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In the search for survival one must be willing to kill, for when it comes to blade combat, it is not so much about fighting as it is about surviving. Most knife attacks are not fights, but rather assassinations. If your adversary does draw a blade during conflict, then they intend to use it, so the victim needs to quickly become the slayer.

All martial art styles have their own set of knife fighting techniques and concepts and for the most part the moves and principles that are taught are solid in theory but not always grounded in reality. The training drills from martial styles such as Silat, Kali, Krav Maga, Systema and Ju-Jitsu may contain the ingredients of speed, footwork, balance, and precision but without the honesty of a genuine threat, they can lack the mentality to truly combat and dispose of their attacker. The methods in these martial arts can work but this is circumstantial, pending on the delivery of the attack, your positioning and the setting of the environment.

Many of the South East Asian martial arts teach blade versus blade techniques and although the knife culture is perhaps more active in certain areas of Asia compared to the West, it is still rare to see a knife-to-knife altercation. So the purpose of training extensively in this area is not suggested, compared to training in the unarmed approach to a knife attack. In this scenario one must accept that they will probably be cut, but it is about limiting the fatality of the damage they receive. The concepts of control and restraint against an armed assailant when you are unarmed are even more unlikely. You need to incapacitate your attacker to the point whereby their limbs are non functional to

eradicate any following threat to your own life. This should be the mindset of the intended victim, before engaging in a physical counter attack.

From the moment the knife attacker advances, you must hurt them. There is no time for parrying with one hand while trying to grab their wrist because in reality you have already been stabbed, cut or slashed. All fighting works on the base of hit and move, you should never wait

for the assailant's attack to be carried out to its full extent and then counter, especially if they have a blade. You must engage the attack by hurting them and moving your body out of harm's way as you connect. The follow up attacks you carry out are important to render your opponent unconscious but the crucial action is your first reaction as it could be the only strike you get off, so make it count.

Be mindful of the incoming knife attack by stepping away and if your forearm has to take a cut to act as a guard as you are stepping out of the line of fire then so be it. However make sure that your injury is not in vain. You should be hitting your opponent as you move; effectively your strike should be a micro-movement before your evasive maneuver.



If you are in the unusual predicament of being in an actual knife fight, the mindset is the same as your unarmed approach, but your strike should be a fatal cut in a kill zone. The martial drills taught in the classroom of cutting away at your opponents bladed hand to disarm them before carrying out your own lethal stab does hold merit. Although disarming your opponent in theory keeps you safe from being stabbed, if a more vulnerable target in the kill zone presents itself, it is better to take this option as it could be your only chance. Remember, they have attacked you

with a knife, so their intention is to kill. The classroom environment allows you to perform your techniques in a controlled and structured setting. However on the street, things happen in a microsecond and the opponent is not standing or coming at you in the linear fashion that you have tailored your technique to. Your design of counter attack is not clean and the room you usually have does not exist. Standing on the spot parrying your opponent's blade away from your own body suddenly has no meaning because your opponent has not stopped storming forward while attacking. To combat these type of common attacks, one must first adapt to different surroundings and then work on countering from a less structured and linear attack from your opponent. Repeat these drills with variation, with no pattern in the attacks. This will result in a messy but effective genuine retaliation.

The handling of a blade in a knife fight is vital. For example, the ice-pick grip does allow for heavy penetrative stabs downwards, and the blade can be easier to conceal. However there are drawbacks to this grip, for example when raising the knife for a downward strike, you not only telegraph your intentions and expose your chest area, but you also make it easy for your opponent to see the weapon. The ice-pick grip also does not provide much opportunity for parrying or thrusting techniques. The chance of blocking your opponent's knife strike delivered in this manner is also greater. The common hammer grip is the preferred option. A blade held in this fashion is less likely to be knocked from your grasp, and can also be used in conjunction with a punch or to deliver an attack with the butt-end of the knife while in a clinch. The hammer grip provides greater dexterity in rotation of the blade in its cuts and slashes. The power in its thrusting penetration allows for it to cut through heavy clothing much easier in this position.

We must have a sense of honesty to our preferred martial training, otherwise we are wasting our time and giving false hope to our students. We need realism to deal with reality.

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