

## **The Defensive Edge**

### **A realistic look at knife fighting - Morné Swanepoel**

**The most constant thing in life is change. Everything that has been mummified belongs to the past. Mummification is a blockage in the body, there is no spirit. We are all alive and need to progress and go beyond...**

In all of my training and experiences, the one area of the martial arts or realistic combat that frightens me the most is the knife. It is hard to convey the ugliness of the knife as a weapon. Anyone, trained-untrained, man-woman, is at a significant advantage with a knife and a great disadvantage against one. So, how do we prepare ourselves for this fatal encounter?

**REALITY** is the key here, as most martial artists train primarily to defend against a face to face 'Hollywood' type knife attack. We need to distinguish between that which looks good for demonstration purposes and that which will work in actual knife fight. Look at the way you are training. You need to develop your training to gain the necessary skills and attributes to deal with high-speed aggressive blade attacks. Training with edged weapons is virtually useless unless it is balanced out with experience or realistic training methods and functional techniques. Research has shown that fine motor skill techniques require a certain degree of awareness, skill, proximity sense and exact timing to pull off, quite a bit to ask in a real self defence situation. The best Techniques are those you have tried and tested over and over again in as close to reality environment as possible. Make things simple so it works under pressure and ensure you incorporate functional training methods to compliment your techniques.

We get this experience via resistance training or through actual sparring. Reality knife fighting occurs at combative speed and this is where we need to be functional and effective. This doesn't mean that you should neglect the various drills that allow for creative, relaxed and playful training. When you are in a confrontation that can cost you your life, you have no excuses for not having prepared as thoroughly as possible in your training. This means that your training exploration has to involve everything that works in a full resistance environment, and that you have to thoroughly prepare yourself for these defensive and offensive tactics.

So why then should you train in offensive knife fighting skills? You need to understand the offensive elements in order to develop defensive tactics for any offensive techniques you might encounter. Knowledge of weapons working will give you an advantage if you must defend yourself against one. Improvised weapons are often available, so we need to practice fighting with a weapon to develop those skills. One needs to also focus on Knife vs Knife and then working empty hand against a weapon. You must always consider surrendering whenever a weapon is used, unless you believe that doing so will place you in greater danger.

When training with weapons it is also important to understand the various levels of confrontation one should implement.

#### **1. Avoid.**

Improve your awareness and avoid. There are various ways to improve ones awareness towards violent crime. From the training you do to studying the criminal mindset and statistics and cases relating to the topic.

#### **2. Escape**

Set up various scenarios in your training and learn to always look to escape. Mentally 'create' various situations in your mind and plan how you would escape from it. One can also create a situation in your training where you need to ensure the escape of a loved one etc.

#### **3. Use Environment**

Throwing objects or putting a obstacle between you and your attacker or using an object to hit weapon hand or attacker. One can set up various training methods to simulate this i.e. using focus mitts, boxing gloves etc. which will represent the difference between objects one can throw and those you can use as a weapon.

#### **4. Mobility**

Working on ones perception of distancing, timing and accuracy not to engage and to escape the situation as safe as possible. One needs to also work on ones mobility tactics when having a loved one with you to protect.

#### **5. Engage**

This is extreme and is really only worthwhile if saving a loved ones life is at stake or if the situation or environment requires one to engage with attacker. When engaging it is imperative that one grabs the weapon hand with both hands to secure and to then set up your escape or attack.

An important guideline is to avoid focussing on disarms unless the situation presents itself. It is also important to use various size training knives and improvised weapons to ensure a well rounded approach to a realistic encounter. Add Realistic drills in your training and ensure correct drilling before and after 'techniques'. Train in various environments and test your techniques all the time to ensure you get the correct feedback with the 'techniques' you are using.

Adding blade training into your arsenal for realistic Street Self defence is essential. One must not make the mistake by thinking you are invincible and that it is now OK to take on a attacker with a weapon. Avoiding and Escaping should always be your first priority. This is by no means a cowardly reaction. Your possessions can be replaced your life cannot. There can only be one winner in a knife fight and more often than not there are two losers. There is an old saying that says ' When two tigers fight, the one will die today, the other dies tomorrow due to all it's wounds it suffered' Don't just dismiss training with weapons because you think that you'll never use them and that you will be able to avoid this type attack in the street. You will gain more insight, be more prepared for any situation, improve your attributes, and its loads of fun. Training with weapons is part of becoming the best that you can be.

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