

Podcast #196 Transcription – Top 5 Self-Defense Myths (BUSTED!)

Jeff Anderson: If you've been following the podcasts episodes lately, you'll notice that I've had a recent passion for tapping into various experts personal experience and observations about the biggest mistakes that most people are making when it comes to preparing for all kinds of attack or crisis.

Now whether it's fire arms training, survival strategies, or whatever. I firmly believe that developing bad habits based on bad information, is a recipe for disaster. Possibly even death. When you go to actually use these skills under the duress of a real attack, or survival scenario. And probably more than any other tactical topic out there, in my opinion this is never more true than when it comes to preparing to defend yourself without a weapon. It's no secret that there seems like thousands of different martial arts, and combative systems available. From online training programs all the way down to the karate dojo at the local strip mall in your town.

With all these choices, and all these so called self defense experts, how do you know what will work? And what could you get you killed? When it's just you and your hands up against a 350 pound street thug in a dark parking lot? Well, a great place to start of course is with a solid top five list of the worst mistakes most people fall for in the self-defense world, and that's coming right up.

Everyone, this is Jeff Anderson, Editor for Modern Combat and Survival, and Executive Director of the New World Patriot Alliance with another podcast to help you better prepare for any threat you may face in your role as a protector, and a patriot.

And here to talk about the realities of life and death close quarters fighting, is someone who is well known to pull no punches, yes, pun intended, when it comes to calling BS, what doesn't work in the self defense world, Damian Ross. Damian welcome back to the program, man.

Damian Ross: Thank you, Jeff. Longtime, too long, great to be here. Thanks for having me.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah, but I think this is like the 397th time we've had you in some way, shape or form. We've done this for a number of years, and I always love getting you on these broadcasts because, well, for this reason alone, it's really because I love your insight into scraping away all the stuff that doesn't work out there. And I know you're very vocal about this, so I thought this was a perfect topic for you.

Listen everybody, if you're not aware, or you haven't listened to our podcast before with Damian, or whatever. He's the founder of the Self Defense Company, a world leader in tactical self defense training. And together with a global network of his instructors, the Self Defense Company's combative training programs have been helping law enforcement, military, and citizens stay safe since 1998. Damian's background training runs the spectrum from

collegiate wrestling, to traditional martial arts, as well as expertise in armed, and unarmed close quarter street combatant. He holds a number of high martial arts ranks, and trained directly under the late great combative's expert, Carl Cestari.

Now to learn more about Damian, and his training programs, make sure that you visit him online at www.MySelfDefenseTraining.com. All right, Damian, so this is my challenge to you, because, and I didn't want to guide you in any way shape or form. What I think the talks of stakes are, because I love your insights when it comes to what really works, when it comes to self defense training for the realities of a street fight.

What I wanted to do, was I basically just threw out the challenge to you, like I've done here recently. When you're out there, you're training with people, or you see what's online or whatever. I know we're not going to trash any specific names, but there is a lot of BS out here, there is a lot of training that could literally get somebody killed if they try and do some of this stuff.

I asked you for your top five lists of what you thought the biggest mistakes were. We have to start with number one, so in your opinion, what is one mistake, one big mistake that you see out there when it comes to self defense training? And, what's the fix for it as well?

Damian Ross:

Well, it shouldn't take years to learn self defense. Self defense is an instant, not an art. Every creature on the planet has the instinct to protect itself, from an elephant to ameba. The problem is we've been civilized and sanitized to be taught that violence never solves anything, which maybe true, but it sure as heck stops a lot of stuff. When it comes down to protecting yourself, it's simple and it's a basic plan of action.

On top of it, you got this myth that's been perpetuated by the martial arts industry, whose business depends on our training longer and more often, I mean, it's in it's best interest to keep you training longer. This is way combat sports and cultural fighting arts get confused with self defense. But the fact remains, every year millions of people defend themselves against real criminals without any training at all. The difference is, and the solution is to make a decision to fight back and when you do that, you just need a simple plan of action.

