

# SELF-DEFENCE IN THE REAL WORLD – THE NEW ITKD SYLLABUS

By Mr Brian Ricketts Il dan, Te Awamutu

**“The new self-defence syllabus has significantly advanced... and now attempts to incorporate both the physical and mental approaches to self-defence”**

Self-defence means different things to different people. Master Evan Davidson, in this issue’s editorial encapsulates his understanding of self-defence as “...the use of whatever means possible to defend yourself from harm or from an attack”. This is pretty broad-brush stuff, but he then qualifies the statement in the context of Taekwon-Do – “It is not only through the use of physical action, but more importantly the ability to see or perceive possible danger, anticipate and react accordingly”. We all learn Taekwon-Do techniques in our patterns and step sparring that we are told will help us out in the event of some unfortunate aggro’. But learning the techniques is the easy part; learning to anticipate an adversary’s intent or reaction, and knowing which technique will work best under any number of possible circumstances is something that is difficult to teach, and perhaps without first-hand experience difficult to learn.

And this is where the new self-defence syllabus has significantly advanced Taekwon-Do in New Zealand. Thanks to the efforts of Master McPhail and Mr Banicevich, with significant input from several other Taekwon-Do exponents, ITKD now has a syllabus that attempts to incorporate both the physical and mental approaches to self-defence: de-escalation that emphasises body and verbal language, and the physical approach that most of us will be more familiar with. The new syllabus points us in the direction outlined by Master Davidson – perception, anticipation, reaction.

The new syllabus also provides appropriate flexibility to instructors and students in terms of their leaning. Rather than being too prescriptive, it allows instructors to see what works for their students or use what they know works in the real world. I have been fortunate to have had instruction from two of the most experienced seniors in our organization in terms of their self-

defence skills – Master Davidson (8th Dan, Cambridge) and Mr Ian Campbell (6th Dan, Te Awamutu); Master Davidson in the Police Force and Mr Campbell for the Corrections Department. In fact both eventually became involved in developing training programmes for their departments; in each case Taekwon-Do played a major role in these programmes. Both gentlemen have had to deal with situations involving attacks with knives, axes, pieces of 4x2, bottles and fists; both survived because of their de-escalation and physical skills.

When I quizzed Master Davidson and Mr Campbell about their use of self-defence and the role Taekwon-Do has played for them personally, their responses had (perhaps not surprisingly) some common themes grounded in the real world:

Not having been in any serious argy bargy myself, I can only imagine the adrenalin rush that confrontation brings. During normal training we never experience this and yet it could have a major impact on how we might react in a real conflict. For Mr Campbell “Any altercation, whether it be a verbal or physical one, for me adrenalin becomes a factor...I find verbal confrontation a more difficult situation to manage because the adrenalin pumps while you are trying to de-escalate, whereas when the physical stuff happens I tend to use this to my advantage by focusing on application of techniques”. For Master Davidson “With my TKD skills, I believe having heightened awareness and using breathing techniques helps minimise any over-reaction. It is about taking control of yourself and getting control of the situation at hand”.

Continuing to develop all Taekwon-Do skills plus a better understanding of the Theory of Power provides both instructors with the necessary tools to resolve confrontation, most often using de-escalation skills, but when necessary

physical techniques. Master Davidson emphasized that this skill set provided “a better understanding of distance and timing as well as having a heightened awareness of the situations at hand and where and when situations can suddenly change (for better or for worse)”. Mr Campbell’s “... continued development with TKD is always a part of how I react and act in all aspects of my role in my job, Not having to get to a point when there needs to be a physical intervention is key , so I believe the soft skills sets i.e. communication and situational awareness are the essential keys to self-defence”.

Simplicity is the key. For example wrist-locks – are they simple or difficult? Simple when your opponent on the dojang is quietly presenting their arm, but in a real situation your attacker will move quickly and may change hands; a wrist under those circumstances becomes a much smaller moving target. So the technique is simple if you’ve been doing it for years, but perhaps more awkward for those less versed in self-defence. The bottom line is – use what works for you at the time given your training and experience, but keep to the basics.

