

WEAPONS DEFENCES

Live or die: it's your choice. By Dik Chance

Human beings are tool users. Ever since the first of our ancestors started banging rocks together, man has sought out the extension to our natural abilities that tools bring. It comes as no surprise then that some of the first tools fashioned by humans were weapons. They give an attacker a great physical and psychological advantage.

Defences against weapons are a very difficult subject. Whilst I'm no expert by any definition, I've studied some of what are considered the best weapons defences around. The one main thing I've learned along the way is that most of the complex weapons defences and disarms that people demonstrate just won't work under the harsh pressure of a real situation. In this article I'll mainly use knives as examples, but there are as many possible weapons as we have the imagination to use.

In the U.K. at the moment we are seeing a rise in incidents of weapons related violence. So much so that some people (including senior politicians) are calling for the banning of sales of 'ninja swords', Stanley knives and even kitchen knives. However in my humble opinion the problem lies in the desire to use a weapon, rather than the weapon itself. Any tool designed to cut could be used as a weapon. However, even banned weapons such as butterfly knives and knuckle-dusters are easy to obtain through the Internet. Aside from these illegal weapons it's all too easy for someone in a pub or club to use a broken bottle or glass.

With that in mind, the important thing for any weapons defence is to consider concepts that are simple and adaptable. Your defence must work for most weapons and situations. If your defence doesn't fit that model, you run the risk of getting *'technique log jam'*. This is where your brain spends so much time selecting between the five most perfect techniques you know for that situation, you've already been hit before you decide what to do.

The biggest weapon against any attack is your awareness. I'll write a more detailed article on awareness in the months to come. However, if you are switched on to your environment and the threats that are there, you can minimise the risk of a surprise. Also, it's a sensible precaution these days to assume that all threats are armed, especially if you can't see their hands.

One of the first things to consider when planning and training for weapons attacks is why they are used. I like to think that this breaks down into two broad categories. They are either used to



Probably the most dangerous sneak attack

intimidate and coerce you into do something, or they are used to damage you (often in a frenzied way). There is a saying that *'stabbers rarely show, and showers rarely stab'*. Whilst this is not a hard or fast rule, it does illustrate the differences in approach. If someone wants to mug you using a knife, they are going to brandish it, poke you with it or wave it around for you to see and be scared by. If someone simply wants to add new holes to your otherwise perfect skin, the likelihood is you'll only see it after it's been used, unless your awareness is excellent.

Any situation is best dealt with before it has the chance to escalate. If you can avoid or escape, then this is always the best option. If you can escape by giving up your possessions or wallet, then do so: these things are easily replaced. The only thing stopping you could be your ego. Capitulation is easy. The only time when this is not the best option is when a weapon is being used to force you to a secondary location. All advice in this instance says that you should never allow this to happen. If someone wants you somewhere else, they are obviously planning to do something that they can't do at that time. You don't want to find out what that is. Make your stand.

Body language plays a big part in weapons attack. To gain the maximum shock, and therefore the greatest psychological advantage, an attacker will often hide the knife until after the initial contact and 'interview' has taken place. If you can't see someone's hands, or they are holding them in a strange way, you've got to assume they are armed. Now is a great time to launch your pre-emptive attack.

You can attack the weapon arm and jam the attacker's ability to bring the weapon to bear. Simultaneously you can launch full power attacks to the head and groin using your free hand and knees.

This concept also applies to virtually any weapon attack scenario you can come up with. Firstly, depending on the situation, you can create a window for escape or attack by feigning compliance. *'Give me your money'*. *'Of course mate, I'm not going to be any trouble, I'll give you anything you want'*. Then, when you launch your attack, you should attack the weapon arm and grab it. If you can strike it, you can get some pain shock into the attacker. If not, just must try to secure it with both hands. At this moment, the



Knife attacks can drain all the fight from you

attacker is often so shocked that they will ignore their free hand and try to pull their arm back so they can regain control of the weapon. You can then go on the offensive with your full power knee strikes, controlling the weapon hand so that you don't inadvertently stick yourself. Keep going until you can safely strip the weapon from the attacker. Don't leave it laying around for someone else to pick up and use on you. This concept applies equally well to front, rear, side and multiple attacks. The key thing is simplicity.

Mindset plays a huge part in surviving a weapons attack. Firstly having a knife placed at your throat, or worse into your body, is incredibly scary and that fear can drain all the fight from you. But take heart, very few knife fights are fatal. I've heard figures of 30% used, but I suspect it is less as there must be many more that remain unreported. Most people that use a knife in a fight have little or no clue about how to actually use it. Most wounds you won't even notice straight away due to the effects of adrenaline.

What you need is an offensive mindset. You need to attack and keep on attacking until the threat is neutralised. I've heard it said that if you are defending yourself against a knife attack you should expect to get cut. However, someone pointed out to me recently that this is a very negative way to view things. It is better to start out thinking that you are going to be fine, but don't be surprised if you get wounded.

To finish with, here is a recap of the concepts that can help you survive a weapon attack.



Attack and jam the weapon arm whilst simultaneously attacking



Attack and double grab the weapon arm, then use your knee

1. Comply if appropriate:
 - Give up your possessions – they're replaceable.
 - Don't allow yourself to be taken to a secondary location.
2. Feign compliance to gain the element of surprise.
3. A winning mindset is very important:
 - Don't be surprised by injuries.
 - Never give up.
4. Strike the weapon arm, grab it and clear it from your body, then use your knee to finish.
5. Retain the weapon at the end.

Finally, please don't try to learn weapons defences from magazine articles like this, books or DVDs. Get some real training. The P.U.M.A. FAST weapons levels will be a great start.

Until next time, train safely, respectfully and smartly with an open mind.

NB Note the use of a blunt plastic training knife for safety reasons.

About the author:

Dik Chance trains under Master Ray Gayle (7th Degree) at Yate Taekwon-Do. He also teaches at his own school at Clifton in Bristol. Dik is an instructor and bulletman in P.U.M.A.'s F.A.S.T. Defence team. He has a keen interest in reality based self-protection training and combatives, and regularly trains in this area. This training has led him to train with some of the world's most influential instructors such as Geoff Thompson, Peter Consterdine, Bill Kipp and Peyton Quinn.