

“Why” Are Myths of Self Defense Important?

The first session taught here at Reality Defense Training is identical for both men and women. After that first class, the woman's program (F.A.S.S.T. Women) take them in a different direction than the (F.A.S.S.T. Men) program. The difference is because it is highly unlikely that a woman will need to or be able to defend herself against a man the way two males would fight each other. *(I am not implying that those skills are essential at some point for continued skill development, they are, but initially spending time learning how to “duke” it out with a man is not a good use of time for a woman.)* I will cover this in more detail in another paper.

In this first class, we start with what we refer to the Myths of Self Defense. There are many “myths” of *{insert topic here}* for any number of subjects and some may think this list is incomplete which it is. This “list” has mainly been unchanged for as long as I can remember because it has served its purpose of making people think. I compiled this list in the process of promoting my business before social media was even a dream, and over the years. This list represents what I view as excuses or reasons why what I thought a prospective student refused to entertain learning what I had to teach. Listed in the ordered in the frequency at the time.

6 Myths of Self Defense

1. Nothing Will Happen to Me -

I have never actually had a person say those words to me but when you hear the reasons people come up with it can tend to make for an eye-rolling experience. If they believed what they were saying I feel they think nothing would ever happen to them. I apply this “myth” to the people that would say to me. *“you know I am just so busy,” “I work so much.,” “I have kids”* or one of my favorites: *“I have always have been able to talk my way out of it”* this is only to quote a very few. When I developed the programs for Reality Defense Training, the goal was to cater to the busy person. The minimum requirement for enrollment was and still is one hour a week. That information was part of my sales pitch, and I would frequently get those responses anyway! You know, I am not a life coach, but if you cannot squeeze one hour a week to train, then you may want to look at your life and make some changes. Or, you believe that **“nothing bad will ever happen to you.”** I always thought the *“I have always have been able to talk my way out of it”* was ironic. That works great until the first time it doesn't. Sometimes no amount of talking will work if they are committed to fighting.

2. Someone Else Will Protect Me -

The “*someone else will protect me*” was a response I received exclusively from women. Some would say “*I will call the cops,*” now keep in mind when this list was produced there were no cell phones. Understand this statement is often used to this day, so let's assume this is the case. The assumption when making this claim would be that your would be attacker would allow you to make any call. But let's assume you were able to get a 911 call sent. If you are unable to speak to the dispatcher, they will not know what to do and would undoubtedly deploy the police immediately. But to where? It is common knowledge that modern phones can be tracked via GPS but I am unclear if that is a retroactive element to dialing 911. (*If it is I believe there is a civil liberties issue but let's assume it is and it is a good thing.*) What is the average response time for law enforcement? This will vary per city and the day of the week and time of the day will affect this response time. I do not think this is a reliable strategy.

I have had on occasion women tell me when speaking to them about the importance of self-defense for women that their “*boyfriend, husband, brother, dad, etc.*” would protect them. The reason I mention this is because when they said these things they were standing in front of me alone! My response would usually have a sarcastic undertone as I looked around and asked: “*is he in your purse?*” Some people you just can't reach.

The last topic concerning this “*myth.*” is can the individual that would be relied upon actually know how to fight? This topic is usually a sensitive one when discussed in the presence of men. The reality is, most cannot. This does not mean that they cannot defend themselves or “*Forest Gump*” their way through a fight. If you were to rely on this as a primary strategy for self-defense, I think you will be disappointed.

Now, let's look at Law Enforcement. I began pursuing the task of piercing the nepotism riddled veil of Defensive Tactics and Alternative Force for Law Enforcement in the mid-1980's with my then business partner. This proved to be a very uphill battle. We eventually made some inroads and what we learned is (*unfortunately*) many agencies approach their training with liability in mind and not survivability. I believe that what we see today, in part is caused by officers NOT trusting the training they receive in the academy. I say this because it has been my experience that when people do not believe in their skills, they tend to overreact. (*I will expand on this in another paper*)

3. If I Don't Fight Back, I am Less Likely To Get Injured -

I heard this “myth” mainly from women, but a few men that were smaller in stature would sometime believe this. Basically, the belief is if you complied with your attacker they would harm you less. This, of course, is an unknown but as a practice, I think this will open a victim to more harm. If you initially allow an aggressor to cause you harm, you may not get the opportunity to fight back later. My philosophy is you ALWAYS fight back if that is your mentality and you recognize that perhaps you should not, it is easier not to do something than to convince yourself that you should. *(I will expand on the importance this in another paper)*

4. Study Martial Arts -

Defining Martial Arts is not as simple as you might think. The word “*Martial*” is “**of or appropriate to war; warlike.**” The word “*Art.*” is described as “**skill acquired by experience, study, or observation .**” Basically “***The Study of Interpersonal War.***” Occasionally when speaking to people about Reality Defense Training, they will ask if it is like Martial Arts. This is understandable because as a culture we began using that term as it related to fighting styles from the orient. By definition, a High School Wrestler is a Martial Artist.

There are countless “styles” of Martial Arts to choose from, but there are only **four** forms of Martial Arts.

