power as we can with tougher parts of the body. The preference is to block with the edge (ulna) or back of the forearm. Avoid extending the arm too far when blocking; it is both ineffective and leaves the body open to other hits.

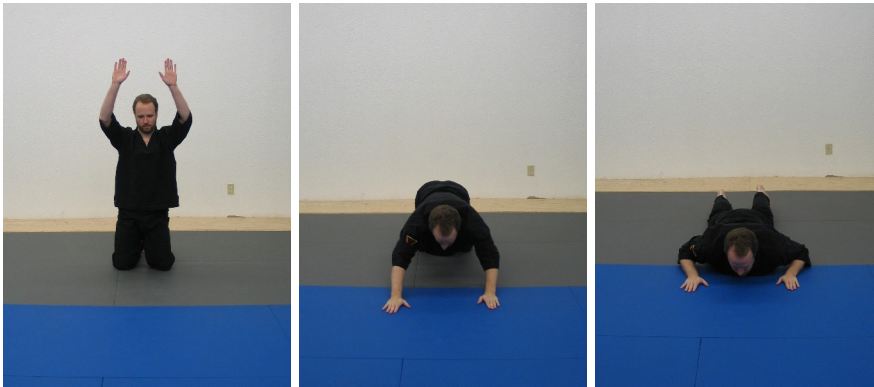
Blocking is pretty instinctive – just get your arm between your body and whatever is coming towards. Following are some examples of blocking positions.



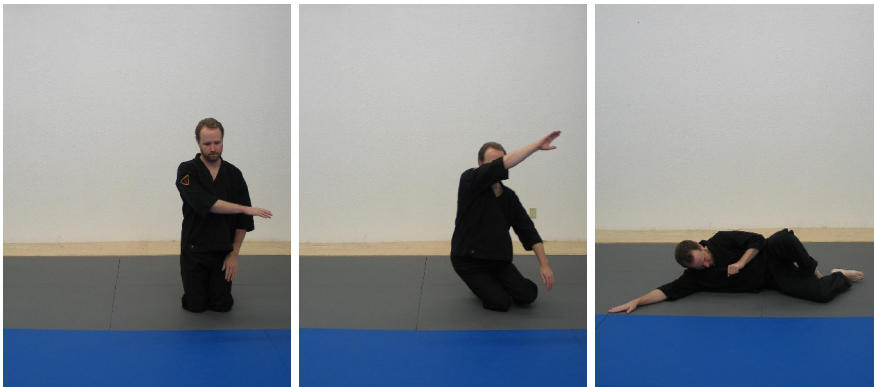
Falls (General): The purpose of the falling drills is to develop the instinct of tucking the head and attempting to control your body's orientation when hitting the ground so as to minimize injury or isolate it to an extremity as opposed to the head, spine or internal organs. This is usually done by attempting to slap the forearm and hand down just prior to the moment of impact. The most common errors are to try to catch one's self or landing on the elbow. Either can easily result in an injury, usually to the wrist, elbow or shoulder.

For beginners, falls and rolls are done from the knees. As you are more comfortable with the move, proceed to crouching, then standing, then jumping.

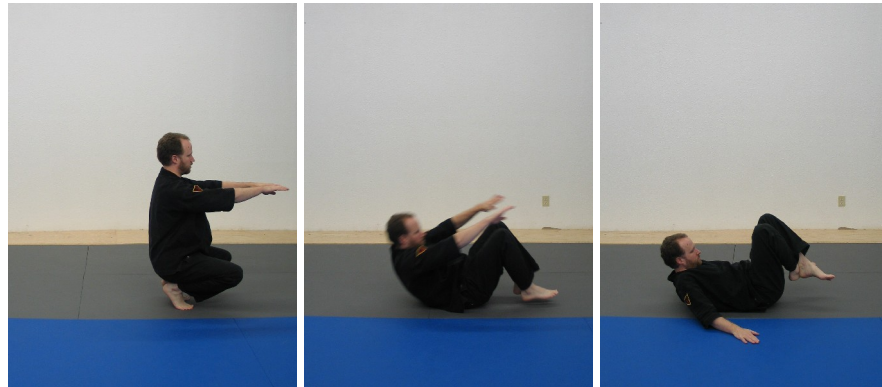
Forward Fall



Side Fall

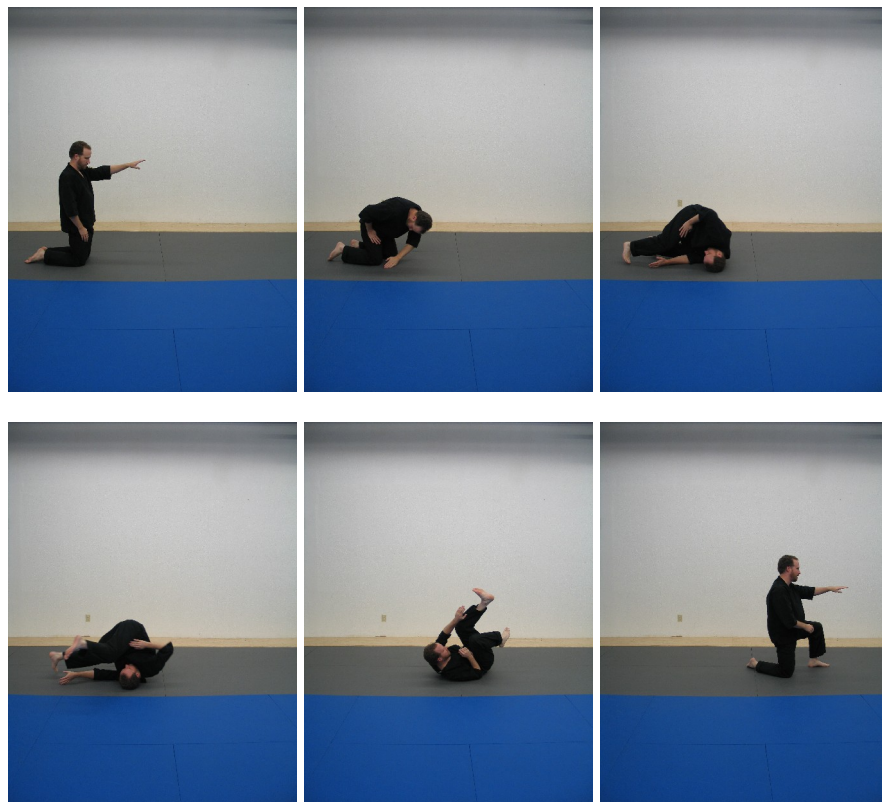


Back Fall

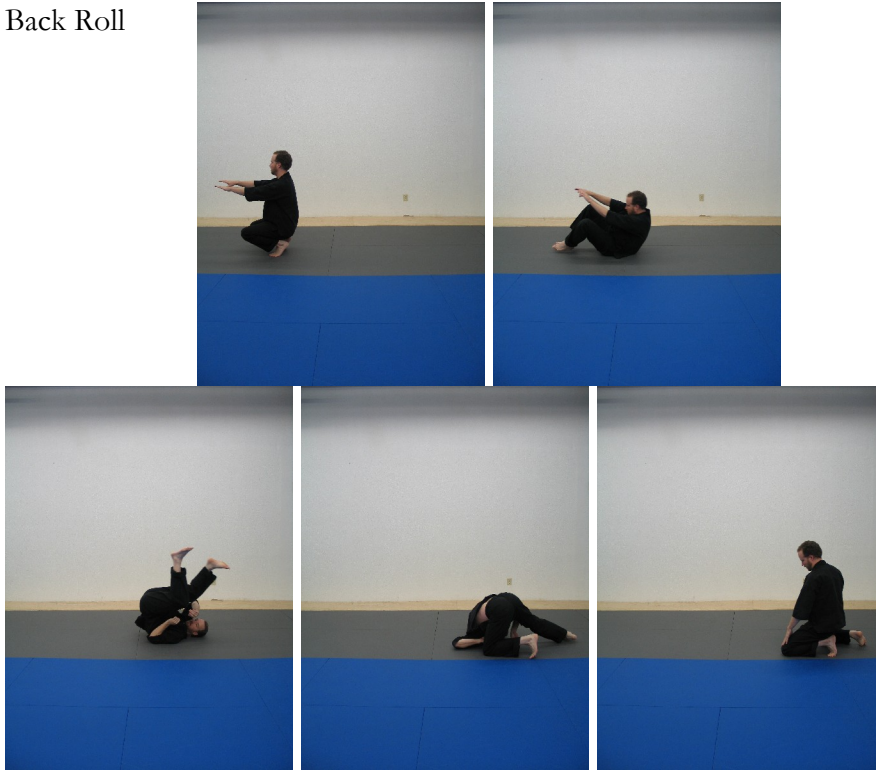


Rolls (General): Rolling complements falling in that sometimes the body's rotational momentum is better handled by rolling out of a position rather than trying to stop abruptly. Like the falling drills, you are trying to avoid impact to the head, spine and organs. Some holds can (must) be rolled out of. Imagine a line drawn from the back of one shoulder to the opposite back pocket. That is approximately the path of pressure from the floor. Though this is safer for the head and spine, you still have to be careful; students have broken collarbones while doing rolls.

