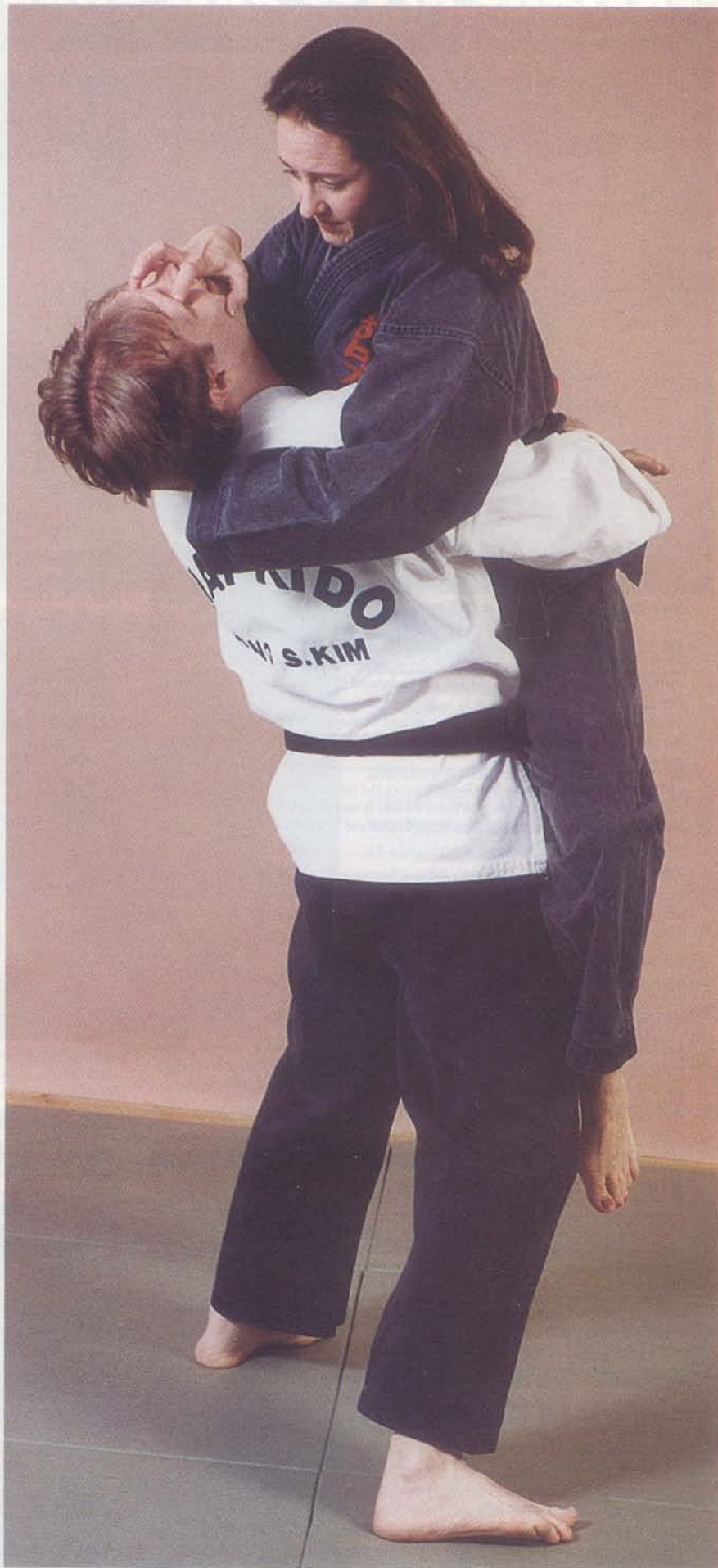


SUPER 7



Essential Hapkido Principles for Women Who Want to Beat Up Men

by Sharon Tkach

The man was becoming enraged. The instructor tried to speak in calming tones, but he appeared more and more agitated by her refusal to stop teaching his wife self-defense. She could see why the timid woman who had become her student desperately needed her instruction.

The man started behaving in a threatening manner, then darted forward and stood over her. Keeping his eyes engaged with her stare, she leapt to her feet. Then she raised her hand from below his line of vision and latched onto his throat. Her next move was a shove into the wall, where she pinned him as she applied a choke.

The teacher explained in no uncertain terms that he was never to return to the school or threaten her again. She then released him, and he walked away. Soon afterward, his wife found the strength to end her years of abuse and leave.

