

Foreword by **Gavin de Becker**, author of *The Gift of Fear*

# SELF-DEFENSE FOR WOMEN

**Physical and  
Mental Skills  
for Survival**

**FIGHT BACK!**



**Loren W. Christensen and Lisa Christensen**

**“Of all the approaches you might take to enhancing your safety, do you suppose that ignorance about violence is an effective one?”**

**—Gavin de Becker**

Some “experts” say you should be submissive when attacked at home or by a stranger. You won’t find that advice here, although you might use it as a ruse before you claw your assailant’s eyes and smash his groin. Your ultimate goal is to get away, but you don’t achieve that by being meek and docile. You get away by drawing on that hardwired survival instinct to attack him like an enraged lioness protecting her babies.

In *Self-Defense for Women: Fight Back!*, martial arts experts Loren W. Christensen and Lisa Christensen teach you to use your hands, forearms, elbows, teeth, knees, and feet to survive the attacks unsuspecting women become the victims of every day. And you will learn that you’re surrounded by a limitless cache of weapons you can use to your advantage against a larger assailant.

If you’re ready to learn to fight back, Loren and Lisa know exactly what you need to survive an attack in your home or on the street.



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**Lisa Christensen** began training in the martial arts in the mid 1990’s. She is a teacher, photographer, mother, and wife. Lisa Christensen resides in Portland, Oregon.

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# Foreword by Gavin de Becker

**Gavin de Becker is the best-selling author of *The Gift of Fear*, the most widely read self-defense book in the world. His books have been featured in *Time* and *Newsweek*, and many times on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, including a special hour-long episode which commemorated the 10th anniversary of the publication of *The Gift of Fear*. His books are now published in fourteen languages. He can be contacted at [www.gavindebecker.com](http://www.gavindebecker.com).**

The primary goal of this book is to teach people to survive a violent physical encounter. The exchange of energy between aggressor and defender cannot be fully appreciated from the comfort and distance of wherever you are reading these words. In actual attacks, events are absorbed through every sense, taken in via taste, smell, touch, and through the skin, literally. That's all the more reason we can benefit so much from having good information in advance.

Human beings aren't natural fighters; we didn't get the sharpest claws or strongest jaws or fastest legs. We got the biggest brains—and Loren Christensen and Lisa Christensen offer much-needed teaching on how the brain and body can work together toward the goal of prevailing in an attack. Loren has been a teacher of survival strategies since 1965, he's authored over 45 books and this one puts it all together for the audience that needs it most: Women.

Why do women need it most? Because women are victimized most often, and because our culture has prepared women least effectively. The culture has sold the (false) idea that survival is always more likely if you do what a predator tells you to do, if you submit. Women have been persuaded to believe that violence is a mystery that can be understood only by men.

Perhaps more than anything else offered in these pages is the gift of practicality and reality, ways to avoid offensive and unwanted advances and confrontations in everyday situations. This book details physical, non-verbal warning signs to help readers detect danger through behavioral cues. You'll learn skills used by warriors, and see that you too can be a warrior when you need to be. You'll see that you don't have to relinquish your control to a predator, that you can physically resist—even if you've spent years thinking you'd better not.

Trained for decades to interact with men in ways that serve the patriarchy, readers who fully absorb the information here can say No when they choose to. And I mean say No with muscles as well as words.

Safety starts with knowing that your intuition about people is a brilliant guardian. Listening to intuition really means listening to yourself. Like everyone, you've had scores of experiences when you listened and were later grateful, and scores of experiences when you chose not to listen, and were later regretful. I can't say it any more clearly than this: To protect yourself, you must

believe in yourself. Nothing will encourage that belief more than knowing you are prepared.

Unlike many self-defense guides, and unlike advice given wholesale to girls and young women as they grow up, Loren Christensen and Lisa Christensen do not recommend submission when attacked. That option, of course, will always be available to those who feel in a given moment that it's the wisest course. But Loren and Lisa add many other options, many other weapons, including those he calls "weapons of opportunity"—and including the ones you're born with: elbows, knees, fingers, etc.

Too many women have been prepared for victimization through a lifetime of being warned that they ought to submit to violence or submit when even threatened. For women who have moved past that idea, who are willing to resist violence, this book can offer a new way of organizing your thinking on the subject: You can act defensively or offensively.

What I mean is that a woman who sees that violence is underway might have the thought "I have to defend myself now."

Another woman in the same situation might have the thought "He acted *offensively* so I am going to respond offensively—and in a manner that will not allow him to act again."

If you're a reader drawn to the second thought process, you're holding the right book—because here it all gets real practical real quick. There's information here about the physical aspects of predatory attack, and as important, the physical aspects of counter attack.

The topics of violence and self-defense aren't always pleasant, of course, so each person must ask herself: Do you want this information? If not, I pose an easier, softer question: Of all the approaches you might take to enhancing your safety, do you suppose that ignorance about violence is an effective one?

This book teaches that our primary defense weapons are the mind and the heart. The heart I'm referring to here isn't just the one that gives love and courage and perseverance; it's also the organ that pumps extra blood to the arms and legs, the organ that gives extra energy and strength to the muscles when needed. That's how practical and realistic the heart can be when it comes to our safety.

Somewhere in America right now are four or five women who will be killed tomorrow. They are going about their day, and I know if they were prepared to counter attack in the ways Loren Christensen and Lisa Christensen teach, they'd have a far better chance of prevailing tomorrow.

**Some “experts” say that you should be submissive when attacked at home or by a stranger.** You won’t find that advice here, although you might use it as a ruse before you claw his eyes and annihilate his groin. Your ultimate goal is to get away but you don’t achieve that by being meek and docile. You get away by drawing on that hard-wired survival instinct that is ingrained into your every cell to attack him like an enraged lioness protecting its babies.

You will learn to use your hands, forearms, elbows, teeth, knees and feet to show the attacker that by targeting you, he just made the biggest mistake of his scummy life. You will learn that you’re surrounded by a limitless cache of weapons. They are not a modern-day, high-tech arsenal but one that has served humans since the first cavewoman fought with a T-Rex bone to protect her children.

