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Are Women Doomed on the Street?

By Fran Joseph

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Imagine a tennis player judging the power and accuracy of her serve solely by its form. Visualize a volleyball player sharpening her "spiking" skill by hitting only air. Also finally, picture a pole-vaulter competing in today's event while refusing to use a fiberglass pole? Ridiculous; you say? As farfetched as the above scenario may sound, many women martial artists, unlike their female counterparts in other sports, have not availed themselves of modern training methods. Instead, they are still relying on so-called "traditional" training methods that are all-but obsolete when applied to self-defense situations on today's urban streets.

What's wrong with tradition? Nothing at all, as long as we distinguish between stylized forms of kicking and punching, with their emphasis on pre-arranged or choreographed kata, and combat-oriented martial arts that stress actual contact over aesthetic or ceremonial considerations. Furthermore, most classical martial arts have a preponderance of "passive" blocking movements that women can ill afford to use against much larger, stronger opponents when precious seconds can mean the difference between life and death. So we can further distinguish between "blocking-type" martial arts regimes, and hitting, or "striking-type" martial arts training.

At this point, it should be understood that we are not discussing "this" style versus "that" style, but rather, evaluating a methodology of training. This approach to training has an underlying premise: All martial arts training should parallel actual combat as closely as possible. With this premise in mind, we now have a checklist with which to analyze whatever martial art we are presently studying, so we can be confident our training is truly applicable for someone of relatively small stature in realistic fighting.

Women's martial arts study must incorporate impact-training from the inception of the program. After all, how else can you know? How hard you kick and punch unless you are making solid contact with something? Impact training can be broken down into three progressive stages. At the first stage of training, the practitioner develops power by striking (or kicking) stationary targets, be it a focus glove, air shield, heavy bag, etc. which will also acquaint her with her own reach (distance) and body

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mechanics.

The second phase of impact training requires the female martial artist to hit moving targets, such as the top and bottom bag, air shields, focus gloves, Thai pads, etc., which an alert coach or training partner can move randomly at a variety of angles, thereby compelling the student to deliver strikes while moving. Unlike the performance of forms, nothing in this stage of training is pre-arranged, since the coach moves her targets in an unpredictable manner. This phase not only enhances mobility and precision, but also acquaints her with the attribute of timing, since the targets are constantly moving. The third phase of impact training is the unrestricted force brought to bear on an "opponent" who is wearing full body armor. This is not a self-defense mode of training, because the partner wearing the protective gear will not cooperate, but rather be hitting, kicking, and striking you as well. The "assailant" is not a model "mugger," but an aggressive adversary changing the combat ranges with no consistent

pattern of attack.

This brings up another item on our checklist of combat-oriented training; a method of training that encompasses all four ranges of combat. How often has a well-meaning male martial arts instructor encouraged female students to develop their kicks since the "legs are much stronger than the hands?" Yet, statistics show that most assaults on women occur in the "in-fighting," or close-quarter range of combat. While back-spinning kicks may be beautiful in the gym, it is unlikely that you will have time to even launch any kick, since the range of combat closes in less than one-tenth of a second. To restrict oneself to a martial arts method that emphasizes long-range kicking is to limit one's coping abilities in the other ranges of a violent confrontation.

So important is this in-fighting range for women that it is imperative we have the necessary "tools" to deal with aggression in this "war zone." Strikes that convey the most damage in the shortest time must be perfected. This means hitting, and not blocking, on the first move. Since no referee will say, "break" when the combat range closes, women must launch damaging shockers so that the assailant cannot continue his attack. (This concept eliminates most restraining-type arts that were developed when professional warriors were clad in armor, thus prohibiting striking or kicking of any sort.)

Some of the most efficient (if not artistically pleasing) strikes are: the finger jab, which should be cultivated on something harder than a pillow since you will likely run into facial bone. (You can build up to striking padded diving goggles by starting to finger jab your shower curtain.); elbows, knees and headbutts can be perfected on focus gloves or Thai pads; low kicks (below the waist) should be directed to the groin, knees, femur bone, or shins and can be practiced on a partner wearing shin guards or long "banana bags."

Now that we have discussed impact training and range familiarity, let's examine another cornerstone of combat-ready martial arts training – contact conditioning. This is the phase of training that most women (including myself) would rather avoid. Contact conditioning is the progressive and controlled willingness to absorb impact, and can only be obtained by a willingness to don gloves and headgear and "go for it" Taking a punch is critical, because women have not had the exposure to full-contact sports, such as football, in which most men have participated. This is not an endorsement of two partners standing toe-to-toe and "duking it out," but enough conditioning in your martial arts training

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that will allow you to continue past the shock of pain and impact in a real encounter.

While we are on the subject of conditioning, you must realize that you are much more likely to be struck by a jab or hook on the street than a sidekick or ridge-hand. A familiarity with basic boxing will let you feel confident in effectively dealing with it. Rest assured that there is nothing unfeminine about women who can deliver jabs, crosses, hooks and uppercuts with explosive power. Once again, however, it is important that after you master the basic mechanics, you attempt to execute these strikes while someone is trying to hit you back. After all, it's very different shooting a handgun at a target range under ideal conditions than it is attempting to shoot with accuracy when someone is firing back at you. Familiarity with boxing will help to "demystify" realms of combat that until recently were reserved for men.

