

# The First Three Lessons of Women's Self-Defense

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by: Linda Della Pelle

**A** jujitsuka of twelve years, I have had a number of illuminating conversations with ladies regarding “women and self-defense”. Comments and questions have ranged from “Wow; you’re a Black Belt! There’s nothing that you have to worry about!” To, “Does self-defense training really work?”

I have instructed women in self-defense with two-hour seminar formats, with six-week mini-course formats and in my ongoing co-ed jujitsu classes. Regardless of the format of training or length of the program, the most fundamental and practical lessons a woman should learn in a self-defense class are:

1. Heighten your awareness of your surroundings
2. Recognize and eliminate (if possible) risky behavior
3. Project an aura of confidence, physically and verbally

Practicing these First Three Lessons will make a woman a less desirable target for assault. Those who seem weak and distracted are more attractive prey.

In an attack, a well-placed strike may gain you a release. A body-winding throw or a shoulder lock takedown may submit your assailant. But mental awareness and attitude may prevent a showdown altogether!

One evening I met at a restaurant with a number of work associates. We were a diverse group of women with a variety of interests. All present were aware of my interest in martial arts, but none shared my hobby. After a lot of good food and conversation, it was late and

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time for me to leave. I announced that I did not want to walk through the parking structure alone. I proceeded to take a poll of my five dinner companions to see who else was ready to leave the restaurant. Incredulous laughter suddenly burst forth from the ladies. “You, a Black Belt, are concerned to walk to your car alone!”

Of course, I immediately delivered my First Three Lessons lecture. My points were well taken: all six of us left the restaurant together! As a pack, we advanced through the caution-worthy parking structure. Each of us projected physical confidence and a no-nonsense, take control attitude. One might have guessed that we each had a black

belt wrapped around our hips!

Does owning a black belt allow you to go anywhere free of safety concerns? No. In fact, the wise black belt, acutely aware of her surroundings, is probably analyzing the situation more than most. Whether or not that “awareness/concern” becomes elevated to “worry” depends on the assessment of the situation.

Does self-defense training really work? There are no guarantees when it comes to self-defense. Training increases your options and preparedness.

Many women do not have the desire, or the luxury of time and money to enroll in formalized self-defense training. However, all women have an opportunity to benefit from the First Three Lessons. No enrollment fees, no training halls, no uniforms — they aren’t necessary to begin. Every day, women can practice:

1. being aware of their surroundings
2. recognizing and avoiding risky situations
3. walking and talking with confidence

“*Mental awareness and attitude may prevent a showdown altogether.*”

These three steps will decrease a woman's odds of being targeted for assault. This practical goal is worth every woman's effort.

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