

Brain over brawn

Self-protection is more about psychology and neurology than it is about fistfights, according to martial arts expert Glen Levy

Text: Asha Mahadevan
Pics: Suresh K K

Glen Levy, a Hollywood stunt choreographer, and an expert in martial arts from New Zealand, was at Lilavati Hospital yesterday to conduct a workshop on self-protection, as opposed to self-defence. "Self defence is what you do when you are attacked," said Levy. "Self-protection encompasses prevention and awareness as well, how to see signs of an event before it happens. Learning a martial art is good, but it takes years of practice. And I am sure none of you have the time," said Levy, addressing the doctors and other medical staff who had gathered to listen to him. "I am not teaching martial arts, I am teaching biology and psychology. Use your brain to destroy the way theirs works."



When you are under attack, put your left hand (because most attackers come from that side, if your attacker is coming from the other side, use your right hand) behind your head as if you are brushing back your hair and catch the back of your neck. Keep your hand parallel to the ground with the elbow sticking out. Your hand should touch your head. This protects your head and when the attacker strikes you, it won't knock you out. In most cases, women are unable to defend themselves, as the first strike knocks them out. The force of the strike is absorbed by the hand and your head is saved.



Be assertive. A simple, soft, pleading 'no' will not deter your attacker. Shout 'No' with force, it should come from your gut. Show you have intent to damage. Attackers want to attack you, not fight you.



If someone is following you, pretend you are meeting someone nearby - either by hailing somebody in the distance or telling someone over the phone 'Oh where are you, I can't see you'. An ambush attacker has a fixed plan - he will attack you, subdue you and take you to another place. If something goes against his plan, he will move to another target. So try to break his plan.



A man is hardwired to protect his groin so aiming to hit him there with a knee will only anger him more. It's the worst thing you can do. Instead put your thumb inside his eye and twist it. We are not hardwired to protect our eyes and there is hardly any resistance offered. After that, if you want, knee him in the groin.



When the attacker has you in a tight hold, don't try to pull yourself free. The brain will think it is a difficult task and you'll fail. Relax your brain and pretend you are doing something that you do every day - like reaching down to tie your shoes. The brain will consider it an easy task and you will get free faster and with less effort.



The body has pressure points, pressing on which will lower the attacker's pain tolerance. The main ones are one point on the middle of the wrist, two points near the elbow and the inside of the thighs. Pinching the attacker in any of these places will cause him to lose his grip on you. Any slap you give after this will cause him more pain than it would have without the pinch.