Forward Roll



Back Roll



When rolling, whether forward or backward, work on rolling over both shoulders, and be careful to avoid coming down on the ground with the point of shoulder, or in such a way that puts a lot of pressure on the clavicle.

Grappling Positions: “Positions” are common places one finds himself – or tries for – when grappling. From these positions one can usually perform attacks or submissions while exercising some control over the opponent, preventing him from escaping. For self defense our goal is to continually improve position until we can escape. This means trying to get to a top position, inflicting some pain or injuries with elbows or knees, getting up, stomping on a limb, and getting away. *Reversals and escapes are extremely difficult to do if the attacker – the person on top – is much larger, stronger or more skilled than the defender.*

Front Mount: One person is seated on the belly or chest of the other. This is a very strong position for the advantaged person and is difficult to escape. Strangles and striking attacks are common -- “ground and pound” -- but a variety of others are possible to the wrist, elbow, shoulder and neck. Ideal defenses against the front mount usually involve arching/bucking, or trying to hook the head with a leg. He can also strike the groin. If these fail, the fallback is to try for half-guard (shrimping). It depends on how the attacker is situated and the relative sizes.



From front mount the attacker often ends up with back control because the defender exposes his back while defending or trying to escape.

Side/Cross Mount: One person is laying on top of and perpendicular to the other. It is often chest to chest, but the defender might be stomach down, or on his side. Top person's knees might be tucked in, splayed back, or both. The person on top should keep his hips as low as possible, weight down, and try not to allow the defender to thread his hand under his hips/body.



Side mount allows for many attacks with the knees and elbows, but also joint attacks to the wrist, elbow and shoulder. The side mount is often just the step before acquiring front mount (via a knee slide or sit out), though it is even easier to go to N/S. It is hard to roll someone who is in side mount because he has both arms and legs available for stability. If you can restrain one arm and forcefully buck in that direction, it can result in an escape or reversal. Twist out is sometimes also effective at getting out from underneath. Most jujitsu systems acquire guard as an “escape” from side mount.

From side mount the attacker can move pretty easily to scarf, north/south, knee-on-belly, or sometimes kick all the way over into a front mount.

North/South: One person is on top of the other, but with his head to his stomach (or lower back).

Depending on the relative location, some neck cranks and strangles are possible. So is the kimura. If the head ends up near the feet, several attacks are possible including achilles tendon compression, knee bar and various ankle cranks.



Scarf: Similar to the side mount in that one is laying across the other, but with tight control of the head and one arm. If held tightly, this position is uncomfortable and almost impossible to escape, but attacks are difficult without opening up for a reversal or escape.

Wrestlers and brawlers often go for this position, and it is acquired naturally after many throws.

Common attacks include strangles, strikes to the face, and shoulder cranks utilizing the legs against the trapped arm. All involve temporarily releasing the tension on or moving the held arm, at which point it should be pulled in forcefully.

Common defenses involve cross facing and hooking the head with a leg, peeling the head back with eye/nose gouges, hooking a leg with a leg, backing out, and arching the top person backwards. If unable to reverse, the defender can sometimes clasp hands under the floating rib, pull, and get a release.



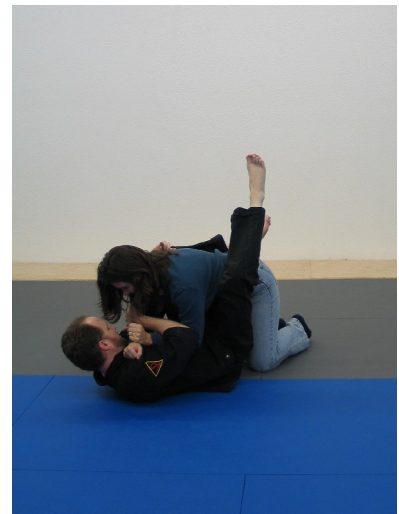
Knee on Belly: Usually a transitional position from side mount to front mount, it can be held and is very uncomfortable for the person underneath. Few direct attacks are available because both legs are being used for balance and one arm is tied to the defender's shirt.

Hold the down person with the hand opposite the knee in the belly. Ideally, place the knee right into the xiphoid. The other leg is support and the free hand can post if you get rolled.



Guard: There are many different kinds of guard positions, where the person underneath uses his legs to hold or restrain the opponent. They go by a variety of names; closed, butterfly, rubber, spider guard and others.

The person on his back has more submission-type attacks available to him. Many styles teach you to acquire a guard as defense or an “escape” from another position. If you are going to be on the bottom, it is the preferred position, but *it is not a desired position for self defense, so don't do it as an end-goal*. A large, powerful attacker can pick you up using your own guard and smash you down on your spine or head. If you can't *immediately* get a submission from guard, release it, attempt to sweep, kick or hook an attacker off of you as quickly as possible.



Typical submissions from the guard are the kimura (shoulder dislocation), a variety of arm bars, knee compression and triangle choke. The top person in the guard has less ability to perform locks, but still can perform strikes and attempt to “pass the guard” through femoral nerve attack or ducking under a leg. If he is in half guard, he can quickly spin and attack the knee or ankle.

For the sake of practice and informal competition, we do consider the guard and half guard – where the person underneath has trapped one of his opponent's legs – to be two distinct positions.

Back Mount: One person is on the back of the other, head to head. It doesn't really matter who is on top. It can even be acquired standing.

The most common attack from this position is the choke/strangle. The disadvantaged person has few attacks available, and must focus instead on defending his neck and turning around to face the attacker or squirming out of the position.

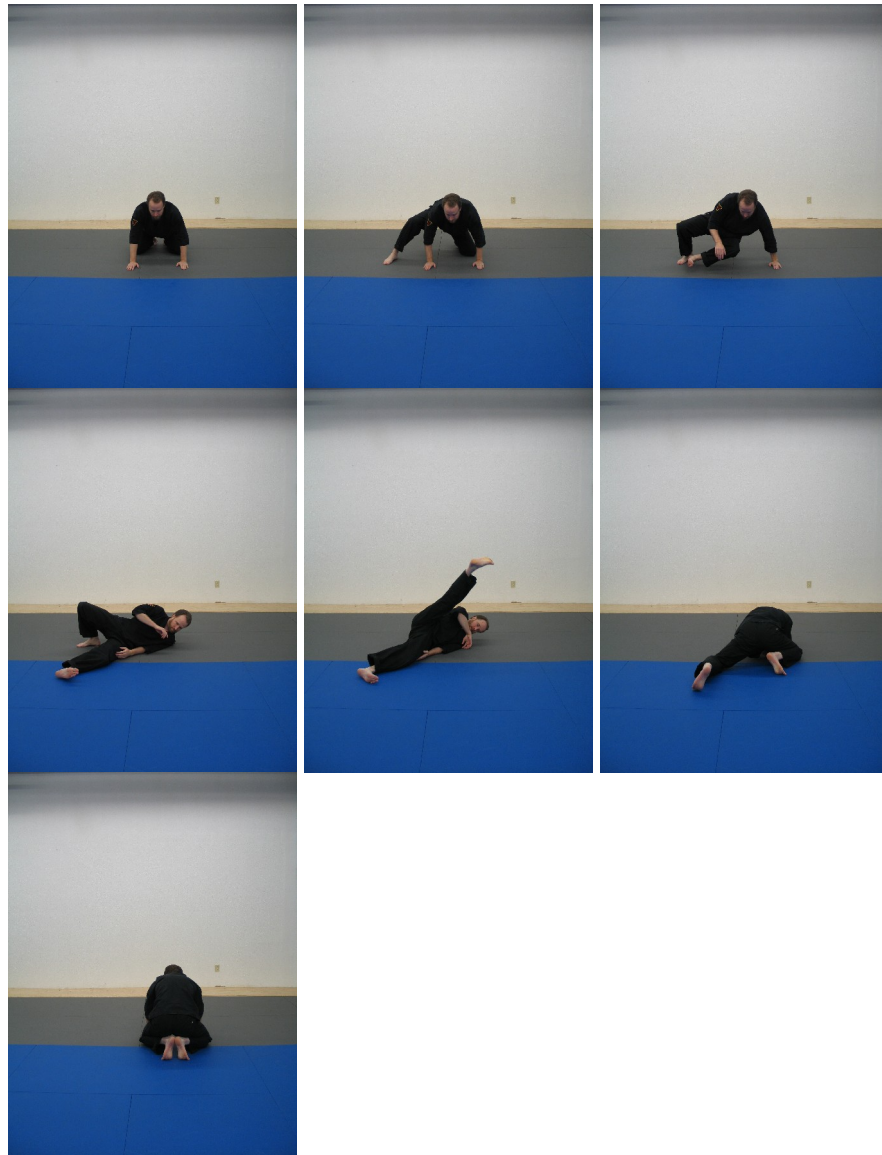
Squirming out generally involves rolling onto the back and then wriggling down while protecting the neck from attack.

