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Guidelines

Self-Defense is more than knowing how to fight back again a physical attack.

Participation in self-defense classes encourages you to think in terms of options and choices, develops your awareness and assertiveness skills and provides practice for physical self-defense techniques. A good self-defense class will expand the way you think about violence prevention, help you deal with your fears and enable you to feel more empowered in your life.

With so many programs, how would you know which ones will best equip you to respond to or avoid an attack?

To find out more, examine our F.A.Q., Criteria and Philosophy, and Self-Defense Program sections. Also, learn more about *50 Ways to a Safer World*, which is a book that shows you everyday actions one can take to prevent violence in neighborhoods, schools, and communities.

Self-Defense F.A.Q.

What is Self-Defense?

Self-defense is a set of awareness, assertiveness, verbal confrontation skills, safety strategies, and physical techniques that enable someone to successfully prevent, escape, resist and survive violent assaults. A good self-defense course provides psychological awareness and verbal skills, not just physical training.

Does self-defense work?

YES! Self-defense training increases your options and helps you prepare responses to avoid, slow down, de-escalate, or interrupt an attack, and also empowers one to prevent violence. It is important that the strategies and skills deal with the potential violence from acquaintances and intimates, not only strangers. Women usually know their attackers, therefore it is essential that a person is training in how to deal with the violence that can come from someone you know.

Is self-defense training a guarantee that you will be safe?

NO. There are no guarantees when it comes to self-protection. Be aware of advertising hype, or exaggerated claims of success from marketers of guns, alarms, devices, and self-defense training programs. Be a smart consumer and find a self-defense training program that increases your choices/options and preparedness and is committed to helping you develop a wide range of strategies.

Must I train for years to learn to defend myself?

NO. A basic course can offer enough concepts and skills to help you develop self-protection strategies that you can continue to build upon. Self-defense training is not karate, although some of the techniques are derived from the martial arts. The skills and techniques do not require years to perfect. Certainly, practice is important and investing the time to review and perfect your skills can build confidence and increase your abilities. The key is to make a commitment to participate in your own safety and to do what is necessary to reduce risk and become empowered to act, rather than to be acted upon.

What is the role of Mace, Pepper Spray or other 'devices' as self-defense aids?

Any device is useless to you unless you understand how to use it, and you have it ready to use at the time of the attempted assault. There is NOTHING guaranteed about any of these devices. None are foolproof, and none of them can be counted on to work against all possible attackers.

Realize that anything you can use against an attacker can also be used against you. While some of the devices can be helpful in some situations, it is best not to depend on them and to be aware of their limitations.

Your brain and your body are the best primary weapons that you have with you at all times. Everything else is a weapon of opportunity.

Should I get a gun?

NO. It is not advisable for anyone to "just go out and get a gun." Guns are often presented as the 'equalizer,' but actually guns can provoke more unintentional injury, accidents and unnecessary deaths than random car accidents. Ten children a day are killed by handguns, and several studies show that the most likely use of a firearm in the home will be against a family member or an individual known to the gun owner. There is a lot of debate surrounding the use of firearms as an effective self-defense tool, with little data available to support their effectiveness. Owning and operating a firearm should not be taken lightly, and if you are a person who is looking for a shortcut to self-protection, and are not sure about investing time in self-defense training, then gun ownership is certainly not for you. There are no shortcuts to self-protection, and guns are not a risk-free solution.

Where can I get self-defense training?

Call your local rape crisis center or community college for a referral. In the Los Angeles area, LACAAW has a program called In-Power Women's Self Defense Training which provides 4-hour basic self-defense workshops, 12-hour intensives which include working with highly trained padded attackers, and Personal Security Awareness Training seminars. Adapted classes for persons with disabilities are available. Classes are available in English, Spanish and American Sign Language. Go to our Self-Defense Programs section for more information on all of our classes.

Philosophy and Criteria for a Good Self-Defense Class

This section is based on the guidelines from the book *50 Ways to a Safer World*.