Self-defence is one of the 5 components of Taekwon-Do – commonly referred to as the Composition of Taekwon-Do (fundamental movements, patterns, sparring, conditioning, and self-defence). We can also think of self-defence as the ‘combat’ part of Taekwon-Do – the part that has no rules (unlike sparring) other than common sense and the legal requirement to only use force appropriate to the situation. We need to understand the different responses required in dealing with the drunkard who is leaning on you, compared with the person coming at you full tilt with a baseball bat. The new ITKD self-defence syllabus continues to take us on this never-ending journey of learning and understanding the importance of perception – anticipation - reaction. 🍻



# BRIDGING THE MISSING LINK

By Mr Phil Thompson Protect Self-defence

The new iTKD self-defence syllabus has been launched! This is a fantastic step forward for iTKD and also the whole NZ martial arts community since the new syllabus moves away from a purely 'self-defence' focus and into a complete 'self protection' focus. I thought it would make sense to give some background on the difference between the two and the importance of the new design for real-world application.

The new syllabus is substantially based on Protect's level 1 Accredited Trainer module. With both Master McPhail and Mr Banicevich being Protect Accredited Trainers (along with many other iTKD instructors) it is no surprise that the new syllabus has turned out as well as it has, as they both have a solid understanding of the principles and concepts within the module. With the integrity and trust of both of these men who I am proud to call my friends, and the genuine intent behind the project being to create a functional system to enhance students' safety, the decision to be involved was ultimately an easy one.

Traditionally martial arts have taught only one aspect of 'self-defence', being the physical response stage. There have been little titbits of awareness information shared, some good and some awful. The concept of de-escalation amounted to screaming "Back Off!" at someone but that was about where it ended. Around 10 years ago when we began introducing the 'Four Stages' (Recognition for Awareness, De-escalation, Physical response, Post-event) and the behavioural and psychological aspects of violence and self-protection into the greater martial arts community, we came up against massive opposition. It affected the convictions of many traditionalists and we were seen as 'underground', 'crazy' and disrespectful to tradition. We understood that to deny change is to deny evolution and that what was taught as self-defence in the NZ martial arts community needed to evolve urgently. It was not an easy road and many times we thought about giving up. I am grateful that we didn't as a decade later we are seeing the massive positive effects coming through.

The difference between 'self-defence' and 'self-protection' is huge. To us, 'self-defence' is the act of dealing with someone who is

already doing something to you; this is our 'Stage 3'. The 'Self Protection' parts (the other stages) focus on all of the things you can do BEFORE you have to 'defend yourself' and how to avoid that horrible situation from even coming to fruition. For your training to be complete, it needs to effectively cover both.

The reality is, if you are a civilian, you are substantially more likely to have to use your 'soft skills'. Recognition for awareness to avoid, De-escalation, Hard target behaviour and others, than you are to use your physical self-defence skills. At least I hope that's the case for your sake. And the better you get at 'self protection' the less likely you'll be to ever need to physically protect yourself.

This is why the new syllabus is a substantially positive step forward; it addresses basic aspects of all four stages. It is realistic, holistic and functional, and to put it bluntly I know it will improve (and save) people's lives. That's very cool and clearly shows that iTKD are willing to put their students' safety before pride and tradition. My hope is others will follow iTKD's lead.

So with that brief background into the new direction, let's look at a 'Self Protection' example.

Only a day before I wrote this article I shared a situation with our Accredited Trainers team in our private forum, which happened to a guy I met at a friend's place. He mentioned that he is a blue belt and had recently been assaulted. He told me he was "King Hit" and that it came "out of nowhere". His comment was "My instructor said there's nothing you can do about the one you don't see coming" (that's true by the way, but...read on...). I told him I was sorry to hear that had happened to him and would he tell me about it. This is what he told me happened:

He was with a friend in town at night. His friend went into a public toilet while he waited outside. He said he noticed two guys across the road from him who looked "dodgy" (Intuition). He noticed one of them stare at him (Pre Contact Indicator: hard stare), turn and say something to his mate as he touched his own face as if to conceal what he was saying (PCI's: group communication and deceptive cue), both

Mr Thompson working on the photo-shoot for the new Self-defence Manual.