Clinch (Intermediate Level): A clinch is a generic state in which the opponents – usually upright – are grasping each other without clear advantage. It is encountered as a beginner, but we emphasize it for intermediates.



Other Ground / Grappling Drills: The purpose of these drills is to develop skill at moving on the ground, especially while being restrained by an opponent. Once the individual drills are all known, they should be practiced in combination. For example, do two sit-outs, then a forward roll and twist out in one direction, and a forward roll and twist out in the opposite, ending up in the starting position; repeat.

Sit Out: A method of trying to break from a hold from behind, and also used in some cases to improve position.

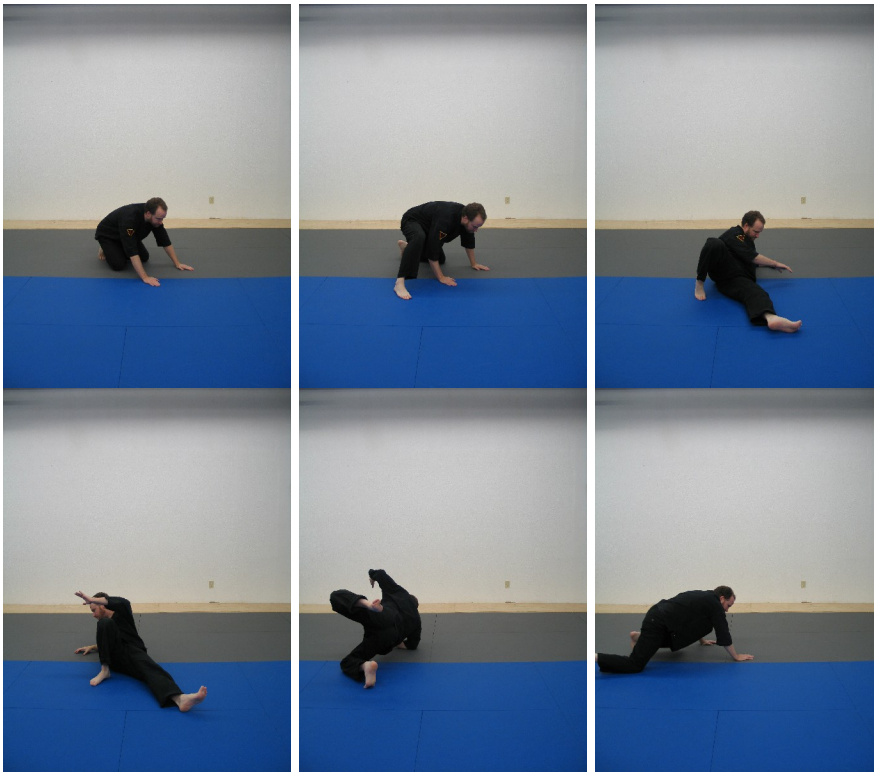


1. Beginning on your hands and knees, place your right foot about two feet to the right of your right hand.
2. Lift up your right hand, and push your left foot under your body, up and to the right (about 45 degrees), as far as you can go, while laying

your body down on its side, on your left shoulder, with your left hand against your body.

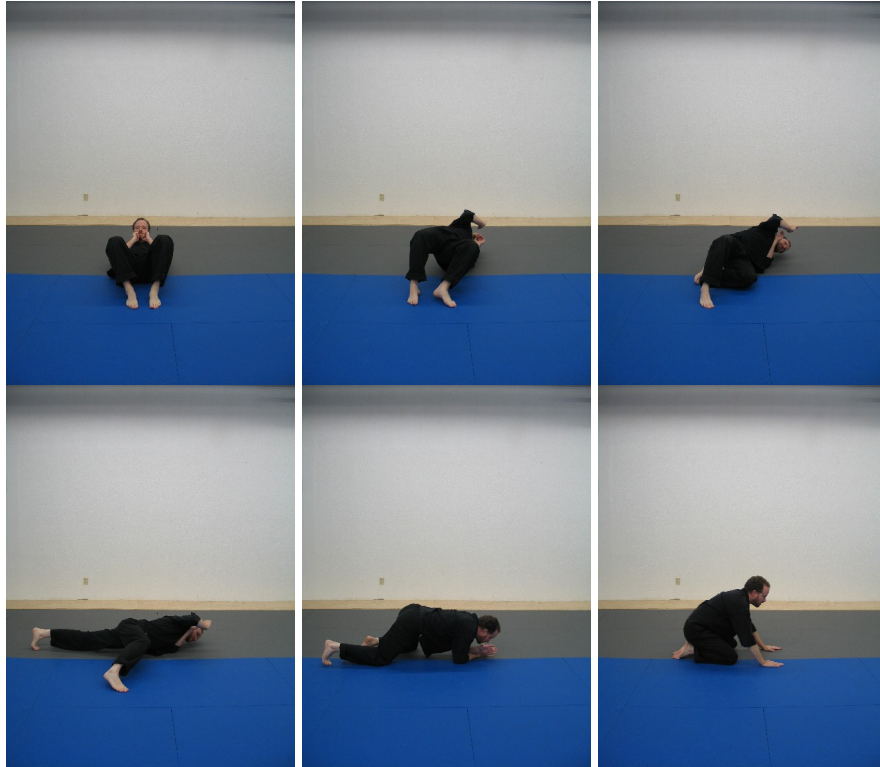
3. Kick your right leg over as high as you can, as if attempting to kick someone standing over you. End up back on your hands and knees, facing opposite the starting direction.

Reverse Sit Out: Usually used to try to reverse position on someone who has your back, or to counter someone who has detected and is resisting your sit out attempt. Identical to the sit out except at step 3. Kick your left leg over to the right, spinning your body in the opposite direction, ending up on your hands and knees roughly in the starting position.



Twist Out: An attempt to twist out from underneath someone who is on your stomach. Useful in several positions.

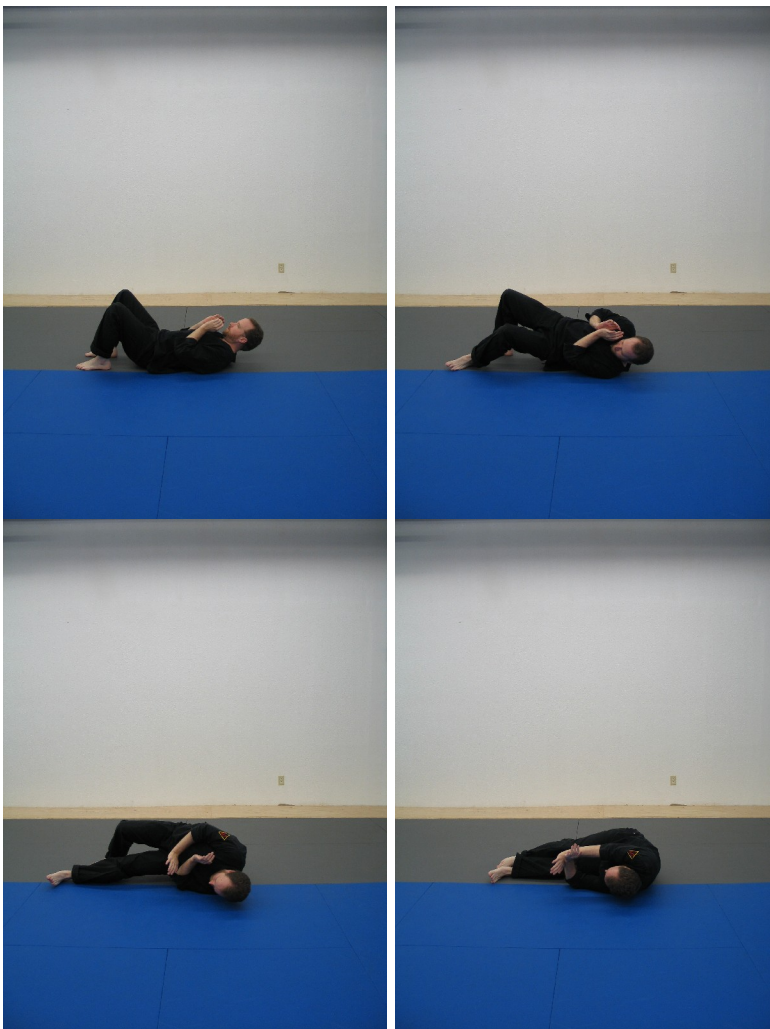
1. Start out laying on your back, arch your stomach up, pressing with your right leg and left shoulder.
2. Pull your left leg under your body and kick it out as far as it will go to the right, twisting your body as you do so.
3. End up on your hands and knees, at roughly right angles to your starting orientation.



