

FIGHTING BACK

Every Woman's Guide To Survival

Helene Crane

Reprinted by [MegaDox Corporation](#) by permission of the author.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, transmitted, or utilized in any form or by any means electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author.

Disclaimer:

The views expressed and methods recommended in this book reflect the personal opinions of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by any police organization.

© Copyright 1993 by Helene Crane

Published by:

Beauvoir

P.O. Box ~~64257~~

55124 St. N.W.

Calgary, Ab. T2K 6J1

Photos by:

Carolyn Sandstrom

JSBN 0-9697160-0-1

Printed in Canada

Acknowledgements

A number of people contributed to the writing and publishing of this book. I sincerely thank Kathryn Kopciuk and Richard Sewchuk for their wonderful and convincing poses for the demonstration photos. Also, my sister Carolyn Crane and my friend Janet Hamende for the many hours they spent editing out my mistakes. Finally, thanks to all who offered support and much needed advise: Myrna Pearman, Roseanne Hamel, Donna Prall, and of course, Faye Cowing.

I cannot name all of the people who encouraged me to complete this project. The support was overwhelming. It showed me that there was not only a need for this book, but that there is an even greater need for us to join forces and help protect each other from violence.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the fourteen young women who were gunned down in cold blood in December, 1989 at the University of Montreal, Ecole Polytechnique (Faculty of Engineering).

INTRODUCTION

In all probability, you have decided to read this book because you are concerned with the level of violence in our society. You are worried about your safety, and the safety of those you care about. You are certainly not alone in your concern. While working as a Resource Officer in high schools and junior high schools, I received many requests for “streetproofing” presentations to students and staff. There seems to be an increasing concern for personal safety for every age group. The escalation of violent crime rates has become the single most important social issue of our times. People are realizing that they are susceptible to violent crime, and in fact, chances are they will become victims, if they have not been already.

In researching the available material for these presentations, it soon became apparent that the instructional books and tapes I was able to find were simply not good enough for my audiences. The more I searched, the more I found that these techniques the “experts” were attempting to teach were, in my opinion, either ineffective in a real life situation, or far too complex for those of us without a black belt in karate. Knowing crisis situations as I do, a person under a surprise physical attack cannot remember complicated techniques. Effective defenses must be simple, yet forceful enough to stop a vicious attacker. I have also determined, over many years as a police officer, what we can do to reduce our chances of becoming victims. Prevention is still the best defense.

In a life and death situation, a person under attack must know how to escape unharmed. All of the defenses in this book are, in my opinion, realistic methods of saving your life. While relatively simple and easy to learn, some techniques are potentially lethal to whomever is attacking you. The message you will see repeated in this book is:

DO WHATEVER IT TAKES!

If you are under attack, and you feel that your life is being threatened, you cannot hesitate. **GET HIM BEFORE HE GETS YOU!**

SURVIVAL IS ALL THAT IS IMPORTANT!

Every effort has been made to determine the most effective methods of self-defense. However, it is impossible to foresee every response to every attack, just as it is impossible to foresee every attacker’s pattern. Only you can determine your own capabilities and evaluate a situation for a response appropriate to your skill level. The techniques discussed in this book should be practiced often and carefully with a friend. I encourage you to further build your strength and confidence levels by enrolling in a reputable self-defense course.

Chapter 1

What Went Wrong With Our World?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Crime

Who is the Enemy?

The Real Police Story

The Power of Attitude

Legal Rights and Responsibilities

WHAT WENT WRONG WITH OUR WORLD?

It seems like a lifetime ago. I grew up during the “Hippie” era. There were “love children” everywhere advocating “flower power” and “make love-not war”. For all its idealism and silly looking clothes, it truly was a kinder, gentler time. Today, the pendulum seems to have swung disproportionately to the other side. We are constantly bombarded with violence. In newspapers, T.V., movies, even kids’ games and toys: the message is clear: “Beware, there is someone, somewhere, waiting to get you.”

Violence towards women and children seems to be increasing at an alarming rate. On any given day, our newspapers tell us that children are being abducted from their own backyards, women are being attacked while jogging, and jealous men are gunning down ex-wives before turning the gun on themselves. This is no longer just a big-city problem. These events are happening in small rural communities as well as large urban centers. Our news is full of violent and inhumane examples of how our society has changed.