# iTKD's evolution into Self-Protection

of them look back at him (PCI: sequenced hard stare). Then one of them crossed the road up ahead of where the target would be walking with his friend when he came out of the bathroom, and the OTHER one crossed the road to end up behind where they'd just come from (PCI's: Triangulation and group splitting/division). The guy who went behind them then looked back at him, stopped for a minute, turned around and began walking towards him. (PCI: Survey/Head on swivel, Change of position). The targeted guy said he "knew something was wrong but didn't know what to do". The offender walked up and asked for a light for his cigarette (PCI: Brain engagement through deception). He said he didn't have a light and apologised. The offender replied "no worries bro" and turned his body as if to walk away (PCI: Body loading/Pattern completion tactic) to which the target also turned his back (refer to new syllabus: 'Open and Live Situation', 'Tactical Disengagement' and 'Code Red' situation). You can probably complete this story right?

The moment the target turned his back the attacker, having loaded for the strike, lunged forward and "King Hit" him in the back of the head. He dropped to the ground where the attacker then kicked him in the ribs and walked off towards his mate.

Now think back to his original statement when he told me about the event. "It came out of nowhere". Really? I hear that statement so often (I've worked with over 1200 people who have survived violence) and it's almost never true. Their perception of it seems true, and perception is reality to them, but that's not actually how it happens. When he said to me it happened "Out of nowhere" alarms bells rang. The moment he said he'd noticed two guys across the road I realised then that this was not going to be an "out of the blue" situation, after all, people don't just magically teleport themselves from across the street to end up behind you.

He told me, very matter-of-factly that no self-defence could have helped him and his instructor had agreed. I agree too. No amount of (physical) 'self-defence' training could have helped him; after all, he had his back to the guy and was hit in the back of the head. So the self-defence part was redundant.



But what about the self-protection part? As you read this, after you have read the sequence of events above with my notes on the PCI's, even if you haven't learned what these things are yet, your common sense is likely telling you that this was NOT "out of the blue". Nothing ever is. It is only our perception of the event that seems "out of the blue" and we can increase our perception by applying behavioural science and researched 'soft skills' to our training.

Imagine for a moment that his instructor had access to teach him even the very basics of the 'Recognition and Awareness' stage. If he understood that the situation warranted a 'Code Red' mindset, it would have helped him overcome denial and freed him to take action much sooner. If he had been shown the most common of our Pre-Contact Indicators (PCI's) for an attack such as the ones included in his scenario; Intuitive signals/Hard Stare/Sequenced group communication/Deceptive Cues/Triangulation/Surveying/Change of position/Deceptive approach tactics/Body loading/Pattern Completion, among others, could the outcome have been different?

ALL of the above, taught by our Accredited Trainer team as just one part of Stage 1, were opportunities for him to recognise what was happening early and take action. What if in addition to the above (if he

couldn't avoid the approach), he had known about Controlling space, Passive behaviour, Tactical disengagement, and all of the other aspects of preventing an attack? Aspects of all of these are in the new syllabus.

But of course he'd never been taught. What upset me too is that his confidence had obviously been shaken and he was blaming his own inadequacy for what happened. He told me he wondered how his instructor would have dealt with it. My guess is, the exact same way as he did and with the same outcome. It was not HIS inadequacy that caused the problem; it was that his training was incomplete. It wouldn't have mattered if he'd been a 6th dan, the same would have happened, he'd just be much better at practising an incomplete system.

This is just one small example of why self-defence beyond the physical, in addition to effective physical tactics, is so important. This article was intended to show some of the importance of 'why' self protection is so important, the next article will be a 'How to' article where we'll delve deeper into the some specific aspects of self-protection.

Congratulations again iTKD, the new syllabus is setting a new standard. 🙌

# OUR SELF-DEFENCE SYLLABUS TAKES A LEAP FORWARD

By Mr Mark Banicevich VI Dan, Paul M Glendowie

One of the great things about International Taekwon-Do is how our organisation continually strives to be better. This is a brief history of our self-defence syllabus, and of our fantastic new book. I'll start with the main point. Buy the book. At only \$20, it is a crazy bargain. And I'm not just saying that because Master McPhail and I wrote it.

