

NOTES FROM A SELF DEFENSE CLASS

The guy who taught the class has a female friend who was attacked last year in the parking garage at Westport Plaza in St. Louis one night after work and taken to an abandoned house and raped. He started a women's group and began teaching these classes soon after. This guy is a black belt in karate and trains twice a year with Steven Segall. He and the others in this group interviewed a bunch of rapists and date rapists in prison on what they look for. Here are some interesting facts:

The #1 thing attackers look for in a potential victim is hairstyle. They are most likely to go after a woman with a ponytail, bun, braid or other hairstyle that can easily be grabbed. They are also likely to go after a woman with long hair. Women with short hair are not common targets. The second thing attackers look for is clothing. They will look for a woman who's clothing is easy to remove quickly. The #1 outfit they look for is overalls. Many of them carry scissors to cut clothing and overall straps can be easily cut.

They also look for women on their cell phone, searching through their handbag, or doing other activities while walking. Because they are off guard, they can be easily overpowered. The time of day men are most likely to attack and rape a woman is in the early morning, between 5 & 8:30 a.m. The number one place women are abducted from/attacked at is grocery store parking lots. Number two is office parking lots/garages. Number three is public rest rooms.

The thing about these men is that they are looking to grab a woman and quickly move her to a second location where they don't have to worry about getting caught. Only 2% said they carried weapons because rape carries a 3-5 year sentence but rape with a weapon is 15-20 years. If you put up any kind of a fight at all, they get discouraged. It only takes a minute or two for them to realize that going after you isn't worth it because it will be time-consuming. These men said they will not pick on women who have umbrellas, or other similar objects that can be used from a distance, in their hands. Keys are not a deterrent because you have to get really close to the attacker to use them as a weapon.

So, the idea is to convince these guys you're not worth it.

Several defense mechanisms he taught us are:

* If someone is following behind you on a street or in a garage or with you in an elevator or stairwell, look them in the face and ask them a question, like what time is it, or make general small talk. "I can't believe it is so cold out here; we're in for a bad winter." Now that you've seen their face and could identify them in a lineup, you lose appeal as a target.

* If someone is coming toward you, hold out your hands in front of you and yell "Stop!" or "Stay back!" Most of the rapists this man talked to said they'd leave a woman alone if she yelled or showed that she would not be afraid to fight back. Again, they are looking for an EASY target. If you carry pepper spray, tell them. (This instructor was a huge advocate of it and carries it with him wherever he goes.) Yell, "I HAVE PEPPER SPRAY, AND I KNOW HOW TO USE IT!" Holding it out aimed at their face will be a deterrent.

* If someone grabs you, you can't beat them with strength but you can by outsmarting them. If they grab your wrist, pull your wrist back so your hand is in waving position (palm facing forward) and twist it toward yourself and pull your arm away. It is hard to hold onto wrist bones that are moving in that way. They stumble toward you and you stumble back, so you can use that momentum to bring the same hand out and backhand them with your knuckles in the forehead, nose or teeth.

*** If you are grabbed around the waist from behind, pinch the attacker either under the arm between the elbow and armpit or in the upper inner thigh...HARD. One woman in a class this guy taught told him she used the underarm pinch on a guy who was trying to date rape her and was so upset she broke through the skin and tore out muscle strands -- the guy needed stitches. Try pinching yourself in those places as hard as you can stand it. It hurts.**

*** After the initial hit, always go for the groin. I know from a particularly unfortunate experience that if you slap a guy's balls (sorry to be graphic) it is extremely painful. You might think that you'll piss the guy off and make him want to hurt you more, but the thing these rapists told our instructor is that they want a woman who will not cause a lot of trouble. Start causing trouble and he's out of there.**

*** When the guy puts his hands up to you, grab his first two fingers and bend them back as far as possible with as much pressure pushing down on them as possible. The instructor did it to me without using much pressure and I ended up on my knees and both knuckles cracked audibly. Of course the things we always hear still apply. Always be aware of your surroundings, take someone with you if you can and if you see any odd behavior, don't dismiss it, go with your instincts. You may feel a little silly at the time, but you'd feel much worse if the guy really was trouble.**

Better to be safe than sorry!! Never get in the car with them, if they want to rob you throw the \$ or keys so they have to go get it, then run and yell "Fire." It's more effective than "Help." Never help a person with a van trying to load it himself and having trouble (with possibly a fake broken arm or leg), that's how Ted Bundy got 60 of his victims...in mall or grocery store parking lots. Be careful!

Please forward this to the friends you care about; it's simple stuff that could save their life. If you read it a few times and think about the defense techniques taught, you will be better equipped to defend yourself in a frightening situation. Don't hesitate to send it to the men you love too. We all need to be better prepared.