THE CRIME

Although women’s groups have lobbied with some success to have sexual and domestic assaults; as well as child abuse dealt with more severely by law enforcement agencies and the judicial system, it appears that some people are simply not getting the message. I’m sure it comes as no great surprise to you that the incidence of violent crime has increased dramatically over the last ten years. While reports of all types of crime have increased, the most alarming increases have been in the areas of sexual assault, child abuse, domestic assault, common assault, and street robbery.

As much as I dislike statistics, I feel that it is important that you know what your risks are of being a victim of one of these crimes. The numbers show that one in four females will be the victim of some type of sexual offense by the time they reach the age of eighteen. One half of us will be sexual assault victims in our lifetimes. For males, it appears that one in ten will be the victim of similar crimes. As if these numbers aren’t frightening enough, consider that they reflect only those offenses reported to police departments and sexual assault agencies. Some experts feel that for every offense reported, ten victims decide to keep the horror of what has happened

8 / Fighting Back

to themselves, or share it only with a close friend or family member.

Victims fail to report these crimes for many valid reasons. They are numbed by shock and disbelief. They may feel somehow responsible for what happened. They may be fearful of further harm from a returning attacker. They have suffered severe psychological and physical trauma. Often the situation is complicated by the fact that the attacker is known to the victim: a boyfriend, co-worker, or family member. Any of these reasons make reporting very difficult.

WHO IS THE ENEMY?

The reasons why someone would threaten to attack you are very limited. They may be thieves, wanting only your property. In this case, if you feel they are capable of harming you, you should turn over what they want. Possessions are simply not worth getting injured or killed over.

The other motivation for an attack is because they wish to cause you physical harm. The kind of confrontation we all fear the most is one by a psychotic killer and/or rapist. Most are planned in advance, although the attacker may not have selected a specific target. Why men rape is a puzzle the “experts” have yet to solve. First, I must clarify the terms. Rape is a word we all immediately recognize and fear. The word, however, only refers to the act of forced intercourse. Many other sexual acts are often forced upon the victim, none of which are any less horrifying to her. Sexual assault is the legal term now used to describe any forced assault of a sexual nature. When I refer to either rape or sexual assault, I refer to any and all of these acts. We are talking about crimes primarily of violence, not sex. It is simply the use of power over another human being.

Sexual assault is most often committed by someone the victim knows. In fact, experts believe that this type of assault accounts for over 75% of all attacks on women. The attacker can be an acquaintance, boyfriend, family member, co-worker, or even a husband. While victims in these circumstances suffer the same kinds of short and long term trauma as those attacked by strangers, these crimes are the least likely to be reported. Attackers in these cases are no less criminals than the strangers lurking in the bushes waiting for an unsuspecting victim to happen by.

Surveys of women in universities and colleges reveal frightening results. At least 25% report they have been sexually assaulted by boyfriends or acquaintances; a “date rape” situation. Most do not report these incidents. Male students, and remarkably, a majority of female students cite that this type of abuse is an indicator of love, and that the violence reflected jealousy, a response to sexual denial, or simply drinking too much. Try to imagine how these numbers would explode if spousal attacks were included.

9 / Fighting Back

Although statistically a rare occurrence, what scares us the most is being attacked by a stranger. For any woman walking alone, and facing a suspicious-looking male on the sidewalk, statistics alone are not too reassuring. This is the situation we fear the most; what we have been taught to be terrified of. This is the dreaded “stranger attack” by a cold-blooded “rapist”.

Rapists are angry. They seek power and control over women and/or children. They DO NOT have uncontrollable sexual urges! They enjoy degrading and humiliating their victims. Helped by a society filled with pornography and violence, they have learned to treat women with contempt, merely objects to conquer and upon whom to vent their anger. Unfortunately, there is no universal pattern as to what makes a rapist or murderer. Each situation, and each attacker is different. Some are scared off when a woman resists or fights back. Others get more excited by the challenge of resistance. All of them enjoy seeing the fear and panic in the victim’s eyes. One thing is known, they seek out those who appear vulnerable. They don’t look for someone who will give them a good, fair fight!

