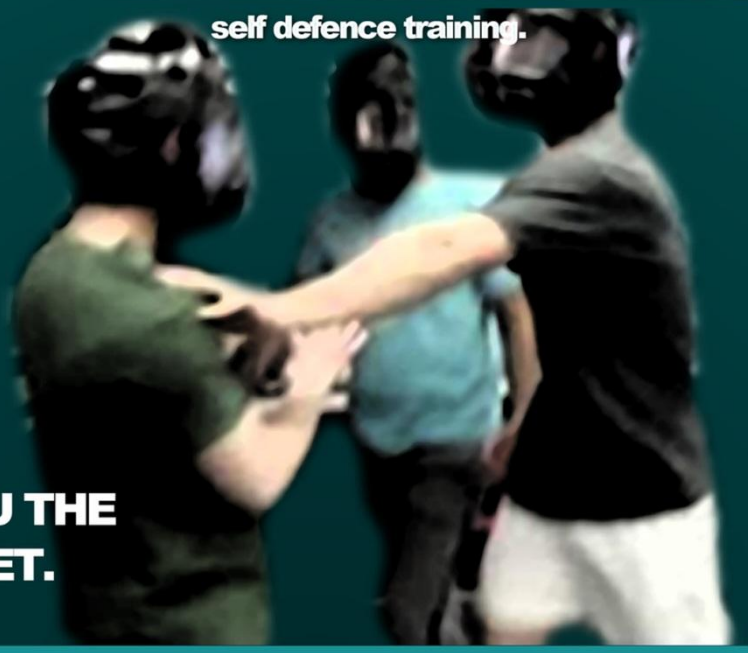
Combative Mind Presents...

COMBATIVES DRILLS

The drils included in this book are for people who like *no nonsense self defence.* No matter what style you train in, these drills are guarateed to boost your self defence training.



NO THEORY.
NO BULLSHIT.
JUST PRACTICAL DRILLS TO GIVE YOU THE EDGE ON THE STREET.

40+ DRILLS TO ACCELERATE YOUR SELF DEFENCE TRAINING!

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INTRODUCTION

When I first began training in Combatives one of the biggest stumbling blocks I encountered was I wasn't exactly sure how I should be training. I didn't really know too many drills to use in training and I had trouble finding them anywhere.

So this is why I decided to write this book. I wanted to give people a resource that I didn't have when I started Combatives training, a resource I would have loved to have had because it would have made training a whole lot easier.

As it was I spent a long time finding drills from everywhere and also developing my own. The drills in this book are the result of that searching and developing.

By no means an exhaustive list (there are many more drills out there that I haven't covered here) there are still over forty drills in this book that cover all the basics in Combatives and realistic self defence training.

The drills listed are not set in stone. Consider each one as a framework in which there is ample room for progression and your own individual creativity. Use the basic structures to build your own unique drills.

I have also shied away from over-explaining these drills or trying to back them up with a load of theory. I felt that would just detract from the practical nature of the book, so if you want detailed explanations on the concepts and principles behind these drills, I suggest you research them elsewhere.

If you are new to Combatives or just want to improve your self defence training, you will find this book very valuable. If you have been training in Combatives for a while now, you may still find some good drills to use in here.

Either way, enjoy the book and let me know about your experiences if you use any of the drills listed here.

STRIKING DRILLS

1. FIGHTING SPIRIT

This first striking drill is as basic as it gets but very effective for cultivating that all important fighting spirit and combative mindset. It teaches you not to give in to tiredness or fatigue and to just keep hitting no matter what.

Tiredness and fatigue can be greater foes than the person or persons you are fighting, so it is important that you learn to cope with them.

The drill is very simple. Stand in front of a bag. A partner will stand behind you and wrap their arms around your waist. It is your partners job to hold you back and make it harder for you to hit the bag. In order to hit the bag you must really go for it and drive forward, giving each strike 100%.

This drill is very draining (which is the point) so start of at one minute and build from there. Your partner must still allow you to actually *reach* the bag so tell your partner not to over-do the pulling back. The drill is pointless if you can't hit the bag, so moderate resistance is best.

If you are coaching this drill, really encourage the person striking the bag. They will need your encouragement to reach the time limit. If you see them tiring or slacking motivate them to carry on. Tell them outside in the street they won't have the option to stop. If you stop in a real fight your dead. This kind of talk usually helps to keep them going.

For anyone just starting Combatives or self defence this a great drill to introduce them to the concept of mindset and fighting spirit without putting them under too much pressure.

It's also a great drill for fitness and conditioning. Very tiring!

Also, if you wanted someone tired before going into another drill, this is a great way to do it.

2. THE PAD SLAPPING DRILL

This is an excellent drill for teaching people how to strike effectively using the open-hand technique.

You simply have a focus mitt on each hand and you strike with the actual focus mitt, as if you were doing so with just your open hand.

You can strike a heavy bag or an actual live opponent, it is up to you. I recommend getting a partner to put on some head gear and gloves and have them attack you. You will fight back, hitting with the focus pads while applying forward pressure.

This is a very useful drill for anyone who isn't used to striking with open hands as you can't make a fist while wearing the focus pads. You also end up doing very natural and instinctive strikes because you don't have to worry about body mechanics or hip movement or anything like that; you just unload on your opponent.

What I find most valuable about this drill is that it is excellent for instilling a forward drive mentality in a trainee. A trainee must keep pressing forward and isn't allowed to stop until the attacker is down on the floor. This is an essential attribute to have in a real street fight situation.

This drill will also greatly aid anyone who is new to Combatives in learning how to strike with the open hand. The standard form of practice is to learn the proper body mechanics first, the hip movement etc. which can take quite a while for some people to grasp.

With this method however, most people end up learning to strike in this manner very quickly and with no fuss. When the focus pads come off, they usually find themselves using the same natural slapping/open-handed striking movements as they did while wearing the pads.