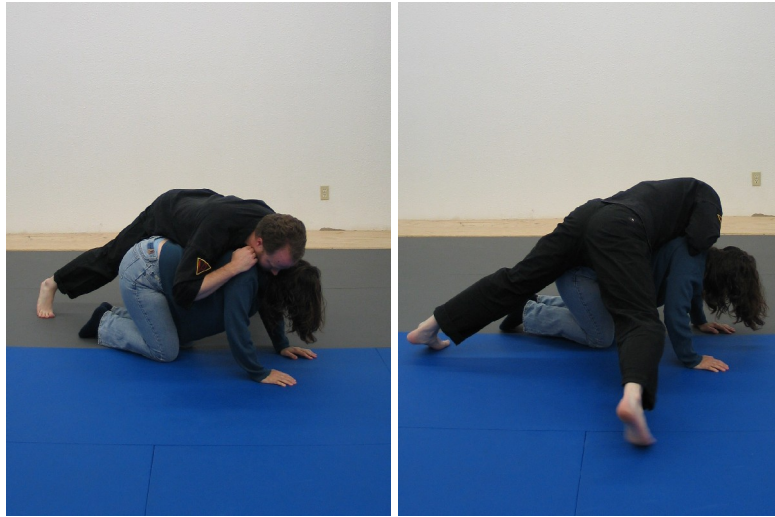
The common error with the sit out and twist out moves is to not thrust the leg as far as possible, and to not twist the body out from under the burden.

Shrimping: An attempt to dislodge someone who has front or side mount, pushing them and freeing a leg so you can acquire half-guard. Can also be used when on the bottom in guard to try to set up an escape, sweep or attack.

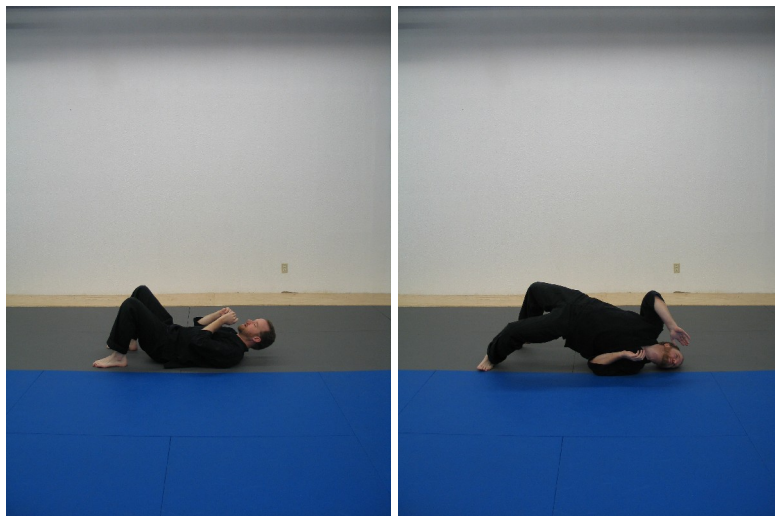
1. Attempt to twist to the left under the attacker while planting an elbow or both hands on his right knee/thigh. If possible, grind your elbow along the inside of the thigh, pressuring the femoral artery and nerve.
2. Push forcefully with your arms and legs at the same time, attempting to press his leg back towards your feet and your body out from under his. The goal is to extract at least one leg (if not dislodge him entirely).



Chest Spin: To spin quickly using your feet while keeping your weight on your opponent using your chest or shoulder.



Arching/Bucking: Useful for attempting to dislodge or reverse position on someone who has you in front mount. A common tactic is to pin the attacker's hand and try to arch in that direction, rolling him off, usually ending up in a better position (or escaping entirely). Kick over powerfully to complete the technique.



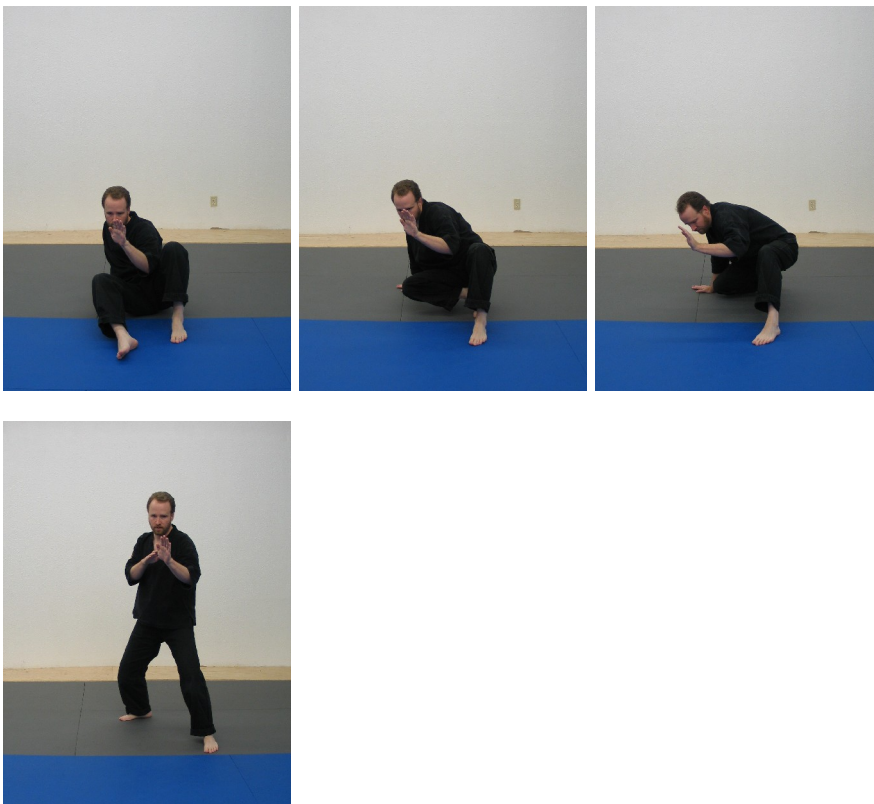
Shooting: “Shooting” means to rapidly close the distance on your opponent and drop low, usually going for a leg-takedown. This is rarely done in self defense (by the defender), and is more of a sport/competitive grappling drill. We include it so that people will learn to defend against it, as many bullies with any grappling/wrestling background attempt it on their victims.

Sprawling: Sprawling is a common defense against a shoot. Kick your legs out behind you and drop your weight down on (and strike) the incoming attacker as he dives for your hips or legs.

Capioera Sweep/Escape: This is an attempt to escape from someone's half guard (sometimes called "lockdown"). One leg will be restrained by the bottom person. Drive your shoulder into his chest and, keeping your weight there, swing the free leg in an arch over the restrained leg until it is on the floor. Then use your hand to press on the inside of his thigh and free your locked leg. You'll usually end up pretty close to side mount.

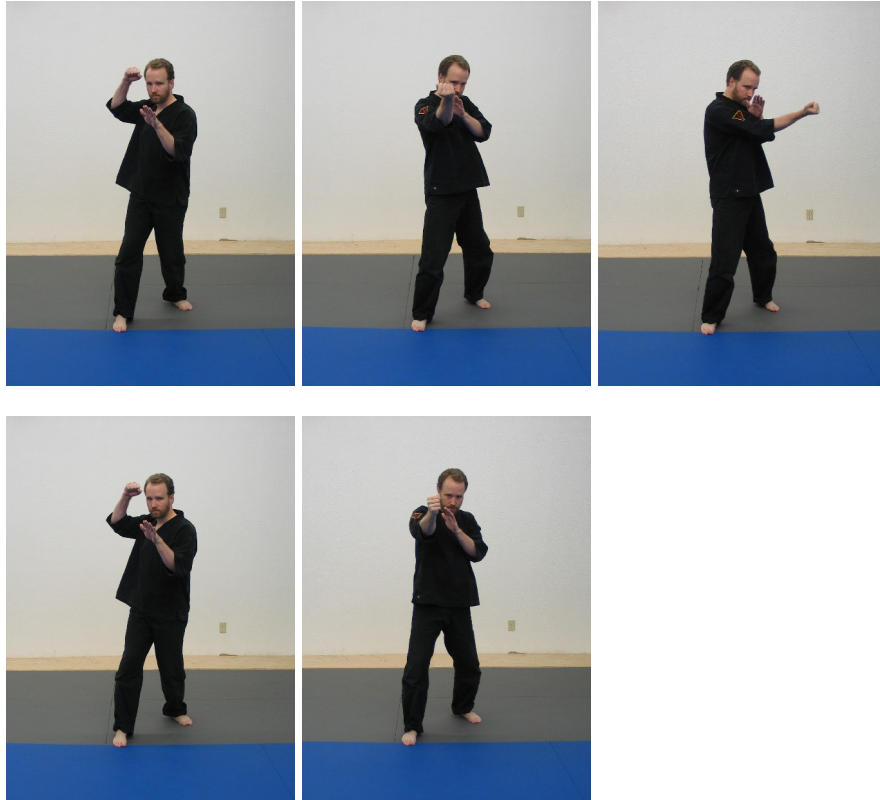
Defensive Stand Up: This is a method of standing up while trying to defend yourself from an upright attacker using one arm. It is also useful when underneath in the guard position.