Participation in self-defense classes encourages you to think in terms of options and choices, develops your awareness and assertiveness skills and provides practice for physical self-defense techniques. A good self-defense class will expand the way you think about violence prevention, help you deal with your fears and enable you to feel more empowered in your life.

Ideally, a good self-defense program should reflect these philosophical points:

1. Women do not ask for, cause, invite or deserve to be assaulted. Women and men sometimes exercise poor judgment about behavior, but that does not make them responsible for the attack
2. Whatever a woman's decision in a given self-defense situation, her decision to survive the best way she can must be respected. Self-defense classes should not be used as judgment against a victim/survivor.
3. Good self-defense programs do not tell an individual what she "should" or "should not" do. A good program offers options, techniques, and a way of analyzing situations, including a full range of strategy-building. A program may point out what usually works best in most situations, but each situation is unique, and the final decision rests with the person actually confronted by the situation.

Criteria for a Good Self-Defense Class

1. For Women Only. Since women are more vulnerable to sexual assault, you may be interested in training that is designed specifically for women. Here's what the best women's self-defense training offers:

- Awareness, safety strategies, assertiveness skills and physical self-defense techniques.
- Awareness of specific vulnerabilities and issues of women and girls.
- Classes taught and designed by women with women's experiences, strength and capabilities in mind.
- A focus on sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse prevention.

2. Size up before you sign up. In selecting a self-defense course, observe a class or at least talk to the instructor about the philosophy of the class. You can also talk to students in the class or someone who has taken the course. Keep in mind that a self-defense class is not the same as a martial arts course, though some of the skills taught may be derived from the martial arts. Evaluate a prospective source using the following criteria:

- Is the instructor respectful and encouraging? Does she or he respect the experiences and fears that women, in particular, have about violence?
- Does the class emphasize rape prevention, including potential assaults by dates and acquaintances as well as assaults by strangers?
- Is assertiveness training stressed as an important part of the class?
- Are the physical techniques simple and easy to remember?
- Is the instructor mindful of the safety of the participants?
- Is care taken to allow class members the option of not participating in any practices or role plays that may re-stimulate trauma or fear?

Self-Defense Programs

LACAAW has a full range of Self-Defense Programs:



Committed to the prevention of violence against women and to community education, LACAAW offers self-defense classes to women and children in businesses, community organizations and schools. One of the first organizations to provide women's self-defense, LACAAW's programs are designed to empower women and children to prevent crime and victimization. IN POWER Women's Self-Defense is presented in four 1-hour modules as a means to empower women, break the myths surrounding violence against women, and develop simple, easy-to-use self-defense techniques.

One of the first organizations in the U.S. to provide women's self-defense, LACAAW has been empowering women and children to prevent crime and victimization for more than twenty years.

IN POWER Women's Self-Defense is presented in four 1-hour modules as a means to empower women, break the myths surrounding violence against women, and develop simple, easy-to-use self-defense techniques.

The Modules

Module 1. Awareness - The foundation of prevention

- Assault prevention must begin with education. In this module participants learn the latest information and discuss the myths and misconceptions.
- Participants will learn how to maintain awareness of their daily environment and decrease their potential for being targeted for assault.

Module 2. Assertiveness - The most effective prevention

- Assertiveness is one of the most effective techniques in avoiding assault.
- An assertive response may prevent as much as 80% of potential attacks.
- Participants will practice using assertive body language, eye contact, and verbal confrontation skills.
- Modules 3 and 4 focus on developing basic physical self-defense techniques which empower you to disable an assailant and get away.

Module 3: Weapons of the Body/Prime Target Areas

- Releases - Punches -Strikes

Module 4: Basic Kicks (Front, back, side)

- Floor Techniques
- The techniques taught are simple, easy to learn, and can be modified to each individual's ability. Workshops are available in English, Spanish, and American Sign Language. LACAAW's programs are designed to be flexible in time and cost, with no woman ever turned away for lack of funds.
- Public workshops are provided monthly in several areas of the city. A schedule will be mailed to you upon request.