You’re going to read the words “be alert, be aware” so many times in this text that they will burn into your brain—and that’s a good thing. Because by staying alert and being aware of all 360 degrees around you, you’re ready to deliver a rain storm of pain on anyone attacking you from any direction. Knowing you have the ability, the means and the warrior mindset to attack back will free that ferocious lioness that for millenniums men have tried to keep chained.

Understand that a stranger will attack a woman because she appears vulnerable by her bearing, and because of where she walks, jogs, socializes, eats, drinks and shops. He is convinced that she will not resist and that she will crumble under his assault. In short, he attacks her because he believes that he will be successful.

An abusive male partner usually begins by being controlling and possessive. Then he progresses to controlling the woman’s daily activities. Where were you at noon? Why didn’t you answer your cell? Who were you with? How long were you there? Soon he begins telling her what clothes to wear and discouraging her from seeing her family. The more he controls her the more she becomes dependant on him. Physical abuse comes next as does forced sex.

Although he might give a myriad excuses why he controls her and beats her, they are meaningless. The primary reason he does it is that he believes he can.

This book teaches you to show him that his belief is wrong. It will help you understand that you don’t have to be submissive, tolerant and weak. You don’t have to be a victim. You will learn that with a little knowledge applied correctly, you can be just as dangerous as the attacker is—even more.

Your authors have spent years training and teaching the martial arts, specifically, street survival. Their system is not about the study of a culture,

spirituality, or a fun way to achieve physical fitness, although those attributes are a byproduct. Their primary goal is to teach people to survive a violent physical encounter. They know that when your adrenaline is boiling over, your heart is pounding like a jackhammer, and when you're gasping for precious air, the key to survival is simplicity. You won't find fancy moves in the first section of this book, "Physical Power." Instead, you will learn how to apply techniques based on natural movements, some as old as woman, some found in the animal kingdom.

The second part of the book, "Mind Power," is about how to use your head, not to headbutt, although that's a good technique, but rather how to learn, practice, be aware, be alert, analyze, assess, and use your fear as an ally. Mastering these things will help you avoid most violent encounters and survive those you can't.

An old white-haired master once said that one's greatest weapon is the mind. Absolutely.

An old Filipino martial arts master once took Loren aside and whispered words that are as simple as they are rich in meaning.

"If you practice very hard, you will be very good."

Let's get to it.

**Note:** We sent questionnaires to a dozen female martial arts instructors and asked for their input on a variety of questions related to women and self-defense. You will find their answers on separate pages before each chapter.

SECTION ONE ■

# physical power



“TO BE EFFECTIVE IN SELF-DEFENSE, YOU CANNOT JUST DEFEND.  
YOU MUST ATTACK BACK.” ~ THE AUTHORS

# *Why should women learn self-defense?*

The sad reality is that people would rather look the other way than come to your defense.

■ ■ ■

Emotionally, it's a horrible, miserable feeling to have been hurt by someone.

■ ■ ■

Because of our bleeding heart justice system, criminals are not deterred from doing crime. Essentially, the only deterrent is when the victim hurts them first.

■ ■ ■

A university study, I don't remember which [Brandeis University in Massachusetts, 1993], found that the women most likely to be raped or assaulted are those who don't fight back.

■ ■ ■

Just look at the statistics. You might not be able to stop the violence from happening to every woman out there, but you should take steps to stop it from happening to you.

■ ■ ■

At first, the force, power, and speed of martial arts intrigued me, and it was only afterwards that I had a real appreciation for it as self-defense.

■ ■ ■

I started out training thinking that it would make me less fearful. I soon learned that fear isn't going to go away, but you can learn to use it to make you a powerful force.

# THE THREAT

**The law calls a punch to the stomach, a slap to the face and a crushing bearhug an assault, whether the perpetrator is your partner or a stranger. However, for our purposes, we have separated the attackers into two categories, which we call “Threats by a stranger” and “Threats at home.”**

## Threat From a Stranger

Loren once wrote an article about two homicide detectives who had just investigated their 100th murder. Both underscored that most of their female murder victims were killed because of their lifestyle choices: hitchhiking, being picked up in a bar, and walking alone on a dark, empty street. Sociologists say that stranger violence occurs in geospatial locations known for disorder: bars, taverns, rock concerts, drunken parties and other locations where unruly people gather. For sure, such places are ripe for arguments, conflicts, aggression and violent encounters.

Rapes, serial killings and kidnappings typically occur in isolated locations, such as jogging paths, parks, parking structures and empty streets.

**Note:** Why strangers attack strangers is a vast subject that is beyond the scope of this book. The interested reader can research other books on the subject or take college courses on sociology, criminology and psychology to learn how personality traits, drugs, alcohol, firearms, and cultural and regional values all contribute to violent acts. Our purpose here is to learn how to avoid it, deter it, and stop it with extreme prejudice.

All attacks, even surprise ones, initiate from one of the following five stages. Learn them, think about them, and discuss them with friends so that you recognize them when they occur.

# Stages of an attack

Our friend Marc MacYoung, one of the most analytical writers on street self-defense today, has developed what he calls “The five stages of an attack,” which he discusses at length in his excellent book *Safe in the City*. He has given us permission to talk about them briefly with a few modifications that apply to our subject. The stages are:

1. Intent
2. Interview
3. Positioning
4. Attack
5. Reaction

## Color Codes of Alertness

### Color Codes of Alertness

The color codes are a simple but powerful strategy used by the police, military and reality-based martial arts systems to describe one’s state of mind throughout the day. We reference it repeatedly throughout this book to remind you of the importance of being alert and aware at all times.

**White Zone:** You’re relaxed, unaware, and unprepared. You’re thinking about everything except where you are at the moment. If attacked, you will say, “He came out of nowhere.” Or, “This can’t be happening.” When in the White Zone your only chance at defense is if your attacker is inept.

