

Can Martial Arts and Self Defense Training Prepare Our Children for a School Shooting?

The subject hits home to everyone. At one point our biggest safety issue in school was bullying. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. Over the past few years, school shootings have been increasing in frequency and in violence. Imagine, there you are, going through your every day routine, thinking about your next class, upcoming test or joking with your friends and then all of the sudden you are in the middle of a war zone, your world is turned upside down as you try to put your mind around what is happening around you. In the wake of the aftermath, the discussion is always the same and the conversation always leads to two main questions: can this be prevented and how can we deal with it when it occurs? The first solution is always increased police and security on campus. Unfortunately when this starts to happen, the issues of civil liberty violations and rising costs of funding the added security arise. As time goes on, the farther away from the atrocity, the urgency for a solution goes away. At the end of the day our children are left to fend for themselves while they wait for the authorities to respond.

The school system can only do so much. They can plan evacuation and increase points of communication; install cameras in all the public areas, but our youth will need an immediate plan of action for the eternity that is the time of the initial contact and the time help arrives. Children are our most precious resource and a little preparation and a little practice goes a long way. The answers you need are there. They are proven in combat. All you need to do is look at what happened to see what will help them. You don't need to be a hero, you only need strategies that will make you a survivor not a victim.

Before I continue, my thoughts and prayers go out to the families and friends of these gruesome atrocities. I only hope to provide this information so that these types of events can be minimized or avoided.

The first place to start is where all good self defense and martial arts training starts: your instincts. If you notice something suspicious or someone acting odd let someone know. You might just prevent something horrible from happening before it ever starts. I'm not talking about holding inquisitions, but a little investigation and asking a few questions can be all it takes to deter someone.

The very next tactic any good martial arts and self defense training program will teach you is to put as much space between you and your threat as possible. Your first instinct should be to run if you have the chance. If you're see someone who's armed, leave the scene. If you are temporarily trapped or out-numbered going for cover is fine (you will naturally do this), but you can't give the give the gunman a second chance, so you need to keep moving. Even at close range the assailant is almost 10 times more likely to miss you than hit you so make a run for it as soon as you can. If your school has plans to deal with an attack, study them and memorize multiple escape routes. Some people have proposed staying where you are, this is not good advice unless the room you are in is completely secure and you are isolated from the assailant. Hiding in plain sight, in unsecured areas or just lying in a compliant position is a big mistake. The vast majority of victims froze where they were, hid under tables and desks or simply lay face down in a compliant position. Remember, the further away you're from the shooter the better off you're. No matter how scared you are, the last gross motor skill to leave is the ability to run. Trust your instinct and get as far away as possible. Practice now by telling your children to run at the first sign of trouble.

Unfortunately, when you can't run, and you can't hide the only thing that remains is to fight, and keep fighting until you can escape. This is a last resort, but when people around you are being executed, there is no reasoning. No time for a debate, you need to survive and history tells us that when all other options are exhausted, your only choice is to fight

Martial artists have a variety of interesting theories when it comes to armed attackers. All of which you will not be able to recall in a life or death situation. In reality, you only need a handful of simple techniques and the will to survive (easier said than done). But throwing objects like desks, chairs and overpowering the gunman with sheer numbers will increase your chances exponentially. Now no school administrator will ever suggest fighting back because they're worried about being liable by recklessly endangering a child, but that doesn't mean you can't train to fight back.

In 1998 at Thurston High School in Springfield Oregon seven students (five of them boy scouts) overpowered Kip Kinkel who had four guns, a knife, and over a thousand rounds of ammunition. The shooter had already wounded 25 other students before wounded student Jacob Ryker and several others, tackled Kinkel. If you have the presence of mind and you will have an opportunity when they reload like the students did at Thurston.

In the case of Virginia Tech, student's recalled watching him reload and continue shooting. At Virginia Tech many students did run and others barricaded themselves in class rooms, but it wasn't enough. The shooter, Cho Seug-Hui continued on his rampage until he killed 30 and wounded 17 and finally took his own life.

The Columbine High School massacre, the Platte Canyon High School shooting, and the Virginia Tech massacre, are just a few examples of what a crazed individual is capable of doing. We need never forget those who died, but we need to look at these situations and put into place strategies that

will stop these types of attacks from every happening again.

We all need to stop the trend of passiveness and denial and plan. The only way to take down these cowards is to prepare through basic practice and mental preparation. It isn't about courage; it's about practice and training. With the proper training you don't have to think, you just act. When you train in martial arts you learn how to perform simple tasks in extraordinary situation. You discover how to be proactive and look for solutions. Martial arts trains you how to react when fear grips your mind.

As a parent you don't need to be told that there is a lot to be concerned about, but you can't let denial or fear keep you from doing everything you need to do to keep your children safe. Take time out and talk to the children and make sure go over some basic self defense and survival techniques. Also teach them not to be a bully, and to respect everyone around them. Be aware of their peers and sensitive to things out of the ordinary. You don't have to like everyone you go to school with, but you need to respect them. That being said if things become violent it doesn't really matter how it happen it is time to go into survival mode and do whatever is necessary.

Most people think that martial arts training will enable them to defend against any assailant or defeat any attacker. This could not be farther from the truth. For these types of survival situations it takes a little commonsense, a little preparation and awareness to increase your chances of survival. This type of self defense training won't take away from study time or from sports, and the training will help you and your kids stay safe in and out of school. Don't wait for another tragedy to occur, be ready to survive, and protect those around you. Survival is something that is earned through hard work and having the right mindset. School is a place to learn and have a good time, but when terror strikes you need to be ready to fight. Be remembered as someone who took action and helped others not as another victim.

About the Author

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