It is impossible to tell you one perfect response to every attacker. In the past, police agencies recommended to women that if they were attacked, the best thing for them to do was submit to their attacker, in order to avoid injury. The only problem was that the victim then had to explain to investigators and courtrooms why, if she hadn’t consented to the act, she had no bruises or visible signs of attack. Surprisingly, recent studies have shown that women who do fight back get away more often than those who remain passive! Also, the more defense strategies a woman uses – yelling, kicking, pleading, running, biting, scratching, the more likely she is to escape serious injury.

THE REAL POLICE STORY

When I became a police officer, it was a tremendous cultural shock to me. I was a middle class, idealistic young optimist. I thought I had lots of friends, and the world was a wonderful place. Then, I put on a blue uniform, and suddenly the world wasn’t so beautiful, and a lot of my “friends” stopped calling. At social gatherings, people would act differently around me and watch what they said. Or worse, they would proceed to complain to me about how they were treated by the traffic cop who caught them speeding last week. But those are the hazards of the profession. I chose this career because I believed I could help people, and somehow make a difference to our world. In fact, if all of the police officers in Canada and the United States were asked why they chose law enforcement as a career, you would find the vast majority simply want to help people and contribute to making our society a better place. It certainly isn’t for the huge salaries and

10 / Fighting Back

wonderful working conditions. We all want to catch the bad guys and save the innocent victims of the world. Disillusionment comes quickly as we realize that we only catch a fraction of the bad guys. When we do catch one, he often walks out the front door of the police station while we're still typing the reports. Or worse, he walks from court because of a legal technicality. Try explaining that to your victim, who has recounted her horror story for the twentieth time on the witness stand.

I believe that each one of us is here on this earth for a purpose. We have a reason for being, and I believe my reason for being here is to help those who are targets of violent crimes. Over the years, I have investigated attacks on many women, children, seniors, and even the handicapped. While it is extremely difficult not to get emotionally involved, it is absolutely essential to maintain our professionalism during an investigation. When we lose our objectivity, we run the risk of tainting evidence, thus enabling the bad guy to "walk". Try to imagine how difficult it is to maintain your objectivity when interviewing someone you suspect has just sexually assaulted a six year old girl. She is hospitalized with physical injuries, not to mention the psychological trauma that will be with her for the rest of her life. You must treat this suspect with respect, and offer him all of the comforts available, as well as a lawyer. And don't forget to read him his rights!

Sadly, the future does not look any better. In fact, indications are that crime rates will continue to climb. Law enforcement agencies do not have the budgets to hire the numbers of officers it would take to protect us all. We had better learn to take care of ourselves, or at least, join with other community resources to help keep our neighborhoods safe. If you dislike feeling vulnerable, and are tired of being afraid to go out alone, you must learn how to take care of yourself. **TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN PERSONAL SAFETY.**

THE POWER OF ATTITUDE

Thanks to the Women's Movement, all of us are learning to be more independent, confident, and strong. Society's passion for physical fitness has contributed to all of these attributes as well. Unfortunately, many women were brought up to be quiet, submissive, polite, and accommodating. It is foreign to them to act aggressively and physically. Unlike little boys, many of us were not encouraged to be competitive and fight for our territory. Whereas boys are taught to be physical and aggressive through football, wrestling, and countless other contact sports, most girls are encouraged to play with dolls and learn how to cook.

Being assertive is very unnatural to most of us, but it is a tremendous defense, as attackers are not prepared for an aggressive victim. They are looking for the weak and meek.

11 / Fighting Back

We have already established the fact that resisting attack works. Now, all you have to do is develop the confidence that will enable you to become angry enough to actually injure your attacker. While this may sound like an obvious reaction, given that you will naturally be angry if confronted, there is a vast difference between being angry, and being angry enough to do significant physical damage to another human being. The term “seeing red” is the degree of anger you may need to defend yourself. This is the “you or me” mind set. It is very difficult for most of us to reach this level of anger. In fact, I would hazard a guess that most of us have only reached that state once or twice in our lifetimes. What would it take to make you “see red”? Someone attacking your child? One of your family? How would your loved ones feel if you were injured or killed? Is this enough to get you REALLY ANGRY? Think about their reaction to seeing you lying in a hospital bed.