Our checklist would not be complete unless we mention two other items. It would be ludicrous to imagine a running back in football refusing to be tackled by anyone except those of his own height and weight. Yet, when women train exclusively with other women, that is exactly what they are doing. Women must experience the aggressive energy and greater strength of men in their martial arts training regimen, or else, like the runner, they will not develop the evasiveness and resilience

necessary to compete. Like the professional athlete, female martial artists must take advantage of supplemental training, along with practicing just technique.

What female tennis player could hope to compete even at an amateur level without some sort of weight training program? Supplemental training (weights, conditioning, etc.) will not replace skill of movement, but will surely enhance it. Merely looking smooth, flexible and yelling while delivering a kick or strike is not enough to make it powerful. Once again, the female martial artist could do well to observe the training programs of professional athletes, who do not rely on sheer repetition of movement to increase skill, but rather supplemental training regimens to develop "attributes" necessary for their particular sport.

Finally, a martial arts program that does not include weapons training is basically incomplete in preparing the female practitioner for street combat. No matter how diligently a woman trains, she is at a disadvantage when facing a much larger, stronger assailant, let alone multiple attackers. The ability and willingness to use a knife, stick, or other weapon will give the female martial artist an "equalizer." Just as the feudal samurai in Japan would never walk the streets without their sword, women in urban areas of the U.S. must likewise be armed and ready to protect themselves with their weapons of choice. Like empty-hand training, weapons training should emphasize hitting (cutting, stabbing), rather than blocking or wide, flowery movements that look beautiful in kata or forms, but have little or no application to combat.

Are we going to continue to pretend that the traditional methods of martial arts training are sufficient, or will we discover the hard way that our training regimens do not work against someone who is not a cooperating partner? Are we going to avail ourselves of a way that allows us to fight back? Modern training methods will eliminate many of the unpleasant surprises that female martial artists would encounter in an actual confrontation. Ignorance on our part of modern martial arts training methods will only benefit our aggressors. So let's avail ourselves of innovative training techniques so that we have

the power (and speed, coordination, conditioning, etc.) to fight back and win.

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Fran Joseph has been training in martial arts since the age of seven. She holds black belts in hwarang do and taekwondo. She is a Senior Instructor of Jeet Kune Do and Eskrima/Kali & an expert in nunchuku, (which she taught to "DRAGON" star, Jason Scott Lee), Fran has choreographed fight scenes for several major films along with her partner, Jerry poteet. She also works with various law enforcement agencies.

How To Walk In High Heel Womens Dress Shoes

By Bowe Packer

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Although many women love high heels, others don't wear them very often. Womens dress shoes, especially high heels, are very intimidating. But, high heeled shoes for women don't have to have this effect on your decision to wear them.

So, when a "high heel occasion" presents itself, many women will run and hide making every excuse in the book why not to attend the event. These famous heel high shoes for women don't have to send you running for the hills. Don't let fear keep you from wearing the dress shoe of your choice and having a great timeout dancing the night away! Walking in high heels doesn't have to be such a challenge and with a bit of practice, you'll be stepping out and dancing in the high heels of your choice in no time.

Stepping Out In High Heels – Shoes For Women:

First practice just standing in high heels. Put yourself in front of a full length mirror, standing for a while, then turning slightly from side to side. You will not only be able to check your posture and profile, but just standing in high heels will help remove some of your apprehension and let you get accustomed to the extra inches in the heels. A woman's dress shoe is about feeling comfortable in her own minds eye.

Try the high heel out by taking a few steps. If possible, do this at first on a hard floor or in a room with low carpeting. Then if possible try them out on thicker or padded carpeting. But, keep in mind this is a progression, don't just jump right to thick carpeting. High heel dress shoes for women are fun once you learn how they feel.

OK, now as you walk in high heels, remember to keep your legs straight and as close together as possible. Start yourself off with slow, determined steps at first, being extra conscientious of each step and the placement of each foot. As your confidence and experience build, walking in high heels will

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become much more natural. Walking in high heel shoes for women will become second nature the more you walk in them.

When it comes to actually walking comfortably in your womens high heels – practice, practice, practice is what it will take. Wearing high heels is a totally different walking experience, and if you take it for granted or think you know how, you'll not only end up with sore feet, but possibly an injury. And if your first experience is bad will you ever return for a second try? Most likely not, leaving you doomed to flats forever. So, when your are shopping for those designer dress shoes like stuart weitzman and claudia cuiti remember to buy the ones you like and have fun!

Bowe Packer is the Webmaster and content provider for <http://www.clothes-4u.com>. His website: <http://www.clothes-4u.com> is dedicated to providing free fashion advice and tips for women. Offering excellent tips and strategies for women to look good in the areas of Casual, Petite Size, Plus Size clothing, as well as dress, athletic and casual shoes. You can reach him at: bowe@clothes-4u.com.

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