# Self Defence

**Alois Vogt**

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Self Defence,

Oh no! Not another essay on self defence (hosin sul) I hear you say.

Well yes. I really had this idea for an essay just before the new syllabus for self defence was changed. Well I said to myself, there goes a good idea of mine, and made harder as a change in the way we did and practiced self defence in Taekwon do was what I wanted to base my essay on.

So my approach to this is really now changed from ideas of what we could do better in our gradings to a more general personal point of view. I actually like the new changes that were introduced in 2007. Something different and more engaging than the old ones that we have been practicing for years (well at least some of us). It opened up a number of questions like:

- Has it made us any better at hosin sul?
- Has it improved the way our Examiners may grade us?
- Has it improved the sometimes disjointed spectacle you use to get at gup gradings?
- Most importantly do you believe what you practice and know will be the right thing to defend yourself with should the need arise?

Anyway, my name is Alois Vogt or as anyone who knows me Louie. A 42 year old 2nd Dan from Berhampore Club in Wellington. I have been doing Taekwon-Do since 1996 if you don't count the small stint I did with Mr Richard Hall at Brooklyn Club as a teenager many years ago.

I enjoy practicing and teaching self defence. Mainly for two reasons, one being I like the more physical side of training and the other I get enjoyment out if something works for myself or the person I am helping with their self defence. It instills confidence in yourself and others and self confidence is a big thing when it comes to protecting yourself.

Now you might ask what experiences make you an expert in this field. Well I can't say I have ever been stabbed or robbed in my time but have had to deal with some minor shall we say altercations in my life.

My experience or knowledge comes from doing Taekwon Do and going to other people and courses for ideas on the practical and theory behind self defence. Two of which I think

have made the biggest impact on how I look at self defence is the Protect reality based self defence courses and a few classes of Zen do Kai.

**What is it?**
Yes, what is hosin sul? Is it proactive or reactive? Is it physical, passive or mental? Well, I believe it is all of these. Of course, not at the same time but you have to consider all these points at some stage of self defence.

It will greatly depend on what sort of personality you have, the environment you put yourself in or more than likely someone else puts you in.

I have always thought and said too many a person the best form of self defence is not to get in any situation. But sometimes no matter how good your intentions are things sometimes don't work out that way.

**Proactive Self Defence**
This is what I would call being aware of your environment. Knowing the possibility of what may or may not happen when you are out and about. For example let's take a night on the town. Are you going alone or with a group of friends? Are you walking into town, if so is the route you take safe, well lit with lots of people about. The place you are going to, do you know it well or at all. Do you have a plan to get home afterwards?

It may seem a bit over the top or even paranoid but all of this can lead to a safe night out for you and your friends. And to be honest, most of us do this without even thinking about it.

**Reactive Self Defence**
Well obviously the opposite to proactive. This is where your personality will come into play more. Whether you can react safely to the situation that presents itself at the time. Whether you can make the correct choices on the go.

For example let's say you are having a quiet night in at home and you get a txt from your mates to go into town. You quickly get dressed run out the door and decide to leave your car at home because you might have a few drinks (smart choice).

Anyway, its night and you are in a hurry because your mates want to move on to the next place. You arrive at your first choice, short cut through the park or extra five minutes round on the main road? Most would go around but if you're in a rush with little or no planning you would take the short cut, or would you? Going on, you're into the park coming up a clearing and see a group of shadows sitting on the benches. You are faced with another choice. Walk close by or just take a bit of a wider berth?

So maybe you're ok being reactive but personally I would rather be proactive with a little more thought process.

**Physical Self Defence**
Well this can also be broken down into proactive and reactive.

What I mean is how will you handle the situation if you have to physically defend yourself? You have many options and time will be short to react, whether you have to defend yourself or someone else that is in trouble. So, if you really feel so threatened that you fear for your safety and well being or even for someone else what would you do?

You could be proactive and just go in, take out the threat as soon as you can before your attacker does anything that might give them the upper hand. This should give you an advantage, maybe even give you enough time to shock and disable the threat so you can get away.

Your other option is to wait and see how things develop. But you must be good enough to react quickly to your attacker's actions. And be practiced enough with your techniques to fend off an attack. I would think carefully using this option though you would more than likely have to disable your attacker completely as they are the one with more aggression in the first instance and you will have to subdue this before retreating safely.

Passive, yes you could always take this approach if you feel the situation has not escalated to the point of no return. **Talk your way out of it!** Or even walk away if you can.

