

Self Defense Vs. Martial Arts

So, what's the difference between "martial arts" and "self defense"???

Even though they share certain similarities, traditional martial arts like Karate, Taekwondo, Kung Fu, Brazillian Jiu-Jitsu, Muay Thai kickboxing and even MMA (mixed martial arts) are not self-defense! Don't get me wrong - I'm not saying that the physical aspects of these martial arts can't be used to fight off an attacker, because they can. But real-world self defense goes so much deeper than just physical tools and techniques for "fighting".

The truth is that 90% of self defense is you being "switched on" (situational awareness) and recognizing potentially dangerous situations and avoiding them before they escalate. Developing solid awareness skills, following your intuition ("gut instinct"), and making yourself undesirable as a predatory target (i.e. being a "hard target") by not giving out an "easy victim / prey" vibe. It can also be about swallowing your ego and being able verbally de-escalate / defuse a situation that could have escalated out of control, even at the cost of looking weak and giving the other guy a way out that leaves his ego elevated and intact. In the worst case, it is about stopping a physical assault with minimal damage to yourself and your loved ones.

Self defense is a desperate and frantic struggle for survival - not a "fist fight". In a martial arts "fight" or "sparring match" you could lose. In a real-world self defense situation you could die. Your mind and body are at risk of grievous harm or death. In the aftermath of an assault there aren't really any "winner", only survivors.

Self Defensive is missing several things that are found in a sport / martial arts "fight", sparring match, bout, etc.:

1. **AWARENESS:** Both parties are fully aware of the fight ahead of time.
2. **PREPARATION:** Mental, emotional, and physical preparation is done often months ahead of time.
3. **CONSENT:** Prior agreement that both people will fight one another at a specific time and place. In other words, both parties are willing participants and *want* to be there.
4. **RULES / ENVIRONMENT:** Safety rules (no weapons, no multiple attackers, "illegal moves", etc.), time limits / rounds, presence of a referee, takes place in a safe environment free of concrete curbs, gravel, broken glass, water, moving cars, etc. All of these factors keep it safe so that nobody is seriously injured or killed.

In a self-defense situation none of the above mentioned points are available to the "victim".

Also, in most traditional martial arts and sport fighting the mentality is usually that of sparring "with" or fighting "with" someone else. In self defense we think of it as doing "to" our opponent just as they are trying to do something "to" us. The goal for us is to gain control of our opponent and the situation and then turn the tables on the attacker causing a "predator-prey switch", whereby there is a psychological role-reversal to who in that struggle is perceived as the "prey" and who is the "predator", giving you, the innocent victim, the upper hand as it is severe psychological blow to the perpetrator and goes against everything that he had anticipated as the "desirable" outcome.