Support yourself on both feet and one arm; in this case, the right arm. With the other arm protecting to the front. Pull the right leg under the body, and plant it behind you. Stand up.

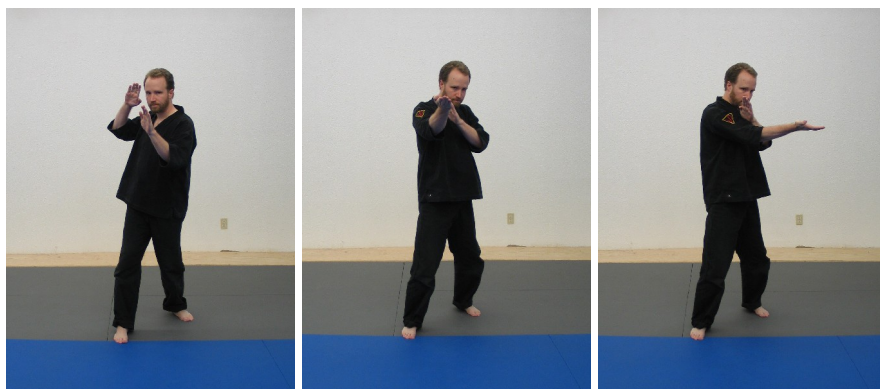


Autumn Term

Hammer Fist Inward / Downward: Keep the fist tight. Strike with the small-finger side of the hand. Primary targets for the inward hammer fist are the side of the jaw and ribs. The target for the downward strike is the collar bone. The most common errors are loose fists and failing to follow through.



Knife Hand Inward: Keep the hand tight and palm flat. Strike with the small-finger side of the hand. The neck is primary target for all knife strikes, an alternative is the root of the neck where it joins the shoulder. Knife hand strikes should not be attempted against hard targets.



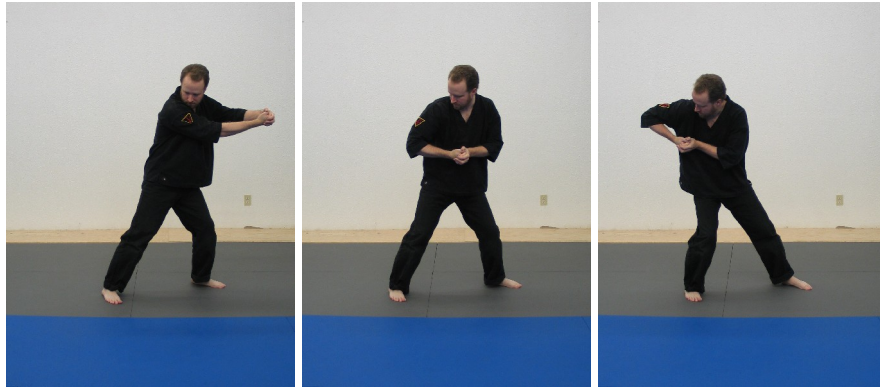
Elbow Outward: The outward elbow strikes with the tip of the ulna or end of the humerus. It can be an attempt to drive to tip of the elbow into the target, or swing through. Head and upper torso are the usual targets. The opposite hand can cup the fist or grab the wrist of the striking arm to add power.



Stomp: Stomps ideally hit with the heel or back outside edge of the foot, though they can be done with the inside edge, too. Just not the toes. Stomps are generally directed to the ankle, foot arch, or the limb of a downed attacker. You can also grind a stomp down the shin and onto the foot.

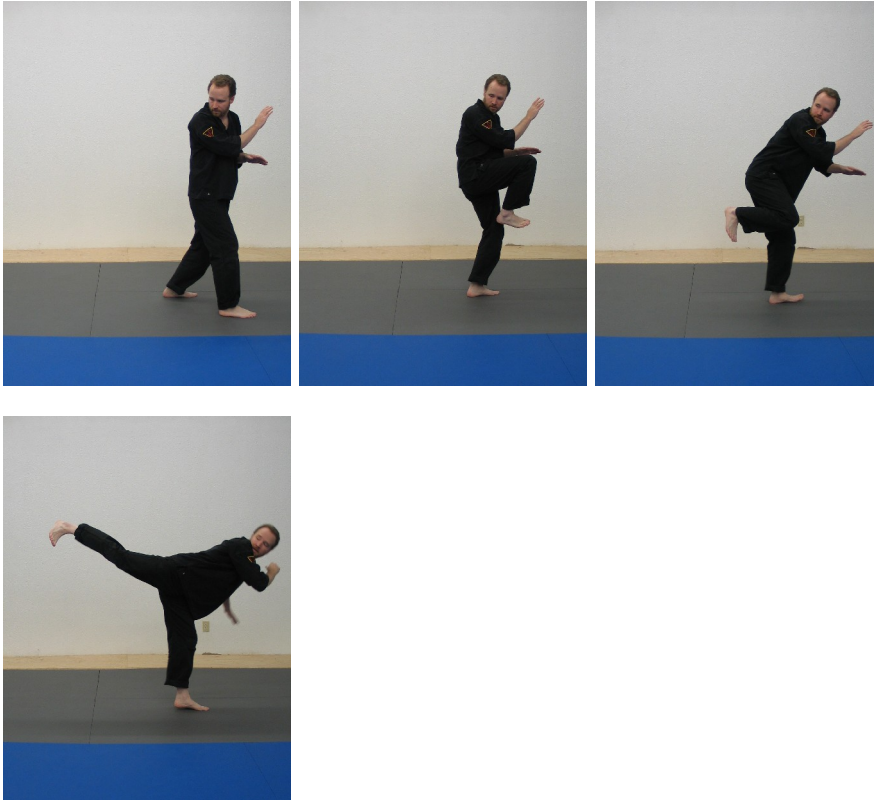


Elbow Back: Similar to the outward elbow, except that the target is generally right behind you, to the body. You are driving the point of the elbow into the target rather than swinging through.



Head Butt: Head butt strikes are done using the crown of the head, usually directly forward or backward. Don't lean away from the strike; think of your spine as a whip and the head the end of the whip. Primary targets are the face, collar bone or sternum. Can also be executed from below the target, standing up and driving the head upward. They are a good strike to know about and use when you've got nothing else, but often result in cuts to the head or face which can bleed heavily.

Back Kick: The most powerful natural kick, but difficult to aim accurately, the back kick is directed at an opponent who is behind you. The target is the abdomen. The striking point is the heel, the toes should be pointed down(ish) and the heel of the planted foot is pointing at the target. Look over the shoulder on the same side as the kicking foot to view the target.



Pincer: The pincer strike targets the throat using the web of the thumb and first knuckle of the first finger. There is some risk to the thumb if this strike is blocked or hits the wrong target.

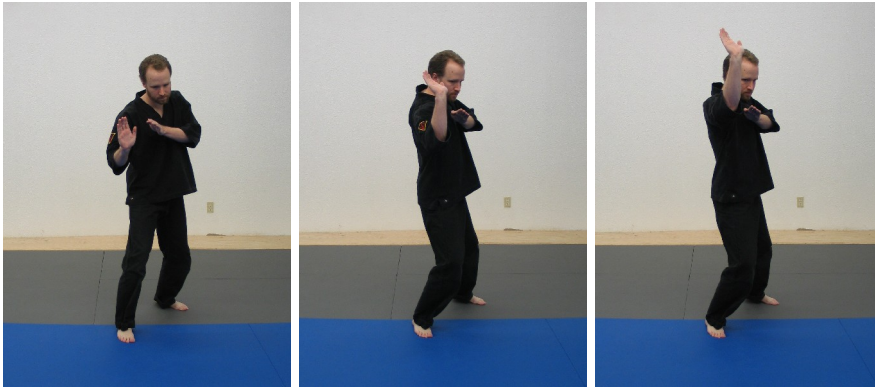


Side Kick: The side kick is a quick and powerful way of attacking an opponent to your side. The point of contact is the heel and outside edge of the foot near the heel. The toes of the kicking foot should be horizontal or pointed slightly down. The toes of the planted foot should be pointed away from the target, especially for higher kicks. Common targets are the knee and lower abdomen. The side kick and back kick (and any kick in-between) are almost identical in basic technique, and differ primarily in the orientation of the leg relative to the hips and the orientation of the kicking foot.



