



BLACK BELT CONTROL

**HAPKIDO'S MENTAL AND PHYSICAL SELF-DEFENSE TACTICS WILL
HELP YOU MAINTAIN SUPREMACY IN ANY SITUATION**

by steve petermann - photos by thomas sanders

"It ain't over till it's over." Those wise words from baseball great Yogi Berra apply as much to violent confrontations as they do to team sports. How so? Intelligent self-defense is about mastering an assortment of tactics and techniques—ideally, all parts of a coherent system—so you can transition from one to another if the first one happens to fail. It's not about having a verbal or physical silver bullet, a foolproof thing to say or do that will work in any situation, because no such animal exists. Your goal in training should be to hone your skills so you have plenty of options no matter the situation. >>

Example: You're waiting at a bus stop and a man approaches. He tries a typical ploy, asking you for the time. Wise to his ways, you reply that you have no watch. He closes the gap to amp up the intimidation factor. You back up, and he pursues. Feeling threatened, you stab a finger into a pressure point at the pit of his throat, causing him to cough uncontrollably, which gives you a chance to flag down an approaching vehicle.

Example No. 2: As the gangbanger pounces, you try to intercept him with a punch, but he blocks it. He follows up with a kick aimed at your gut, but your stance enables you to trap his leg and execute a twisting takedown. When he falls, you lose your hold on his leg, which forces you to transition to plan B, a groin strike. It turns out to be the fight-ender.

In both scenarios, your guiding philosophy is the same as Berra's: Never give up until the battle is over—even if your first effort to gain control fails. No technique you learn is guaranteed to work every time you try it, so you need options, and you need to be able to access them on short notice.

Which is one reason the *hapkido* curriculum includes an abundance of mental and physical techniques. If one doesn't work, you try another, preferably one that meshes with where you are on the threat continuum and that's designed to be implemented from the position you're in. The sentiment is reflected in a Korean saying about the nature of perseverance: If you're knocked down eight times, get up eight times.

To that end, *jang mu won* hapkido, the system founded by Chong S. Kim, emphasizes verbal and physical techniques and counter-techniques, all of which are intended to provide you with lifesaving options for any situation.

In self-defense, there's no such thing as a fair fight. Your job is to do whatever it takes to get home so you can have dinner with your family. At one end of the spectrum, that might entail walking away from a challenge even though bystanders think you're a coward. At the other end, it might involve taking a life.

Somewhere in the middle of that continuum lie hapkido's mechanical-control techniques. They include close-range physical tactics such as wrist locks, armbars and come-along holds. Versatility is their hallmark, for they can be executed with a cane, a short stick, a rope, a belt, handcuffs, zip ties or your bare hands. The techniques

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is MORE better?

Anytime traditional martial arts instructors get together and discuss techniques, an argument arises over how many a student should be taught. Is there any advantage to learning more? Or is less better? In such exchanges, I'm reminded of the story of the exploding tiger.

A martial arts master taught five students for several years. They trained hard and showed great potential. One day, the master took them for a walk in the forest. During their stroll, a tiger jumped out of the brush, charging straight at the master. With a flourish of his hands, a flash of energy leapt from the master to the beast, blowing it to pieces.

The teacher asked his first student, "Would you like to know that technique?"

