

Popular Myths and Useless Sound Bites of Self-Defense © CRGI & Erik Kondo

The following *Myths* and *Useless Sound Bites of Self-Defense* are commonly held and repeated among the general public. This misinformation is perpetuated by the popular Media, the Internet, some in the Self-Defense Industrial Complex, and are handed down from generation to generation by many well-intentioned, but unknowledgeable individuals. A *Myth* is information that is simply not true. A *Useless Sound Bite of Self-Defense* is advice that comes with no context. Therefore, it may be correct in some circumstances and also be incorrect in other circumstances.

MYTH: *The first thing men look for in a potential victim is hairstyle. They are most likely to go after a woman with a ponytail, bun! , braid or other hairstyle that can easily be grabbed. They are also likely to go after a woman with long hair. Women with short hair are not common targets.*

Comment: This myth has been resurfacing on the internet for years. There are no studies which substantiate this claim. Rape victims come in all shapes, sizes, ages, races, and hairstyles. Circumstances and behaviors are primary indicators. An assertive woman with a ponytail is less likely to be victimized than a passive submissive woman with short hair.

MYTH: *The second thing men look for is clothing. They will look for women whose clothing is easy to remove quickly. Many of them carry scissors around to cut clothing.*

Comment: Same as above. The majority of sexual assault victims know their attacker. Many of these victims are selected based on the attacker's perception of the likelihood to both submit the victim along with the victim not reporting the crime.

MYTH: *The number one place women are abducted from / attacked at is grocery store parking lots.*

Comment: There are no studies that verify this claim. Most victims are assaulted in someone's home or in a private area by someone they trust. In public, victims are more likely to be attacked in low security "fringe areas" that border a well traveled and "secure area.

MYTH: *Young attractive women are at greatest risk of sexual assault.*

Comment: Many studies have shown that women with physical or development disabilities are the most likely victims of sexual assault by a wide margin.

MYTH: *I am safe because I carry a handgun, carry a knife, carry pepper spray, am a Black Belt, live in a safe neighborhood, own a dog, took a self-defense class, etc.*

Comment: The *myth* is that safety exists. Many life style changes can alter your chances of being chosen as a victim or surviving, but nothing makes you completely safe.

MYTH: *Hitting someone upwards on the nose can kill them.*

Comment: If the person then falls and hits the back of his head on a solid floor, it is possible for him or her to sustain a fatal brain injury. The anatomy of the nose is such that such a strike is most likely to cause pain or a simple break of the nose cartilage.

MYTH: *If I perform a technique under stress it will be "burned" into my nervous system. My body will never forget it.*

Comment: The average person is put under different stresses many times during their lives. If this was true, then every stressful situation would result creating in permanent habits, both appropriate and inappropriate ones.

MYTH: *If I practice a technique over and over, I will be able to do it automatically no matter what the circumstances.*

Comment: This line of reasoning doesn't take into consideration the effect of emotions on actions. You may be an expert at walking a plank at two feet of elevation, but your practiced skill will not be the same twenty stories up.

MYTH: *Self-defense is about learning physical fighting skills.*

Comment: Self-defense is about minimizing negative consequences. It is about prevention, deterrence, good decision making, and

effective problem solving. It is about making accurate threat assessments and understanding the context of potentially dangerous situations.

MYTH: *Creepy looking strangers are the most likely to attack you.*

Comment: The unkempt and dangerous looking stranger is most likely to scare you. But someone you know is most likely to actually assault you.

SOUND BITE: *Always take the elevator instead of the stairs. (Stairwells are the perfect crime spot).*

Comment: Heart disease is a leading cause of death in the US. Elevators are a confined space that works well for an attacker. Whether you take the elevator or the stairs depends on your threat assessment at that particular time.

SOUND BITE: *If you are grabbed around the waist from behind, pinch the attacker either under the arm between the elbow and armpit or in the upper inner thigh.*

Comment: Pinching along with scratching may or may not work. It depends upon the motivation of the attacker and circumstances of the attack. A low motivated attacker may be deterred by most forms of active resistance. A highly motivated attacker may not be.

SOUND BITE: *After the initial hit, always go for the groin.*

Comment: After the initial hit, it is usually a good idea to follow up with some other action. That may mean more striking, or it may mean disengaging and escaping. Striking the groin is not the Holy Grail of Self-Defense,

SOUND BITE: *If a mugger asks for your wallet and/or purse, do not hand it to him. Toss it away from you.*

Comment: Tossing the wallet may be perceived as an act of disrespect. It may change a simple resource based crime into a socially motivated one. In this case, beating or killing you may be the mugger's means of saving face.

SOUND BITE: *Any piece of self-defense advice that begins with ALWAYS or NEVER.*

Comment: Given the vast amount of influencing factors on any potential altercation, sweeping generalizations are ill advised and most often outright dangerous statements to make.

SOUND BITE: *Don't make eye contact with an aggressor/attacker.*

Comment: It's not that simple. In some cultures and subcultures, direct eye contact is a sign of disrespect, in others of honesty. Making eye contact can be seen as a challenge which must be met... and avoiding eye contact can be seen as the sign of an easy, submissive victim.

SOUND BITE: *Carry your keys between your fingers to be used as a weapon.*

Comment: Some find that the keys actually tear up your hand. That said, if you must go physical, the more pain you cause and the more forensic evidence you create, the better your chances.

SOUND BITE: *Don't walk alone.*

Comment: It is naturally reassuring to have company, especially in an environment you feel uncomfortable. However, this is not always practical or achievable. Maintaining awareness and reacting to changes in your environment, is one of the best skills to learn and strategies to adopt.

SOUND BITE: *Don't talk to strangers.*

Comment: It is almost always safe to talk to strangers. Your guard has to go up when a stranger talks to you.

This is not a scary and dangerous world. Do not live in fear. Do not train out of fear. Watch people because they are fun and educational to watch. Train because it is fun and healthy to move.