



The Seven Principles of Self-Defence

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The First Principle is Alertness

Two rules are immediately evident; know what is behind you, and pay particular attention to anything out of place.

It is axiomatic that the most likely direction of attack is from behind. Be aware of that. Develop 'eyes in the back of your head'. Eric Hartmann, the World War II German Ace who is unquestionably the greatest fighter pilot of all time (1405 combat missions, 351 confirmed victories) feels that he survived because of an 'extremely sensitive back to his neck'; and conversely, claims that 80% of his victims never knew he was in the same sky with them. Combat flying is not the same as personal defence, but the principle applies. The great majority of the victims of violent crime are taken by surprise. The one who anticipates the action wins. The one, who does not, loses. Learn by the experience of others and don't let yourself be surprised.

On the street never let a stranger approach too close or take your hand. To allow a potential assailant a firm grip on your right hand is to give him possibly a fatal advantage. Use your eyes. Do not go into unfamiliar areas that you cannot observe first. Make it a practice to swing wide around corners, use window glass for rear visibility and get something solid behind you when you pause. All this may sound excessively furtive and melodramatic but those who have cultivated what might be called a tactical approach to life find it neither troublesome nor conspicuous and like a fastened seat belt, a life jacket or a fire extinguisher, it is comforting even when unnecessary.

BE AWARE, BE READY, BE ALERT.

The Second Principle is Decisiveness

It is difficult for a domesticated man to change on the instant into one who can take quick, decisive action to meet a violent emergency. Most of us are unused to violent emergencies—especially those which can only be resolved by the use of force and violence on our part—and these emergencies require an almost superhuman effort of will to transform ourselves from docile chickens into ferocious hawks. Decisiveness, like alertness, is to some extent a built-in characteristic but also like alertness, it can be accentuated.

In formalised combat it is supplied, or should be, by appropriate orders from superior officers.

In cases of personal defence it must be self-generated, and this is the problem. When 'the ball is opened'—when it becomes evident that you are faced with violent physical assault—your life depends upon your selecting a correct course of action and carrying it through without hesitation or deviation. There can be no shilly-shallying. There is not time. To ponder is quite possibly to perish, and it is important to remember that the specific course you decide upon is, within certain parameters, less important than the vigour with which you execute it.

The difficulty is that the proper course of action, when under attack, is usually to counter-attack. This runs contrary to our normally civilised behaviour, and such a decision is rather hard for even an ordinarily decisive person to reach.

The law allows you to use sufficient force and violence to prevent an assailant inflicting death or serious injury upon you. You may not pursue your attacker with deadly intent and you may not strike an unnecessary blow, but if someone is trying to kill you, you are justified in killing him to stop him—if *there is absolutely no other way*. This is putting it about, as simply as possible and as the law here is eminently reasonable the legal aspects of personal defence need not detain us in formulating a proper defensive decision.

We must be sure that our assailant is actually trying to kill us and that he is physically capable of doing so, and that we cannot stop him without downing him. So when under attack it is necessary to evaluate the situation and to decide instantly upon a proper course of action to be carried out, immediately and with all the force you can bring to bear. He who hesitates is indeed lost.

DO NOT SOLILOQUISE, DO NOT DELAY, BE DECISIVE.

The Third Principle is Aggressiveness

In defence we do not initiate violence. We must grant our attacker the vast advantage of striking the first blow, or at least attempting to do so. But thereafter we may return the attention with what should optimally be overwhelming violence. 'The best defence is a good offence.'

Many instances of superior force being over-powered by anger and aggression on the part of the victim spring to mind. I have witnessed a little Corgi attack and run off a large Alsatian, which had entered the Corgi's 'territory'. Surprise and the ferocity of the little dog's response led to panic in the Alsatian's breast and he fled the scene. That Alsatian, well known in the neighbourhood, had already killed two other dogs. Unfortunately for him the Corgi did not know this!

In another instance two Kobe-Osaka students, unarmed, went to the assistance of two Glasgow policemen who were being severely mauled by a gang of about a dozen thugs some of whom were armed. The aggressiveness of the pair coupled with effective unarmed combat technique so overwhelmed the opposition that they fled the field in total disarray leaving some of their number behind. The two, though not entirely unscathed, had shown that skill and aggression speedily applied could win the day against a numerically superior force. They received a police commendation for their action.

If it is ever your misfortune to be attacked, alertness will have given you a little warning, decisiveness will have given you a proper course to pursue and the third course, counter attack carried out with everything you have.

BE INDIGNANT, BE ANGRY, BE AGGRESSIVE.

The Fourth Principle is Speed

In 1957 at Eastney Barracks, Portsmouth, Colour Sergeant Overbury, our squad instructor, gave us Royal Marines recruits this fatherly advice just before our first 'run ashore'. "Don't get into any trouble, but if you do, make sure you win". He added, "Do unto others as they would do unto you, but do it first". Good advice.

Speed is the absolute essence of any form of combat. The stake in personal defence is your life. You cannot afford to play by sporting rules. Be fast not fair. Remember there is no referee to stop the play in the street. The perfect fight is one that is over before the loser really understands what is going on. The perfect defence is a counter-attack that succeeds before the assailant discovers that he has bitten off more than he can chew. Therefore, if you are attacked, retaliate instantly.

BE SUDDEN, BE QUICK, SPEED IS YOUR SALVATION.

The Fifth Principle is Coolness

You must keep your head. If you 'lose your cool' under deadly attack you will probably not survive to make excuses, so don't bother to improvise any, just keep your head. Anger, as long as it is controlled anger, is no obstacle to efficiency. Self-control is one thing the anti-social malefactor does not usually possess. Use yours to his undoing.

BE CONTROLLED, STAY COOL AND GO TO WORK.

The Sixth Principle is Ruthlessness

Anyone who wilfully and maliciously attacks another without sufficient cause deserves no consideration.

Just who he is, why he has chosen to be a criminal, his social background, his ideological or psychological motivations, all these may be considered at a future date. *NOW*, your first concern is your safety, let your attacker worry about his. Don't hold back. Strike no more after he is incapable of further action, but see that he is stopped. The law forbids you to take revenge, but it permits you to prevent.

If you must use your hands or feet use them with all the strength you possess. Tapping your assailant half-heartedly for fear of hurting him will indeed make him mad and since he has already shown that he is willing to kill you he may try the harder now that you have struck him a painful though indecisive blow. Remember that at the time of attack you are your own salvation, you cannot depend on others. By the time help arrives you could be maimed or dead. If you choose to strike by all means strike hard. If you find yourself under lethal attack don't be kind.

BE HARSH, BE TOUGH, BE RUTHLESS.

The Seventh Principle is Surprise

This is put last on purpose, for surprise is the first principle of offensive combat. However, the privilege of striking the first blow is a luxury we must usually grant to our attacker, so in a sense there can be no strategic surprise in defence. That does not mean that the defender cannot achieve tactical surprise. By doing what our assailant least expects us to do, we may throw him completely off. As we have seen, what he usually least expects is instant, violent counter-attack, so the principle of aggressiveness is closely tied to that of surprise.

The criminal does not expect his prey to fight back. May he never choose you, but if he does, surprise him.

Remember - The understanding and application of these principals could save your life!