If you are an instructor, this method of practice will save you hours of having to patiently teach a student how to strike with the open hand. Combatives is after all, about learning to fight in the quickest time possible.

2. Pre-Emptive Striking Drill

Pre-emptive striking is one of the mainstays of Combatives and self protection so it is essential you practice striking in a non-static manner.

Practicing statically means just standing in front of the pad your partner is holding up and striking repeatedly. Just be sure to put 100% behind each strike. As you train, so shall you fight.

Non-static practice means having your partner advance towards you with the pad held out in front of them as they hurl aggressive dialogue at you. This makes things feel much more alive than just standing striking.

You will have to use your fence as your partner advances towards you with the pad. Basically, once you feel ready, you strike the pad with your pre-emptive strike, which can be anything from a right cross to a power slap.

The point of the drill is to get you used to the other person's aggressive advances, and also to teach you to use your fence along with dialogue before you strike. Remember to always ask some kind of question just before you strike. You'll be surprised how many times you forget to do this when under even mild stress, so this drill helps you ingrain that into your brain.

3. Aliveness Pad Drill

The object of this particular drill is to make the whole experience more alive and realistic, and once you understand the principles behind it you can apply those same principles to your other pad drills as well.

Firstly, the pad man will flash a pad that will in turn program you, the hitter, to track and attach to the target in order to strike with the ideal tool for that range without thought.

Secondly, the pad man will move away and retract the pad, so that the feeder is now programming forward drive into the hitter.

The third and final phase will incorporate a lowering of the target pad to simulate the head moving or falling to a low line.

In addition to this the feeder is encouraged to turn the target pad over, to simulate closing the target line so that the hitter moves automatically to another target.

Finally you are encouraged to keep hitting the target until the pad man pulls it away. This simulates fighting until there is nothing left to fight about.

All in all these ideas will completely transform any static pad drill into a much more alive experience.

4. Pre-Emptive Striking Against Multiple Attackers

This follows naturally on from the single attacker drill.

Start of statically. Have multiple pad holder's stand before you in a line first of all. Pad holders will flash the pads one at a time. As soon as you see the pad raised in front of you, you strike it without hesitation. Do this for one minute or longer, always remembering to strike with full power and intention every time. After a bit, pad holders can begin to move around you like they are trying to flank you. Adjust your position as necessary and keep striking the pads as they are flashed.

To make this drill more dynamic and realistic, have the pad holders advance towards you as they would if they were to confront you in the street. One pad holder will be the "mouth-piece", the leader. He will try to intimidate you using aggressive dialogue while the others stay at either side of him.

Again, use your fence and whatever calming/deceptive dialogue you want to use. Then, when you feel the situation requires it, pre-emptively strike all your attackers (the pads).

Just by doing this drill you will see how vulnerable a position you are in and how unwise it would be to wait for your threats to attack first. Pre-emptive action is much preferred over just reaction to your threats attack.

5. Friend and Foe Drill

The friend and foe drill is done with multiple partners, and as the name suggests, your partners will alternate between friend and foe as they please, forcing you to use a bit of judgement.

Basically the drill goes like this: Multiple pad holders form a circle around you (the more pad holders the better). It is your job to strike the pads with a single strike as they are near you. So pad holders will move in and out with the pad held in front of them for you to strike. If a pad holder behind you hits you on the back of the head with the pad, this signifies they are a foe and you must spin round and strike them (or the pad). If a pad holder taps you on the shoulder, this signifies they are a friend so you must try not to strike them. The whole time, any of the pad holders can latch on to you and hold you back just as a friend might if they were trying to hold you back with good intentions. This will make it harder for you to strike.

Amongst all the confusion, it can be hard to discern who is friend and who is foe, but that is exactly the point of the drill. Quite often in real situations, friends can get involved and hold you back. Without meaning to however, they are making it more difficult for you to deal with the real attackers.

What I like about this drill is that it gives you a sense of how chaotic and confusing such situations can be when there are multiple persons involved and not all of them real threats. After a while you may find yourself telling your "friends" to stay back and stay out of it so you can effectively deal with the real foes.

A minute or two is usually long enough for this drill but if you want to go longer then you can do so.

6. Wall Slam Drill

In this drill you will start with eyes closed standing about 2 feet from a wall. A single pad holder slams you into the wall to help trigger a slight startle reflex and to help inoculate you to getting bumped about a bit.

From here, the pad holder closes you down into a tight clinch. Your first response is to try and keep only two points of contact on the wall, with your shoulders slightly in front of your hips and your arms in front of your face, known as the default position.

Now the objective is to peel the man off you, via the eye gouge & head butt until you can get to elbows and palms to finish.

A second variation of this drill employs the same eyes closed/wall slam but followed by a punching attack, which you meet with a flinch response. Your partner then shows the pads so you can blitz your way to your primary attached strikes.

7. Restrictive Striking

It is easy to get a good strike in when you are in a good stance and have lots of space around you, but quite often in real situations, you will find yourself restricted in some way, either by your attacker, your environment or both.

It makes sense to practice striking when in these restricted positions since you can't rely on being in good position all the time. You must be able to strike with power from any position you happen to end up in.

Restricted positions include: having your back against a wall, being on your knees, sitting down, lying flat on your back, lying on your side.

With each of those positions, your partner would stand by you with the pad and you must do your best to strike the pad with as much power as you can muster from that restricted position.

This will feel very awkward at first, but you will soon find a way to move your body so that you can generate good power. In most positions, you should still be able to move your hips and put your body weight behind the strike. It just takes practice to be able to do this.

To make things even more awkward, have your partner hold you with their free hand, perhaps pushing up against a wall, or having their hand right in your face. Just play around with different position. The more awkward and restricted the position, the better. Pretty soon you will be able to strike powerfully from any position.

To quote my friend Al Peasland: "One of the huge benefits of Restriction Training is that it teaches us what we should really focus on in times of hardship or limitation. Don't dwell on what you can't do, focus on what you can."