Jeff Anderson:

Yeah, makes total sense. And we often talk about how important just that mind set is. Like you're saying, it's really the mind set that's perpetuated out there is like, this mind set that you need to train, what is it like, a thousand repetitions for it to be mastered, or you got to go, it takes three to five years to become a black belt. But you can get attacked tomorrow night in a dark parking lot, so it doesn't take years, like you say, and you know your DVD's are real good examples, to give shameless plug out here for you. Go ahead.

Damian Ross:

No, everything now is on-line, all of our training, so the DVD, we kind of moved away from that just to jump in, talk about this real quick. Because what we do is provide 24/7 coaching and support, so it's an interactive training platform when we come to this stuff. We were running into that the DVD's is that you just kind of send them out, and you don't really get a lot of feedback. So now everything is on demand, we add content to what we do, and we're involved with the people that are training.

But getting back to your original point, we're confusing a fighting art with an instinct, and an instinct is just a will to survive. That's it. It's more will than skill. We've got people that are conditioned to believe you have to be some UFC maniac, to do this, but what's the option for someone who's like in their 40's and out of shape. Or 50, or later, I mean it's not really, we're not looking at a sport which is pitting two people who are trained in a particular discipline designed with a set of rules against another like competitor. It's not like the guys in the corner are going to jump over the fence and start stabbing you when you're fighting. It's a competitive sport.

Yes, you can defend yourself using a combat sport. I'm living proof of that, without a doubt. But there are more efficient means of doing it and we're taught with martial arts to defeat your enemy, defeat your enemy, defeat your enemy, but for most part, people just want to get away from them.

Most people are going to, once you resist, the reason why you're getting picked or targeted, is because whoever your attacker is thinks he can get what he wants from you with little or no resistance. So once you start fighting back, that changes the risk, reward, and starts to re-evaluate it, maybe you're just not worth it. Because again, the three things that every criminal fears is being caught, being identified or being injured or worse. So the longer the contact, the longer the exposure, the less likely they're to continue the assault.

If they wanted to have a fight and wanted to be challenged, they would join a gym and start taking classes and get in the ring, but they don't. They want to get something from you and they want to take it from you. Just the simple act to decide to fight back, again, millions of people all over the globe do this every day. Just that decision to fight back, gives you that advantage to survive, and when you actually know what you are doing a little bit, and you have a plan.

You're walking into a situation, first you see it, you are aware of it, you can avoid it, you can escape, you can evade it. Then you think of your training as you're driving down the highway and in the beginning it's awareness, it's avoidance, it's escape, and it's evasion and then as you're going down, it's control, it's dominate. As you continue to go deeper that requires more training, more physical attributes.

What people tend to forget too, and we'll get into this later. We are constantly changing, we are not the person we were yesterday, last year, last week, even if for better or for worse, so we need to constantly adapt our current skill set,

physical skill set to the ever growing or constant need of self defense. You've got to look at what's out there. I mean it's just not realistic, we're not always in our prime. Right? That's where you have to start looking at self defense as an education, more than a physical endeavor.

Jeff Anderson:

Yeah, I think your point about this being a real myth that's out there about it takes years, is what holds people back from doing anything, because most people don't have years or even the interest for it. They don't want to go down and have these classes. I think a good example of why it doesn't take that, we've shown people before your scenario based training. That you've got here are the most likely ways you're going to get attacked, and here are responses, like real world responses of how simple it can be to defend yourself. We'll put a link to that as well so everybody can see what we're talking about, I'll put a link to that down in the show notes for when we release this as well.

Okay. Number one is it takes, number one the myth that you put out there is that it can take, the myth that'll take years, I can talk really. That it takes years to be able to defend yourself. Okay, Damien, what is number two, on your top five list of the worst mistakes that people make when preparing to defend against a real street attack?

Damian Ross:

Training to wait. This happens in every defense class on the planet. Whether it's a dojo. I think this is like a hidden killer, if you will. Typically when you are training in self defense, what people do is they line up when you start, you stand in front of your partner, and you wait to be attacked. They attack you with a specific defense. And you give a specific counter to that attack.

