



THE ALLIANCE

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SELF-DEFENCE TECHNIQUES OF MARTIAL ARTS

Part Two: Choosing A Course

By Hanshi Stephen A. Lonsdale



I consider the study of all martial arts to have merit. So, which martial art should a student choose, if self defence is the primary motivation? To answer that question properly, an assessment of risk needs to be undertaken. In my first book, **“An Introduction to Seishindo: A Modern Method of Self Defence,”** I

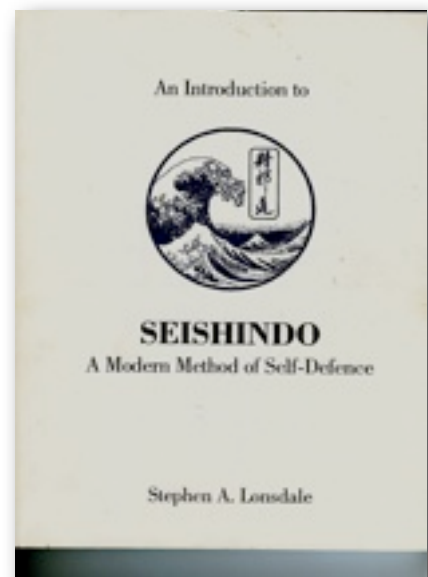
included a questionnaire, *How Safe Am I?-A Self-Evaluation*. The questionnaire asked about frequency of travel, security at home, in the car, in public, your habits and personal characteristics. There were seven sections and four possible answers per section. The respondent could tick off as many of the suggestions as pertained to them. A score below 14 indicated a safe lifestyle. I also included statistics, based on the *US Department of Justice, Bureau of Statistics*, and a *Violence Against Women Special Report*. I wrote specifically about how to choose a program, based on the *National Coalition Sexual Assault Report* on what to look for in a self-defence course (*NCASA, PO Box 21378, Washington, DC 20009*). Here is what I wrote based on the NCASA report:

Self-Defence Philosophy:

1. No one deserves to be assaulted. Being attacked does not make you responsible for the attack. It is the attacker alone who bears the responsibility of his actions.
2. Regardless what decision a person makes; to act, not to act in defence, that person is not at fault. The decision to survive the best way possible must be respected.

3. A good self-defence program should not “tell” the student what to or not do. The program should offer options, techniques, and method of analyzing situations. It is appropriate for the program to point out what usually works best in most situations, noting that each situation is unique and the final decision on how to act rests with the student confronting the situation.

4. Empowerment is the goal of a good self-defence program. A student’s decision regarding her level of participation must be respected.



Questions to Ask:

1. What is “self-defence”?

Self-defence is a set of awareness, assertiveness, verbal confrontation skills with safety strategies and physical techniques that enable a student to successfully escape, resist, and survive violent attack.

2. Does self-defence work?

Yes. Self-defence training can increase your options and help you prepare responses to slow down, de-escalate, or interrupt an attack. Like any tool, the more informed a student, the greater chance of making the correct decision in the face of an attack.

3. Is self-defence a guarantee?

No. There are no guarantees when it comes to self-defence. However, self-defence training can increase your options and your preparedness.

4. Is there a standard self-defence course?

No. There are many formats for training. They may be as short as two hours or as long as eight weeks or a semester. Whatever the length of the course it should be based on maximizing options, simple techniques, and respect for individual’s experience.

5. Is there a course I should stay away from?

This depends on the student’s perspective. Find out about the philosophy of the course and the background of the instructor. Observe a class and talk to the instructor or a student. Discover if the instructor is knowledgeable and respectful of your concerns. Determine if the length and commitment is suitable for you.

6. Who is better, a male or a female instructor?

This depends on the student’s perspective. For female students there is an advantage having a female instructor as role model. It may be easier to discuss sensitive issues in an all female class. However, having male partners to practice on adds to the experience. In the end, it is knowledge, attitude, and philosophy of the instructor that counts, not the gender.

7. Must I train for years to learn to defend myself?

No. A basic course can provide concepts, principles, and skills for you to develop self-protection strategies you can build on.

8. If I use self-defence could I get hurt worse?

Studies indicate a physical response does not increase the level of physical injury and may decrease the likelihood. There is, however, no real guarantee and “going along” with an attacker does not guarantee your safety. The decision to act or not, must lie with the student facing the situation. That decision must be respected.