Defensive Drills

1. Defensive Offense Drill

The defensive offense drill is based around the notion of the startle flinch reaction. If you don't know what that is, then read this article first before continuing.

Ok, got it? Good. Let's continue.

Practice the move statically first of all, just defending against a partner who is attacking in some way from the front. Once you have the mechanics of the move down, you can then make the drill a lot more dynamic.

Have a partner play the part of a would-be assailant, complete with aggressive dialogue, pushing and shoving etc. Make it as real as possible.

You will put up a fence and then basically wait for your partner to attack, which can happen at any time. You must defend against the attack without sustaining any damage.

In the beginning the may find this difficult, depending on how your partner attacks, whether he does an exaggerated street punch or sneakily jabs you in the face.

You can increase your reaction time by being aware of the build-up to the attack. Usually when someone throws a punch they set themselves and draw back their arm before punching. If your partner is playing their role to the full, they will also probably clench their teeth before striking.

The subtle pre-contact cues are all there, you just have to be paying enough attention to spot them and therefore stop the attack before it lands on you.

You can stop after you stop the attack, but I recommend following up as well, striking your partner and/or taking them down. This way you condition yourself to follow through each time.

The defensive offense technique is very practical and far superior to any kind of blocking or trapping techniques, which are just too slow. You will see this for yourself when you do the drill.

You can see me do the defensive offense technique in this video if you are still not sure what I'm talking about here.

2. The Boxing Cover Drill

This is a very basic defensive drill but good for teaching you how to cover and defend against multiple strikes and also to get you used to taking a few shots. It's a good drill for toughening you up.

Stand with your back against a wall and either fold your arms across your chest or hold them behind your back. What you are going to do is try to defend against a constant barrage of punches being thrown at you by a gloved-up partner. You may only move your body and use your shoulders to block or deflect the punches. *You cannot use your arms to block*.

Not being able to use your arms will force you into using body movement and also utilising the shoulders to block. Doing it this way will hopefully show you that you don't necessarily need your arms to block all the time and also how incredibly powerful and useful shoulder strikes can be.

For the next round you can use your arms as well, but still stay against the wall so you can't back track away from the punches. Continue to use body movement and shoulder blocks.

You will take a fair few shots here, but that's okay. The point of the drill is to get you used to being hit and to work on your defence.

Start with light punches and increase the contact as you get used to the drill. About one minute rounds work best for this drill.

3. The Crazy Monkey Drill

This drill is done with multiple partners. Have as many partners as you can get surround you in a circle. Each partner should be gloved up.

What you are going to do is use the crazy monkey defence to defend against the attacks that will come from all sides. The crazy monkey defence involves covering your head and moving your arms back and forth like pistons so that you also block with the elbows. You must keep moving around as you do this, shoving your shoulder into your attackers as you move to create space for yourself.

Against multiple attackers this the only valid defence, in my opinion. Trying to hit each attacker will just put you at risk as you won't be covered up enough and will therefore be open to head shots.

You can use elbow strikes though, as your arms are already up and blocking in that position. Just remember to have at least one arm covering your head while the other one strikes.

4. Into the Pit Drill

This drill is probably more about survival than defence, but I include it here because it still has defensive elements in it.

You will be surrounded by multiple partners for this one, the more the better. Each partner will be wearing focus pads. On the go signal, all of your training partners will close in on you and begin relentlessly striking you with the focus pads they are wearing. They will stay in tight, pushing and shoving you, all the while making as much noise as possible, shouting and cursing at you to get the adrenaline going.

You just have to survive this as best you can for a full minute (which can seem like a long time in this drill!). You will find you won't be able to do much if your partners are correctly giving you little space to manoeuvre in. You may land the odd strike, but in the main you will only be able to cover your head and take the hits as they are coming in.

You will need plenty of spirit to survive this drill. It's exhausting but quite a buzz!

MULTIPLE ATTACKER DRILLS

1. CLINCH AND MOVE AWAY DRILL 1: FOOTWORK ONLY

These next two drills were devised by Lee Morrison.

This first drill will involve you and two partners, who will play the part of attackers. Your attackers will approach you with verbal, with one attacker flanking of to the side so he can do some kind of ambush attack like a sucker punch or aggressive shove.

Your response should be to drop your head and cover by raising your arms as you rapidly close with him, tying him up in a Thai style neck clinch. As you do this, the other guy will be attacking at the same time, as would happen in a real street attack.

The clinch may be on the one that has made the move toward you or you might clinch the other guy, whoever you can get hold of first is fine. From the clinch you will now zone away from the second aggressor again placing you in a position where you are dealing with one whilst watching the other.

This drill is performed as a progression by first practicing the foot work by clinching and zoning away from the second guy who pursues you by moving around in an attempt to get behind you.

Working off the fence, clinch the neck of whoever is closest to you and zone away from the second aggressor so that you are dealing with one whilst looking at the other.

In reality as soon as you zone to relocate your position, you would head-butting and kneeing the guy you are holding, but for this drill just zone away from the second man as he tries to close in on you two or three times just to get the idea of positioning.

2. CLINCH AND RELOCATE POSITION DRILL 2: ADD STRIKING

It is from this zoned position that you would be mauling your clinched aggressor with rapid head butts, knees and elbows the whole time that you have him in the clinch.

From here you would shove him into the second aggressor in order to escape or re-engage.

The pressure is added by having the aggressor throw all out punches at your head wearing boxing gloves or whilst wearing a pair of focus pads, as you cover your head and close for the clinch. All the while you should be throwing rapids shots into your clinched body armoured aggressor.

Zone away 2-3 times as you practice your verbal boundary and posturing skills such as "STAY BACK, STAY WHERE Y0U FUCKING ARE!! " Then from here you shove one into the other and make good your escape.

3. SUCKER PUNCH DRILL

For this drill you will need two pad holders. You will close your eyes as you are turned in a circle ten times until you start to feel dizzy. This simulates instability and disorientation similar to the effects of being sucker punched from behind.