When in reality, first just the mere fact that you're standing there in front of somebody who you think is a potential attacker, and you're letting them basically get the first punch and put their hands on you. Right there, against a good, someone who seizes it and let's just say what it is. A good street fighter, one shot is all they're going to need. One leads to two, two leads to three. We've got this notion that we're going to be able to block and counter, or that he's going to grab us in a specific way, and we're going to counter.

In the ring, or in the dojo, these sometimes appear to work. In the ring, it's simple. You can still gauge your distance. We're sparring, doing MMA, whatever, I know there is only x number of techniques you are going to throw at me. And the block is going to be more the shifting of my weight and parrying. We have already entered into a consensual fight, and that's what you're training in these consensual fights. When you're doing self defense, I know that he's going to grab me in a specific way, and I'm expecting a finite number of techniques, even if it's in the hundreds, your training partner is going to get this hand, you're set up to win. He's going to let you win, he's not trying to take something from you.

So in the dojo, when you're doing these things, they appear to work. Take it outside of the realm of training and competition, when you're going to your car, when you're coming into your apartment, and you're confronted with

somebody, and you're not sure, you're in that gray area, if they're going to make a move, you don't know if they're lost, if they want something from you, if they're trying to help you with your groceries. When they make a move, we have what we call, an oh shit moment. And even when I was working body guarding, security, and doing all that other crazy crap, and I knew that there probably was going to be a problem, and the guys, anyone who is in law enforcement, military, will tell you the same thing, you're out there and like oh my god, he's going for it. Even when you're ready, trained and geared up, you still have that oh shit moment, where it's, oh shit, he's going for it. You take a split second to realize what's happening and then you've got to mobilize.

In that time, you will not be able to figure out what type of attack is coming, if it's a punch, if it's a stab, if it's a grab, and then you've got to figure out which counter to use. Oh, grab my wrist, I use counter 1A. He grabbed my shoulder, I use counter 1B. In reality those grabs, those initial techniques are just the beginning of the assault. The real assault follows that up. And what does the damage. That first grab, punch, kick is going to be followed by a barrage of them. So what you need to do is focus on non-specific self defense. Or non-specific defense that is targeted at general areas, based on simple motor skills, you know that work on a specific position and distance. If it's more complicated than swinging a bat or kicking a ball, chances are you're not going to be able to do it.

So if I know my target is sitting there, whether he grabs my wrist, or he grabs my shoulder, I'm just going to blast him. Just going to blast him, I'm not going to wait to see what he grabs on me. As soon as he, you know we set our distance in self defense training, we set our distance, a perfect case scenario, best case scenario is, far enough away for if he has to grab us or touch us he has to shift his weight. So now, as soon as I see that shift in weight, I can react, and that reaction, if he's trying to close the distance on me, I know I've got to do something, I've got to move or I've got to attack. Once you draw that line in the sand, that's it. If you let him in any closer, you're not going to be able to react in time. I don't care how many stripes you've got on your black belt, if you're standing next to me, and you want to punch me in the face, you're going to have a good shot at doing it. Right?

In martial arts we like to think we are ever present and constantly in the moment, but in reality is this, when you're going about your daily life, you're not constantly on edge. If you are, you're insane. I'm telling you right now, it's not a realistic way to live. Right? You're probably going to have an ulcer by the time you're 35. What you're going to do is interact with your environment in a way that allows you enough reaction time, and then don't get sucked into someone trying to set you up and close in the distance on you. In order for anyone to impose their will on you, they have to get next to you. If they're across the parking lot, they can do whatever they want to. Right? They can yell, they can kick, they can scream, it doesn't matter. In order for you to impose your will on me you have to be next to me. And once you learn how to manage that distance, and once you learn how to respond with those non-specific defenses, I

mean we're targeting general areas, like above the neck, and moving. Things become very simplified when you break everything down to position and distance.

Jeff Anderson: Man, this is so timely that you're talking about this, I just got back from an arms course. The person who gave us the course, doesn't want me to mention who they are. One of things that he brought out which would seem so obvious to most people, is that whether it's firearms training or self defense training, whatever it is, we do ingrain these bad habits,

Damian Ross: It's all the same.