Self-Defense for Women with Disabilities & Senior Citizens

LACAAW also offers workshops specifically for women with physical disabilities and for the elderly. In the past few years, thousands of Southern California women and children have attended these workshops.

Personal Security Awareness Training and Self-Defense for Senior Citizens and/or Persons With Disabilities is presented in four (4) modules as a means to empower participants to prevent crime and victimization and learn how to overcome fear in their lives.

Module 1: Awareness & Assertiveness as Crime Prevention Tools
Module 2: Developing Street & Residential Safety
Module 3: Financial Self-Protection
Module 4: Physical Self-Defense Techniques and Skills

All four components are suggested for completeness and building camaraderie among participants. Two-hour time slots are suggested for each session.

Age and ability grouping is suggested. While our workshops are especially developed for women, males who are disabled or seniors are at high risk of assault and will greatly benefit from this training.

The techniques taught are simple, easy to learn, and can be modified to each individual's ability. Our expert instructors have provided training for persons who are deaf, visually impaired, mild to severely physically disabled and/or developmentally disabled. Trainings are available in English, Spanish, and American Sign Language.

LACAAW's programs are designed to be flexible in time and cost, with no woman ever turned away for lack of funds. Sliding scale rates are available. Educational Seminars and/or modified versions of the self-defense workshops are available.

Personal Security Awareness Training (PSAT) for Businesses & Corporations

Workplace safety has become an increasingly important consideration for concerned employers. Businesses forfeit \$100 million in lost wages, sick leave, absenteeism and non-productivity due to domestic violence. Employers can help prevent violence before it occurs, and can assist their employees to travel and work together more safely. LACAAW offers a comprehensive safety training program tailored to meet the specific needs of employees at your place of business. PSAT seminars include classes in self-defense, travel safety, workplace violence prevention and conflict resolution.

Below (and continued on the following pages) is a list of the series of seminars and experiential workshops that comprise a basic Personal Security Awareness Training. The training can be offered in its entirety, or tailored to better serve the needs of the client. These are our most frequently requested sessions and we offer them here as suggestions. If there is an area of concern or interest which is not covered in this list, please feel free to discuss your specific needs with our program coordinator, Peggie Reyna.

"Sexual Harassment"

Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual attention. Learn the different forms this attention can take and study it from a female and male perspective.

"What Are We Afraid Of?" Myths and Realities of Sexual Assault

Assault prevention must begin with education. In this session participants will learn the latest facts and discuss the myths and misconceptions we all grew up with.

"How to Keep Your Child Safe" Child Abuse/Assault Prevention

Children are not helpless. Children can and do protect themselves from harm by developing and using their own resources. You can help your children develop safety skills by becoming an informed parent.

"Awareness of Our Environment" The Foundation of Prevention

Learn how to maintain awareness of your daily surroundings and decrease your potential of being targeted for crime.

"When No Means No" Assertiveness Training

Assertiveness is one of the most effective techniques in avoiding assault. An assertive response may prevent as much as 80% of potential attacks.

"In Power Women's Self-Defense Training"

Two-Part Series Emphasizing Physical Self-Defense Techniques for Women
Both Sessions will focus on physical self-defense techniques and practice. Women can and do resist assault attempts successfully. There are three times as many attempts as completed rapes. Participants will learn how to disable an assailant in order to get away. The techniques taught are very simple and effective and are based on striking vulnerable target areas.

"Peace Begins at Home" Domestic Violence Prevention

Battering is the use of force to control and maintain power over another person. That force can be physical, verbal, psychological and/or sexual. In this session, learn what domestic violence is, learn how to stop the cycle of violence, learn what to do if you, or someone you know, is in a violent relationship.

"Traveling Safely"

Guidelines for behavior and safety when traveling and/or working away from the office.