Reverse Side Kick: Less common than the standard side kick, this is done by bringing the back leg into position and twisting the body to execute the kick. The lower abdomen is the target. It is usually slightly less powerful than the leading foot side kick, but still effective.

Upward Palm Strike: The primary target for the upward palm strike is the lower edge of the chin. Strike with the lower third of the palm.



Winter Term

Elbow upward: Striking with the end of the ulna. Primary targets are the ribs, xiphoid and chin. Keep the hand and forearm relaxed, palm facing your center line. Bring the arm back quickly to avoid exposure of your ribs.



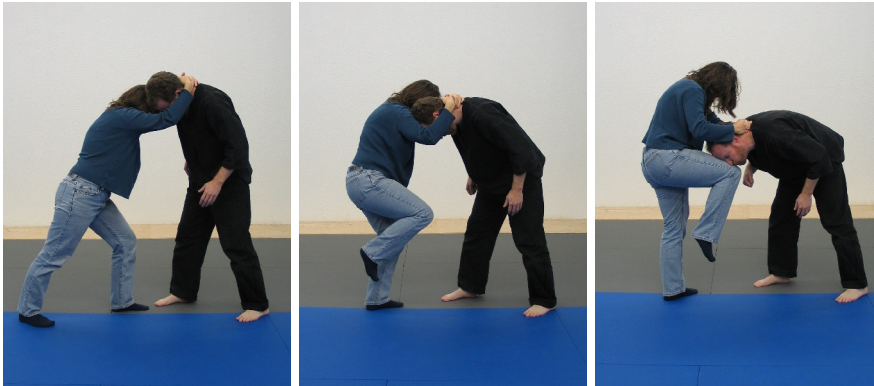
Straight Palm Strike: Primary targets are the face, jaw, side of head, sternum and xiphoid. Strike with the lower third of the palm.



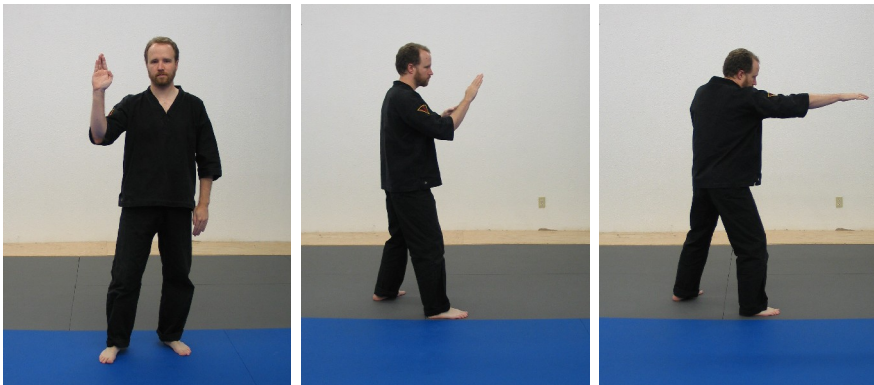
Straight Knee Strike: This strike drives the patella directly into the opponent. Twist the hips and shove them forward. Typical targets are the abdomen and thighs.



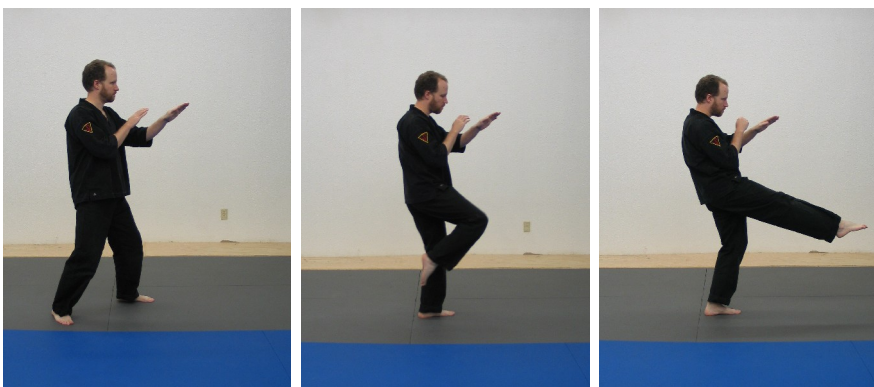
Upward Knee Strike: Targets are the groin and, if the opponent is pulled over, stomach, chest or head. The point of impact is the end of the femur.



Spear Hand: Targets are the eyes and neck. Like the pincer strike, this is a quick, in-and-out hit.

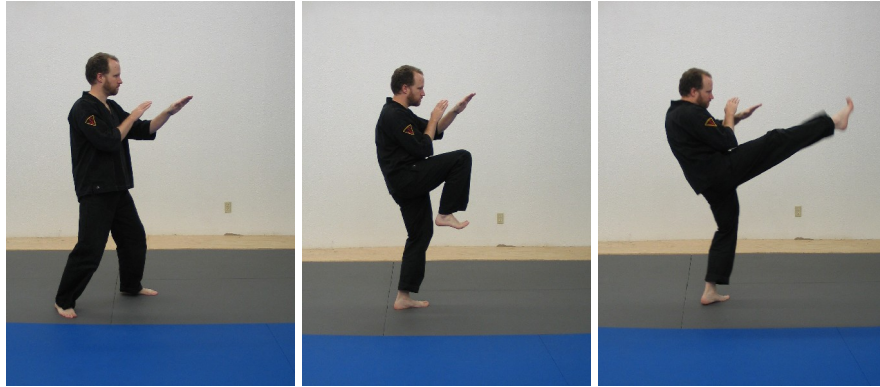


Snap Kick: Primary target is the groin. Also effective against the head if the opponent is bent over. Striking surface is the top of the foot or lower third of the tibia.



Front Kick: Primary target is the lower abdomen. Bring the knee up high and thrust the foot straight out. You can strike with the tip of the shoe (toes pointed or pulled back), or heel. The kick with the heel is sometimes referred to as a thrust kick.

Reverse Front Kick: Same as front kick, but performed with the back foot.



Low Palm Strike: Low palm strikes (with fingers down) are effective against the lower abdomen.



Spring Term

Raking Claw: This strike rakes the tips of the fingers across the face, attempting to cause damage to the opponent's vision and eyelids. First picture merely shows hand posture.



Straight Claw: The straight claw drives directly into the eyes instead of raking across them.

Elbow Inward: The inward elbow strike hits with the ulna. The ideal target is the side of the head around the ear and jaw, but it is also effective against the sternum and ribs. Picture is of a reverse inward elbow strike.



Chop / Turning / Roundhouse Kick: This kick is much more complex than most people assume and goes by many different names. Usually done with the top of the foot or last third of the tibia, typical targets are the leg in general, sciatic nerve, femoral nerve, immediately above the knee, fibula, kidneys and liver. Some systems pull the foot and toes back, attempting to hit with the ball of the foot or point of the shoe; that is effective for shots to the body.

First picture series is of a low chop kick. Ideally, begin with a small step with the leading foot outward at about 45 degrees, heel lifted slightly off of the floor.

Planted foot position and hip orientation are very important to this kick, especially as higher ones are attempted. If you feel stress in the hip, knee or ankle, it is usually because you have not rotated your hips and planted foot far enough. Notice that for the higher kick the heel of the planted foot is pointing at the target and the weight is supported by the front half of the foot – not the heel; for the lower kicks that level of hip and foot rotation is not necessary.