The problem is, you never know how you are going to react to a physical threat until the situation arises. My first experiences as a police officer were extremely disturbing. These were situations with violent, drug or alcohol-induced “crazies”, who were out of control. I have relived many of these fights in my dreams for years afterwards. Once the adrenaline stops flowing through your veins, you can regain some control. Adrenaline is nature’s way of supplying us with incredible strength and pain suppressant. Unfortunately, the attacker is usually having an adrenaline rush as well. The difference is that a police officer is trying only to subdue and arrest this person. As a possible victim, you may have to injure and disable him, at least long enough to make your escape.

If you are ever faced with this type of situation, try to remember that **YOU MUST GET HIM BEFORE HE GETS YOU!** You did not create this situation- **HE DID!** You are a very valuable person to a lot of loved ones, and your welfare is all that is important. What happens to him is insignificant. Anger will get the adrenaline moving, and give you the extra strength and faster reaction time you need to have the edge over him. Panic will only cause you to freeze and become helpless. You must be prepared to do real physical damage to this person. **You must do whatever it takes to prevent being a victim.**

I remember being called to attend a hospital where a prostitute was reporting a serious sexual assault. She was lying in her hospital bed with black eyes, swollen face, cuts, and contusions. She reported that she had been attacked by a “john”, for no apparent reason. He had simply picked up a large rock on the floor of his pick-up truck, and began bashing in her skull! As he was beating her into unconsciousness, she gathered the strength and courage to shove her thumb deep into her attacker’s eye. While he was preoccupied with this excruciating pain, our victim managed to make her escape. My job was to wait for someone with an eye injury trying to obtain medical attention at a hospital in our vicinity. Fortunately, our victim had

12 / Fighting Back

done enough damage to require our “bad guy” to plead for help, and we were happy to respond to another hospital’s report of an incoming patient requiring help with his damaged eye!

The moral of this story is to **DO WHATEVER IT TAKES!** You must use your gut instincts to determine whether this situation requires your fiercest reaction. Be aware of your identity, “I am a special human being, valued by many loved ones, and ready to do battle with anyone wanting to take my basic human rights away from me.” There is no such thing as a “FAIR FIGHT” in these situations. **ANYTHING GOES:** you must do whatever it takes to preserve your well-being.

LEGAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It always amazes me how many people are preoccupied with the threat of being sued. Under all laws in modern civilized societies, we are allowed to use reasonable force to prevent being attacked, or act in self-defense. We may use as much force as is necessary to stop the attack upon us. In other words, a simple verbal threat may not be reason enough to physically attack whomever is threatening you. However, once you are **convinced** this person is going to attack you, use as much force as is necessary to stop the attack. Worrying about a possible criminal charge or lawsuit against you should be the last thing on your mind. If you feel your life is in danger, **DO WHATEVER IT TAKES.**

Sometimes, in the heat of the moment, with adrenaline flowing, a victim may be so blinded by anger that she does not realize how much damage she is inflicting. The important thing to remember is that once you are satisfied your attacker cannot continue the attack, however temporarily, **MAKE YOUR GET-AWAY.** Even though your anger level is at its highest, your objective should not be to inflict more injury on this individual. The objective is to disable him sufficiently to allow you to escape unharmed.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS and believe in your worth and value as a human being. Worry about being sued after you are safe and sound, surrounded by those who care about you!

Chapter 2 **Staying Safe**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Walking Alone

At Home

In Your Car

At Work

STAYING SAFE

I have spoken with women who are accomplished martial arts competitors and instructors. When asked what they would do if physically attacked by a 200 lb. male, they invariably reply, “I would run like hell”. In 1983, Lisa Sliwa, National Director of the Guardian Angels citizen protection group, was attacked by three men. They had knocked her almost unconscious in preparing to rape her, and the last effort she could summon was to yell as loud as she could, and grab one of her attackers in the crotch. This was enough to scare the gang off. Although she has a black belt in karate, she was no match for this fight. What saved her was her attitude that nobody was going to rape her. She would fight to the end. What Sliwa preaches now is that women must learn to be “streetwise”. In other words, the best way to prevent being a target, is to be vigilant, and have a plan.