Jeff Anderson: Whether it's all the same. Even if it's as simple, as in this case, like a wrist grab, in the dojo, we're practicing wrist grabs, so you let them grab your wrist, because you're going to do this technique, so you let them grab your wrist. And you do that over and over and over again, so your training partner can get used to defending against a wrist grab, but what it does is ingrain these pathways where if you're somewhere and somebody reaches out, your brain is used to, like you let them grab your wrist. In real life, don't even let them grab it. Don't let them do it,

Damian Ross: Right.

Jeff Anderson: Let them have to get to your wrist, in order to train. So we ingrain these bad habits. It's just really timely that you bring that up. So I love that insight. Okay. We've been talking with Damien Ross, of myselfdefensetraining.com, about his top five mistakes most people are making in preparing for a real attack. We only just hit the first two, if my math is correct, which it usually sucks really bad, it means we have three left, and those are coming right up, but first check out this special message.

Okay, we're back with Damien Ross of myselfdefensetraining.com, with his top five list of the worst mistakes people make when preparing to face a real attacker.

We just finished up the first two pet peeves that Damien has, so let's jump back in to continue our bitching and complaining session.

Okay, Damien, we've gone over your first two top five list for mistakes people are making in preparing for a real attack. That leaves us with number three. So what is your third biggest pet peeve that you have when it comes to preparing for a real attack?

Damian Ross: The toos. I'm too old, I'm too fat, I'm too busy, I'm too small. You know, self defense, it's funny, because when people are like, I'm going to get in shape and do this, or I'm injured and I'm going to start this, and my response is like, well, you think you're going to get attacked when you look like you're in shape and

you're walking around with a lot of confidence, or do you think you're going to get attacked when you're hobbling around on crutches or using a cane. In reality, we all know the answer to that.

But the problem is again, get back to that perception of self defense is some type of martial arts. Yes, there is a physical component to it, but there's a lot of tactical to it as well. How you manage yourself in your environment, other ways you can arm yourself and protect yourself. We concentrate on empty hand technique, well we teach a variety of close quarters weapons, everything from pepper spray, to black jacks and brass knuckles. You use everything you can. And we get into weapon retention as well. It's what you have in your tool box. Now is the time you need to prepare and adjust and adapt.

It's always about adaptation. In my opinion, self defense is always smaller, weaker, unarmed, verses larger, stronger, multiple attackers or not. What works for a smaller person, male or female will work for a larger person. The reality is the bigger, stronger, faster person can make bigger mistakes than a smaller person can. Like I said, chances are you're going to be attacked when you're most vulnerable. Your appearance, body language says it all, and now is the time you need to figure out how to protect yourself. You're looking at self defense is about adaptation, like I mentioned this before, you need to constantly adapt, your current physical skills to the ever growing need of self defense.

The problem again is, you get martial arts and combat sports that have a lot of athleticism and physicality attached to them, and you're not them, and I'm not them, we're trying to live in a world where there are predators out there and the chance we come across one. One, we want to make them pick somebody else, the analogy I like to use is the two buddies, with the bear in the woods, they're walking along and they see the bear and the one buddy starts putting on his running shoes. And his friend looks at him and says, you're never going to outrun that bear. And he goes, oh no, I just have to outrun you.

Self defense is the bear, so what you're doing when you start preparing, you're increasing your awareness, you're getting better body language, you're making some eye contact, you're interacting with a world that says, hey, in a split second, maybe I'll just pick the next person. That's it. It's a predatory decision that's made by your threat, just to go on to the next person, because believe me, we all know not everybody is doing this stuff. If nobody's doing this stuff, we'd be more like Bill Gates. Right?

It's not like it's only a small percentage of people relative to the general population that are going to prepare. And anything you do, is going to go a long way. And remember, this isn't a title fight, you were targeted because he thinks he's going to get what he wants from you. Once you resist, the game changes, his risk might not be worth the reward. As you get injured, continue your education, continue adapting. If you can't do that, then what you're training in,

is not self defense, it's a combat sport, it's something else. So you need something that you can do, even when you're at your worst.

