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*Self-Defence in*

*A Note to the Reader*

THERE ARE only two rules of self-defence: 1) avoidance and 2) survival.

*Self-Defence in 30 Seconds!* has been written for people with the maturity and good sense to appreciate the value of avoidance.

In a perfect world there would be no need for the second rule of self-defence.

Unfortunately, our world is not perfect and physical assault happens. If it does happen to you, you have the right to defend yourself. Similarly, if an aggressor attacks someone you care about or who is unable to protect themselves, you can help.

Unlike a boxing match or a martial arts competition, a physical assault does not involve willing participants whose aim is to accumulate points within a predetermined framework designed to prolong the event while simultaneously entertaining spectators.

In a real self-defence situation, once conflict becomes physical, you have, at best, 30 seconds to save yourself.

Unless you are a talented and highly trained athlete, it is a tactical error to believe that if you can't defend yourself in the first 30 seconds, *more* time in the affray is going to help. It won't.

It's like trying to save yourself from drowning; if you can't do what needs to be done in the first 30 seconds, *more* time in the water is going to make the situation worse, *not* better. With this in mind, I have written *Self-Defence in 30 Seconds!*

I've cut to the bone of what it takes to understand how to survive a violent encounter. The end result is deliberately brief as I've followed the maxim: *It's not daily increase, it's daily decrease; hack away at the non-essentials!*

It has taken me over two decades to 'hack away' the non-essentials of self-defence. During that time I've travelled to and worked in over thirty countries. Many of the insights gained from those travels are described in my autobiography *Waveman*.

The purpose of *Self-Defence in 30 Seconds!* is to take the experiences of *Waveman* and provide you, the reader, with an honest appreciation of what really matters when it comes to protecting yourself and the people you care about.

Travel well, and stay safe.

*Robert Redenbach*

# 1

## *The Anatomy of Pressure*

HAVING TAUGHT the subject of self-defence to thousands of people, and given interviews to scores of journalists, I've come to realise that many people interpret (or at least want to interpret) self-defence as a passive, non-aggressive act. They see self-defence as a magic amulet to be dusted off in times of crisis both to protect themselves from physical harm, and as a means to showcase philosophical opinions such as 'right is better than might' and 'weak can overpower strong', etc. Nice theories. Unfortunately, nice theories have nothing to do with surviving a non-sport, violent encounter.

Self-defence is ugly, and it is desperate.

It is a pressure situation where the risk of loss (of being injured) negatively affects the possibility of reward (survival).

As in any pressure situation, there are specific phases that require decisions and actions, which in turn influence the outcome and determine the result.

Understanding the anatomy of pressure is the first step to enhancing performance and, in the process, increasing your chances of survival.

## *The Three Phases of a Pressure Situation*



**Phase 1** is the *Error*.

This precedes all physical contact and relates to things such as bad planning, bad communication and bad choices. It can also include bad luck. Basically, you find yourself in a position or location that you shouldn't have put yourself in; you said or did something that you shouldn't have said or done.

Alternatively, you are simply unlucky and trouble finds you.

The essence of safety and security is to protect against the occurrence of *Error*.

In the world of close personal protection (bodyguarding), if everything is done as it should be done, the day-to-day functions of a bodyguard are spectacularly boring. There is nothing exciting about standing next to a VIP or President if you've done your homework beforehand — advanced reconnaissance, site inspections, route selections, guest

vetting, maintaining appropriate skills like first-aid competency, etc. It's when you've slipped up in the preparation and planning stage or taken unnecessary risks that, in most cases, leads to something 'exciting' happening.

Personal protection should focus on identifying and defending against the occurrence of problems *before* they happen.

If you go to a red-light district by yourself, drink more alcohol than you can handle, stumble up to an ATM at two o'clock in the morning with your wallet in one hand and a cigarette in the other, don't complain the next day when you wake up in hospital, bruised, concussed and no longer in possession of your wallet.

**Phase 2** is the *Bubble* of confusion.

The duration of this phase can vary considerably, from a few heartbeats to many minutes and in some cases even days or longer — but what is vital to recognise is that the progression from Phase 1 to Phase 2 is both linear and chronological. There is no 'past tense' in the *Bubble* — once you find yourself in the confusion of Phase 2, you can't go backwards and address the *Error* of Phase 1. To expand on the earlier example: if you are alone and drunk at an ATM in a red-light district when a predator chooses to mug you, you can't magically go back in time and undo the decisions and actions that resulted in your predicament.

Apart from the *Error* (or compound errors), which

invariably heralds Phase 2, common indicators of being in the *Bubble* are: denial, anger, frustration, blame shifting and wishful thinking.

All of these predictable human conditions are perfectly understandable, and completely useless!

Once you find yourself in the *Bubble* there is only one way to proceed, and that is forward! The more time you waste hoping the problem will magically disappear or wishing that someone else will fix it for you, the less chance you have of influencing the outcome in a way that serves you — not your opponent.

It is vital to appreciate the fact that action beats reaction. This is not a variable. It is a constant. Action beats reaction, *every single time*.

Regardless of the details of the *Error* that preceded Phase 2, whoever or whatever initiates an action once Phase 2 has been reached will *always* have a physical, a psychological and a combative advantage over their opponent. There are no exceptions to this.

Once the *Error* has happened, if you wait to respond to your competitor's actions and, in the process, allow them to 'pop' the *Bubble*, your inaction will dramatically undermine your chances of survival.

Conversely, if you initiate an action that bridges the gap between Phase 2 and Phase 3, you will force your opponent to have to respond to you. Even if the overall situation isn't desirable, it is always desirable for your opponent to respond to you — rather than the other way around.

To return to the example of the red-light district at two o'clock in the morning: once you find yourself confronted by a predator demanding your wallet, there *will* be a bubble of confusion as you try to figure out what's happening and subconsciously hope it's all a dream. The longer you wait and do nothing, the greater the likelihood that the predator will 'pop' the *Bubble* by physically assaulting you. Acknowledging that your decisions and actions that contributed to the *Error* were simply stupid, the outcome does not have to be physically painful.

The smart thing to do is to pre-empt the predator's physical assault by *voluntarily* handing over your wallet. Of course, I realise some testosterone charged knuckleheads will find advice such as this repugnant but, in the circumstances described, it is the best way to bridge the gap from Phase 2 to Phase 3.

**Phase 3** is the *Result*, the sum total, of the *Error* of Phase 1 plus the action(s) of Phase 2.

The *Result* is more usefully viewed as 'more desirable' or 'less desirable' than as 'good' or 'bad'. Voluntarily handing your wallet over to a predator is not 'good', but it is more desirable than being beaten and hospitalised and in the process having your wallet forcibly taken from you.

In appreciating the consistencies of a pressure situation, it is also important to appreciate that making the transition from Phase 1 through to Phase 3 is pivotal to survival.

Of course, bridging the gap is difficult.

The fear inherent in the *Bubble* can easily transmute into indecision and procrastination which, in turn, can become like an irresistible drug. Indecision and procrastination are dangerous at the best of times. In a violent encounter they can cost you far more than a wallet or a bruised ego.

If you want to survive a physical assault, it is imperative that *you* initiate the transition from Phase 2 to Phase 3.

If the thought of doing so intimidates you (and if it doesn't intimidate you, you are probably suffering from unconscious incompetence or arrogant over-confidence) go back and revisit the two rules of self-defence\*.

Also, give serious thought to how you can prevent the error from happening in the first place.

\*1) avoidance and 2) survival.