"Conflict Resolution" Strategies and Techniques for De-Escalation

This seminar was created to answer the many requests LACAAW receives from those who wish to avoid physical confrontation. Learn how to diffuse anger and de-escalate volatile situations.

"The Perpetrator You Know" Misconceptions of Acquaintance Rape

Women are assaulted by a wide range of men they know: by dates, by friends, and by associates. Find out why acquaintance rape is the most widespread form of sexual assault against women, yet the least reported. Learn the latest statistics and how to prevent it.

"Custom Designed Safety and Security Seminar"

Specifically tailored to meet your needs regarding employer/employee safety and security issues.



Parents can't always be there when their children face danger. Safe kids are safety smart. They trust their instincts, think on their feet and don't hesitate to protect themselves. There are ways to train children to be safety smart. LACAAW's Kids' Self-Defense and Safety program can help your child be safe. Role playing and hands-on skills building provide children with an opportunity to develop critical thinking skills, respect their instincts and cultivate assertiveness.

Parents can learn how to help their kids be safe by supplementing their knowledge of safety and help their children be safety smart. 50 Ways to a Safer World's chapter, "Teach Safety Smarts to Kids," offers succinct tips to help any parent reinforce LACAAW's Kids' Self-Defense and Safety program.

LACAAW's Kids Self-Defense & Safety is a child abuse prevention/intervention program based on empowerment of the child through building self-esteem, awareness and assertiveness skills, and physical self-defense techniques.

The program is presented in four (4) modules, incorporating age-appropriate role plays which encourage children take action on their own behalf.

Statistics and awareness exercises help children to understand that, while being prepared is important, most people would never hurt a child.

Assertiveness exercises and conflict resolution skill building exercises increase the child's ability to prevent abuse by adults, older children, or peers, and physical techniques build self-esteem and decrease fear.

Kids Self-Defense & Safety is available for schools, scouts, church groups, recreation departments, etc. Adapted workshops are available for children who are deaf, blind, physically disabled, or developmentally disabled.

The program is designed to be flexible in time and cost and can be adapted to meet the specific needs of our clients. Workshops can be presented in English, Spanish or American sign Language (ASL).



Probably the most thorough self-defense course a woman can take, Women Warrior Weekend offers a two-day intensive In Power Women's Self-Defense program that culminates in Practice with trained padded attackers.

Women Warrior Weekend LACAAW's Women Warrior Weekend is a progressive, innovative women's self -defense program, applying LACAAW's empowerment model of self-defense. This class offers 12-hours of interactive training in awareness, assertiveness and physical self-defense techniques. Role-playing, and assertiveness exercises are used to empower participants, and encourage them to participate in their own safety. LACAAW trained, male co-instructors, participate as "padded attackers" to aid participants in a hands-on practice of newly learned physical self defense techniques, including strikes, kicks and floor techniques.

Participants not only enjoy the confidence of learning that they can protect themselves but, perhaps most importantly, they learn that they have a right to feel they are worth protecting.

LACAAW's programs are designed to be flexible in time and cost. Our base rate for a 12-hour class is \$175.00 per participant. Other programs are available. All classes are offered in English, Spanish and American Sign Language

Be part of the Power and Fun in facilitating your own safety.

Testimonials

"I have gained an incredible sense of strength and confidence in myself through these methods, and recognize the newly-found faith in my abilities to physically defend myself." -program participant

". . . self-defense doesn't stop at physical protection-it is intrinsically threaded into our life patterns through assertiveness, awareness, self-esteem and ultimately self-reliance." -program participant

"Two thumbs up' . . . for our 'padded men' who allowed us to use them as 'punching bags' - It's indescribable to discover there are still men existing today that - respect women and can't stand the psychology of the abuser." -program participant

"I can't find the right words to express my appreciation about the way I now feel thanks to this experience. I have a different approach to life now." -program participant

**Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women
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