**Yellow Zone:** You’re relaxed, but alert. There is no threat but because you read the newspaper and watch TV news, you know that something bad could happen today and you might have to fight back. People in the White Zone are unaware of the news or are in complete denial that anything bad could happen to them. When in the Yellow Zone, you use your eyes and ears to monitor your surroundings, all 360 degrees. You carry yourself in a way that others know that you’re aware of everything. In time, this becomes habit.

**Orange Zone:** You’ve alerted on something. That person walking toward you doesn’t look right. Something moved to your right when you got off the parking structure elevator. That man at the end of the grocery aisle keeps looking at you. The thought that you might have to defend yourself is in the forefront of your mind. You want to remain in this high state of alertness until the thing has gone away or you have departed the area.

**Red Zone:** It’s on! You’re thinking strategy. You’re looking for an avenue of escape. You’re retrieving something from your purse to use as a weapon. You know where your cell phone is. He is reaching toward you. You know what you’re going to do. He is getting into your car. You know what you’re going to do.

When in the Yellow Zone you can quickly make the transition to Red Zone. But if you’re walking around in the White Zone, you *might* make the transition if you’re lucky and the threat is inept. Most likely you will be unaware—until its happening.

If you’re in an abusive relationship, you must be in the Yellow Zone at home.

## INTENT

Because you're in the Yellow Zone, you see the stranger approach. You notice that he is looking from side to side and behind him as if he doesn't want witnesses to see what he is about to do. He moves even closer. Check out his body language: nervous facial ticks, hands opening and closing, feet shifting about, and a seemingly inability to stand still. These characteristics are not reason for you to attack him but they are enough for you to slip into the Orange Zone where your alertness and suspicion are on high alert.

You should:

- assume the leave-me-alone stance (see Chapter Two, “De-escalation”).
- check your surroundings for weapons and an avenue of escape.
- extend your arms and say in a loud, commanding voice, “Stop! Don't come any closer.” You might feel shy or awkward about doing this but do it anyway. It's all about giving yourself an advantage by being proactive in your defense, and about letting him know and anyone within earshot know that you don't want him to come near you.
- repeat your commands even louder should he continue to advance. Shout it if you think that is the best option.
- take the best avenue of escape.
- prepare to attack him with ferocity if you can't leave. Retrieve a weapon—pen, scissors, keys—from your pocket or purse. See Chapter Five, “Weapons, weapons everywhere.”

While it might be uncomfortable for you to take the above actions, consider that not doing so could put you at great risk. A stranger, who is exhibiting common characteristics that we know are typical when an attack is eminent, wants to get close to you. He wants to “invade your space” so that he can do...you don't know what he will do. Don't wait to find out and be put into a position of playing catch up as you fight to defend yourself. Telling him to stop is within your rights and a wise move tactically. If he does stop, great. If he doesn't stop after you tell him to, that is one more element you can use to justify your physical response and one that can be used against him when he is arrested.

In his book *The Gift of Fear*, Gavin deBecker stresses that any person who doesn't hear your “No” the first time (“Stop!” in this case) is trying to control you (and get close to you), and that when someone is persistent it means that they're troubled in some way.

## INTERVIEW

When a potential attacker interviews you, he is deciding if you're a good target. This is one interview you want to fail.

Consider the just described twitchy man. As he approaches, he interviews you, watching how you respond to see if you would make a good victim. When you take a defensive posture and tell him, “Stop! Don't come any closer” and he does exactly that, you failed his interview. He sees that you're not a good target and he goes away, usually. But if you ignore his advance, as if it isn't happening, or freeze because you don't know what to do, you passed his interview; he now sees you as his next target.

Here are a few ways an attacker conducts an interview.

- He watches you from afar: your daily routine, where you park, where you go, how you carry

yourself (timidly or confidently), and how alert and aware you are.

- He approaches and asks you for the time, directions, a cigarette, or to help with his stalled car. His true motive is to see how close he can get to you, how alert or oblivious you are, how you hold your purse, and to see if you're open for additional questions. If you're in the White Zone you won't notice but you will when you're in the Yellow.
- He approaches and asks the well worn, "How you doin'?" You answer him and he asks another question. "You from around here?" Or "Can I buy you a coffee?" Or he might comment that you look attractive, hot, or sexy. In short, he is interviewing you to see how you respond. He wants to see if you're shy, timid, afraid or flattered.
- He offers to carry your packages. He is checking to see how close he can get to you, to see if he can walk you to your car, or carry your things into your house or apartment.

Because nice people do some of these things, too, you must be in the Yellow Zone and use your well-earned instincts to know the difference. Be alert, be aware, and watch for any cues that make you uncomfortable. Is he talking too fast, looking around a lot, acting nervous, or excited? Is he pushy? Is he using his attractiveness? Is he charming? Uh oh, watch out for charming.

In *A Gift of Fear*, Gavin deBecker writes: *Charm is another overrated ability. Note that I call it an ability, not an inherent feature of someone's personality. Charm is almost always a directed instrument, ... [it] has motive. To charm is to compel, to control by allure or attraction. Think of charm as a verb, not a trait. If you consciously tell yourself, "This person is trying to charm me," as opposed to "This person is charming," you'll be able to see around it.*

When someone asks you the time, you're under no obligation to stop and lift up your wrist or open your cell phone, and say, "It's 3:47." A better response is to keep walking, make eye contact with the guy and, without checking your wrist or phone, say, "About 4." Then as you walk on, stay alert as to where he is.

Likewise, when he asks to carry your packages for you, tell him, "Thanks, I'm good." If he tries to start a conversation, say something like, "Sorry, I got to make a call." Then, keep your eye on him as you call a friend.

The attacker who interviews you from afar is the type that people claim "came out of no where." In reality, only magician David Copperfield can do such a thing. The best defense against this person is to be in the Yellow Zone of awareness and alertness. Functioning in this mindset increases the chance that you will be aware of someone watching you everyday. But should he be watching from a position that doesn't allow you to see him, your awareness and alertness will detect him quickly when he does make his approach.