From here you are let go of as you try to clear your head and as the feeders attempt to close on you with the pads. You will strive to respond as best you can with single impact strikes and again priority positioning. If you fall over for any reason the drill should continue and you must now fend from the floor and strive to get up on your feet quickly.

4. Gang Simulation Drill

This drill is very similar to the Into the Pit Drill except this time you will try to escape.

The drill requires a minimum of 7 people and a maximum of 15 all wearing focus pads. You, the defender, will be in the middle of the rest of the group who will strive to keep you closed in from all directions.

Your objective is too continuously move and cover your head so as to present as little target area as possible. The method used to do this is the same Crazy Monkey defence as mentioned earlier. Simply place both open hands on your head and raise your elbows then move your arms and hands vigorously over your face, head and neck in order to protect this vital area from a continuous assault from the entire group who attempt to slap you from all directions with the pads.

The idea is to keep damage and blows to your person to a bare minimum and your sole objective is to escape. Find a gap and blast through it verbalising and striking out as you go.

This drill will quickly show you just how limited your options are in such a situation. Damage limitation is the key as you prioritise your escape. This is the only sensible decision in such a scenario.

5. Cornered Rat Drill

For this drill you will be placed into a corner and surrounded by a minimum of four gloved up partners so that you have no escape except to go through your aggressors.

On the go signal your aggressors will lay into you all at the same time with punches. Just like in the Gang Simulation Drill your objective will be to move and cover initially and then blast your way through your attackers so you can run to safety.

Trying to strike your aggressors individually will not work here because they are all hitting you at the same time and doing so will only expose you to head shots which will inevitably put you down or out.

Close and crash through is the best tactic in this situation.

ANTI-GRAPPLING DRILLS

1. HEAD HUNTER DRILL

In this drill, a partner will attempt to take you down to the ground in whatever way they like. They could rugby tackle you to the floor or sweep you down or just fall over on top of you. Whatever, it doesn't matter which way they choose to grapple you.

As your partner goes for the takedown you must seek to control his head in some way. You can do this by either grabbing his face Shredder style or taking control of his head with both hands, one on the back of his head, the other on his chin, so you can twist the head. The idea is to get him off you as soon as possible and either take a more dominant position where you can strike him, or simply roll him of you so you can get back to your feet.

The point of the drill is to teach you to go for head control each time, rather than try to grapple your partner, which can end up messy for lots of reasons.

2. DIRTY ROLLING

Rolling dirty is the same as normal grappling, the only difference being that you and your partner are both allowed to do what normal grappling rules usually forbid, i.e. eye gouging, biting, clawing, butting, hair pulling etc. All the nasty things you can think of really!

The big issue with this drill is obviously safety. Bites and eye gouges should obviously be simulated. The idea is not to leave your partner in a bloody mess but to show you how incorporating these techniques into your grappling can be a game changer. Suddenly locks and armbars seem a lot less important, especially when your partner is biting or gouging you.

This is how it would go down in the street so it is essential you get used to feeling and using these nastier techniques.

3. ROLLING WITH A KNIFE

This drill is another game changer as your partner will be brandishing a knife. You can start with your partner in a mount position with the knife already out, or you can begin grappling and then have your partner pull the knife at any time.

The drill forces you to be aware of the possibility of a knife being drawn and also the most effective ways to deal with a knife wielding opponent from the ground. You will quickly learn what works and what doesn't!

AMBUSH ATTACK DRILLS

1. THE BLINDSIDED DRILL

This is a basic ambush attack drill. It involves you standing minding your own business and a partner suddenly blindsiding you with a punch to the head.

Your immediate reaction should be to cover up first of all, which you will do reflexively anyway. Then, as quickly as possible, you must launch into a counter attack, either striking your attacker or taking them down or both.

To make the attack that bit more shocking, do some number crunching in your head while you wait for the attack. Concentrating on the numbers will make you less inclined to steel yourself for the attack, making it more surprising and realistic. You can also stand with your eyes closed, which tends to bring on the adrenaline a bit more.

If you are an instructor, you can base a whole class around this drill. At any point in class you may shout, "Fight!" and each student must immediately attack the student next to them. This really gives students that sense of surprise because they never know when the attack will happen.

Even after the students think the class is over and their guard is down, carry on with the drill. Shout the fight command as they are getting changed after class!

2. GET ME OUTTA HERE DRILL

This drill is done with multiple partners. To start, have one partner stand in front of you, playing the gang leader, giving you loads of aggressive verbal. His mates (the other training partners) will stand around you. While you are trying to deal with the leader one of the others will ambush you from behind by grabbing you in a head lock (or any other hold you want to use). You must escape from the hold while defending against the other attackers at the same time.

How you react to the ambush attack will dictate how things go for you. If you don't escape from the hold quick enough you will find yourself overwhelmed as the others attack simultaneously.

A good tactic is to try and use the guy who grabbed you as a shield against the others. Also kick out in front to keep the other attackers back and use aggressive verbal commands to keep the other attackers at bay. The first chance you get, run and escape.

Here's a video of this drill in action so you can get a clear idea of how it should go.

BLINDFOLDED DRILLS

1. COMBATIVE SENSITIVITY DRILL

This drill will improve your sensitivity to touch. Because you are blindfolded you have to rely on touch if you want to find targets on your partner or move him in some way. You have to feel your way, rather than see it. You also have to become sensitive to your partners energy, doing the whole Aikido thing of blending with your partner's energy, moving with them rather than against them.

The combative version of this drill is to find targets for striking or gouging on you partner. So you feel your way into placing a thumb over your partner's eyes and simulating an eye gouge before trying to find a different target, like the groin or throat. It's about target acquisition and you keep going, finding and (simulating) damaging targets.

Of course throughout all this your partner is trying to do the same things. Thus you end up vertical grappling, tussling for position, pulling and pushing while also trying to stay as relaxed as possible.

