

## ***Fight Like a Girl ~Awareness, Instincts, Self-Defense***

If you are reading this article you are likely interested in increasing your personal safety. That is what we're here for. We believe (as should you) that you have the absolute right to fight back. Whatever a woman's decision in a given situation, whatever action she does or does not take, the woman is not at fault. Her decision to survive the best way she can must be respected. Whether or not you have self-defense training and no matter what your age or physical condition, you have options. It is important to understand that you CAN defend yourself physically. Many women worry that they will anger the attacker and get hurt worse if they defend themselves, but statistics clearly show that your odds of survival are far greater if you fight back.

Women should focus on three areas - AWARENESS, INSTINCTS, and SELF-DEFENSE. All three are important in your commitment to personal safety, and are already within you, they just need to continue developing in order to increase your ability to protect yourself. The irony of effective safety training has shown that the more prepared you are to defend yourself, the less likely you will ever have to.

### **AWARENESS**

True self-defense begins long before any physical contact. The first component in self-defense and personal safety is awareness. A simple definition of awareness would be the knowledge gained through one's own perceptions or by means of information. Do your best to be aware of your own feelings, your surroundings, and the likely strategies used by a potential attacker or predatory criminal. There is an enormous amount of information out there regarding sexual predators and violence against women. Unfortunately, much of the information is misleading! You want to enhance your awareness with good information that will help you avoid an attack, and if necessary to survive one. One of the worst places to get useful and accurate information on sexual assaults and violence against women is from the news media. You will rarely find new or relevant information regarding your safety on the news.

The following are some common myths and misconceptions commonly associated with violence against women. They are indeed myths and believing them to be true has contributed to feelings of powerlessness and apathy on the part of many women.

**Myth: Only young, beautiful women in mini-skirts or women with "reputations" get raped.**

**Fact: Rapists choose their victims for their vulnerability and accessibility, without regard to physical appearance or reputation.** Victims are young and old, single and married, rich and poor. Victims of reported assaults have ranged from six weeks to 93 years old. Of note, however, is that women aged 16-24 run a greater risk of being raped than any other population group. More specifically, a woman is most likely to experience an assault during their first two months of college. Also, women have a right to dress any way they want. It is the rapist who makes the **choice** to rape them. As the statistics show there is no truly "typical" victim of rape. Size, shape, weight, race, and looks, generally have little or nothing to do with a woman being chosen as a victim. It is all about control.

**Myth: A rapist is more likely to be a masked, crazed stranger who jumps out of the bushes, than a good-looking man.**

**Fact: Eighty-five to ninety percent of rape victims know their assailants.**

**Myth: Some men rape only once.**

**Fact: All rapist are serial criminals.** There is a common perception that rapists can be separated into two categories; those who rape only once and those who continue to rape – over and over. This misconception has to be seen for what it is. All rapists are serial rapists. Once a man rapes, he never decides that “once was enough” feels guilty about it and stops. It is never in a woman’s best interest to trust a man who has raped before.

While accurate statistics can add to our awareness and give us some idea of what to look out for they should not be your sole basis on understanding violence against women. Many times people will twist the statistics around to scare women into buying their product or paying big money for martial arts lessons that don’t always lend themselves to a woman’s personal defense. Also, statistics will always underestimate the magnitude of sexual assault since it is among the most underreported crimes.

## ***INSTINCTS***

Rely on your “Sixth sense” or your “Gut instinct” to guide you when you are unsure of a particular man or situation. Whatever you may call it, your body will have a physical reaction to a potentially dangerous person or situation before your brain has had a chance to process all of the information. Remember when you were six years old; lying in your bed and a loud noise scared you? Then you pulled your magical blankets of protection over your head to keep safe from the monster that made such a noise? That’s the feeling I’m talking about when I say listen to your INSTINCTS. Your intuition, unlike logic, will always have your best interest at heart.