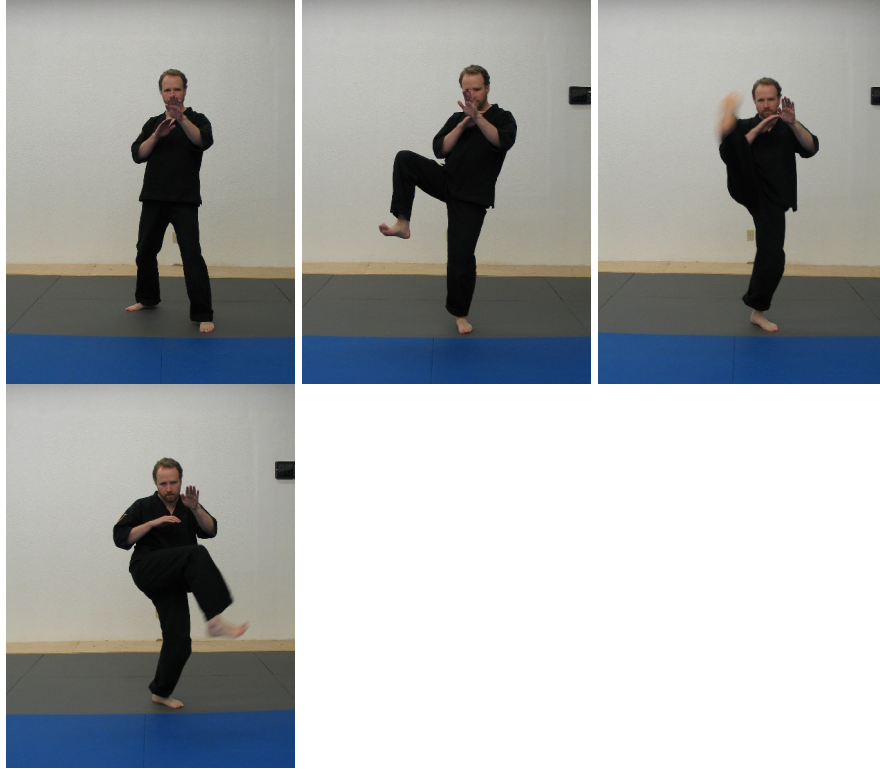


Knife Hand Outward: Striking with the small finger side of the hand and end of the ulna, the primary target is the neck.



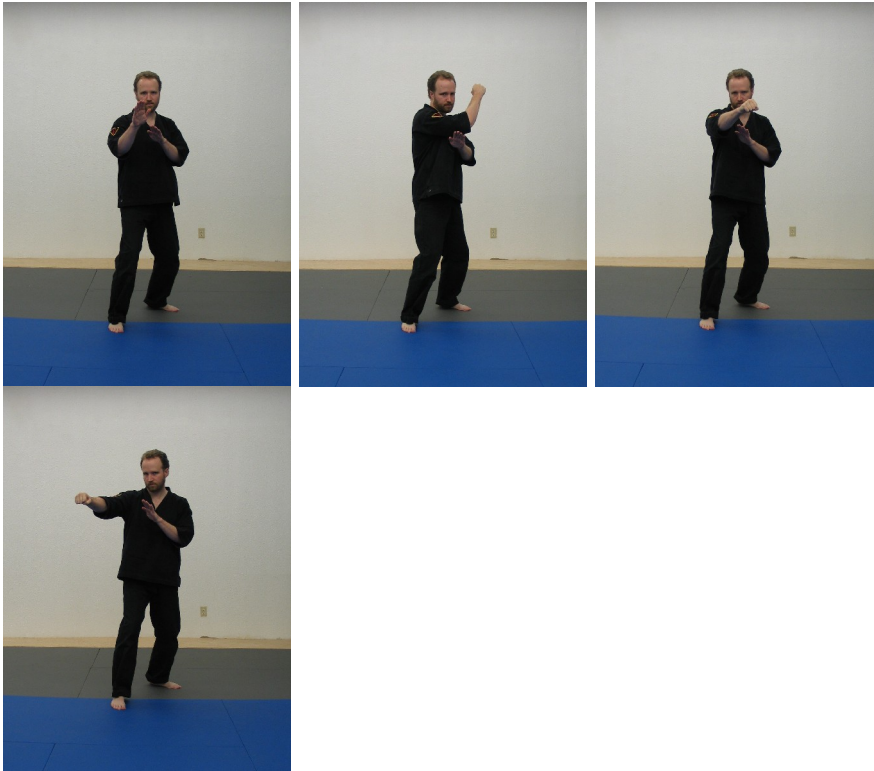
Crescent Kick Inward: More of a defensive kick used to attack an arm, the crescent kick strikes with the inside edge of the foot. It can also be done towards the head, but is easily blocked.





Crescent Kick Outward: Similar to the inward crescent kick, but utilizes the outside edge of the foot. The motion is simply reversed. Either can break the wrist or elbow.

Hammer Fist Outward: The outward hammer fist strikes with the small finger side of the fist and end of the ulna. Ideal targets are the side of the head, neck and liver.



INFORMAL WINCHESTER / NRA QUALIFICATION TARGET

For those just getting started with shooting there is an interesting, self-paced program offered by the National Rifle Association and Winchester. See the NRA web site for details:

<http://www.nrahq.org/EDUCATION/Training/marksmanship/index.asp>

They actually have several programs for different guns. The pistol qualification – our focus – has six levels with increasing difficulty:

Pro-Marksman
Marksman
Marksman First Class
Sharpshooter
Expert
Distinguished Expert

The shots are made at 15 to 30 feet. Each stage takes roughly 100 rounds, plus several different targets. You can perform them all at 15 feet if you use the target on the next page. It combines the 8" plate, 6" plate – used for the first two qualifications – and D-2 target onto one 8 1/2 x 11 sheet.

It isn't a perfect adaptation, but close enough for informal use. The main difference is that the 5 point region (outside of the 8 point ring for the sharpshooter and higher qualifications) would actually be larger than the page.

In any event, with practice, a steady hand and a half-way decent gun, you'll have little problem placing all shots in the bulls-eye at 15 feet.

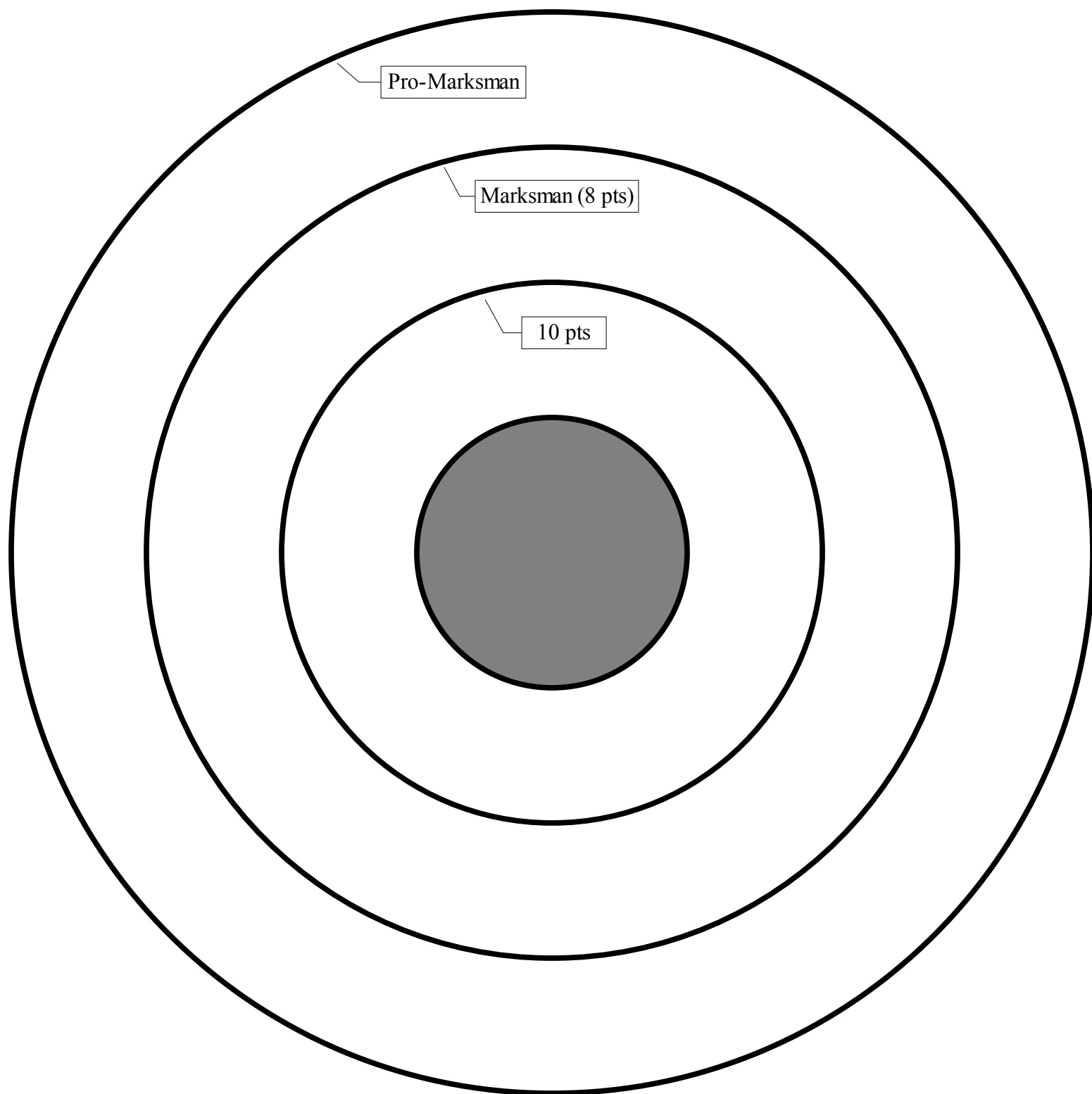
The B-2 and B-3 targets are for (practice) use for the NRA competitive pistol matches. They are generally placed at 50 feet. The B-2 target is for slow fire, and the B-3 for timed and rapid fire. According to the NRA, this means:

- Slow fire: 4 strings of 5 shots, 1 minute per shot (or 2 strings of 10 shots, 10 minutes per string, conventional pistol)
- Timed fire: 4 strings of 5 shots, 20 seconds per string.
- Rapid fire: 4 strings of 5 shots, 10 seconds per string.