But remember if you walk away that means you have turned your back, so be careful. That's when you see most things start, they will let you go then hit you from behind when you least expect it, when you are at most vulnerable.

**Is Taekwon-Do self defence?**
**Do we train for it in the right way?**
**Do we practice enough?**

Of course Taekwon-Do is self defence.

And I am not talking just about the self defence part of the syllabus. We all train to block, punch and kick in so many different ways that you would think you have most situations covered.

Now I am not saying that Taekwon –Do is the be all and end all of self defence, but with the skill sets that you will learn in Taekwon-Do you will be better prepared to protect yourself and others than most people with no martial art experience.

Also doing Taekwon-Do you should be better prepared to physically get involved should the need arise rather than not reacting to a physical attack or even trying something that will just lead you into trouble. Now don't get the wrong idea that being good at Taekwon-Do or any other martial art for that matter will better prepare you but won't necessarily make you good at self defence.

Why? We don't train for every possible scenario; we don't train in different environments. We don't spend enough time conditioning our tools and our mind for might what eventuate.

Think of this, is self defence long range or close quarter combat. Would you be trying to do a reverse turning, turning kick or even a flying kick to the head? No, I wouldn't think so, it's not the movies.

Be willing to come in close use those tools we don't often use, elbows, knees, shins, open hand palm, forearms and fingers. Of course multiple others tools are available.
Remember your choice of tools are not always what someone else will use, don't get caught up in training with what people teach you if you can't or don't like to use the technique.

Try it once it's been shown to you, practice it repetitively and if it doesn't work don't use it because when it comes to the real thing it will fail you.

Even with the syllabus, try it and work on it. However, what normally happens is we tend not to spend too much time on it so it tends to be very awkward at gradings and in class. So why when it's not going well do you just tend to stop and go "ah well never mind" and have a bit of a giggle? What you should be doing is flowing on with your other tools, maybe be just a bit more primal and through a shin to the thigh or knee. What about a palm or elbow to the face.

You need to think outside the square without thinking for things to work.

What I like about Taekwon-Do is that we bring different styles or organizations in to teach and show us different self defence ideas, techniques and values. We have available to us many different types of Protect seminars, in Wellington we have had Zen Do Kai and Karate styles come and do classes at club and regional camps.
All with different ideas, some of which maybe you wouldn't use but then some that you wouldn't forget either.

One thing they all bring is experience of situations and techniques that hopefully get you thinking and being more open to what might help you when the need arises.

**Can you do it if you have to?**

Well can you?

What's the biggest problem that will face you at that critical moment? . . . . . .**FEAR!**
Will you be able to cope, push it aside and without thinking react with outward control and confidence?

I can't tell you this one and I doubt you can train yourself for that moment. But you can train for the actions and if you train enough and have confidence in your own ability, maybe you can overcome fear just for that moment when you need to most.

Let me put this way, say you are going for a job interview or if you're a bit younger a speech in front of the class. What do you do to try and overcome your fears? Learn about the new company as much as possible to cover any questions, study and practice that speech.

The more you know and practice the less your fear of something.

Also have you considered the possibility that if you have to protect yourself or someone else that you may or will hurt someone in the process? Are you willing to hurt someone if needed and able to cope with the trauma afterwards?

I myself know that I would have trouble with the thought of hurting someone as it would play on my conscience, but I believe that I would have no trouble in protecting myself and my family if in danger.

This is a moral question that everyone has to think about.
I will not go into the law as many essays and information are available for your reference.

Needless to say if you feel you are in threat for your personal protection defend yourself first if there is no other way, but remember whether it was justified or not you will have to deal with the consequences later. Moral and Law.

I have some quotes from a book I have been reading (Unleash the Warrior Within, by Richard J. Machowicz) that may stir some thoughts in to how you should think about self defence, sparring, patterns and other things that may come your way in life.

*The more I sweat in peace the less I bleed in war.*
*-SEAL Commandment*

*Act as though it were impossible to fail.*
*-Winston Churchill*

And the one I feel fits more to this essay,

*Know your enemy and yourself, and in one thousand battles you will never be in peril. When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chance of winning or losing are equal. If ignorant both of your enemy and of yourself, you are certain in every battle, to be in peril.*

*-Sun Tzu*
*The Art of War*

With this last one relating to self defence, you will almost never know your enemy but you will know your environment and if you trained enough you should know yourself and your capabilities. So it should give you an even to better chance of success.

I don’t and never have claimed to be an expert in self defence. All my comments are my own thoughts and I hope when you read this it may just get you thinking about hosin sul in a different and more open way so that it may help you and your trainings.