Here are some other types of interviews:

- The attacker seems friendly at first but becomes more aggressive in increments. He asks directions. After you give them to him, he asks you to walk part way with him. When you decline (as you should) he gets angry or insulting.

- He buys you a drink, which you accept (not a good idea), and begins touching you frequently as you talk with him. He might even comment that he is touchy person. In reality, he is testing you to see how you respond.
- He starts out aggressively: “You think you’re too hot to talk to me, don’t you?” He is testing to see if you will humble yourself to prove him wrong or if you will agree that you’re indeed too hot to give him time. If you say no, he just learned that he can control you. If you agree that you’re too hot for him, he might increase his aggression toward you.

Think ahead of time how to respond to these common interview techniques. Remember, you’re never obligated to agree with him, give in to him, or speak to him.

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## “He came out of nowhere”

As a cop, Loren heard many stranger-to-stranger assault victims claim that the attacker came out of nowhere. He always wanted to respond with, “Really? This man, not a ghost, not a spirit, but a live person actually ‘came out of no where?’” He didn’t, of course, but the fact remains that people come out of *somewhere*. The attacker was there, but the victim didn’t see him until it was too late.

To be fair, there are those occasions when an attacker does lie in hiding and then springs out to take the victim by surprise. Such was the case with Nurse Susan Kuhnhausen whose story we tell at the beginning of this book. Statistically, however, those incidents are rare. Most cases involve an attacker who is there and giving signals that he is a dangerous person.

Be aware. Be alert. Assess.

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## “He came out of nowhere”

### POSITIONING

An attacker cannot attack you unless he is in the right position, such as standing close to you in a parking lot, leaning into you in a bar to—supposedly—hear you over the music, or helping you carry your packages into your apartment. He will use every ruse to get into the right position without making you suspicious. As always, your best defense is to be aware, be alert, and be in the Yellow Zone.

There are four positions in which an attacker(s) can do you harm.

- He surprises you: An example is when an attacker steps into your path from a darkened doorway. Hidden from view, there is no way for you to know that he was there. However, when you’re in the Yellow Zone or Orange Zone you’re better able to respond to the surprise. But when you’re daydreaming in the White Zone...well, good luck.

**Note:** When walking at night, stay close to the curb and away from doorways. If there are parked cars at the curb, places where someone could crouch in waiting, walk in the center of the sidewalk. Better yet, get someone to walk with you.

- **He closes in on you:** In this case, you see the threat coming toward you in an attempt to get close enough to do whatever is on his mind. Because you're alert and aware, you see him right away, and you're able to read his facial expression and body language. Get away, step behind a car fender or a trashcan, and/or retrieve something from your person or the environment to use as a weapon.
- **They surround you:** You're surrounded when three or more threats encircle you so that you're unable to leave. The best defense is to be alert and aware enough that it doesn't happen in the first place. Let's say that you're waiting for the bus when you spot three undesirables moving toward you. React quickly by going into a store or any place in which there are people, by stepping out into the street to stop traffic, or by calling 9-1-1 on your cell and asking for a patrol unit.
- **Cornering:** Defense against someone cornering you in a bus stall, a hallway to the bar restroom, or against the railing in a high rise parking structure begins with—you guessed it—alertness and awareness: alertness of what the threat is trying to do and awareness of your environment. When you feel an impending threat, move to a place where they cannot corner you. In this case, move to the middle of the sidewalk, the middle of the hall, or the middle of the parking structure. If you're cornered anyway, you must explode like a bomb to get away: smash the closest attacker's nose with your hammerfist, shred his face with your claws, crack his shins with your kicks, and annihilate his groin with your shin. Do whatever it takes to get your freedom.

Position is paramount for the attacker; without it he can't hurt you, with it he can. Use your primary weapon—your brain—to stay one step ahead of him. Be aware, be alert.

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## Where Am I?

When Loren worked with rookie cops, he would occasionally pull to the curb half way between intersections and ask the young officer where they were. The first couple of times the officer would usually respond with, "Uh..."

Loren would ask, "What if something occurred right now, right here? What would you tell dispatch? How would you direct in back-up?" Loren knew what an awful, helpless feeling this was because he had made that mistake early in his career. It went something like this:

Loren: "Send more cops now!"

Dispatch: "To where?"

Loren: "Uh..."

It's great that you carry your cell phone but you also need to know where you are at all times. Do you know the names of all the streets on which you travel to work, school and the grocery? If not, learn them today. Then make it a habit to know the name of any new street on which you walk or drive. At first, this will take effort, but in just a few weeks, you will do it unconsciously.

# Threats at Home

Two days after Loren got out of the police academy he stepped on a man's aorta. The hallway was lit poorly and Loren's attention was on the dead man crumpled on the floor, a hideous hole in the center of his chest.

Minutes earlier, Loren and his training coach had received a radio dispatch on a violent family fight, "family beef" in police parlance. A moment later, dispatch updated the call to "shots fired."

Chaos.

Shouting officers, TV blaring at full volume, a screaming woman, hysterical toddlers, cops struggling with a teenage boy, a choking cloud of shotgun smoke, and the coppery smell of fresh blood, lots of it.

Just before the officers received the dispatch, the stepfather, whose aorta Loren stepped on, had been beating the teenage boy's mother in the face with a heavy glass ashtray; it wasn't the first time. The boy tried to protect her but the enraged man knocked him down and commenced hitting his wife with the thick chunk of glass. In desperation, the boy retrieved a shotgun from a closet and fired it pointblank into the man's heart.

A week later, Loren and his coach got a radio call on a "loud family beef." The complainant was a neighbor. A large man answered the officers' knock and assured them that all was okay; he and his wife were just having a little spat. Loren's coach asked to see the woman to determine that she was indeed okay, but the man refused and started to close the door. In doing so, the big man moved out of the way enough that the officers could see the woman sitting in an easy chair a few feet away. Something didn't look right. When the officers tried to nudge the man aside so they could see her, he struck out at Loren's coach and the fight was on.