In a perfect world, we would be unafraid to walk, cycle, or jog wherever and whenever we wanted. We would invite someone over for a sociable drink, or even, if the urge struck us, walk down the street with no clothes on without fear of being attacked. Unfortunately, as we all know, any of these actions carry a strong risk factor with them. The world being as it is, we only have to look at which businesses are thriving today. The fastest growing enterprises supply and sell security devices: home and car alarm systems, self—defense weapons, private security personnel, special door locks and devices, window bars, etc. The focus is on PREVENTION. We want to make it difficult for the bad guys to pick us as a target. If we can slow them down, or deter them, they will hopefully move on to an easier target.

Let’s look at some common, everyday situations we all experience. If you had not thought about these as potentially dangerous, perhaps you should take particular note. My experience with most victims is that they had no idea that where they were or what they were doing was making them a target. Being vigilant does not mean being paranoid. Fear of attack does not have to take over your life. Some simple precautions, practiced everyday, become second-nature. You will learn to drive with your doors locked, just as you have (hopefully) learned to use your seatbelts at all times.

WALKING ALONE

Remember always that attackers are not looking for resistance or a “fair fight”. They seek out targets who appear weak, easily intimidated, and possibly, already fearful. The most important image to project on a street is one of a strong, confident person. This is best done by walking assertively, with straight posture, unafraid to look someone in the eye. This does not mean staring offensively at someone coming towards you, as this might actually provoke a confrontation. It simply means looking at someone long enough to be able to describe him, if need be. You might be surprised at how many people cannot describe their attackers at all, simply because they walk with their eyes down almost all of the time.

Common sense precautions to take when walking alone include staying in well lit areas at night. Do not take shortcuts through parks, alleys, or schoolyards, even though it might get you to your destination quicker. Stay where there are people. Walk facing oncoming traffic so that a vehicle cannot sneak up on you from behind. For a vehicle to follow you while you face oncoming traffic, the driver would have to drive in reverse.

If you think you may have someone following you on foot, get to where there are people: a convenience store, gas station, or firehall. **TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS**. If you have a bad feeling about someone walking behind you, and you fear the gap between you is closing, run as fast as you can to a safe place. Don’t worry about feeling foolish or mistaking a respectable citizen for a stalker. It is not worth the risk. Far better you look a little silly running down the street than take the chance that your instincts are wrong. Trust yourself. The worst possible situation is to be grabbed from behind. This catches you off guard and off balance. The advantage of the element of surprise is totally with the attacker.

If the gap has closed and your instincts tell you that this person is after you, **YOU MUST CONFRONT HIM**. This means turning around and assuming a defensive stance (see photo, chapter 3). In a very **LOUD and AGGRESSIVE voice**, say “What the hell do you want from me?”, or “Quit following me!” This reverses the element of surprise and will, hopefully, attract the attention of anyone nearby. The attacker is definitely not

14 / Staying Safe

ready for this aggressive reaction. He was expecting a cowering, quivering, defenseless target. The most important point is not to wait until this person is close enough to grab you from behind. You must act first in order to get the upper hand. **TURN AND FACE HIM!** Don't worry about looking foolish. You can always apologize to an innocent person. This is far preferable to risking being jumped from behind. **DO NOT WAIT! TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS!**

The person following you may be a thief, in which case you should not put up a fight. Your possessions are simply not worth getting injured or killed over. One case which always comes to mind involved an elderly woman waiting at a bus stop. Two young males came by and grabbed for her purse. Rather than give in to her attackers, this brave woman hung on tight to her purse straps. She was not going to give it up without a fight. They knocked her to the ground and dragged her by her purse straps down the sidewalk until the straps broke, and the thugs ran off with her purse. I took this report from the hospital, where our victim was being treated for multiple contusions, bruising, and a dislocated shoulder. All that was in her purse was \$20 cash, identification, and a set of keys. The cash was minimal, the identification replaceable, and her door locks easily re-keyed. These items were not worth the physical damage done to her. Possessions are meaningless when compared to your physical well-being.

