

## **Is Taekwon-Do Practical for street self-defence. How do you know?**

The best form of self-defence is to avoid street fights or to avoid and de-escalate any form of physical confrontation. Avoiding and de-escalating are the fundamentals of protecting ourselves. If physical response is unavoidable, then we can use our Taekwon-Do tools that we have been trained for to protect ourselves.

The aim of self-defence is all about getting home safely to your family, whatever that takes. This is defined in our ITFNZ Self Defence syllabus, which is part of the comprehensive ITFNZ Taekwon-Do syllabus. This self-defence syllabus takes the practical application of Taekwon-Do techniques learnt from Taekwon-Do fundamental exercise, patterns and sparring into a real-world situation. The focus here is the adaptation of Taekwon-Do techniques so that they work in reality for each of us. In other words, each Taekwon-Do student must develop and find effective techniques that work for himself or herself. In addition, the syllabus covers the most important component of self-defence, which is the repercussions of a physical altercation and recovery.

Avoidance focuses on recognising signs of potential violence and being aware of potential threats. Recognising these potential threat and violence will assist us to avoid them, which is the best self-defence technique.

De-escalation focuses on talking our way out of a situation if the avoidance is not feasible. Having training in these techniques will assist us from de-escalation to avoidance. The simple passive stance goes a long way in justification for a self-defence if a legal case is upon a situation. The passive stance is a simple technique of having your hands up with open palm facing your aggressor. It sends a powerful psychological message that you are not in any threat. Having both hands up acts as a defensive shield or barrier. Witnesses around you, will perceive that you not a threat and you do not want to fight.

In today's society, there are cameras everywhere. It is very likely that the situation you are in may be captured on CCTV. The application of the passive stance technique is a classic negotiation stance which says that you are not a threat and are open to options or possibilities. In the event that you have to prove self-defence in court, the CCTV video will act as strong evidence that you are a victim and not a threat to anyone.

The response focuses on application of effective self-defence techniques that we have been trained for. Here, you apply a range of techniques and adapt to the one that really works for you to get home safely. This is the last resort. You may be end up in court, hospital, or worse.

Recovery focuses on dealing with what had happened as best you can. These techniques are about disengagement, medical procedures, police response, court procedures and moving on. During the disengagement, where you may gain distance from your opponent, it gives you an opportunity to look at other possible dangers, such as multiple opponents, acquaintances, and exits. Once you are safe, you can dial 111 for the police and the ambulance. In addition to medical procedures if required, the ITFNZ Self Defence syllabus covers dealings with police, during or after the event. It also covers court procedures. However, the most importing techniques are how to deal with the aftermath or the trauma that may persist; Where to get help after a violent situation.

At the recent IIC (International Instructors Course) 2020 in Auckland, New Zealand, Grand Master Pierre Laquerre demonstrated the adaption of Taekwon-Do techniques for street self-defence so that they work in reality. Grand Master Pierre Laquerre worked through various adaption of traditional Taekwon-Do techniques, including vital spots for each of us to practice, enabling us to

work through techniques that work for each individual student. Grand Master Laquerre took the IIC participants through several exercises to train students in the art of self-defence that works in the streets. Most of the adaption of Taekwon-Do techniques are soft attacks tools on soft vital spots. The exercises included training using pads initially, followed by reality practices using protective gears, stimulating real world events. This will enable students to gain confidence and to develop a set of tools in each individual toolbox. When a situation calls for these, the student is then well-versed to protect themselves effectively.

Stuart Paul Anslow, in his book title Ch'ang Hon Taekwon-do Hae Sul, studied the entire Taekwon-Do patterns as devised, taught and developed by our founder. His detailed studies involved taking apart each and every Taekwon-Do pattern's fundamental movements, looking at its roots, make up and its differences with other martial arts. Stuart dissected and rebuilt these fundamental movements to help us understand the applications that are really contained within each of these patterns. These fundamental movements are in fact fundamentals of basic training of self-defence. Stuart demonstrated how to turn them into a realistic way of training actual self-defence techniques that work and are practical for street self-defence.

The repetitive exercise of the very first pattern of Chon-Ji for students that commence Taekwon-do training and who has no prior knowledge of martial arts is the very first technique for a simple self defence against a "bear hug". The student has already learnt about generating power through hip movement in the fundamental exercise of Saju Jirugi and Saju Makgi. The movements of the student's hip, full body rotation and its pivot generates substantial power. The use of chambering motion of the block will generate some room to manoeuvre, as the student moves their hip and pivot. By simply stepping the leg behind the attacker, the student will not only release the "bear hug" via the execution of the block, but at the same time, take down the attacker as the leg and the student's body rotation removes the balance and taking down the attacker.

Throughout the repetitive training of all the 24 Taekwon-Do patterns, the students naturally gain muscles memory of each fundamentals of these patterns. The guidance from the instructors will then demonstrate the real practical applications of the ITF patterns for street self-defence. Stuart concluded that the adaption of these techniques from ITF patterns are practical for street self-defence.

I always remember one piece of guidance from Grand Master Lan: street self-defence is about defending my family and not to fight for oneself. There are no rules and I must not fight fair. This is the mentality I must have when it comes to street self-defence. The Taekwon-Do techniques we learned and the adaption of these techniques make it very practical for street self-defence. How do I know? It is because I have used it before.

My most recent encounter was at a Wellington bus stop when I was waiting for my bus. I witnessed a middle-aged lady being bullied when she just got off from the bus. She was yelled at with rude words by a man in his twenties. I think the women accidently bumped into him when she got down from the bus. He pushed her a few times very hard until she fell to the ground.

I instantly shouted to the man "Ooi, push me instead! You're coward, bullying a women!" He turned around and moved straight into me, doing the same push and yelling some rude words. I had my passive stance up, with hands up and palms forward. I quickly moved aside as he moved towards me, resulting in him dropping to the ground! I asked the women to get up and run away. At this point, the man got up and I ran away too to assist the women.

It was a simple application of some fundamental ITFNZ self-defence techniques, which are very practical for street self-defence. It works!

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References:

1. Maser Paul McPhail and Mr. Mark Banicevich, *Self-Defence Handbook*, First Edition, 2014
2. Stuart Paul Anslow, *Ch'ang Hon Taekwon-do Hae Sul*, Vol 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2009
3. Stuart Paul Anslow, *Ch'ang Hon Taekwon-do Hae Sul*, Vol 2, 2012