Jeff Anderson: Oh, really good points, really good points. Okay, that brings us to number four in our top five list. So what is the fourth thing that you think is a big mistake that people are making out there in preparing for self defense against a real attack?

Damian Ross: Pulling your punches in training. I think it's one of the worst things you can do and you do it when training with a partner. This is why when it comes to self defense, we're not talking about martial arts or combat sports, where training of the partner is essential, I'm talking about self defense. I use self defense training like firearms training, I use live rounds, I hit my target, I position the distance, I'm moving, I'm drawing, I'm closing, I'm doing all the things that I would normally do, and I really don't give a shit, what my target does. All I care about is my position relative to my target, and how far it is from me. That's it.

When you're training, in order to build real confidence, and develop power, you need to go 100%. Whether it's empty hand technique, or using a cane, or using a knife, pretending to stab, hit and bludgeon, will cause you to pretend in the street.

I mean from years of sparring, and I was doing karate, it was pulling your punches on your partner when you're sparring. When you're sparring, it creates really bad habits in the streets. I've seen guys hit and I remember when I was in my 20's, I remember being in a situation where I was hitting somebody, and had literally zero effect on them. I realized I was doing what I do in class. I was hitting him, but I wasn't driving, I wasn't fully committed to it, and I wasn't getting the desired effect I thought I was going to get. And that's a rude awakening, so I changed my training. Back then when I was doing karate, I just started hitting the [inaudible 00:24:18] like crazy. Then it kind of became difficult to control what I was doing, which was fine. I didn't care. I really cared about having that power, and having that effect on my target.

In our self defense training system, which is our program, our main program, we give this a fancy name, called combat conditioning, and really what it means is you're training with 100% effort and technique. Along with developing power and speed, it develops attitude. So you know when you flip the switch, and I think the hardest thing for regular people to do, not fighters, not soldiers, not cops, it's to flip the switch. To go. You need to create that go, no go condition, and when you decide to go, you need to go foot to the floor.

That's where training, hitting, and stabbing, I get a kick out of people who do knife systems and all they do is dance with a knife, come on, stab something. As soon as you stab something, you automatically understand how to hold the knife, what knife is good, what knife is crap. When you hit something, and when I first started training with a black jack, I started, I got on the bob, the dummy, and I started hitting the thing, and I realized, holy shit, this thing can come back and hit me in the head. Which it almost did, oh it did, kind of drop me a little

silly. I was seeing someone coming in and finding me on the ground with a black jack next to me and the dummy with a smile on it's face. It's tough.

It corrects a lot of things, and you're really going to find out, there's really only a couple ways you're going to stab, there's only a couple knives you're really going to want to hold, there's only a couple ways you're really going to use a club or a stick, or a cane. When you're sitting there flipping it and spinning it around, that looks cool, but you ain't causing any damage.

You're also going to find out that you want to have a little weight behind that stuff. It makes stuff real, and they upside it from a training standpoint, that when you train like this, and you actually hit, you can't do, it limits the amount you can do, because your body gets tired. And your hands get sore, and you condition yourself to actually hit something. While it make take a lot of effort, a lot more effort. It actually cuts down your time in training a lot. Like I say, if I put you in a room, and I just say punch this thing, as much as you can every day, and come back every day and do it again and do it again. I'm going to tell you by the end of a couple of weeks, you're going to have a hell of a punch, and if anyone gets near you and you decide to tee off on them, you're going to see some results.

Stay away from pulling your punches, practicing control. In the real world, you're going to miss, you're going to hit, when you hit something you want it to stay hit. You need a reaction out of it so you can do another technique, and another technique and build on that. And again, try to get away from having to knock someone out, we just want to have an effect. Right? If they flinch, if the move, well maybe you escape, or you go off on them, that depends on you. Practice full boar or full go.

Jeff Anderson:

Awesome. I know people out there can't see me, or hear me, but I'm nodding my head like as hard as I possibly can. All really good information, it's so on point. So here's what I have so far, I'm taking notes here.

Number one in the top five is that it takes years of training to defend yourself, it does not.

Number two is, is the second mistake, is training to wait. In other words, developing bad habits in your training because you're just kind of going through the motions for the purposes of having a training partner and stuff. And that's going to set you up for, that might be the way you react when you're actually attacked.

