

MidWeek

Common Sense Self Defense For Wahine

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By Kerry Miller



Byron Lee photo blee@midweek.com

McLaughlin teaches Jan Weaver to roll out of an attacker's grip

For a woman who's been assaulted, gaining back your lost sense of self is the greatest feeling in the world. As a woman who's been in that situation, trust me, I know. While I can't speak for all women, personally I'd say one of the best ways to "get back to normal" is to learn how to defend yourself, making sure that an assault won't happen again.

No woman wants to ever be in that situation, but should it arise, your best weapon is to know how to stop it.

On Jan. 21 I took the Hawaii Zenyo Bujutsu Kai Women's Assault Prevention Course. Instructor Steve McLaughlin is a professor of DanZan Ryu Zenyo Bujutsu, a seventh-degree black belt, hospital security instructor, bodyguard instructor and has many other related occupations. The HZBK course, coauthored by McLaughlin and Dr. Linda Annigela, teaches "common-sense self-defense." It is the local offering of the nationally taught Women's Assault Prevention Course, which has been around since 1929.

McLaughlin has rewritten the HZBK course to coincide with modern statistics on assault. Because 70-80 percent of assaults on women in Hawaii happen in the home, McLaughlin teaches self-defense methods for how to get out of being attacked in places like your bed or your couch.



Byron Lee photo

The author fends off an attack

Inside the Daijingu Temple of Hawaii in Nuuanu, 17 of us gathered for four hours, partnered up, and learned how to push someone off of us, kick, get out of a headlock, break someone's foot and other "common sense" moves.

Should someone knock you down, the best thing to do is stay relaxed. Becoming stiff, McLaughlin says, makes it easier for someone to pick you up. But if you're relaxed, you're more like "dead weight."

If a person is sitting on you, McLaughlin says to use your legs together to push the person off of you. We practiced this maneuver by pushing our partner off of us and rolling over onto our sides. The next move McLaughlin says is to kick them in the face. The best way to kick, he explains, is rapidly and all over the place, kind of how a 3-year-old might kick if he or she were having a temper tantrum.

To stop a choke from the front, McLaughlin taught us to swing our arm in from the outside, knocking the attacker's arm away from their throat. Should you be caught up in a headlock from behind, take two fingers and push them under the person's arm to release their grip on your neck. You can then slip out, push your head down and push them away from you.

A popular question McLaughlin is asked by women is what they can do if an attacker grabs their hair. The best way to get out of that, he says, is to turn most of the way around and punch them in the nose with your fist, positioning your arm like it's a hammer. When practicing this maneuver, McLaughlin's words proved true about how if you turn all the way around, you are bending the person's wrist, loosening their grip on you.



Christine Curatillo defends against instructor Steve McLaughlin

While the home is the most common place women in Hawaii are assaulted, McLaughlin says that getting attacked in your car is the second most common place. In either case women are usually assaulted by someone they know or have just met.

“You must be staked out and cased out a little bit, first” he says. “They know what they’re doing and how to do it.”

Use common sense, don’t let someone in your house or your car, he advises. Also, he says, don’t roll down the window to talk to someone, they can still hurt you. The best way to prevent an attack in your car is to pull over if you’re driving.

Also, make the No. 9 button on your cell phone a direct dial to 911. Twelve minutes is the average amount of time it takes for the police to come to a scene, McLaughlin explains, so if a fight is one minute, you have 11 minutes to keep yourself alive and not get hurt.

More of McLaughlin’s tips include:

- * If someone attacks you in your bed, you can push them into your nightstand or table by the bed, where they’ll hit their head.
- * If your attacker can’t see, breathe or walk, you have the best chance of escape. To break the nose, do the “hammer” with your arm; take your knee to their groin area. And you can break some-one’s foot by stomping on the very top of it - it’s the most fragile bones in the body.



Byron Lee photo blee@midweek.com

Gabrielle Curatillo rolls out

* Never interlock your fingers. Keep them together for the swinging motion and rolling on the floor. When you swing your arm, swing from the outside in, it's stronger.

* Moving around, twisting is good. MacLaughlin uses the analogy of a 3-year-old and how they tend to flail around all over the place. It's the best way to kick and twist, he says.

* Pepper spray, mace "are only useful if you have easy access to it," he says, and if you are sure you'll need it.

* Another important thing to remember is, as MacLaughlin attests, "there are no rules in self-defense." While participants of his classes usually remember most of what to do, if in the moment you don't pull off every single step, you can still do it right and still stop the attack, because you have the basic knowledge.

Assault Statistics for Hawaii:

* One out every eight women in Hawaii is assaulted, and the average assault lasts only 15 seconds.

* Among women ages 18-25 drugs and alcohol are a major contributor to assault.

* 70-80 percent of assaults in Hawaii happen in your home (in the bedroom), unlike on the Mainland where most happen in the street or in a parking lot.

* Gambling is the No. 1 reason men ages 25-35 are assaulted. Drugs and alcohol are second and third.

* With women age 18-25, most of the time no weapon is involved.

* Samoan women are assaulted more times more in Hawaii than other women.

* Odds are less for an assault on women over 50.

* Only 30 percent of assaults are reported. "If you don't turn him in," MacLaughlin says, "he's going to get someone else."

For more information, call 351-3074. You can also visit

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