All that moving and pushing and pulling and trying to find targets to strike or gouge is exhausting after a while, shockingly so in fact. It's also great conditioning and will improve your vertical grappling no end; plus your ability to find targets to attack without first seeing them. You learn to run on instinct, which is more powerful and more effective than conscious thought.

You can also change the goal of this drill to suit your needs. You can make it about target acquisition or about vertical grappling and balance control (of both you and your partner). You can also just practice controlling your partners head, pulling it down for knee strikes or takedowns or turning it into walls. Richard Dimitri also uses this drill to practice the Shredder, where you simply focus on keeping your shredding hand working over your partners face.

2. The Attached Striking Drill

In this drill you will be blindfolded while your partner will be wearing protective head gear and gloves. The two of you will start from a clinch position and on the go signal your partner will start to strike you about the head. You must stick close to your partner as you try to attach yourself to him while striking him at the same time, using hand strikes, elbows and head-butts.

The whole point is not to give your partner any space to strike, you must stay close and stick to them the whole time, otherwise you will get hit.

This is also a good drill for improving your tactile sensitivity. Since you can't see, you must feel your way through the drill, using your touch as a gauge to strike from.

A one minute duration is long enough for this drill but if you want to go longer then do so.

3. Blindfolded Grappling

Similar to the first drill. Both partners are blindfolded while grappling. You can start standing up, vertical grappling first, trying to take your partner down to the ground, or you can begin on the ground and go from there.

With all these drills you are learning not to rely on sight, but to feel your way through things. Quite often in a real situation, your sight will be useless to you, so learning to fight in this way is imperative.

Third Party Protection Drills

1. The Saviour Drill

In this drill you will play the role of saviour, since you are effectively saving another person from being attacked, or being beaten further.

Have two partners simulate a real situation, with one picking on the other. Once the bully of the two starts to lay into his victim, run up behind him and kick him in the back of the thigh to bring him down a bit, then place both hands over his face and pull him back to the floor. Pick up the victim and get to safety.

2. Crowd Control Drill 1

You can practice crowd control techniques firstly on the pads. Have two or three partners hold kick shields against their chests and then have them try to close distance with you. To keep them back at a safe distance, you will palm heel them in the chest (or on the pad), using verbal commands as you do so. "GET BACK! DON'T COME ANY CLOSER!"

Do this for each person that comes in on you.

This is a good way to keep aggressors at a safe distance without actually having to fight them. Those chest shoves hurt and they will also have the effect of adrenalizing the aggressor and hopefully giving them "sticky feet" in the process so they no longer have the will to move forward again.

3. Crowd Control/Intervention Drill

For this drill, a partner will be surrounded or cornered by several other partners playing the role of aggressors. It will be your job to intervene here and rescue your "friend" from the situation he is in without necessarily hitting anybody in the process.

Using verbal the whole time, you will make your way through the aggressors to your friend and keep the aggressors back using the crowd control technique mentioned previously. While doing this you will take you and your friend out of the situation, making sure none of the aggressors get too close to you or your partner. If they do, just shove them back and tell them, "STAY BACK, GET BACK!" Stop when you get to safety.

Knife Drills

1. Knife Awareness Drill 1

For this drill you will have a partner stand in front of you as he gives you loads of verbal. Then at some point he will pretend to reach around behind him for a concealed weapon. As you see him do this, say to him, "STOP! STOP WHAT YOU'RE DOING!"

This is letting him know that you are on to him, that you know he is reaching for a weapon. His element of surprise is therefore gone and he may just leave the weapon where it is.

This is good practice to make you more aware and to improve your situational control skills through verbal commands.

2. Knife Awareness Drill 2

This drill requires a minimum of three training partners, plus yourself as defender.

Your aggressors will be standing in front of you, as they would be if they were going to attack you. One of your aggressors will have a concealed knife, but you will not know which one has it.

On the go signal your aggressors will advance towards you with plenty of aggressive verbal and perhaps some pushing and shoving. You must strive to maintain situational control using your fence and making sure to keep a position that allows you to see all of your aggressors.

The person with the knife has been told to pull the blade at any time during the mock confrontation and try to stab you.

You must spot the knife as soon as possible, shouting, "KNIFE!" as soon as you see it.

End the drill there.

3. Knife Awareness Drill 3

Same deal as the first drill, only this time you keep going after the knife has been pulled, defending against your attackers while trying not to get stabbed. Ideally you will attack the knife wielder first, but this isn't always possible if the others are attacking you first. You could therefore use one of them as a shield against the knife and the others.

Try to escape the first chance you get.

4. Knife Awareness Drill 4

This drill should be on-going throughout the duration of a whole class. Most or all class participants will be carrying a concealed training knife. At any point during class, any participant may pull their knife and attack another participant without any prior warning.

If nothing else this drill will drive home just how easy it is to get stabbed because most of the time you will get stabbed before you realise what has happened. Other times you may see the knife being pulled or see it coming and you may then try to defend against it.

Even if you do see it though, it is very hard to defend against without getting stabbed in the process, which is why this drill is so good for driving home the reality of knife attacks and how they usually pan out.

AWARENESS DRILLS

1. SPOT THE COLOUR DRILL

This is a good drill for enhancing your awareness and observation skills. As you go about your business you must spot people who are wearing a certain item of clothing. So for instance, you may elect to notice only those people who are wearing a red item of clothing or a blue item of clothing. It doesn't really matter which. The idea is just to focus your attention on one particular group of people.

By doing this, you are forcing yourself to become aware of *everyone* around you as you filter out the ones who aren't in your chosen group. You can do this drill while you wait outside a shop on your partner (as I often do!) or while you are sitting on a bus or wherever. Just be casual about it. You'll be surprised how much you end up observing just by doing this drill.

2. THE LAY OF THE LAND DRILL

This is similar to the previous drill but instead of observing people, you will be observing your surrounding environment.