An excellent escape technique to use in a "mugging" situation is, when the thief demands your money, take it out of your purse or pocket and throw it on the ground far away from you. While the thief looks and reaches for the money, run away as fast as you can. He will choose to stay and gather up the money, unless it wasn't just money he was after.

If the person following you is not a thief, but is out to do you serious harm, you have faced and confronted him first. This gives you the advantage of surprise, and it just might be enough to make him change his mind. Remember the discussion on who these attackers are? Studies have shown that many attackers are actually scared off by women who are not afraid to fight. For those who aren't scared off, at least you are facing your assailant and are in your defensive stance, ready to use the techniques to be discussed in the next chapter.

AT HOME

Nowhere should we feel safer than in our own homes. It is our safe haven, our sanctuary, our cocoon. We never expect to be targets in our own home, but, as we discussed earlier, most often women and children are attacked by someone they know, and often in their own home. We need to make our homes as secure as possible, without making it feel like a prison.

Call your local police department to see if they will conduct a home security check. Often, they will make recommendations that are relatively easy and inexpensive. Basic home security should include good deadbolt locks on all exterior doors, metal bars and pins to eliminate horizontal and vertical movement on all sliding glass doors and windows, and bars on basement windows.

An alarm system is expensive, but effective, especially if it sounds a pre-entry alarm. This would alert your neighbors that there is a problem at your house even before a housebreaker actually enters. Some alarms are monitored by security companies, who then contact the police if the system is activated. The problem with alarms is the human error involved. Home owners, their children, and even their pets often accidentally set off their alarm systems. Once there have been several false alarms, police stop responding and complacency sets in. It is very similar to car alarms going off in parking lots. Have you noticed how no one even turns to look in the direction of car alarms anymore? You may want to consider something as simple as buying a "Beware of Dog" sign and very large dog dish for the backyard. Much cheaper than an alarm system, but very effective as a deterrent.

Good exterior lighting is important too. Dark shrubbery makes excellent hiding places. Motion detector lights are a great idea. If someone steps into range, they turn on immediately to warn you of an intruder.

Everyone in your home should be instructed in the proper way to answer the door and telephone. Never open the door to someone you do not know. I know it may sound rude, but people can hear perfectly well through a closed door. Ask who they are and what they want. Identification is carried by anyone who would legitimately

15/ Staying Safe

need to enter your home on business. If they do not provide it, **DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR!** A common story is the distressed motorist who needs to use your phone. Tell him you will call whomever he wants while he waits outside your **LOCKED** door.

Similarly, telephone etiquette states that we shall be polite to everyone. We surrender far too much information over the phone. How many times have you given out your credit card number to someone over the phone? We tell poll-takers if we are married, how many people live in our house, how much money we make, and on and on. What if the poll-taker is really not a poll-taker at all? Do not give out personal information on the telephone.

Obscene calls should invoke no response other than hanging up. These callers want a reaction from you. They want you to be upset. Do not use a whistle to damage the caller's ear drum. He could call back and do the same to you or someone in your family. Obscene and threatening phone calls are against the law. Record the dates and times of each, and call your telephone company. Most companies have the equipment to instantly identify the phone number of the caller. If the problem persists, the best solution may be getting an unlisted number.

IN YOUR CAR

Someone close to me was once driving home very late at night. There was hardly any traffic on the road. As she pulled up behind another car at a red light, the male driver of the car in front got out and ran toward her. She managed to push the door lock down just as he reached for the handle. He then jumped on the hood of her car and began to pound on the windshield. She couldn't go forward, so she put the car into reverse and stepped on the gas. Luckily, there was nothing in the way! She slammed on the brakes and cranked the wheel, and the crazed attacker went flying! If this doesn't convince you to drive with your doors locked at all times, I don't know what will. Carjacking may be the crime of the future, so we will need to be extra vigilant while driving.

If you think you are being followed in your car, **DO NOT** try to lose them or outrun them. This will most likely result in an accident. Try honking your horn repeatedly, to attract attention. Drive to where there are people: a convenience store, gas station, fire hall, or police station. Getting a licence plate number is very helpful, but not as important as getting to help.