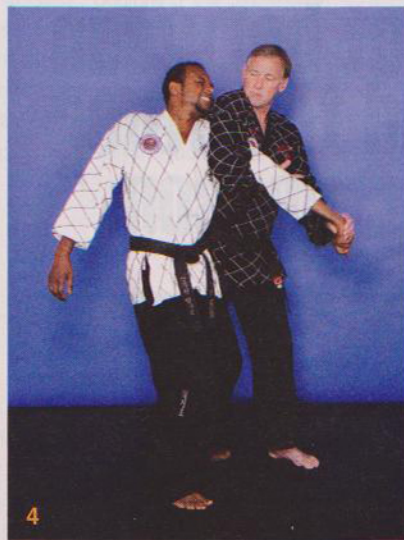
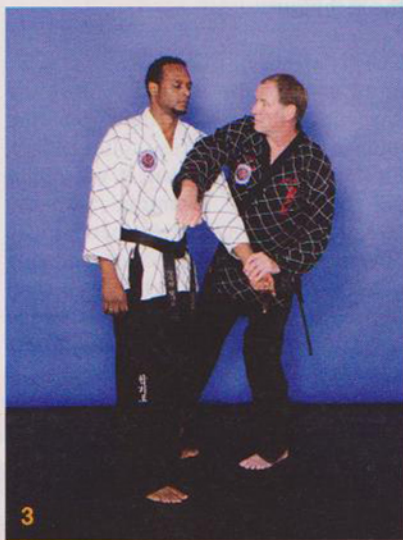
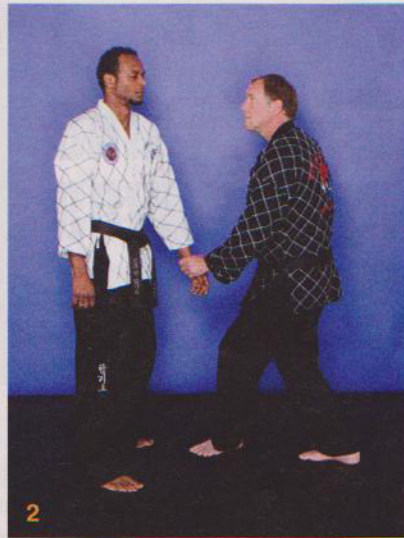
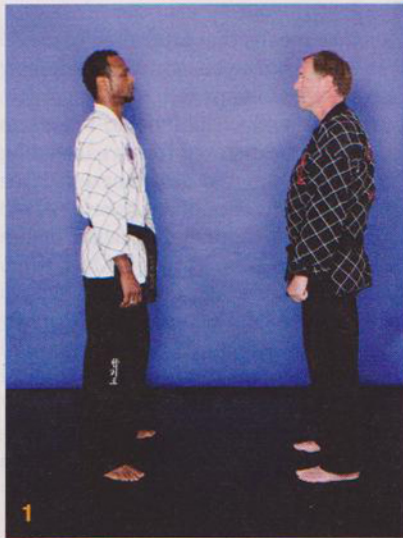
The student answered, "Oh, yes, Master, please!"

One by one, each student was asked the same question, and three answered in the affirmative. Then the master approached the last one. "Would you like to know that technique?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" the student said. "I want to know the defense to that technique."

"The others may go," the master said. "You I will continue to teach."

It nicely summarizes *hapkido's* philosophy, which holds that because every technique has a defense, the best way to guarantee victory is to know more moves.



Steve Petermann (right) faces the assailant (1). He steps diagonally forward with his left foot, reaching out to grab the man's left wrist (2). He moves his right foot until it's behind the man, at the same time encircling his elbow with his right arm (3). Using the push-pull methodology, Petermann forces the trapped wrist down while lifting the elbow (4). If additional control is needed, he can sweep the assailant backward and onto the ground.

shown in this article, taken from the jang mu won curriculum, focus on unaided mechanical controls, those that are performed with nothing but your empty hands. Before examining them, it's useful to see exactly where they fit into the hierarchy.

THE AVERAGE STREET CONFRONTATION

progresses through a series of steps, often escalating in a manner that affords you a chance to short-circuit it before a mechanical control becomes necessary. However, as I said earlier, self-defense is all about options, and fortunately some of them mean you don't even have to get physical.

The first level of control is the only one that's fail-safe: You choose to avoid people and places that might subject you to increased risk. Going to a bar in a bad part of town with a loudmouthed

friend with the intention of getting drunk is not a recommended way to spend a Saturday night.

Sometimes, even though you've made reasonable efforts to avoid it, confrontation inserts itself into your sphere of living. In those cases, you can try to exert control by remaining emotionally mature and speaking in a calming voice. (This, of course, presupposes that the other person is in a state in which calm conversation can occur.) Not wanting to get dragged into a screaming contest, you ignore taunts and insults. Hapkido teaches that having a tight stomach and managing your breathing can help you maintain your composure without sacrificing preparedness. Bonus: It helps you stay oxygenated and avoid hyperventilation in case the situation sours.