So as you walk the streets you will force yourself to become aware of your surroundings, noticing every detail about your chosen route. You will also notice which parts of that environment could be classed as potential trouble spots, like alleyways, deep cover, shadowy doorways etc., anywhere a criminal could hide in wait.

Also look for escape routes. If an incident occurred now, where you could run to safety?

As you enter a room anywhere, scan the room, looking for all the exits.

Like the last drill, this one will improve your awareness and observation skills a great deal. As you do it, you will be in a "code yellow" state, or a state of relaxed alertness, casually noticing everything about your surroundings.

Try not to get too hyper-vigilant about things. The goal is stay alert but still relaxed. You can do this drill for five or ten minutes at a time. Eventually you will find yourself doing it all the time without even thinking about it, which should be the goal with any kind of awareness training.

3. Peripheral Vision Enhancement

The following exercises where developed by Marcus Wynne and will help improve your peripheral vision. Peripheral vision signals enter the brain 25% faster than normal focussed vision signals, so learning to use your peripheral vision can help you react to an attackers movements much faster than normal.

We also have a tendency towards tunnel vision when we are under stress and facing an attacker, so working on improving your peripheral vision will also help you break that tunnel vision state.

Firstly, calibrate your peripheral vision by holding your hands out either side of your head. Move your hands further away until you can just about see them in your peripheral vision. Now, make a point of relaxing for a moment, getting rid of bodily tension by deep breathing or having a partner massage your neck and shoulders. Now recalibrate your peripheral vision using the method just described. You're peripheral vision should now be extended. This will show you the importance of relaxation when it comes to peripheral vision enhancement.

Now have two partners stand either side of you (on the fringe of your peripheral scope) or another partner in front who will offer face to face role play and raw naked aggression through dialogue and body language so as to add stress to the drill. This drill is repeated several times until a degree of de-sensitization starts to occur, which can be measured by your ability to now maintain a good degree of peripheral scope in comparison to the first test.

Next, have a partner with a striking pad/shield stand in front of you, and on your partner's signal blast into the pad with an all-out attack. On your instructor's signal stop your assault and re-calibrate your vision, check state then spell your mother's maiden name to simulate thinking under stress.

When striking a pad or a person, most people will tend to fixate on the intended target, which has its pro's and con's. If you focus on the central threat once you've received the stimulus to access state and proceed to eliminate that threat, your central focus may now make you vulnerable to an additional threat from outside of your periphery.

By habitually checking vision you can broaden your peripheral scope to a degree where even under the stress of a critical incident, it will close down a lot less,

than if you didn't have that skill. This is obviously a huge tactical advantage in a fight.

Also by habitually checking your vision after accessing the fight state, you are also checking your state, to a degree of calm, where it is now possible to make a tactical decision based on any new orientation.

4. Bad Intentions Drill

The purpose of this drill is to increase your sensitivity to feeling another's intentions towards you.

Firstly, stand with your eyes closed with a partner in front of you and have that partner project two different types of intention, good intention and bad intention. You must try to feel which type of intention is being projected towards you. This will enhance your "spidey sense" and allow you to pick up on a potential attacker's intention before anything else, potentially allowing you to stop or avoid a situation well before it happens.

Next, open your eyes and have your partner project the same bad intentions and notice some of the pre-attack cues that he is giving off. You may notice in your partner a clenching of the jaw, a flaring of the nostrils or slight coloration changes in his face. These are very subtle pre-contact cues that are not as obvious as the usual gross motor movements of weight shifting or any kind of exaggerated facial expression. By becoming aware of these more subtle cues you are again increasing your chances of reacting before things go too far to do so.

You can take this a step further into a drill developed by Richard Dimitri called the Opportunity Drill, a drill designed to increase your perception time as opposed to reaction time. Have a partner stand in front of you and get him to throw a straight punch at your face, making sure the punch actually connects but not with full power obviously. Slow it down before impact.

You must watch as your partner throws the punch and count how many opportunities you would have to stop that punch in the time from when you first notice your partner's initial movement to the actual landing of the punch. As you do this you will notice that certain movements occur every time as your partner gears up to punch. They may shift their weight; their shoulder may move back, they may clench their jaw, all before the punch is thrown.

By becoming aware of these subtle cues, you stand a greater opportunity of stopping the attack before it even reaches you.

COMBATIVE PSYCHOLOGY DRILLS

1. THE COMBAT ANCHOR

The following is a technique designed to accelerate performance and increase the retention of your fighting skills by putting you into the optimum combative state while you train.

In a study of five thousand students after completing a particular training course it was found that he retention of the skills learned (without any subsequent practice!) was almost as high after five years as immediately after the training course.

This was then compared to traditional martial arts instruction, where there was a rapid fall-off in the skill retention when regular training ceased.

The key element here was anchoring those skills to the appropriate state, which is what we are going to do now.

Strike a Thai pad or heavy bag in the way you normally would in training. Now stop.

Take a moment and visualize something that would make you fighting mad-maybe someone hurting your partner or child.

Make that picture big and bright; add the sounds of someone you love in pain or fear. Take the feeling that arouses in you and double it. Then double it again.

Now hit that pad as though it is the person you visualize hurting your loved ones.

Did you notice a difference in the power of your strike and how you feel striking?

You can anchor that state by clenching your fist and visualising something in your head that represents the state to you just before it reaches peak intensity. Also say the word “combat” (or any other relevant word) to yourself.

All three things will anchor the state to you so that when you need to access it again you just clench your fist while at the same time seeing the picture in your head and saying the word “combat” to yourself. You may need to repeat this whole process several times so the anchor takes hold.

This technique will radically increase the intensity of your workouts and you will probably find yourself becoming fatigued and exhausted much quicker than before because you are putting more of yourself into the training. I certainly found this to be the case. Time will tell if the technique aids in skill retention, though it is my feeling at this time that it does, simply because the intense state in which the techniques are applied will naturally make more of an impression on the brain and

the neural pathways will be cut deeper than they would be in just a normal state. Try it for yourself and see what you think.