As the officers battled the man into the living room, down a hallway and into a bedroom, the middle-aged woman sat still in the plush easy chair, her arms resting on its doiled arms, her feet flat on the floor, a 10-inch kitchen knife protruding obscenely from her throat.

That was Loren's dramatic introduction to family beefs. There would be hundreds more over the years, most not as extreme, some worse.

This book is not about the complexity of domestic violence. (Check out "Resources" at the back of this book for a small list of reading material and websites on this important subject.) Our purpose is to teach you to be aware, alert, to diffuse violent situations, and to apply specific physical techniques to stop an assault so that you can get away.

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## Intuition

Much of human communication is nonverbal. It's estimated that as much as 93 percent of what we are really saying is done through our clothing, voice tone, facial expressions, hand gestures, posture, eye contact, and spatial distance. Work to perceive these things in other people, and pay attention to and heed what the information conveys to you.

Albert Einstein called our intuition "the highest form of knowing." Most of what we know about people comes from our interpretation of all that we see, not all that they tell us.

Be alert, be aware, and listen to your intuition.

The following are a list of indicators that you might be in danger. Knowing them and thinking about them will help you decide a plan of action.

**Note:** The word “partner” is used to refer to a husband, a romantic male or female live-in, or an intimate boyfriend or girlfriend who doesn’t live with you.

**You:**

- Are you afraid of your partner much of the time?
- Do you refrain from talking about certain subjects because you’re afraid of how your partner might respond?
- Does it seem that everything you do is wrong?
- Do you feel emotionally numb?
- Do you feel that you ought to be physically punished when you do something wrong?
- Do you feel you have to function in the Yellow Zone most of the time around your partner, always vigilant, always cautious?

**Your partner:**

- Does your partner constantly interrupt you?
- Does he mock your opinions and put you down, especially in front of others?
- Does he make you feel like you’re dumb?
- Does he make you feel bad about yourself?
- Does he threaten you?
- Does he treat you like you’re his waitress, personal assistant and sex object?
- Does he have a volatile temper?
- Does he damage your possessions?
- Does he threaten to take away your children?
- Does he threaten to harm your children?
- Does he force you to have sex?
- Is he excessively jealous?
- Does he have rigid gender roles?
- Does he call you or others to check up on you?
- Does he prevent you from seeing your family and friends?
- Does he control the money, phone, computer, car, and where you go?
- Does he abuse your pets?
- Does he like isolation and wants you to be isolated, too?
- Does he blame you for his problems?
- Does he have a negative view of women?
- Does he abuse drugs or alcohol?
- Does he have a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde personality?
- Does he restrain you from leaving a room, pin you against a wall?
- Does he stand nose-to-nose with you and shout in your face?

**Note:** Know that emotional abuse often leads to physical abuse. We define physical abuse as force that causes you physical pain, injury or in some way endangers you.

We encourage you to learn all you can on this issue. If you need help now, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.

*You don’t have to live in fear.*

## WHEN TO FIGHT BACK AT HOME

Physically, a punch and a kick are just that, but the blows can carry a more significant impact when the person hurting or trying to hurt you is a partner. You might experience shock and disbelief that this person with whom you have shared so much and with whom you have made future plans would hurt you. You might feel betrayal because you suddenly realize that all that you had believed about your relationship was a lie.

On the surface, especially to people who have not been the victim of partner abuse, the decision as to when to fight back at home is an easy one. To those involved, however, emotions, the variables of each abuser, economic issues and the presence of children can make the decision extraordinarily difficult. For that reason, we reiterate that you call the National Domestic Violence Hotline number listed above and at the end of this book, explore the books and websites we've recommended, talk with your local police and with an attorney. All of these sources can give you solid information from their perspectives.

Our answer as to when to fight back at home is straightforward: You fight back the first time you're physically abused. Then you leave. This remains our answer no matter how complex the issues surrounding it. Problems, such as not having money or a place to go, pale when you weigh them against injury to you and your children.

# Statistics

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## Statistics

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, in one recent five-year period, there were almost 3.5 million violent crimes committed against family members, 49% of them against spouses, 84% of those spouses were females. Over three quarters of the victims of dating partner abuse were female.

Women are disproportionately victims of other violent crimes, too. According to the Stalking Resource Center, in one year 1,006,970 women reported being stalked. When the stalker was a current or former intimate partner, 81% of the women were physically assaulted by the partner.

The National Women's Study conducted a three-year longitudinal study of a national probability sample of 4,008 adult women (2,008 of whom represented a cross section of all adult women and 2,000 of whom were an over sample of younger women between the ages of 18 and 34). The study found 13% of adult women had been victims of completed rape during their lifetime, someone they had never seen before or did not know well, assaulted 22% of them. Husbands, ex-husbands, fathers, stepfathers, boyfriends, ex-boyfriends and other relatives raped 46%. Friends and neighbors accounted for 29% of the rapes.

Stats are important as they reveal the enormity of the issue but they don't show the horror, the fear, the humiliation and the pain.

## THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF PHYSICAL FORCE

Our answer is based on nearly 70 years of combined experience training with physical force in the martial arts and, in Loren's case, nearly three decades working in law enforcement, which included responding to many, many domestic violence calls. One of the things Loren saw as a police officer is how the human body can be both amazingly resistant to physical violence and incredibly fragile. He saw people survive extraordinary damage, to include two cases in which the victims (one case was a man and the other a woman) were shot five times in the skull. Both survived; in fact, the woman was still running about and officers had to restrain her. Conversely, he saw people fall unconscious from seemingly minor blows, some even died. Rarely is there a way to predetermine how an individual will respond.

Many female victims of domestic violence told Loren that they were "only slapped," and begged him not to arrest their partners. Although we understand that there is much behind this way of thinking, which we encourage you to research, there remain dangerous ramifications to physical violence, even when it's "only a slap."

