



# PREVENTION IS YOUR BEST (SELF) DEFENSE

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## BY/WESLEY MANKO

It's one of those Wisconsin winter days when all you want to do is curl up with a good book and a cup of hot chocolate. Unfortunately, you had to stay late at work. It's already dark as you struggle through putting on your winter wear and begin to head out the door to the parking lot.

You pay little attention to the soft voice that is telling you to be aware. The big voice in your head is just thinking about all the chores you have yet to do today. It is the voice of logic that dominates your thoughts.

Out of the corner of your eye you spy a van you don't remember seeing in the lot before. Perhaps some workman, you reason. An uneasy feeling is now beginning to build up inside you. You don't quite know what it is but it's making you apprehensive. This feeling is but one way that your intuition is trying to communicate to you and save you from imminent danger.

What does using your intuition have to do with self-defense? Plenty, if you are studying Systema

(The System), a form of self-defense used by the Russian Special Forces that incorporates intuition into the program.

### A unique system

Systema training provides students with knowledge of avoiding dangerous situations, intuition development training, and ways to overcome fear, increase mobility, access relaxation and prevent injury from blows. Systema students focus on learning how to protect themselves from strikes, holds, ground attacks, knives, guns and multiple attackers while standing, sitting, walking or lying down. In other words, it provides students with defenses to the types of attacks that occur in the real world.

Another unique trait of Systema is that it caters to the needs of the individual, both physically and emotionally, so almost anyone of any size or ability can participate in class. Reliance on natural body movements instead of choreographed patterns allows Systema to be learned in a more rapid fashion, and some student can become proficient in it in as little as six months to a year with dedicated practice. Self-defense, plain and simple is the

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Systema maxim and probably the reason the US Marines, Navy SEALs and others are beginning to study it now.

## Knowledge

Part of the philosophy of prevention involves knowing the types of dangers one is likely to face. Equally important is separating the myth from reality when it comes to self-defense for women. While some martial arts focus on the stranger attack scenario as a primary form of attack on women, the truth, according to the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA), is that, in Wisconsin, 88.9 percent of sexual assaults were perpetrated by someone known to the victim. This means it could easily be someone that the woman has let in her home already, and requires different psychological and physical tactics than the stranger scenario, although Systema provides ways of dealing with both.

## Forged in adversity

The history of Systema was forged in the fires of adversity of a vast and unforgiving Russian landscape. Due to a continuous onslaught of foreign invaders attacking their borders from the 6th century onward, Russian warriors knew that combat was a state of chaos and that the way to survive was to develop the adaptability, creativity and autonomy of each warrior.

The absence of a formal army compounded the emphasis on adaptability and individuality. As civilian soldiers, the warriors required a method of self-defense that was easy to learn and practice on top of their existing duties. They found that natural body movement best fit their criteria. The goal then became to improve the way the body moved, and health and well being.

Systema was taught until 1917 when the new Communist government forbade its practice in hopes of destroying nationalism. Still, the government could not deny its effectiveness and confined its use to the most elite units of the Voiska Spetsialnogo Naznachenia (Special Forces) or Spetsnaz.

Systema was first taught outside of Russia by Vladimir Vasiliev, a 10-year veteran of Russia's most elite special forces unit and a former instructor to Special Forces, KGB, SWAT and law enforcement agencies. Currently, Vasiliev is the director of Russian Martial Art, headquartered in Toronto, Canada.

## Sexual Violence Statistics

Compiled Wesley Manko  
From the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)

Every 90 seconds, somewhere in America, someone is sexually assaulted.

Approximately 66% of rape victims know their assailant.

48% are raped by a friend  
30% are raped by a stranger  
16% are raped by an intimate  
2% are raped by another relative  
4% are unknown

In 2001, only 39% of rapes and sexual assaults were reported to law enforcement officials.

### Breakdown by age of the victim:

Ages 12-34 are years of the highest risk, with girls ages 16 to 19 being four times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape or sexual assault.  
80% of victims are under the age of 30  
44% are under 18  
29% are age 12 to 17  
15% are under the age of 12

### Breakdown by location:

About 4 out of 10 sexual assaults take place at the victim's home  
About 2 out of 10 at the home of a friend, neighbor or relative  
About 1 in 10 takes place outside, away from home  
About 1 in 12 takes place in a parking garage  
More than half of all rape/sexual assault incidents were reported by victims to have occurred within 1 mile of their home or at their home.

### Breakdown by time of day:

43% of rapes occur between 6 p.m. and midnight  
24% occur between midnight and 6 a.m.  
33% take place between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

### Use of weapons reported in 2001 in the commission of rape:

Only about 7% of rapes involved the use of a weapon (2% used a gun and 4% used a knife)  
86% involved physical force only  
7% of victims were unsure

### The criminal and the punishment:

The average age of rapists at arrest is 31.  
52% are white  
61% of rapes/sexual assaults are not reported to the police. The rapist goes free.  
If reported to the police, there is a 50.8% chance that an arrest will be made.  
If an arrest is made, there is an 80% chance of prosecution.  
If there is a prosecution, there is a 58% chance of a felony conviction.  
If there is a felony conviction, there is a 69% chance the convict will spend time in jail.  
Factoring in unreported rapes, 15 out of 16 rapists will walk free.

## Intuition Development Exercises

Systema contains various exercises to develop intuitive strength. To perform them well, a person must be relaxed and breathe properly. Proper breathing involves inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. The following are but two examples of intuitive training.

### Exercise one

One person stands with her eyes closed while another person tries to sneak up on her. The person must identify the direction that the other person is coming from by pointing at him. While this is best suited to be done in a park, any area that is sufficiently large will do. When doing this exercise indoors, pick a place where the floor doesn't squeak as that would give away the direction a person might be coming from.

### Exercise two

This is a really fun game called pick-pocket. One person puts about a 6-inch by 2-inch piece of paper through his belt in the back. Then that person closes his eyes. The other person must snatch the piece of paper held by the belt. The person with the piece of paper in the belt must have his eyes closed and can only stop the other person by sensing him. When he feels that the piece of paper may be snatched away he can reach for it with his hand and protect it.

These exercises will help increase your intuitive skills when practiced regularly, however, it is best to learn from a certified Systema instructor.

## DefenseWorks Programs

DefenseWorks Systema training is open to the public and offered at Apple-A-Day Massage at 437 E. Lincoln Ave. in Bay View, Mondays and Tuesdays 6:45 p.m. - 7:45 p.m. although times are subject to change.

### Self-defense seminar

On Oct. 20, DefenseWorks will host a self-defense seminar at MSOE Kern Athletic Facility. For costs, registration and other info, contact Wes Manko at 414-332-0599 or e-mail wes@defenseworks.us. For information about Systema visit www.defenseworks.us.