

Urban Tactical Weapons

'Expect the unexpected'

Street violence, which can be directly related to the unlawful exercise of physical force, is a reality which all of us live with on a daily basis. Training to protect oneself for street confrontations is very intense and quite different from training for competitions, even the No holds barred competitions that are very popular today. The Pavement arena is where there are no rules, where anything goes and where you can expect the unexpected.

'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...'

The latest 'buzz word' in the martial arts community is **REALITY BASED**. It is a police term, though never widely used in the law enforcement community, which refers to Realistic Conflict Rehearsal training. The term 'reality-based' was brought to light thanks to one of the world's leading reality based instructors, Sergeant Jim Wagner. He defines reality-based as follows:

'Training and survival skills based on modern conflict situations that the practitioner is likely to encounter in their environment (their "reality"), in an accordance with the use-of-force continuum of that jurisdiction.' - **Jim Wagner**

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word reality/realism/realistic can be defined as: 'Actually existing or occurring. Practise of things in their true nature and dealing with them as they are. Based on facts rather than ideals'

In the reality-based world there are 3 main conflict stages that one is exposed to. Any violent or self defence situation can be divided into these important stages.

- Pre Conflict (before the fight)

Most situations can be avoided by ensuring one exposes oneself to pre conflict training. Pre conflict training consists of various factors such as: Threat assessment, situational awareness, hostile awareness, legal issues, verbal judo etc. Learning how to avoid confrontations physically, mentally and socially is imperative to any reality based self defence training. Besides the physical techniques and training methods one can incorporate to achieve these results, it is just as important to expose oneself to case studies of various violent crimes to identify the pre conflict stage and methods of avoidance or minimal damage/injury.

- Conflict (the actual confrontation)

This is the part that most Self Defence and Martial Art schools focus on. The problem is that most of them are based on theory, rituals, tradition and set sequences or forms. Not one confrontation is the same as the next and trying to memorize complex techniques for certain situations or attacks is going to get you killed or seriously injured. The conflict stage has social and asocial violent components, which need specific attention such as gang attacks, the way criminals fight with weapons, carjacking, robberies, muggings etc. It is also important one is able to establish the difference between social and asocial violence and the amount of force you will be using to successfully defend yourself and your loved ones. The importance of getting the most

effective results is directly related to the tools that are brought into action focussing on the most vulnerable targets that are available.

- Post Conflict (after the fight)

These are the actions you will take after the confrontation/fight. Again there are many factors involved here which needs to be addressed in ones reality based training such as first aid training, escaping methods, citizen's arrest methods, communication with the authorities, courtroom survival, attacker description and incident detail etc.

Your duty as a Street Self Defence Coach/instructor is to expose your students to what is real in today's world of street violence and to ensure that their training methods and techniques is on par with what is actually happening out there today i.e. their reality.

If you are serious about self defence or personal protection then you need to include weapons to your training whether you like weapons or not. Most violent crimes involve weapons. It doesn't matter whether you live in a 'weapons culture' like the USA or in a country with strict weapons control, criminals make use of weapons. Buying illegal weapons on the black market is as prevalent as the drug trade. Don't think for a moment that your government can keep weapons out of the wrong hands, because they can't. It is imperative that you always expect your attacker to be armed in an asocial street encounter, as this is the most common tool used for effective intimidation.

In the streets of today we can face up to 5 main weapon categories.

1. Projectile Weapons i.e. Firearms

This includes but it not limited to the throwing of objects i.e. being attacked by rocks being thrown at you. Firearms are your most common projectile weapons associated with street attacks/crime. It is imperative that one needs to learn how to use and study some basic tactics concerning a firearm. Part of these tactics should include important feedback on issues such as; firearm disarms, escaping methods, use of various firearms, gun safety, target acquisition, weapon grip & stances, difference between competitive and combat shooting, cover and concealment, room entry and building searches to mention just a few. Exposing yourself to this training will give you a better idea of what the attacker is able to do with his weapon thus giving you a better chance to survive.

2. Edged Weapons i.e. Knife

In all of my training and experiences, the one area of the martial arts or realistic combat that frightens me the most is edged weapons or more commonly the blade. It is hard to convey the ugliness of the blade as a weapon. Anyone, trained-untrained, man-woman, is at a significant advantage with a blade and a great disadvantage against one. This includes but is not limited to broken glass or bottles being used as a weapon. One also needs to be aware that you can be up against any sharpened objects which includes steel, wood, plastics etc. Anything that can cause a puncture or slash wound will fall into this category. The blade is the most common edged weapon used in the streets of today. It is important to understand that your attacker does not need a \$100 limited Edition designer blade to be effective or deadly. Again it is imperative one trains with various edged weapons to understand the strengths and weaknesses. Part of your tactical training you should expose yourself to the studies of various criminal edged weapon attacks as experienced in the jails etc. Do not think for one second that the criminal out there is going to feed you with the perfect overextended angle of attack or

give you time to perfect your block or your disarm.