It's a true story.

The skills the woman used to save herself are an essential component of *hapkido*, a traditional Korean art that is replete with techniques that will enable anyone to redirect an attacker's force and use it against him. If you are a woman, however, you should pay a little extra attention to the seven principles listed below to guarantee your safety despite a difference in weight, size and strength.

Distract Him

You can increase your chance of success in any encounter by keeping your attacker's attention away from the area to which you intend to apply your technique. Maintain a calm expression and make eye contact to send him the message that you are not his prey. By not showing alarm, you introduce doubt into his mind and force him to think twice about your suitability as a victim. The resulting un-

certainty becomes a distraction for him and an advantage for you.

A male attacker may have sufficient strength to initially resist the defensive move you try, so you must have additional methods for gaining control over him and be ready to use them. A quick strike to a strategic body part will draw his attention away from the area you intend to target. A finger flick to the eyes can partially obscure his vision. A strike to the groin will inevitably cause him to flinch. An attack to either area, whether or not it actually causes damage, will elicit a natural protective response. In that moment of reaction, you may be able to complete your technique.

Use Large to Overcome Small

In addition to distraction, you can apply the principle of large muscle vs. small muscle. It is effective regardless of the size of the attacker because it enables you to efficiently use your energy rather than struggle in a strength-vs.-strength contest—which you are likely to lose.

Hapkido teaches that you can break a grab using even a single digit of your opponent's hand. If you have trouble grasping a finger, use your thumb to pry one up, then wrap more of your fingers around it as space is created. Add power to your hold by engaging your arm muscles rather than just your hand and wrist muscles. Keeping constant pressure on the trapped finger, guide him away from you and down to the ground. Breaking is an option, but first use the pain of the lock to force him into a position that is to your advantage.

According to the same principle, a finger or thumb is stronger than an eyelid. Methods of attack include single- or multiple-finger pokes, flicking motions that traverse the eyes horizontally, and gouges that utilize the thumbs.



When grabbed by an assailant (1), Sharon Tkach lowers her center of balance as she repositions her right leg behind his left leg and executes an elbow strike to the groin (2). She then turns and uses her body to force him off-balance and onto his back (3).



If a woman has doubts about her ability to support an attacker's weight during the execution of a fireman's throw, she can begin the technique normally (1-2), then drop to one knee (3) and complete it effectively (4).

This large-vs.-small principle can also be used to defend against a choke. With his arms extended to clutch your throat, the attacker's upper-body strength will be insufficient to hold your weight as you tuck your chin and drop to your knees. You will then have a clear shot at his groin as he adjusts to having lost control of his intended victim.

Utilize Your Entire Body

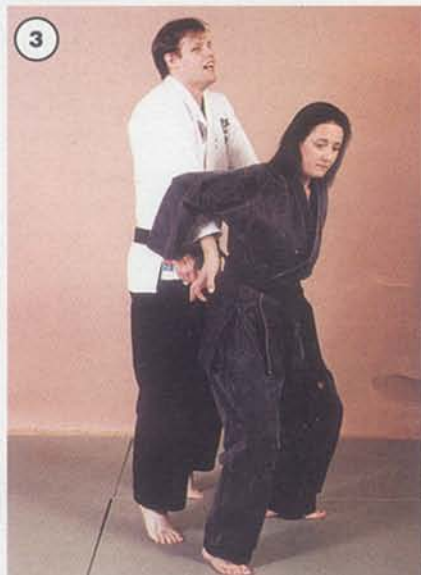
Some martial arts throws can endanger you if you try them on a larger opponent. Attempting a technique in which you must support his body carries the risk of his weight crushing you if your positioning is slightly off or if your legs can't support the load. A safer method is to start yanking him off-balance and then drop to one knee while you pull him across your back or around your hips, thereby using your whole body as a fulcrum.

When executing techniques, keep your hands close to your center at about belt level. Extending your arms makes you vulnerable to your attacker's superior strength. By adding the torque provided by a quick hip rotation and dropping your weight, you can overcome anyone's arm strength.

Remember that gravity is your friend. Harness it by squatting during your defense, thus lowering your center of balance and providing a more stable base. Using your body weight adds to your leverage as you pull your opponent off-balance. Once he is teetering, his own weight will work against him and accelerate his trip to the ground.