I must point out here that you can't have any doubt or uncertainty in your mind as to whether the technique will work or not. If you do, then you will just end up anchoring these feelings and the power of the technique will be lost. So when you anchor the state, make sure you believe it.

2. Visualisation Practice

Visualisation is an excellent way for you to imprint certain responses to particular stimuli on to your brain without you actually having to have that experience directly. So you can visualise yourself in different combative situations using your skills in a successful manner. The more you do this, the more your mind comes to believe that these imagined experiences are real.

Start by closing your eyes and relaxing your body and mind. Spend a few minutes getting into a really relaxed state, because you will find it easier to visualise then, plus your mind will become receptive to the experiences you are imagining.

Once relaxed, begin to imagine different situations as vividly as you can, using as many of your senses as you can. What situation you play out is up to you. It could be a situation where you have to defend yourself against an attacker on the street. See yourself successfully putting your attacker down. Be specific in what techniques you use to achieve this.

You can imagine any situation, involving one or multiple attackers. Just remember to see and feel yourself accessing the ideal combative state every time, that of cold aggression, and see yourself in continued action until the situation is resolved.

Because of the power of visualisation it is recommended that for every situation in which you imagine yourself using violence, you also visualise a situation where you don't use violence, where you in fact talk a situation down or resolve it in some other non-violent way. This is important. Too much violence, even imagined violence, is not good for a person's psyche. As with everything, balance is the key here.

Solo Training Drills

Although training with a partner is the ideal way to train Combatives, quite often we won't have access to training partners. So rather than not train at all, we can train alone and still get a good session in.

A few pointers to keep in mind when solo training:

- **Don't try to do too much in one session.** Pick just a few techniques or drills to work on throughout the session and stick to them. If you try to cover too much you will scatter your focus and end up learning nothing. Remember that good Combatives training is about repetition. To get good you have to train a select few techniques over and over until you master them. If you try to master too many techniques at one time you will end up mastering none.
- **Train with the street in mind.** This means you do not train in a sporting manner. So no shadow boxing or long endurance workouts. Everything you do must be combative, not sporting. Warm up first, then practice your drills and techniques in short bursts. A real street fight is an explosive burst of energy that doesn't last very long. There are no rounds. Only periods of intense combat lasting only several seconds. Your training must reflect that. So basically, go like fuck for no more than ten seconds then stop and repeat.
- **Add emotional content to your training.** Whatever you do, you must back it up with the correct mindset. If you hit the bag, do so with full intent and aggression. Really imagine that you are in a situation and you have to put this guy down. Anything less will not do. You are practicing accessing state as much as the physical techniques. Hit the switch, go like fuck and then knock the switch off again, making sure to check state every time. Training in this way, you are making sure the techniques will come out under pressure when you need them. This is the only way to train.
- **Resist the temptation to do long sessions.** Long training sessions are for endurance athletes and sport fighters. You will benefit most from shorter sessions of about fifteen to twenty minutes, but train at full intensity during that time. If you feel one session isn't enough, train twice a day.

1. Fence and Strike Drill

What's good about this drill is that you don't need any equipment and it can be done anywhere.

Start from a square on stance, then move into a fence position with your arms out front as if controlling your space, then from there throw a pre-emptive strike. Repeat a number of times.

To make the drill more useful, bring your imagination into play. Pretend there is someone in front of you, giving you grief. Control your space as they try to enter it and then, when you think the moment is right, strike with full intent and see yourself knocking the guy out. Remember, emotional content is what makes these techniques stick.

2. Fence, Strike, Blast and Finish

As above, only after you strike pre-emptively you continue to blast your opponent with multiple strikes, moving forward as you do so (forward drive) before finally finishing your opponent off with knees and elbows or some other technique of your choice.

3. Imaginary Brawl Drill

For this drill you are going to be playing out a whole attack scenario from start to finish. Think of a scenario first. You could be walking to your car in a dimly lit car park after a particularly tiring day at work or you could be standing outside the chippy on after having had a few drinks with friends. Whatever. Your imagination is the limit here.

Once you have a scenario in mind, really put yourself into it, mentally and emotionally. Begin to act it out the way a real actor would.

Let's take the car park example. You are walking to your car when you spot two dodgy looking guys loitering near your car. Your spidey sense starts to tingle and you can feel the adrenaline begin to bubble up inside you. Something isn't right (really feel this!). As you continue to walk to your car, one of the guys (dressed in jeans, black jacket and baseball cap) asks you for a light. You tell him you don't have one. No sooner have you answered him when the other guy (wearing track suit bottoms and a dark coloured hoodie) suddenly rushes towards you, drawing his fist back in preparation to hit you. The fight is on.

That's the set up. What way this scenario goes is up to you. The important thing is that you mimic every move as it happens. If you strike one of the guys, then do so for real and really feel the impact. If you get hit or grabbed, react to that for real. Fall to the floor and grapple. Enact the whole fight. Then when it's over, walk away.

Done right, with your imagination in full swing, this can end up feeling like a real fight. It's almost like visualisation practice but you are physically acting out each movement instead of just picturing it in your head.

Try to be alone when doing this drill. If anyone sees you, they will think you've lost your mind as you throw yourself around and fight imaginary attackers!

MISCELLANEOUS DRILLS

1. AGGRESSION THERAPY

In this drill you will get to release all that aggression and all those stress hormones and emotional toxins that tend to build up in us over time. The drill couldn't be more simpler. You will play the role of aggressor while a partner plays the defendant. You will basically begin shouting and screaming aggressively at your partner while he does his best to control his space and use calming dialogue. Really go for it here and be as aggressive and as vitriolic as possible, dredging up all that negative energy from inside of you and hurling it at your "victim". Notice how much better you feel after wards.

2. VERBAL DE-ESCALATION

Verbal de-escalation is the art of talking someone down or defusing a conflict situation through dialogue and good body language. Like everything else in this book, if you want to get good at it, you have to practice it.