1.) Exhibition - Exhibition, theatrical or dramatic martial arts are represented by styles that require extreme movement, flexibility, posturing and balance to apply. Things that you would likely see in Martial Arts movies. The techniques are flashy, beautiful and graceful, but have little to do with the realities of street violence. *(Theatrical Martial Art is to self-defense what James Bond movies are to espionage: one is practical - the other is fantasy)*

2.) Competition - Competition Martial Arts represent pretty much every traditional and what is today considered *(a modern approach)* Mixed Martial Arts (M.M.A.). The issue with trying to use competitive Martial Arts for self-defense is not that the skills developed will not work. They “**can**” work but the approach to the skill development is structured to operate within specific guidelines or rules. These rules are very limiting, and you will do what you train most to do under stress. In all organized competition fights, both combatants wear some form of protective gear and agree to abide by a set of particular rules. Then, they don't even trust the fighters to completely abide by the rules though because they place a referee into the equation to intervene if someone steps out of line. Lastly, you can quit anytime you want, Tapout, throw in the towel or whatever vernacular is used to “QUIT.” None of the previous element will be present in a real-life situation.

In a real fight, there are no rules, referee and no practical way to quit unless escape is an option. You can never assume that you will be able to escape until or unless your attacker has been neutralized. Unless you are going to compete in the combat sports, then don't train in "Combat Sports." As stated above, techniques taught can work on the street. You can never deny success but as a philosophy is whatever it is you are training in the best thing to do every time? Maybe, maybe not, you are rolling the dice if you come across someone that has trained only for survival and will unhesitatingly engage you with such viciousness and directness that it will be over before it starts. All because one of you prepared to fight for 15 minutes and one for 9 seconds.

3.) Reality Based - In the last decade a phrase that I have used since the mid-1980's started Based Martial Arts is not complicated. Remove the sports aspect and attempt only to develop and apply techniques, tactics, and strategies that will work in "real" life. Sadly, the later is where most all fail. What I have noticed is there is a lingering "sport" element to their approach. I believe the largest culprit is the ground fighting and grappling arts. ***I maintain that ground fighting and grappling have no business on the street or battlefield. (Unless it is required for your job)*** Even this should be applied sparingly due to the uncontrolled environment and the dangers of being on the ground or wrapped up with someone.

Unfortunately, this phrase has been co-opted by factions of the Martial Arts and Defensive Tactics Community, mainly Law Enforcement, Military and the like. In my opinion, their use of the word is not applied correctly in some cases where it really matters. I understand that the definition that I use is not necessarily the same as theirs. *(I will be covering these issues in great detail in the future, the purpose of "survive the fight" is to challenge the validity of these skills)*

4.) Survival Based - ***"Survival Based Martial Arts."*** is a phrase I started using about 12 years since Reality Based was co-opted. There two factors that are required to qualify as a "Survival Based Martial Art." Firstly, ***"Mindset."*** This is the most important of the two and also the easiest *(theoretically)*. The conscious decision must be made that you will not bother developing skills and concepts that do not directly increase your potential for survival. You must be diligent in this regard. Secondly, ***"Techniques That Support That Mindset."*** This factor is the engine that makes all this possible. Without this element, you simply do not have the makings of a ***"Survival Based Martial Arts."***

The example I use to explain this is an article I read years ago in a Martial Arts magazine. A Taekwondo school was attempting to become “street.” They went on and on about how useless katas were, all the pomp and circumstance and gis were utterly unnecessary in this day and age (*which I agree with*). They transitioned to wearing Black BDU’s, combat boots and wife beaters (*oh the 80’s*). That outward changes in my mind represented the mindset change moving away from the unnecessary things. However, they were still standing, punching, blocking and kicking the same way. Those techniques did not support the changed mindset.

“Survival Based Martial Arts.” Accept that real violence can and probably will be messy if it turns bad. We assume it will turn south on us; that we will mess up, and that the bad guy will get lucky. This may sound pessimistic, but it is not. We don’t actually “expect” those former things will happen, but we know that they can occur and train with that in mind at all times.

Reality Defense Training is a Survival Based Martial Art!

For a more detailed explanation of Survival Based Concepts (please see: [Survival Concept: “WHY” is it important?](#))

5. Weapons Are The Answer -

Having conversations with people about unarmed combative and they blurt out *“I don’t need that karate crap, ill just shoot em”* can sometimes be infuriating because some believe that once they make that statement, anything you could possibly say will be null and void. I almost always take a look at their waist, and if I do not see a print I ask; *“Where is your gun now?”* In all my years of presenting these “myths,” I have only had one woman from a realtor officer proudly state *“right here in my purse.”* Only one time!

There are **5 forms of Weapons**, and those weapons share some advantages and disadvantages. The critical thing to note for the purposes of this discussion is ALL weapons share two disadvantages:

Weapons Over-Reliance - Weapons over-reliance is the mindset that there is no need for unarmed combative skills because you have a weapon and that is all you will ever need. This is, of course, short sights because that is not always possible. Another issue with this mindset lies in that you are not always justified in using a weapon. This lack of justification transitions to the next disadvantage. Not knowing “when” you are justified to use a weapon.

Operator Error - Operator Error begins with the purchase of any weapon **with no intention** of learning the proper handling, use, care and justification of that. This is very prevalent in the firearms community. This, of course, can have deadly consequences whether intentional or accidental.

Weapons are "AN" answer, not "THE" answer.

For a more detailed explanation and break down of each weapon: (please see: [What Weapon is the Most Dangerous Weapon?](#))

6. Only the Strong Win -

People have looked at me and said what could I possibly do to you? I'm a pretty good sized guy, and some people have a near irrational fear of "Bigger." If you know what to do, and have the proper mindset, size does not really matter. Understand that there are physiological realities and when the adequate techniques are brought to bear on the size of the appropriate target does not matter. Remember the adage ***"it's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog."*** This is a true statement.

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