3. Impact Weapons i.e. Baton

Impact weapons are probably the most available weapon to which a person has access to. Man has been using impact weapons since he began throwing rocks, as his first means of protection, and as a weapon to hunt game in his struggle for survival. Impact weapons become usable for everything from riot control, prisoner control, military purposes, civilian self defence tool to a extremely lethal close-quarter combat weapon. The range of impact weapons are unlimited with batons, clubs, sticks, everyday household objects to just about anything you can lay your hands on. The baton, club and stick are the most common impact weapons found on the streets of today. Two important factors re impact weapons in contrast and comparison with edged weapons is that firstly your attack with an impact weapon should primarily be focussed upon the bony protrusions and nerve centres of the human anatomy, while the edged weapon is most effective cutting, slashing and puncturing veins, arteries, muscle, tendons and organs of the body. Secondly it is exactly what it says 'impact' which means you need to strike as hard and powerful as possible whereas the edged weapons can be effective with far less brute force.

4. Chemical Weapons i.e. Pepper spray

Chemical weapons offer an easier way for the user to escape various situations or to create an opportunity to attack an innocent party more effectively. Think about it. If you wanted to rob somebody or beat them to a pulp just for 'the fun of it,' wouldn't it be easier if you came up to the person unexpectedly and sprayed him in the face with pepper spray, mace or some caustic chemical ? Once you 'blind' him, it is next to impossible for the victim to put up effective resistance. This is why criminals are turning to this tactic. Chemical weapons come in various formats such as liquids, gas and powders. Pepper spray is the most common chemical weapon out there today. Pepper sprays are aerosols containing the extract of very hot chilli peppers as their ingredient. A correctly formulated, correctly produced pepper spray is the most effective non-lethal weapon available for use against single and multiple attackers. A good pepper spray will blind an attacker, create temporary breathing difficulties and extreme pain (physical and psychological). All symptoms are temporary and are not life-threatening. It is once again imperative to understand the use and effects of common chemical weapons and build your strategy surrounding your experiences and studies.

5. Weapons of Mass Destruction i.e. Bombs, chemical warfare etc.

You may be learning a Martial Art system in order to protect yourself against a common criminal, but does your training also include how to handle the global wave of terrorism ? Terrorist attacks are generally very spectacular due to the fact that they crave media attention. Bombings are the most favoured method of attack by terrorists. For those of us who live, work or travel through big cities, a bombing or bomb threat is part of our 'reality'. It is important that you know how to detect a device (pre conflict), what to do at the moment of attack (conflict) and how to recover from the attack (post conflict).

So why can't one just train against an armed opponent, why is it important to also become efficient using various weapons?

It is imperative one understands the character including the strengths and the weaknesses of the most common weapons found in the 5 categories above. The best way to achieve this is by doing actual training with the specific weapon. You need to understand the offensive elements in order to develop defensive tactics for any offensive techniques you might encounter. Dealing with an armed

attacker you need to be able to make use of the weapon should you be able to disarm or if the weapon drops. 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. Like any fighting or survival skills, you must train it in order for it to become a natural response.

It is important we also study our reality, in other words – Know your enemy or who you up against -. A Person's reality in the Middle East will surely not be the same as someone who lives in Nashville Tennessee for example. Or someone residing on the Maldives Island will not have the same reality as someone in Johannesburg, South Africa. These are extreme examples illustrating my point that one needs to study and be aware of what your immediate reality is. So the person who lives in Johannesburg South Africa will have to ensure their training and studies are up to date with what they face on a daily basis. For the resident of the Maldives Islands to undergo comprehensive training in Weapons of Mass Destruction will surely not be as relevant as the person residing in the Middle East.

What looks good is not always effective and what is effective does not always look good

Realism is the key here, as most martial artists train primarily to defend against a face to face 'Hollywood' type attack. We need to distinguish between that which looks good for demonstration purposes and that which will work in the streets of today. Most weapons training today is complicated and unrealistic for the streets of today. 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 attacks. Training with 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.

'Knowledge is not power. The ability to apply your knowledge (under pressure) is true power' – **Burton Richardson**

We get this experience via resistance training or through actual sparring and scenario rehearsal/training. Street 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. It is also important to use various kinds of weapons 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, wear everyday clothes and test your techniques all the time to ensure you get the correct feedback with the 'techniques' you are using. Besides the importance of training with a variety of weapons it is also important to include training in various light conditions, environments and scenarios and the 'not so ideal' situations such as fighting on the ground or in reduced spaces.

When training with weapons it is 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

In the case of Impact, Edged and chemical weapons incorporate throwing objects or putting an obstacle between you and your attacker or using an object to hit the weapon hand or attacker. In the case of projectile weapons i.e. firearm, ensure one is able to make use of cover and concealment concepts when one is being fired upon. One can set up various training methods and scenarios to simulate this i.e. using focus mitts, boxing gloves, safe debris etc. which will represent the difference between objects one can throw and those you can use as a weapon or find cover behind.

4. Mobility

Working on ones perception of distancing, timing and accuracy not to engage and to escape the situation as safe as possible. The 'safe' distance between an attacker with an edged, impact, projectile, chemical weapon varies and one needs to understand the range of the weapon to be able to deal with the attack effectively. 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 you or a loved ones life is at stake or if the situation or environment requires one to engage the attacker.

In Conclusion

Adding Urban Tactical Weapons 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 an 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. Most of the time there is only one winner in a weapons encounter 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 of attack in the street. Expose yourself to practical techniques and dynamic training methods. 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.

Morné Swanepoel

President JKD High Performance Street Fighting – Mixed Martial Arts

Founder of Urban Tactical Weapons program

Website www.combatcoaching.com

Email morne@combatcoaching.com