9. What does “realistic training” mean?

Choosing a self-defence course is a serious decision. It should be based on research. There is no program or instructor that replicate a “real” assault; there are too many scenarios, and the level of energy would irresponsibly endanger the student. Responsible self-defence training requires control. It is important that each student can control her own participation during the class.

10. What about “pepper spray” or “mace” or “stun guns”?

First, check with the laws of your state. Some self-defence tools may be illegal. Second, a device is only effective if the student can get to it quickly and use it competently.

11. How much should I pay?

Paying the most does guarantee better instruction. Shop around, not all courses are the same. Do your research.

12. Where can I find a self-defence course?

Check the local paper or crisis center. Community colleges often run courses as do martial arts schools. Ask your local police department if they know a reputable course.

13. Am I too old, out of shape or disabled to participate?

A good course can adapt to age, ability and special requirements. Each student is unique.

14. How can I tell a good course from a bad one?

A good course covers critical thinking about defence strategies, assertiveness, powerful communication skills and easy-to-remember techniques. The instructor respects and responds to your concerns. Instruction is based on the premise we can act competently, decisively, and intelligently in defence of self.

I hope this questionnaire, a paraphrased excerpt from my first book, and based on the NCASA Self-Defence AD-HOC Committee, proves helpful.

Next month we will discuss the advantages of formal martial arts training for self-defence purposes.



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COMPASSION AND THE MARTIAL ARTS SEMINAR

By Jeannette Shaw

Martial arts and compassion are subjects which seldom spring to mind simultaneously. The mention of martial arts usually evokes images of aggression, conflict, and violence. Compassion, on the other hand, is defined as: *"pity inclining one to be helpful or merciful."* Can such disparate concepts co-exist? Does compassion have a place within a discipline which hones fighting skills? These were the questions explored on **Saturday, August 14th**, at a seminar hosted by **Snow Lion Jujitsu and Self Defense Academy** on the topic, **"Compassion in the Martial Arts"** at *Trinity United Church in London, Ontario*. Seminar instructors were **Rev. Michael Shaw, Sifu, Chinese/Korean Mantis Fist Kung Fu**, and an independent Christian minister, and **Rev. Jason Carter, Kyoshi, Master instructor/ founder of Nying Bulam Jujitsu** and founder of *"Assembly of Compassionate Beings Buddhist Ministries"*.

Rev. Shaw stated that traditional Asian martial arts had originated within the religious traditions of Buddhism and Daoism and therefore, right from the outset, had incorporated ethical training and the practice of virtues, including compassion. Two pillars of Buddhism, for example, are wisdom and compassion. In our western culture, Christian values mirror those of the east: *"What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy..."* (Micah 6:8). Rev. Shaw reminded participants that Jesus himself said, *"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."* (Matt. 10:34) and that Jesus

acted with aggression, when necessary, to uphold the right. In one of the most well known stories of Jesus, the Good Samaritan, we are told that the one who is in need is our neighbour and that we are



Reverend Jason Carter

to *"go and do likewise"* (Luke 10:37). Martial artists need to take that message to heart and act with compassion to protect or defend victims of violence. Rev. Shaw also pointed out that it is imperative for a martial artist who teaches others skills to dominate and inflict pain, to balance those skills with virtue training, so that students develop the proper judgment to decide when violence is necessary and to what degree it need be used.

Rev. Carter reminded participants that the values of courtesy, honour, and respect - integral elements of traditional martial arts training - are of greater importance even than the fighting techniques. Respect for the instructor and the traditions, respect for one's opponent, courtesy towards one another, and honour in personal conduct are among the spiritual values that hold martial artists to a higher code of conduct than the average person. Compassion in the heart of a martial artist dictates choosing to act with the least possible degree of aggression in any given

situation. Rev. Carter outlined the five levels of aggression from verbal to multiple attacks or being taken to the ground. He reminded participants of the importance of body dynamics when trying to defuse a potentially violent situation and of the need to put one's ego on hold in order to stop the flow of aggression. The need for martial artists to reclaim their spiritual heritage and to pass on that compassionate tradition to younger generations is especially urgent in a time when the appeal of the raw violence inherent in our culture and some martial arts circles is growing.

The seminar finished with both instructors presenting a variety of techniques from different martial arts traditions for gaining control of a violent situation while inflicting the least possible harm. Participants were then given a chance to practice the techniques and ask questions.

All the proceeds from the event were donated to **Trinity United Church's Hospitality Meal Program** an outreach of the church to the needy in the community.



Reverend Terry Shaw

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