

Rape and Fighting Back—Myths, Facts & Options

Submitted by Susan Bartlestone, ICPS, ISCPP Member, New York, USA

FIGHTING BACK is not a magical solution to an attack. If you have no other choice, however, it just might save your life! Listed below are a few factors to weigh **before** a situation occurs where you have to decide on this course of action.

- Always consider a rape attack (or an assault) a life-threatening situation.
- Don't assume that if you cooperate with an attacker you won't be hurt or killed anyway—even if he tells you this.
- The physical trauma resulting from a rape can be devastating (including the possibility of getting pregnant or contracting AIDS or other STDs).
- The emotional trauma resulting from a rape can be equally severe and can last for years.

Many people, women especially, have absorbed myths and falsehoods about self defense that make them hesitant to even think about fighting back as a choice. Here are three common myths:

Myth 1: Fighting back will just make the attacker madder. It's safer to submit than to try to defend yourself.

Fact: Submitting to any crime, with or without resistance, is always a valid choice and a person should only act in a way that will allow them to survive. The myth that it's safer to submit, however, is based on the assumption that you would lose the fight. That assumption might be an erroneous one—especially if you have some training. It's easier to consider fighting as an option if you know what you're doing—even a little bit. Experts have determined that you are **twice** as likely to prevent a rape if you take forceful and immediate action.

Myth 2: A person needs to be a martial arts expert in order to defeat an attacker. A few weeks of a Self Defense course isn't enough.

Fact: For centuries people with no martial arts training at all have successfully fought off attackers—using only guts, the determination to survive and (probably) a bit of luck. It's well known in my field that these

factors can be even more important than years of training! The odds of success can only get better if you actually have some defensive instruction (i.e., a Self Defense/Personal Safety course).

The Self Defense approach to fighting is different from the martial arts approach and training is designed to be short-term (usually 4-6 weeks). Naturally, no one can expect to attain a high level of skill after only a few weeks; but the **Fact** is, a high level of skill isn't necessary in the most common crime scenarios. There are thousands of success stories from former self defense students that attest to this.

TRAINING MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Myth 3: No matter what, I think I'd be too scared to fight someone. Besides, I'm (pick one) too old, too small, too weak, too out of shape to be effective in a fight (or to even take a Self Defense course).

Fact: If you've never driven a car, you might be fearful of driving until you take some lessons and actually get behind the wheel of a car. Similarly, taking a self defense/personal safety course is the quickest way to break through the false conditioning and mental barriers (I'm too old, too weak, etc.) that makes you fearful of fighting back.

As opposed to martial arts, self defense courses are specifically designed for shorter, older, weaker people. Techniques focus on vulnerable areas of the body which can be hurt severely with minimal force and don't require athletic ability or a fully-functioning body to be effective. Or, years of practice to master.

A good course should also include the following: skills for avoiding problems and defusing confrontations; techniques for finding your inner courage in a desperate situation so you can overcome the common reaction of freezing in panic; and a safe space for those folks who already have battle scars, so they can further their healing process.

TIP: Take at least one self defense or personal safety course a year to keep your knowledge and skills current. ■

Susan Bartlestone, ICPS, is a longtime teaching and writing professional in various crime prevention topics. She has taught personal safety courses to thousands of men and women.

Known for her unique and practical methods for avoiding and defusing problems, she's been featured in a long and varied list of media (including "America's Most Wanted" and the "Today Show") and her articles have appeared in over two dozen publications. Ms. Bartlestone lives in New York (USA).

Visit her via her website: dearsafetysolutions.com

Estimates are that
3 out of 4 people who
receive proper
training—consisting of
awareness preparation
and physical defense
tactics—will
successfully deter
crime.
Put the odds of
success in YOUR
favor!



Susan Bartlestone from
New York, USA