

Four Self Defense Tips

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Most people will do whatever they can to steer far clear of situations that may take a violent turn. But sometimes, for some people, violent behavior erupts uninvited and unexpected.

Ten years spent mastering Tai Mai Shu kung fu may keep you fit, flexible, and graceful. But ten minutes invested reading these four tips may save your life.

They are simple ideas, but not common. Since most people don't plan to be attacked, these ideas don't occur to them until they are remembering the event and thinking, "If only I had ... "

TIP #1 - USE YOUR HEAD

First, stay calm and think. As soon as the adrenaline kicks in, everything will seem to happen in slow motion. Your mind processes thoughts so rapidly that it will seem like you have hours to make a decision about how to react.

Second, the human skull is an awesomely powerful weapon. Bashing your forehead into the goon's nose is tremendously more effective than bashing your fist into it.

Similarly, ladies, if you are grabbed, bear-hug style from behind, don't waste your time trying to step on his toes, or elbow his ribs, or kick your heel up into his groin. Those moves will do little besides anger your attacker.

Instead, start trying to bash his face with the back of your head. All you have to do is connect once or twice with your attacker's face or collarbone.

TIP #2 - ALWAYS HAVE A TOOL HANDY

Always, always, always have something easily and quickly accessible tool to use as a weapon. Note that I did not say, "have a weapon accessible" which is not always practical or advisable. I mean, if someone surprises you, there should be something instantly accessible to aid in your defense. It can be a pen, keys, a can of vegetables, a pen knife -- anything.

If you remember this one absurdly simple rule about weapons fighting, you will see the potential weapon in virtually everything around you AND be able to effectively use it: anything hard and fast goes to bone, and anything pointed goes to soft tissue.

For example, a stick or can of vegetables would target bone: the face, skull, hip, shin, elbow, kneecap. It would be less effective to use these against, say, an attacker's abdomen.

Conversely, a knife or pen is much more effective targeting the throat, eyes, crotch, armpit, or belly than they are targeting the kneecap.

Hard goes to bone, point goes to soft tissue -- remember that rule, and you will never be without a weapon again.

TIP #3 - MOVE ALONG A TRIANGLE (a bit of theory)

There is one tip about self-defense that is so important that entire martial arts systems are based upon it. The tip: don't get hit. I mention that, because moving along a triangle goes a long way toward the goal of not getting hit.

One of the most dangerous mistakes the average person makes during a fight is to move in straight lines, either forward and backward, or side to side. This is also the mistake that will cause the Tai Mai Shu black belt to get his or her butt whooped in very short order on the street.

Imagine a vertical dividing line along your body, dividing your body into left and right halves. The aggressor is probably going to attack some point along or around that line: your face, your throat, your heart, your groin.

Your goal is to move that line out of the path of the attack AND change the distance of the target from attacker.

The attacker has mentally committed to striking to a particular target. His brain has sent the signal to his fist that the intended target is located at a particular distance in a particular direction. When you change the target's coordinates, it spoils the effectiveness of the attack.

The attacker may be able to recover from a change in target location or change in target distance alone, but changing both factors is your best bet. Then, even if it does connect, the strength of the attack will be greatly diminished.

Moving in a straight line backward and forward changes the distance, but does not move your center line out of the attack path. Moving laterally changes the location of the center line, but not the distance. Moving along an imaginary triangle changes both.

Imagine standing with both feet on the point of a triangle and facing the bad guy. The other two points of the triangle can either be in front of you or behind you -- I have a preference, but that's tip #4. Each of the other triangle points are about one medium-large step away.

Step one foot onto either of the two available triangle points. Note what has happened to the distance to and the location of the attacker's original target? Bingo! Bring your other foot up, and you are now at the starting point of another triangle.

TIP #4 - ALWAYS ADVANCE WHEN YOU SHOULD RETREAT

During a fight, as during a game of chess, the experienced player is already planning the second or third move before the first one is ever completed. In fact, many of the experienced fighter's moves are used solely to get the opponent to react in a predetermined manner.

Fight your own instinct and do not back up. Your instinct is wrong.

For example, imagine you are throwing a flurry of jabs at me. In your mind, you "know" exactly what I am going to do: backpedal to escape your jabs.

In fact, you are counting upon me back pedaling into that corner behind me, then you'll pound me into a liquid, right? How surprised are you going to be when I step forward, along my trusty triangle, and not backward? You'd be very surprised because I'm not "supposed" to step into an attack, rather away from it. Since, in this scenario, I've stepped forward along the triangle, while you are busy trying to figure out how to handle this unexpected happening, I am now inside your defenses, and face your unprotected ribs, armpit, neck, head, abdomen, flank, and knee -- a virtual smorgasbord of targets. Then it's back to tip #2: hard goes to bone, point goes to soft. All of these tips are simple common sense. But, most people never think about them until someone points them out. Additionally, most people will never use this advice because they do not put themselves in situations which may become violent. As I see it, the goal of self-defense training is not to have the ability to utterly destroy another person, but foresight to never have to demonstrate it.