Myth number three, or mistake number three is thinking that, it's all the too,s. I'm too fat, I'm too short, I'm too old, I'm too small, and so why take any kind of training anyway. And those are the reasons why you will be attacked. And you damn well better be ready to react to those.

And then number four, is pulling your punches when you're training.

Alright, Damien, so what is number five on your top five list for the worst mistakes that people make in preparing for a real street fight?

Damian Ross:

You know the audience is going to love this one. A gun is all you need for self defense. First, there seems to be, people think that because what I do, I'm not an advocate of firearms, which is ridiculous. It said in my bio, I had a concealed carry permit, and in the public of New Jersey, when I was a bodyguard. It's not exactly an easy thing to get, you know you have to show need, your life is in danger, I had to go before a judge and qualify, the whole bit.

A firearm is just another tool in your tool box. There seems to be some ridiculousness that substance guys are against guns. Well to me, it's all the same thing. It's just another tool, but the fact of the matter is, over 70% of violent crime in America is committed without a firearm. Even if you're in a situation where a gun is warranted, if it's a reactive situation, you're going to need to create space, draw your weapon, fire and hit your target. There aren't any guarantees he's going down. You still may need to fight.

This is why you should supplement your training with other means and systems. When we're in emergency services, we have redundancies, we've got back ups to back ups. Never put all your eggs in one basket. Never depend on one thing, that was made by the lowest bidder to save you. People think that, this is funny, and grown, grown ups, you know I have fun with people on Facebook, social media, I get a good time, when guys say all I'd do is shoot them. Really? Somebody that is a potential threat, you're going to pull out your firearm and shoot them. You're not going to have a conversation first? You think all threats start at seven yards away? No way, it's ridiculous. Grown men talking about shooting another human being over the slightest infraction.

Or they'll say, I won't let anyone get near me. Oh, wow, you don't go to a concert, or a movie. It's like, it's nuts. The problem is, people look at this and it's like the diet pill of self defense. I'm going to get this and all my problems are going to be solved.

Look, firearms work, there is no doubt about it. If they didn't I think we'd still be hitting each other with rocks and sticks. But there are times when you need a rock and a stick or something else, a coffee cup, and a pen to use. What we say in self defense, you do what gives you the tactical advantage at the time. So whatever it may be. Again, wherever you are with firearms, yes, when in doubt, it's a perfect world, and I had the justification and the time, yeah. Why get my hands dirty?

I mean heck, I carry pepper spray, and people are like why do you carry pepper spray? Because I know better. Because if someone comes up to me, I'm just

going to juice them and go about my business. I'm not going to sit there and roll around with them unless I have to.

Give yourself a chance, be realistic about your training, and include a wide variety of back up systems. Not even a wide variety, understand that maybe I got to practice with an edge weapon or an impact weapon, edge, impact weapon, and empty hand, understanding some basic stuff. Understanding the tactics and principles, then you can turn most anything you can grab into one of those things. Firearms are great, big fan, but again, it's not the be all end all when you're living in a world where you most likely will be without your firearm, or not have time to draw it, if you're one of the three million concealed carry permit holders in the United States.

Jeff Anderson:

Yeah, a resounding amen, to that. Lots of nodding. My workout today was nodding to, I love all your tips man, that was awesome. Thank you so much. I really appreciate your getting here. I love getting insights from people like you and just seeing what other perspectives are out there. Definitely bring up things that you haven't thought of, or that we've not had on here before, and I love giving our audience a new perspective on that.

So listen everyone, definitely go check out more of Damien's training. You can go, if you're listening to the podcast, actually on our website right now, then you can go ahead and there will be some links down in the show notes there. Also you can get our cheat sheet and everything from a page on our blog. We're going to have all that stuff ready for you as well. But you can go over to his website. Go to www.myselfdefensetraining.com. Check it out, it's real world stuff there, and that's what I love about Damien's training, I'm a big fan, so go check it out now.

And until our next Modern Combat and Survival broadcast, this is Jeff Anderson saying, prepare, train, and survive.