The next level of control is simply to leave the area. If you're not a law-enforcement officer, you have no reason to

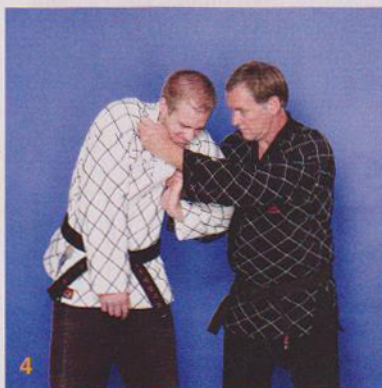
stick around when things go downhill. Trying to exert your dominance in a hostile situation gains you nothing. It's better—and healthier—to walk away, thus removing yourself from the path of destruction.

THE METHODS DISCUSSED SO FAR

haven't involved real violence on your part—which makes the aftermath a whole lot less complicated. However, it's not always possible to employ one of them—if your movement is impeded, if you're followed or if you're grabbed. In such cases, you need to get physical.

The first level of control in this realm revolves around a jolt of pain. Sometimes it's all that's required to re-establish respect between you and the other person. Hapkido's pressure-point techniques are great for making an aggressor disengage. They don't require much room to execute, and their understated

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Stepping in, Steve Petermann seizes the opponent's arm at the elbow (1) while rotating counterclockwise and grabbing his hand in a palm-to-palm orientation (2). As the hapkido expert leverages the hand upward, he ensures the elbow is still pinned against his chest (3). Releasing the elbow, Petermann grasps the man's collar and applies counterforce by pulling with his left arm (4).

elegance means that after they're used, frequently only you and the recipient know what happened. The average bystander will be oblivious. Pressure points are best-suited for a reasonably sized, noncombative assailant who isn't under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Once you cause him to back off or let go, leave the area. Don't give him time to relaunch his assault.

It's only when a push or poke isn't enough that you might need to crank it up a notch with a mechanical control. As with pressure-point techniques, mechanical controls are best used with a reasonably sized, sober assailant. Alcohol or drugs can numb the senses, and the accompanying increase in pain tolerance can inhibit the effectiveness of the techniques.

DURING THE EXECUTION

of an unaided mechanical control, the key components are intent, position and, in some instances, counterforce. First up is intent. Without it, you might fail to apply the technique with the strength or intensity you need to be effective. Sub-par application not only gives your opponent a chance to steel himself to the effects of your technique but also can afford him time to initiate a counter.

Position includes your stance, your distance from the assailant and your ability to manipulate him—all of which affect whether you can apply pressure to the intended spot. Example: The proper rotation of a wrist can inflict extreme pain, but attempting to do so from a bad position can sabotage your ability to twist it or even control the arm it's attached to.

Counterforce comes from *ki*, the middle character in the word "hapkido." Meaning power or energy, *ki* is often taught alongside the concept of opposing yet balancing forces—*yin* and *yang* in Chinese (*eum* and *yang* in Korean). Yin-yang can be used to describe the relationship between male and female, night and day, and many other pairs, but for the purposes of control, it applies to push-pull.

Proper application of the push-pull action creates a counterforce that holds the assailant in position and prevents him from wiggling out of your control. In situations in which your empty hands aren't sufficient, counterforce can be augmented by a chair, a wall or the floor—or even another person.

NO MATTER HOW

you choose to gain control in a dynamic situation, especially one that involves or has the potential to involve violence, success requires a plan of action, as well as an adaptive mind. Both of them must be cultivated in the *dojang* and carried with you everywhere you go. If you don't, you may find yourself heeding the advice contained in another of Yogi Berra's famous lines: "You should always go to other people's funerals; otherwise, they won't come to yours." ✘

About the author:

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Using his right hand, Steve Petermann grabs his opponent's left wrist, and at the same time he uses his left hand to bend the man's elbow (1). Petermann turns 90 degrees counterclockwise, beginning the application of a gooseneck hold (2). The opponent's wrist is then angled downward, and his elbow is tucked tightly against Petermann's chest (3). Under control, the opponent can be held or escorted to a different location.



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