

you come in to class. During the week the women go home and think about what they learn and then discuss it with boy-friends, husbands and girlfriends. Then they come back the next week with all kinds of questions. That's the process of going through the attitude change.

**Do you think that only a little training might be a misleading thing because it might make a woman over-confident?**

I don't think so. It's a really unusual woman who's going to be over-confident. We tend to feel less confident about ourselves than we should. The only exception is that sometimes when women go home after the first or second class they're really high. I remember myself when I left my second class, I wanted to meet five guys in a parking lot. But that feeling goes. It hangs around for a couple of days and then you realize, 'I wouldn't even want that experience.' I think most women are really sensible as to what their skills are.

**Have you ever had to use your self-defence skills in your own defence?**

Yes. One incident happened before I had any self-defence training. One night a man came in through my bedroom window with a knife. It didn't occur to me that there was anything I could do about somebody with a knife, so I talked my way out of that. So that my students know how to handle a situation like that, I teach verbal self-defence in the class.

Since I've taken self-defence I think I use it all the time in the sense that I'm a lot more confident about where I go and whom I talk to. I think too that if you have some self-defence skill, it's a lot less likely that you will be attacked. In addition to that I've done some crisis intervention work with women who have been raped, and with battered wives. I've sometimes been in the position of getting in between a husband and wife.

**Would you have done the same thing in the situation where the man confronted you with the knife, now that you have the training?**

I don't know. I never know how I will react until the incident happens, no matter how much training I've had. I could leave the school tonight and if I'm feeling depressed or tired it could cut down on my skills. The most important thing is that you have to really want to defend yourself. If a woman goes away thinking, 'Oh, I know I'll definitely defend myself,' that's great, but I don't think that you can ever rely on that attitude.

**Are there any good books on self-defence?**

No, but there are some bad ones. I tried to get funding from Ottawa for a manual on Self Defence for Women, and I got as far as putting together a brief for it, but that's about it. I've talked to some people about publishing it, but now I don't think I would ever really want to. I think it's far more important for women to practise self-defence than to read about it. I've talked to the rape crisis centre and a woman from the National Film Board about putting a film together, but I don't think solely a demonstration of punches and kicks is very useful. You can't get into someone's head via a film very well.

**If a woman has no access to training courses in self-defence, could you recommend anything that would help her break down her barriers against striking out in her own defence?**

I think the most important thing for her to do is for her to talk about attitude a lot, preferably with a group of other women friends who are interested in just getting together and talking. Then she should get some books on rape and self-defence and read a lot about that. I think the important thing though is the *doing*. You should practise self-defence with the group and should try different situations out, which will help bring about the attitude change.

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### Recurrent Theme of Wood:

#### After the First Workshop

To-day, I almost took your hand  
to search it    creased & calloused  
as wit  
you splinter in the soft grey matter  
of my brain    membranes ragged & ripped  
warped & rotted boards    pushed  
again, & yet again    against the blades  
of the machine  
to make it perfect    flaws dancing to curls,  
curling and uncurling, rise in wooded smoke  
My hands.  
Two    purple and pale  
soft with new bruises  
still white between the stains of sap and gum  
almost entered  
Yours.  
You understand this would not be a tender gesture  
but the hard look  
of a pilgrim  
wanting to know where she was headed.

Leslie Saunders