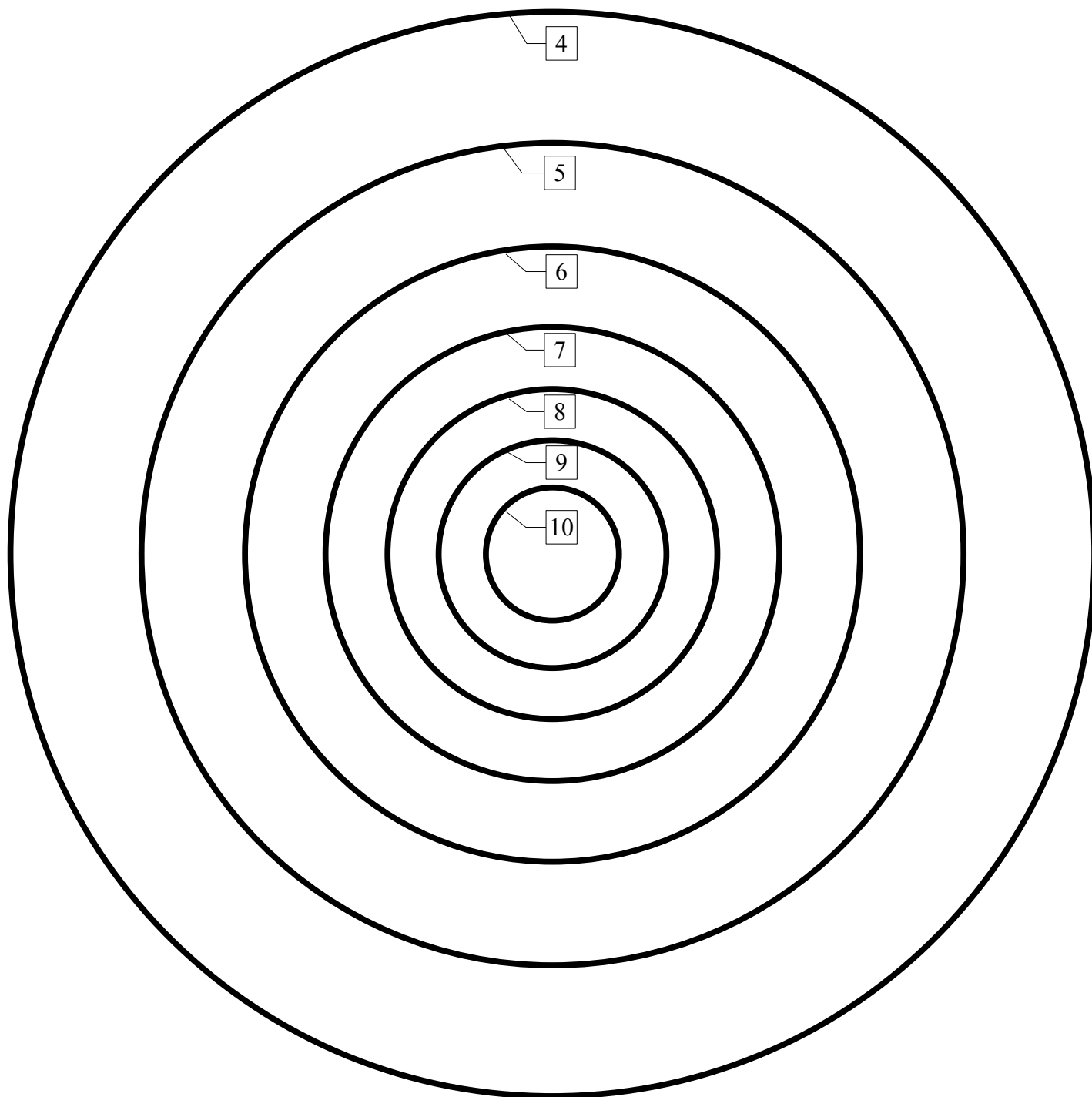
These are fine for practice and will save you some money, but you must use targets purchased from an official NRA target manufacturer for an NRA-sanctioned competition.

Have fun and be safe.

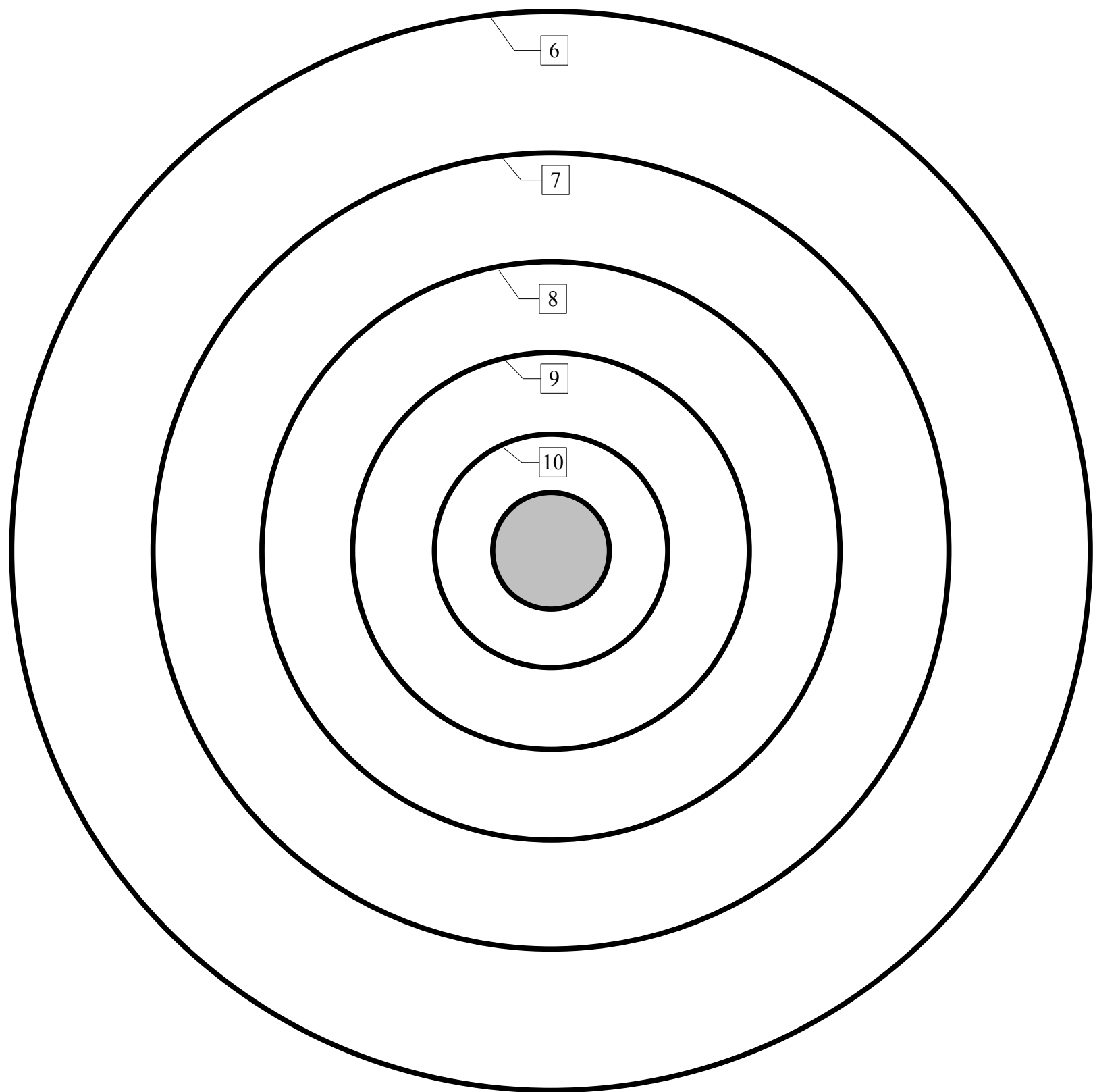
NRA/Winchester Qualification Target



NRA B-2 Target (for practice only)



NRA B-3 Target (for practice only)



Your Notes

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