A slap or a push can be much more than the simple assault it suggests. Say you're leaning against a wall in your kitchen when your spouse draws back his hand to slap you. Know that such a blow carries with it a degree of force, sometimes great force when the deliverer is intoxicated, enraged or physically powerful. A slap to the face can knock you unconscious. A slap can easily knock your head against a counter edge or a refrigerator corner. Likewise, a simple shove can produce force that knocks you back a couple of steps or sends you stumbling over something so that you land awkwardly, break an arm, a vertebrae, or crack your skull against your fireplace.

You might say that that would never happen to you. Tell that to the tens of thousands of victims of domestic violence every year, many of whom have received life-changing and life-ending injuries.

That is why we say fight back.

## BUT HE'S MY HUSBAND (BOYFRIEND, GIRLFRIEND)

Whether it's your husband, boyfriend or life partner, all the physical techniques discussed throughout this book apply. When you strip away all the emotion, history and potential future with this person, what is left is someone wanting to hurt you physically, emotionally and spiritually.

To reiterate, there are no special physical techniques when defending against a husband, boyfriend or partner. Since you know this person, you have an advantage that people dealing with the actions of a stranger do not. You probably know how he acts when he is angry, when he drinks, and when he tries to control and berate you. If he has assaulted you in the past, you might have an advantage in knowing how he acts just prior to committing violence. Think about these things ahead of time and include them in your preplanning and mental imagery

practice (see Chapter Ten, “Mental Imagery”).

Think about at what point you would use physical force against your physically abusive partner. This is something only you can decide. We can tell you that most of the women we surveyed said that they would use force against a stranger when he touched them. Since your partner touches you frequently, you must factor into your thinking how he does it. This isn’t difficult as there is a big difference between a pat on the back as he walks behind you in the kitchen, and a hard arm grab, neck squeeze, or shoulder shove.

Although we can’t tell you when to get physical, here are a few stages in a confrontation when you could. Think about them as to how they might relate to your situation.

## YOU WOULD GET PHYSICAL

- when he touches you in anger.
- when he charges toward you, his face contorted with rage.
- when he has been drinking, and suddenly slams down his beer and charges at you.
- when he goes off like a cannon in your face and cocks back his fist.
- when he throws something and stomps through the house looking for you.
- when he tells you that he is going to beat you.

Do you have others?

As mentioned before, think about this before it happens because in the heat of the moment, it’s hard to think clearly, make good decisions and know what is best for you. But when you think about it in advance and study the techniques throughout this book, you’re more likely to react on autopilot before it’s too late. See Chapter Ten, “Mental Imagery.”

If you live with a volatile partner, your mind should be in the Yellow Zone of alertness whenever he is around you, or at least when he is in one of his moods. If he has an unpredictable and explosive personality, you must be alert and aware 24/7.

Better yet, get away from him.

Gavin deBecker writes in *A Gift of Fear*: “I believe that the first time a woman is hit, she is a victim and the second time, she is a volunteer.”

---

## Mandatory Arrests

Many states now mandate the police to make an arrest in a domestic violence situation in which one or both parties were hurt. It’s a complicated issue, one that varies in nuance from state to state. Keyword “Domestic violence arrest policies by state” into your search engine to find out your state’s policy.

# Mandatory Arrests

## *Can women be effective at de-escalation?*

Yes. I put a lot of emphasis on how to avoid the physical confrontation in the first place and on ways to defuse the situation.

■ ■ ■

Of course. Women are good talkers.

■ ■ ■

The more self-esteem a woman has as a result of her training, the more able she is to find the right words and actions to de-escalate a situation.

■ ■ ■

Learning right language and right body actions, such as gestures, distancing and facial expressions, will go a long way toward preventing a physical assault.

■ ■ ■

Yes. A good course teaches critical thinking about defense strategies, assertiveness, effective communication skills, and easy to remember physical techniques.

■ ■ ■

When someone tries to intimidate you verbally, understand that you might be fearful and afraid inside, but it is important that externally you appear focused, confident, relaxed and ready.

# DE-ESCALATION



**Loren used the following de-escalation techniques as a police officer and he taught them to others in the police academy. Do they work all of the time? No. When dealing with the human condition, there isn't any technique that is a 100 percent sure thing. That said, these simple techniques worked more times than not.**

## Leave-me-alone

### STANCE

The beauty of this posture is that it has all the characteristics of a martial arts and boxing fighting stance. However, it's less threatening and it can even have a calming effect on some upset people. Here are the elements of the stance:

- Angle your body so that you're turned about 45-degrees from the threat. This makes you a smaller target and positions you to rotate your hips into a kick or hand strike.
- Your feet are shoulder width apart to provide you with optimum balance.
- Your knees are bent slightly, though imperceptible to the threat. This allows you to step quickly in any direction without giving away your intention.
- Hold your hands at chest level, palms forward. This is a non-threatening hand position that shows the threat and witnesses that you don't want trouble. When you make





**Maintain a relaxed demeanor.**

- small, slow circles with your hands, some psychologists believe that it has a calming effect on some people.
- Maintain a relaxed demeanor. This presents an image of calmness, even when your insides are bubbling. A bully likes fear. Don't give it to him.
  - Move slowly. This perpetuates calmness. A quick movement that isn't done for a good reason might startle the attacker and force him to act. Move quickly only when attacking, reaching for a weapon or fleeing.
  - Don't point your finger at him or clench your fists before you're ready to smash his face. Pointing might antagonize him and fist clenching gives away your intentions.
  - Don't touch a hostile person even if you're a touchy person.
  - Unless you're deliberately reaching for a weapon, keep your hands in sight. You don't want him to think you're trying to get to a weapon when you aren't.
  - To change your position, simply move the foot that corresponds with the direction you're going. For example, to move forward, move your lead foot a few inches and then move your rear foot up so that your feet are once again shoulder width apart. To move to your right, move your right foot first and then your left. (See Chapter Three, "The least you need to know" for a photo description of how to step.)



**Remove all expressions from your face.**

## **FACIAL EXPRESSION**

Remove all expressions from your face. Affecting disgust, a hard stare, anger, or fear are like food to an attacker, food that makes him hungrier.