Verbal de-escalation drills are not yelling drills, where your partner immediately begins screaming and aggressively pushing you around. You must build up to that level of aggression. In fact, the whole point is to prevent your aggressor getting to that stage.

Come up with a scenario first of all, to give the drill a focus. For instance, you may be accused of stealing his parking space or spilling his drink. Do your best to defuse the situation from there, using assertive body language and calming dialogue. If your partner believes you have done a good enough job, he will back down.

Practice this drill using different scenarios to give it focus. Once you get competent at talking one person down, bring in other partners and try talking down several people at once. Just to make it more complicated and realistic you can have other partners play the role of your friends and have them get involved as well. Not only will you have to try and talk down your aggressors, but you will also have to handle your interfering friends as well. Not always easy!

3. ARTICULATION DRILL

This is a drill developed by Rory Miller that I really like. The articulation drill involves you describing your actions after an event. You are giving a statement about what happened, in other wards.

So you play out a scenario that involved you using to violence to resolve the situation. Afterwards you then try to explain yourself, justifying why you had to use violence to resolve things, why you didn't or couldn't escape before using violence and why you used the level of violence you did, just as if you were explaining your actions to the police or in court.

Next, one of the training partners involved in the scenario will explain themselves in a similar manner, but they will naturally try to paint themselves in a sympathetic light, probably explaining why you went overboard in your use of violence and why they were just trying to help you out, just as a real criminal would.

In light of this statement, it is your turn to make a new statement based on what was just said. And so forth.

The goal here is to have a plausible statement that will make your actions airtight in the eyes of the law. Not always easy, which is why you should practice drills like this.

4. Training Outside

Not a drill as such, more of a change in environment. Stepping outside your usual training facility will put a different spin on your training. Go through the other drills mentioned in this book, but do so outside in different environments, like car parks, hallways, elevators etc.

Real attacks happen in these kinds of places so it makes sense to get used to doing what you do in these different environments.

Keep an eye out as well for how you can actually use your environment as a weapon. Slamming attackers into walls for instance, using cars to and other obstacles to put space between you and your attacker(s) or finding things to throw at or hit your attacker(s) with.

Just remember to be sensible and keep safety in mind so no one gets hurt. Don't for example, lift a rock and brain one of your training partners with it! Simulating doing so is enough.

5. Sparring

Sparring is often over-looked in Combatives training, even though it is great for many reasons. Boxing, kickboxing and MMA/Jujitsu Randori type sparring are all great for teaching you how to hit and how to take a hit as well. It also improves many other things, like speed, distancing, timing and co-ordination.

You can play about with sparring. It doesn't always have to be one on one for instance. Sparring against multiple opponents is great for working on your spatial awareness.

Spar in low light or near darkness as well, which is also great awareness training

And, as mentioned above, take your sparring outside the normal training hall to a variety of different environments.

Check out this video as an example.

It's all excellent training.

6. Stress Tests/Pressure Drills

Stress tests, or pressure drills, are designed to put an individual under extreme pressure and then see how they perform while under that pressure.

A good way of doing this is to completely tire the person out with physical exercises before immediately placing them into a situation where they have to deal with single or multiple aggressors.

For example, you might have a trainee do one minute blitzing the pads at full power then immediately after have them try to talk down or pre-empt another pad holder.

The point is to make the trainee tired and fatigued to see how they perform in that state. Trainees should be encouraged to go all out, even if they are totally drained. This encourages the development of a good survival mindset where you keep going at all costs and never give up until the job is done and you are safe once more.

Your imagination is the limit here; there is so much scope for doing different things. Take a look at this video here to see an example of a pressure drill done in my gym. The kicking the pads at full power for one minute is meant to tire you out before having to deal with the aggressor after wards. It's difficult to even talk when you are that tired, never mind fight.

You can also take any of the drills mentioned in this book and just do them over and over again to the point of exhaustion, and then do them some more. This

provides great physical and mental conditioning as you push through the pain and fatigue, refusing to give up no matter what.

6. Scenario/Simulation Drills

In scenario training you want to take things like situational control, pre-emptive and reactive attacks and place them into a workable simulation.

The training progression starts with learning the said principles and physical gross motor actions. Then the majority of practice comes from impact/pad work with a partner, in order to develop the said skills to an instinctive level and drill them into muscle memory.

Then you take the said format and place it within the context of a possible altercation. This starts with simulation practice, where you have a theme to work to incorporating role-play and dialogue, allowing the trainee to put their skills into operation.

Here a simulation/scenario takes on a particular theme such as an ATM robbery attempt, or noisy neighbour confrontation or bar bump scenario for example, employing several different outcomes.

Now the trainee must add lib according to how events unfold. The feeder will dictate the trainee's response so a certain degree of pressure is added in order to see what comes out.

After wards you discuss what took place in the scenario. If mistakes are made then you re-drill until they are corrected. This is the whole point of simulation training, to find out what works.

7. Real Street Violence Video Analysis

Find videos online that depict real street violence and analyse them. Observe how a real incident goes down, how real criminals and thugs act, then work out how you can best tailor your training to prepare you for these types of attacks. If you see someone get beaten up work out why they got beaten and how you can avoid their mistakes.

8. Exposure Therapy

Quite simply, expose yourself to real violence and confrontations. Do some door work for a while. Get some real experience. It's the best there is.

About Neal Martin

Neal Martin is a self protection instructor who has been training in martial arts for the past thirty years. His background is in Combat Jujitsu, in which he holds a 2nd Dan.

He has always been interested in practical, street-wise training which is why he was drawn to Combatives. In 2010 he became a certified self protection instructor under Geoff Thompson.

Besides being involved in martial arts and Combatives, Neal also spent a number of years working doors and two years ago he distilled all his experiences into his On Guard Combat System, a practical Combatives and self protection system.

He is the publisher of Combative Mind blog and a regular contributor to Combat Network Magazine.