

Dealing with Angry People in Combat
AKMA Mental Retreat - 1.28.2017

As martial artists, we train for the worst case scenario. But, we can't just jump into combat. Not only is it dangerous, but there can be serious legal consequences. If you get into a brawl on the streets, and someone gets hurt, there's a good chance that you will be arrested, regardless of who was in the right. If you remain calm when confronted by force and anger, you can stop a fight from happening. And if violence is called for, you can minimize the damage. Remember, your mind is the strongest weapon you have.

Why it's important:

- 1) To calm them down and prevent them from hurting you or others, physically/emotionally
- 2) If you respond angrily, you could be seen as the aggressor, and face serious consequences
- 3) By responding calmly, you set an example for others, and inspire those around you

Strategies:

- 1) **STAY SAFE** - if you feel threatened, trust your gut, and leave the area, if possible
- 2) **INVOLVE OTHERS** - get help from friends, passers by, call the police if appropriate
- 3) **DON'T RESPOND WITH ANGER** - it's natural to want to fight fire with fire, to get upset when someone confronts you, regardless of whether they're justified or not.
 - biologically, if you feel under attack, your body floods with "fight or flight" hormones.
 - you may feel rage, panic, you may cry, faint, or just freeze up
 - as you progress through the training, you'll be better able to deal with FORCE coming at you, and have strategies already in place to deal with the emotions that come up
- 4) **DISTANCE YOURSELF EMOTIONALLY** - Sometimes, another person's anger has nothing to do with you, if you can recognize this, you can distance yourself from the anger emotionally, and you'll find it much easier to cope with it
- 5) **SHOW RESPECT** - Even when you feel disrespected, be polite yet firm, don't ever compromise your integrity
 - Once you understand the situation, avoid making excuses or defending your actions, defensiveness can make others feel even angrier
 - Pursue a solution, and, ideally, apologize, even if you did nothing wrong
- 6) **DEALING WITH ESCALATING ANGER** - Before violence actually breaks out, an important tool that can prevent it is called an unexpected response. These are responses that the other person doesn't see coming and can quickly stop a negative encounter and steer it toward a calmer problem solving focus
 - Unexpected Response 1: Humor - Humor is a high-risk, high-gain tactic. If your humor tends to be sarcastic, very droll, obscure, or cutting, it's best not to use it. If the other person is very serious, not familiar with English idioms, significantly older or younger, it's best to reconsider. It's safest to laugh at yourself. Even if you don't believe you're at fault, a funny, self-deprecating remark can reduce tension
 - Unexpected Response 2: An Apology - Two statements that are rarely used are: "I'm sorry" and "I was wrong." Either of these two comments, if said reasonably early in an encounter, are likely to cause the other person to pause for a moment. It's not what people usually hear right away, and could defuse their anger

- Unexpected Response 3: Distraction - Distractions are a last resort and are used when emotions are running extremely high and you want to sidetrack a volatile interaction. "Do you smell smoke?" or "Oh my God, what's that thing behind you?!?!?" Well, maybe not that one...
- 7) RESPOND CALMLY AND INTELLIGENTLY - don't escalate, remain calm and in your center, create your cause level, manage your emotions, breathe deeply, don't hold your breath or tighten up, stay loose and ready
- more advanced students, create your space, stay big and get tall, don't let the other person encroach on it; lower belts - visualize yourself as being taller than the other person, you're looking down on them, like a parent dealing with a volatile child
 - keep your hands up (it looks like a pacifying gesture, but you know that you're able to block and counter-attack more readily with your hands up)
 - take a 'bladed stance' - dominant hand back, don't face a hostile person straight on, protect your targets
- 8) KNOW WHEN TO ESCALATE - Sometimes, despite all your attempts to de-escalate a dangerous situation, words fail. Prolonged attempts to talk it out may actually be counterproductive and perceived as a sign of your uncertainty or weakness. At some point, the situation may get physical, and you must rely on your training. Don't panic, defend yourself appropriately, and get to safety as soon as you can

We have a duty to take care of our opponent. We read it aloud from our certificates every time we're promoted to a new rank, we check, rather, than hurt; hurt, rather than maim; maim, rather than kill; because all life is precious. Fighting must be the last resort, and ego is never a good enough reason to hurt another person. If you look foolish, and no one gets hurt, that's a win. If you give up your watch, or let go of your purse, and you can go home that night, that's a win. If you feel your life is in danger ... that's another story.

Don't let adrenaline or fear control how you react. Keep your mind clear, observe, analyze, and then act.

ROLEPLAY -

- 1) Physical stance / hands up / different cause levels
- 2) Look for escapes / get help
- 3) Unexpected responses - humor / apology / distraction
- 4) Block / counter / escape