God gives all of us the gift of intuition, but many refuse to pay attention to it. Learning to listen to this power and then trusting it will greatly increase your personal safety. When you are in danger, logic can get you into more trouble by ignoring your instincts. If you find yourself saying “I’m just being paranoid” or “He’s such a nice guy, I don’t know why I’m being silly” you’re trying to override the nagging feeling call intuition. Intuition will always ignore logic and send you the involuntary signal of fear that is a real prediction of danger. Listen to it!

Women are victimized far more than men, which makes it all the more important to listen to your instincts every time they communicate with you. Trust your instincts as your heavenly foresight, and give it more weight and concern than you do your hindsight. We use hindsight to determine how we messed something up, which is not a good method to prevent violence before it happens. Foresight can help us avoid violence altogether if we pay close attention to our bodies signals, and then follow the advice that it gives us.

## ***SELF-DEFENSE***

One of the most common statements I hear from women when they attend our clinics is “I don’t think I can hurt another person.” It is hard to think about hurting another human being when you are a good person, but now is the time to prepare yourself for that decision. You

don't want to wait for an altercation to find out if you will fight back, prepare yourself mentally now to do what is necessary to protect yourself and your family. No one is more affected by a sexual assault than the victim, but I have seen a great toll taken on their families as well. A rapist or abuser injures an entire family, not just one person, with his actions.

I have seen the destruction from women whose kids were threatened by a predator. There was nothing left for me to do but cuff him and take him to the hospital. And like so many women they said "I didn't think I had that in me." The truth is God instills these protective instincts in all of us, we just have to be threatened enough to unleash them. If we don't suppress them with doubts and fears they will come out much sooner and be more effective. That only comes with answering the hard questions now and not after an attack.

Don't just prepare to defend yourself if your kids are in danger, but even if you are the only one in danger. It will undoubtedly affect everyone who is counting on you. YOU ARE IMPORTANT AND YOU ARE LOVED!

### ***Why "Fight Like a Girl?"***

When we train women how to use physical techniques to defend themselves, it's not so they can fight a man like a man. You aren't a man so you shouldn't train to act or fight like one. We want you to "Fight Like a Girl" and use your strengths as an advantage over a male attacker.

Men and women have unique physical characteristics that can make a big difference in self-defense. Men commonly have more upper body strength than women, and to fight upper body strength with upper body strength would most likely be a losing battle for a woman. It can be a surprise that, pound for pound, women have far more hip strength than men. This is due to the way God designed a woman's hip structure for child birth. When used to their advantage, a woman's hips can give her added power with strikes, kicks, and especially ground techniques. Hips are not always a woman's favorite subject, but they are your best friends in self-defense. Women should put the force of their hips into every strike, kick, and technique used against an attacker. Instead of hitting him with your hand, in reality you hit him with your whole body. Many places that advertise "women's self defense" classes just teach them the same thing they would a man. Punches and kicks that are to the advantage of the male attacker.

Women should use techniques that focus on their hips as the power center to deliver each technique with full force. It does not matter if you're standing up or on the ground; your hips are your secret weapon that men aren't ready for. We teach women how to fight like women by using their strengths against a man's weaknesses. When a woman fights back with full force and trusts her instincts, the attacker is likely to be the one caught off guard. There are thousands of success stories in which women have fought off a would-be attacker.

### ***Protecting His Gifts***

Protecting His Gifts is a non-profit organization working to advance the safety of women and children through self-protection, awareness, and violence prevention. We partner with other organizations to offer our "Women's Safety & Self-Defense Clinic" free of charge. We have an upcoming clinic at the Huber Heights YMCA on April 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> for women and girls 13 years of

age and older. You can register at the YMCA or online at [www.ProtectingHisGifts.org](http://www.ProtectingHisGifts.org). More information for women's and children's safety is also available on the website.

*"Most predatory criminals have a limited repertoire; their advantage comes from planning ahead. You can too." ~Officer Richard Neil (Huber Heights Police Division-Retired)*