Flow, Then Reverse

When a male attacks, he expects to overcome you in spite of your resistance. If he pulls, he expects you to pull in the opposite direction. If he pushes,



Finger locks play an important role in hapkido and in women's self-defense. Here, Sharon Tkach begins her defense by crushing Chris Noelck's clasped hands from the top and bottom to loosen his grip (1). She then peels off one finger at a time to release his hold (2). By leveraging those fingers upward, she gains her freedom and temporarily immobilizes him (3).

he expects you to push back. His initial movement will be strong because his goal is to achieve immediate control over you.

These expectations can give you an opportunity to exploit his expenditure of energy. Start by responding the way he anticipates, then set him up. If he pulls, you push. If he pushes, you pull. By flowing with his movement, you facilitate his motion and take him off-

Choose Wisely

Women who take up serious self-defense need to make two important decisions. The first involves which art to study. In reality, for most people the selection is limited by the phone book, for few students will stick with an art that is not taught near their home or office.

If an appropriate school is available, consider studying *hapkido*. The traditional Korean art offers an extensive array of options for defense against every attack in the book, including punches, kicks, grabs and weapons. Its methods can be readily adapted to fit any body type, and huge amounts of strength are not required.

When it comes time to pick an instructor, shop for one who does not rely on strength to make his techniques work. Such a teacher may not be able to give you the options you need to defend yourself.

—S.T.

balance. By using his power, you save your own strength and let him do the work of throwing himself.

He may be able to regain his balance and reverse his direction. If that occurs, you can once again use his motion against him: Set him up by faking a pull or push, then suddenly reverse yourself to put him where you want him.

Let the Ground Help You

When throwing or taking down an

attacker, strive to make him land on his head or the point of his shoulder. Using the ground or floor to inflict injury can relieve you of the necessity of executing a finishing strike—and that's good because sticking around for another blow always involves more risk to you than does running away after the first technique.

If you must issue a follow-up attack while he is down, it will be easier to accomplish because whatever part of his body you aim for will be backed up by an unyielding surface. Move in immediately and apply your strike before he has a chance to grab your legs or kick you.

Becoming proficient in falling techniques will help ensure that the ground is not used as a weapon against you. If you find yourself down there, use it as a solid base from which to kick or to brace yourself as you knock him down.

Practice with Contact

Hands-on training is absolutely essential for proficiency in self-defense. Working out with other females can help, but once you are comfortable with the basic components of your techniques, find a male partner. There is no substitute for working with a person who can provide the type of resistance you are most likely to encounter on the street. It also lets you experience the mechanics of your moves on a more realistic level and discover which corrections you need to make to boost your effectiveness.

Random grabs are an excellent tool for realistic training. Instead of going through a predetermined series of defenses for a particular attack, instruct your partner to seize you in random ways. That forces you to develop the reactions you need to prevail in a street encounter. For maximum benefit, practice your responses using both sides of your body.

Spar

As a woman, you have probably never had to defend yourself against a man who was trying to punch or kick



When a woman uses her whole body against a man, she has a better chance of winning. Here, Sharon Tkach is grabbed by Alex Anoushian (1). She turns in response to his force (2), then drops to one knee and wraps her right hand around his lower leg (3). By using her shoulder to lock his knee and her arm to keep his foot in place, she can break his balance and force him down (4).

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you. Consequently, you will probably be stunned the first few times you feel the shock of a punch and the accompanying adrenaline surge. But they absolutely must be experienced firsthand, for only then will you be prepared to do what's necessary to survive.

Contact sparring improves your

the forging of a stronger mind. You will know that you can take a hit and keep on going. You will know that preparation is the key to victory, for it is far better to receive a blow in a controlled environment from a partner who's there to help you than it is to feel contact for the first time in a hostile situa-



A strike to the groin can serve as a distraction or a finishing technique.

ability to block strikes and combine counterattacks with your blocks. It makes you adept at controlling the distance between yourself and your opponent, and it improves your ability to act under pressure. Increased stamina, strength, agility and concentration are fringe benefits.

One of the most valuable results of putting in your time in the sparring ring—and in all likelihood one that will benefit you for the rest of your life—is

tion. You will know that you can calmly face anyone and, if you have to, take care of the business of defending yourself without being ruled by fear. ✘

About the author: Sharon Tkach is a free-lance writer and hapkido instructor under Black Belt Hall of Fame member Chong S. Kim. To contact her, write to Kim's Hapkido, 1437 West Arrow Highway, San Dimas, California 91773.