If the threat is your partner, call him by name without anger attached to it.

## NAME CALLING

Don't call the threat a "loser," "idiot," "creep," or a curse word. To some, such words will inflame their anger (probably because they know they are true) and give them more motivation to hurt you.

If the threat is a stranger, you can't go wrong with "sir" or "ma'am." It might seem strange to call someone about to hurt you "sir" but it does have power.

If the threat is your partner, call him by name without anger attached to it.

---

## Your Tone of Voice

How you speak is often more important than what you say. Consider these tips:

- Don't lower your voice too far below what is normal for you. Speak too low and he might think that you're angry or deliberately challenging him.
- Don't raise your voice too much higher than you normally speak because the threat might think that you're about to attack. The uncertainty in his mind might agitate him or cause him to attack when he otherwise might not.
- No matter how frightened you are, speak slowly as this can be soothing to a threatening person. It will help you to stay calm, too.
- In his mind, scaring and hurting you might be a way to get respect. Using "please," "thank you," "sir," and "miss" might be all he wants to hear.
- Using a humorous tone is always a risk. Since humor is an abstract, it's easily misunderstood, angering the attacker and escalating the situation. If you use it at all, and we don't recommend it, direct the humor at you, not at the attacker.

## THREATS

Don't threaten. Don't say "I'm going to kick your ass," "I'm going to make you pay," "Touch me and you'll regret it," or "I'm going to call the cops." You might indeed do these things but don't tell the person in advance. It will anger him and he will likely take steps to prevent you from doing any of them.

## GOOD WORDS

Using the right words can—meaning not always—diffuse a violent person. Dr. George Thompson wrote a wonderful book on the subject titled *Verbal Judo*. We highly recommend that you get a copy and read it three times. For now, consider these points.

- **Don't say** "Calm down." Never in the history of the world has this ever calmed someone. However, since it's judgmental and since it's usually shouted, it often provokes people even more.
- **Do say**, "It's going to be all right. Can you tell me what's wrong?" Or "How can I help?"
- **Don't say**, "What's your problem?" usually asked with a curl of the lip, ala Elvis, and in a tone that challenges. In a bar, it translates to: "Let's fight."
- **Do say** gently, "What's the matter? How can I help?" Or, "What can I do?"
- **Don't say**, "Watch where you're going you stupid jerk!" when someone bumps you.
- **Do say**, "I'm sorry. My fault." Say this even when it's clearly his fault. Hard to do? It can be. But say it anyway because by doing so the situation will likely pass and be forgotten. If you provoke him, however, especially when there is alcohol involved, the situation might escalate, turn violent and end up in injury, an arrest and a lawsuit. Swallow your pride. Life is too short.
- **Don't say**, "I'm not going to give you my purse you piece of dog \_\_\_\_\_"
- **Do say**, "Okay, no problem. Here," then toss it away from you and run.
- **Don't say** to your partner, "You're a loser. You always\_\_\_." Refrain from starting any sentence with "you." And don't call him a loser, even when he is.
- **Do say**, "I'm sorry" even if you aren't. Say, "Please, let's sit down and discuss this." You're not figuratively pointing your finger at him but rather trying to take the wind out of his sails by admitting that you're at fault. You're also showing that you want to talk things out. Hard to do? Sure, you might be angry, too.

Here are a few more don'ts, whether the threat is your partner or a stranger.

**Don't:**

- challenge him.
- tell him that you're going to kick his butt.
- call him a name.
- curse at him.
- belittle him.
- tell him that you know how to defend yourself.
- say, "Come on, come on. Let's see what you got."
- ask him, "Is that all you got?" after he hits you.

The old "sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me" is a big fat lie. Words are powerful. Words can hurt, encourage, enrage, and instigate a situation, but they can also calm and diffuse it. Choose the latter. Yes, you might have to lie, swallow your pride and dignity, but by doing so you might buy time, distract and even terminate a threat's intentions. You might lose face, but in so doing you might save it—literally.

**PRACTICE**

Rehearse in front of your bathroom mirror or better yet, a full-length bedroom mirror. Assume the leave-me-alone stance and affect a neutral face. Check to see that your shoulders, neck and arms are relaxed. If your concern is an abusive partner, practice saying, "I'm sorry." "It's my fault." "Can we talk about it?" If you're thinking in terms of an obnoxious jerk in a bar, an aggressive co-worker, or a street assailant, practice phrases like "I'm sorry." "Can I help you with something?"

You will always have to modify your verbiage to fit the situation. This is especially true when it comes to your partner. You know him and you probably know what sets him off, and you probably know what calms him. We say probably because there are no absolutes when dealing with the human animal, even an intimate partner.

## *What techniques have you been taught that you feel are worthless for women?*

Any technique is worthless if the woman is unwilling to use it. If a woman hesitates for a moment because she “doesn’t want to hurt her attacker,” which can happen under stress, she has given him the advantage.

■ ■ ■

Pulling away techniques generally do not work.

■ ■ ■

Trying to twist out of a tight grip.

■ ■ ■

No attacks are worthless, if you apply them with force and to the right target.

■ ■ ■

Techniques that knock the arms off generally do not work.

■ ■ ■

Women should be taught techniques that can be used in almost any situation.

■ ■ ■

Pressure point stuff on a big guy.