When I started Taekwon-Do in 1989, self-defence wasn't examined. Master Pellow, then a third degree, brought his school into the fold about 1990, and he developed our first self-defence syllabus. Mr Tolley and I were among the first to be examined under the syllabus when we graded to first degree in 1992.

The syllabus continued to develop over the following 22 years. We started with close combat for first degree. Later it was devolved into the coloured belt syllabus. When I helped Master McPhail write the black belt handbook, we added ground self-defence and throwing and falling. (Knife and stick defence were already required for third degree.) Seven years ago, Master Pellow revamped it to integrate inward and outward wrist locks.

Master Pellow and our Senior Examiners were never really happy with our syllabus when it was performed at gradings. It just didn't look right. Students struggled with it. It didn't look like students could make it work.

Our future had already changed. We just didn't realise it yet. Also in 2007, we were introduced to a reality-based self-defence specialist – Mr Phil Thompson of Protect Self-defence. Mr Thompson taught us the psychology of self-defence. We all knew that safety isn't about kicking and punching. Mr Thompson taught us what that means.

Although this was the major catalyst, we didn't realise how big an influence it would be. When Master Hutton first visited our shores in 2012, he started us thinking that our physical responses should be centred around what we do best – hitting the bad guys. He even offered to write something for us.

When Master McPhail and I toured the country to teach Instructors' Update Courses last October, he showed me the beginning of what was to become our new

coloured belt syllabus book. It included material Mr Thompson kindly shared, and a bunch of technical photos and explanations from Master Hutton. It was very exciting. Master McPhail and I have collaborated on many projects over the years, and I find it motivating and inspiring. We made great progress on the book while we were on tour. Writing, re-writing, reorganising.

We spent our Christmas breaks working pretty solidly on the book. We spent a day with Mr and Mrs Hart, who modelled for draft photographs. One day Master McPhail and I discussed a draft with Mr Thompson at a café in Botany. My favourite moment: I said, "Perhaps in a few years, we will be mature enough [as an organisation] to have students using dialogue when they practise self-defence." Master McPhail said, "Why don't we do that now?" Our game lifted. The small conversations that change the course. Awesome.

Master McPhail flew Mr and Mrs Patterson up for the final photo shoot: a day in and around Warrior Taekwon-Do in Ellerslie. Mr Thompson came. He watched every sequence we shot, challenging techniques his team have proved ineffective, and replacing them with things that work in reality. We are so grateful for his input; he helped us make our self-defence syllabus the most effective in New Zealand's martial arts community.

A number of our own specialists reviewed drafts and suggested additions and changes: Master Pellow, Mr Salton, Mr Campbell and Mr Skedgwell. Dr Pearson and Mrs Bajac added expertise about recovery. The breadth and depth of skills and experience in our organisation make us so very strong.

I joined International Taekwon-Do 25 years ago to learn self-defence. While I enjoy so many aspects of our fine art, self-defence and moral development are how we build a more peaceful world. Our self-defence journey has been exciting. This time, perhaps we have arrived? 🍷

## Photoshoot Out-takes



*A huge thank you to Mr and Mrs Patterson for being our models for the our Self-defence manual!*

## Self-Defence Handbook – Coloured Belt Syllabus

Self-defence is about getting home safely to your family, whatever that takes. There is nothing more important than your safety and your family's safety.

This handbook outlines the coloured belt self-defence syllabus of International Taekwon-Do. It is an holistic approach, from avoiding dangerous situations, through de-escalating, physical response, and recovering from an incident.

This book is essential reading for all members of International Taekwon-Do, and anyone interested in learning about defending themselves and their loved ones.

“An excellent training resource for all International Taekwon-Do students.”

– Master Evan Davidson, VIII dan, President of ITFNZ

“We are proud to have assisted in the development of what is now the most relevant and functional self-defence syllabus offered in the New Zealand martial arts community. Master McPhail and Mr Banicevich have done an outstanding job, creating an invaluable resource which is required reading for anyone serious about self-protection.”

– Phil Thompson, International Director, Protect Self Defence

### Where can I get a Self-defence manual?

- From your Instructor or
- On-line at one of our approved suppliers: [itkd.co.nz/merchandise/approved-suppliers.php](http://itkd.co.nz/merchandise/approved-suppliers.php)
- **Only \$20**