Park in well-lit areas, and avoid dark parkades. Always have your keys ready and check the back seat before getting in. Cellular phones are excellent security if your car breaks down or you think you are being followed. Just seeing you speak into a phone is usually enough to scare off someone who is following you, especially if you are looking into your rearview mirror, reciting his licence number.

If your car breaks down, especially at night, stay inside with your hazard lights flashing and doors locked. When someone stops to help, open your window, just a crack, and ask them to phone for a tow truck or the police.

One final note about vehicles. Never, ever, allow yourself to be coerced into a vehicle. Statistics show that a person's chances of survival drop dramatically if they are taken to a secondary location. Use every physical defense you can muster to prevent being taken away in a vehicle.

AT WORK

In addition to our homes, most of us feel safe and secure in our workplace. We don't expect to be attacked in familiar surroundings. However, in places where the public has access, or is invited to enter, the risk is always there that someone dangerous may be lurking close by.

Places to be on the alert include bathrooms, elevators, secluded storage rooms, and anywhere that puts you at a distance from work colleagues. Have you ever been waiting for an elevator, and when the doors open, there is only one person inside, and he gives you an instant uneasy feeling? Well, you are not alone. We have all felt this way. The astonishing thing is, **WE GET IN ANYWAY!** We will go against all of our instincts and good judgement simply because we feel obliged to get in that elevator. Why not walk away, or state that you are

16 / Staying Safe

waiting for an elevator going in the other direction? Or, if you are already on the elevator and others are preparing to leave you alone with someone you don't trust: why not leave with them? So what if it's not your floor. Catch another elevator! If you determine that something is about to happen and you cannot get off the elevator in time, push the ALARM button (not the STOP button), and all of the floor buttons. This will alert others that there may be a serious problem on this elevator.

People who work evening and night shifts are often at risk when going to their cars. Parking lots and parkades are becoming common crime scenes. Many hospitals have implemented an escort system for nurses going to their cars after dark. Other organizations have started a telephone system cars after dark. Other organizations have started a telephone system whereby the employee calls back to work once they have arrived safely home. This type of "buddy" system is an excellent back-up to personal safety.

More and more we hear about sexual harassment in the workplace. Prominent business executives, politicians, and even judges are being successfully prosecuted and sued for such conduct. But most disturbing is the fact that almost all of us have, at some time, been sexually harassed in the workplace. For those of us in traditionally male professions, this can be in the form of put-downs, sexually explicit jokes, or being denied certain positions. Other types of sexual harassment may be in the form of requests for sexual favours in return for job security or advancement. Whatever the form or reason for such treatment, it is illegal, and potentially dangerous. A sexually aggressive co-worker can present as frightening a confrontation as a complete stranger can. The fact that you know the attacker may make you hesitant to yell or use physical force against him. He knows this. This is much like a "date rape" situation. He may also be your immediate supervisor, using that form of power over you. He may challenge you by saying it is all a test to see if you "can take it".

My recommendation to anyone being harassed at work is to first confront the person making the unwanted comments or actions. You must make it absolutely clear that his advances or crude behavior are not welcome. Document all dates, times, conversations, and actions. If one warning is not enough to stop this unwanted behavior, go to the next supervisory level within the company or organization. If no action is taken, go To the next level, in addition to a representative from your union or employee group. If you have no employee organization, talk to other women at work. Chances are, you are not the first one to be harassed by this individual. Or, it may be revealed that there are other offenders within the organization. By coming forward together, victims are not as reluctant to report incidents. The worst thing to do is nothing. By doing nothing you are condoning such behavior and actually encouraging the offenders to continue with you and your co-workers.

There have been many reports of women being fired for pursuing complaints of sexual harassment. If this were the case, I would encourage them to go to local women's groups for support, and write letters to the media. It is amazing how these companies will finally "do the right thing", once these stories become public.

Chapter 3 - Fighting Back
Part I: Physical Defenses

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Fighting Stance, front view (photo)

Controlling Your Fear

Fighting Stance, side view (photo)

Where to Take Aim

Pressure Points (diagram)

FIGHTING BACK

In Chapter 2 we discussed how to minimize your chance of becoming a target of violent crime. Unfortunately, as with much in life, there are no guarantees. People are attacked in broad daylight, with plenty of potential helpers and witnesses close by. Even in a mall parking lot, at one o'clock in the afternoon, you must be vigilant and trust your instincts. One thing I often hear from victims is, "I felt funny about this guy from the first moment I saw him". Your gut feelings are usually correct. The best self-defense is awareness and escape.