# 7 BASIC TECHNIQUES

## *The Least You Need to Know*

*A fox and a cat were out walking together when the fox began boasting how clever he was.*

*“I’m prepared for any situation,” said the Fox. “I have a whole bag of tricks to choose from if my enemies try to capture me.”*

*“I’m afraid I’ve only got one trick, but it has always worked for me,” the cat said timidly.*

*The fox looked at the cat and shook his head. “One trick, how dumb is that? I’ve got hundreds of ways of escaping.”*

*“I still think it’s better to have one trick that works than waste time trying to choose from a dozen that might,” said the cat softly.*

*“Rubbish” shouted the fox. “You’re just not as smart as me.”*

*Just then they heard a pack of dogs barking louder and louder as they grew near. The cat immediately ran up the nearest tree and hid on one of the highest branches.*

*“That’s my trick,” the cat called from high up in the tree. “You had better reach into that bag of tricks of yours and choose one right now or you’re history,”*

*“Ok, ok, stay calm,” said the fox to himself. “Should I run and hide behind the nearest hedge? Or should I jump down a burrow?”*

*The dogs were getting closer and closer.*

*“Down a burrow that’s the way to go,” said the fox, and started running around the field looking for a burrow. “No, that one’s too small; I can’t get down far enough. This one’s too big; they could get down it, too. Maybe that one over there?”*

*Too late. While the fox wasted time, confused by so many choices, the dogs caught him and killed him.*

*The cat looked down sadly, and said, “It’s better to have one safe way than a hundred you can’t choose from.”*

The story of the cat, fox and dog is a fable about what can happen when there are too many techniques from which to choose. A British psychologist named William Edmund Hick conducted experiments in which people sat before a panel of random flashing lights and made choices as to which Morse code keys to poke. He eventually came up with a conclusion, which he humbly named Hick’s Law. Hick peppered his findings with confusing looking formulas, such as  $T=b \cdot \log^2(n+1)$ . Since we strive to simplify defense and offense, for our purposes, Hick’s Law means this: It takes your mind longer to choose between multiple options than it does to go with just one. To say it another way, the fewer choices you have, the faster your response.

## WHAT THE DOG, CAT, FOX AND HICKS MEANS TO YOU

Martial artists spend years studying the fighting arts, collecting along way hundreds of techniques, thousands when put into combinations. They don't need this many (imagine if all these moves were unleashed on one hapless mugger) but veteran martial artists study not just for self-defense but also for the beauty of the art, its culture, the science of movement, spirituality, unprecedented fitness, and its health benefits. For self-defense purposes, you don't need all that.

Self-defense is about simplicity. Forget anything you've seen in a movie that has the word "dragon" in its title and forget much of what you've seen in mixed martial arts competition on television. Yes, the latter is real fighting, but it's done in a ring with rules, a referee, a time clock, no-hit zones, and a complex set of techniques and strategies. While what you see in the movies and in competition is, in the broadest definition of the word, self-defense, the movies are pure fantasy and competition is too complicated and has too many restrictions (many of the techniques you're about to learn are illegal in competition). What you need are simple techniques and strategies that are instantly doable, easy to remember, and easy to do when your heart is thumping against your chin and you've got to go to the bathroom like never before.

A situation in which you have to defend yourself can ignite within a second. You're in your parking garage tossing your briefcase into your car when two powerful arms encircle you from behind, crushing the air from your lungs as you're lifted and then slammed against the corner of your open car door. Before you can cognitively process what is happening, your heart rate rockets from 65 beats per minute to 250, leaving your fine-motor skills in its wake. This means that a complicated defense isn't going to be there for you unless you have trained it extensively. What will work are gross motor movements, sometimes called "cavewoman techniques." We think of them as natural movements.

## TECHNIQUES BASED ON NATURAL MOVEMENTS

The flashy tornado kick is an unnatural move. To do it, spin counter clockwise 180 degrees, lift your right knee as you come around and then leap high into the air as you whip your right leg in a high arc to slam your foot into the attacker's chops. Complicated? Yes. Needs tons of practice? Yes. Based on natural movements? Not even a little. So we're not going to do this technique.

Have you ever used the bottom of your fist to slam a tabletop or to beat on a door? It's a natural movement that no one taught you. You probably did it when you were a little kid. It's called a hammerfist and it's a good one for your repertoire because with just a couple of minor tweaks, it becomes one of the most powerful blows in the martial arts.

Have you ever kicked a box out of the way or kicked a lawn mower that wouldn't start? Some kicks are so natural that toddlers can do them not long after they start walking. Again, with some minor tweaks, certain natural kicks can be made devastating.

---

## Training Cops

Loren has taught over a thousand police officers in person and thousands more through his books and DVDs. He doesn't teach them dozens and dozens of techniques because the students would forget them by the next day. Police officers are not martial artists, though there might be one who studies out of a hundred. Officers just want to learn a few proven moves to help them get through their shift so they can go home to their families. So Loren teaches a maximum of nine techniques.



Photo by A'lyse Place

## About the Authors

**Lisa A. Christensen** began training in the martial arts in the mid 1990s, earning belts in taekwondo, kempo, American freestyle, kickboxing, jujitsu and arnis. She has extensive teaching experience in the martial arts working with adults and children.

Lisa began training with Loren in 2003, and has appeared in several of his books and DVDs. She has been the principal photographer for numerous martial arts books and magazine articles.

Lisa can be contacted through her website: [www.lisaplacebeadzone.com](http://www.lisaplacebeadzone.com)

**Loren W. Christensen** began training in the martial arts in 1965 and continues to this day. Over the years, he has earned a total of 11 black belts, eight in karate, two in jujitsu and one in arnis. Because of his nearly three decades in law enforcement, Loren's focus in the martial arts—writing, teaching and training—has always been on street survival, not competition.

Loren began his law enforcement career in 1967 as a Military Policeman in the Army and then joined the Portland (Oregon) Police Bureau in 1972, retiring in 1997. During his years on PPB, he worked street patrol, child abuse investigation, dignitary protection, Intelligence, street gangs, and as a defensive tactics instructor.

As a professional writer since 1978, Loren has penned over 45 published books with five publishers, dozens of magazine articles, and edited a police newspaper for nearly eight years. He has written on the martial arts, missing children, street gangs, school shootings, workplace violence, police-involved shootings, nutrition, exercise, prostitution, and various street subcultures. Loren has starred in seven martial arts training videos. From 2007 through 2008, Loren was included in the *Heritage Registry of Who's Who* for his accomplishments in publishing.

Loren can be contacted through his website LWC Books at [www.lwcbooks.com](http://www.lwcbooks.com)



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