At the point you determine that you are about to be physically confronted, and that you cannot escape, you must decide on how you will defend yourself. In some cases, such as when the attacker is using a deadly weapon, you may decide that fighting back would mean certain death or serious injury. Many women have survived weapon attacks using "passive defenses", which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. In short, passive defenses require women to become great actresses, pretending to submit to their attacker. This technique may calm him down to the point where he lets down his guard, and the woman can make her get away.

PHYSICAL DEFENSES

You do not need a black belt in karate to successfully defend yourself or your loved ones. In fact, as stated earlier, some women who have studied martial arts have experienced a total blank when attacked. The panic and terror that rushed over them caused their memories to completely shut down. They were immobilized with panic. That is why I believe in teaching only a few basic (but extremely effective) techniques. It is the old K.I.S.S. Principle (keep it simple stupid). If you **practice, practice, practice** these few points, you should be able to react, almost instinctively, under stress.

Mental practice is just as important as physical practice. Role-playing with a friend, making faces and yelling at a mirror, and picturing yourself in highly stressful situations, will all contribute to your mental preparedness. In the following physical defenses, we will emphasize the importance of using **SURPRISE, SPEED, AND AGGRESSION**. Try acting a defense out in front of a mirror, or see how well it works when role-playing with someone else. Most women are extremely reluctant to hurt anyone, even when under attack, but try to remember: **IF YOU THINK SOMEONE IS OUT TO HARM YOU, YOU MUST HURT HIM BEFORE HE HURTS YOU!**



Fighting Stance - front view

21 / *Fighting Back*

CONTROLLING FEAR

Fear is a natural reaction to confrontation, but, if fear leads to panic and “freezing”, it can prevent you from protecting yourself. If you cover your face and recoil into a sobbing mess, you will surely lose. By turning your fear into anger, you begin the flow of adrenalin. Adrenalin produces the “fight or flight” syndrome, which is nature’s way of empowering us when we are threatened. Vision and hearing become more acute, strength increases dramatically, reaction times are quicker, and our pain threshold increases. To gain the benefits of this adrenalin rush, fear must be turned into anger, not panic. Here are some basic steps designed to achieve that result:

1. BREATHE - Holding your breath is a sure fire way to “freeze”. When you are shocked by something, you tend to sharply inhale and hold your breath. If confronted, you must consciously make yourself exhale and breathe deeply. Think about it: oxygen keeps the brain alert, muscles ready to react, and keeps you calm. Remember what you were always told about public speaking? “Take a few deep breaths to relax”. The same holds true for confrontations. Breathing will help to keep you calm and in control, even giving you a sense of power. Breathe deeply and steadily. **Do not hold your breath!**

2. STRONG BODY LANGUAGE - Once you are convinced someone is out to harm you, you must confront them. You should turn to face them and state (in a loud and aggressive voice), “What the hell do you want?” or “Quit following me!”. You must also protect your personal space. I recommend that you let them get no closer to you than four paces. Anything less than that puts you within grabbing range. Equally important is to avoid being grabbed from the rear. It is much more difficult to defend yourself when attacked from behind. **Turn and face him!**

Next, assume the fighting stance shown opposite. Feet are approximately shoulder width apart, with one foot slightly ahead of the other. Knees are flexed and weight is on the balls of the feet. Hands are poised for blocking and striking. This stance makes you look like you know martial arts, and may be enough to make your attacker have second thoughts. It also gives you a strong, balanced position, from which all other moves will originate. Being in this balanced position makes it more difficult for someone to drag you down to the ground (the last place you want to be in a fight). It also establishes your zone of personal space. You are, in effect, saying “Don’t come any closer or you will be very, very sorry !” Just assuming this stance should make you feel more confident and strong. Try it! Yes, right now! How does it make you feel?

THIS IS A 66-PAGE E-BOOK.