

**THE FACTS: YOU
HAVE THE POWER
TO PROTECT YOUR-
SELF. STARTING
HERE, A MUST-READ
TWELVE-PAGE REPORT**

Self-

'Women hesitate to yell when they suspect danger because they don't feel they have the right to disturb the peace'

Only 43.1 percent of women who are raped report the crime

'Assess the situation, take a breath, and focus on which parts of your body are free to strike with'

Self-defense

Government statistics indicate one in twelve American women will be the victim of an attempted or completed rape at some point in her life

Your best weapons in an attack: mental and physical readiness

27 percent of rapes involve a weapon used by the offender: of these, 27 percent are handguns and 37 percent are knives

You Can Defe

No longer just an urban nightmare, the threat of assault—from a pickpocket, burglar, mugger or rapist—is just as real for women living in the idyllic port of Seattle as in crime-weary New York City, on tree-lined suburban streets or in rural areas.

On a national level, violent crimes increased by 5 percent during 1989—the highest jump since 1985. Reports from the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicate that one in twelve American women will be the victim of an attempted or completed rape at some point in her life. Given this grim reality, are you prepared to defend yourself in an attack?

Most women say no. They fear they would freeze or panic or do something to endanger themselves even more.

Too polite to fight

"From childhood on, women are programmed to respond to violence in a certain way: Boys learn to fight and girls learn to avoid conflict at all costs," says Shelley Neiderbach, Ph.D., executive director of Crime Victims' Counseling Services in Brooklyn. "In that way, we've been raised to be victims."

Rape victims, for example, frequently report that they sensed danger well before their attack but were "too embarrassed" to act on their gut-level instincts. Many remembered thinking, *What if I'm wrong?*

One woman who's teaching others to tap into their basic survival instincts is Susan Bartelstone, director of Incident Management in Queens Village, New York. Bartelstone's twelve-hour seminar stresses psychological—as well as physical—self-defense. "You can pick up most of the techniques of self-defense in an hour," she explains, "but then it takes time to learn how to summon the will to fight," what she calls "the warrior spirit." "We work to strengthen the belief that no one has the right to hurt you. Whatever it takes to defend yourself—you'll do it."

A visitor to one of Bartelstone's classes is struck by her stark, matter-of-fact approach: "Make it loud. Make it rude. Cause a scene," she advises

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SPECIAL REPORT: Self-defense

anyone catching a pick-pocket in the act. Or, if struggling with a rapist: "Push your key into his eye socket," she says, "turn and pull—you'll pop that eyeball right out. This isn't something you do when someone cuts in line at the supermarket," she adds. "This person is trying to rape or kill you—he's showing no concern for your feelings."

Self-defense training: Who needs it?

Experts estimate that any woman has a fifty-fifty chance of stopping an attack when she resists in any way (anything from talking or yelling to running or fighting). But, according to Patricia Occhiuzzo Giggans, executive director of the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women, "if she's properly trained in self-defense, she boosts her chances of successfully deterring an assault to 75 percent." Still, few women are properly trained, and the subject of self-defense is clouded by misconceptions:

Myth: *It takes years of studying martial arts to defend yourself.*

Fact: *Martial-arts training may be of little value in an assault; vital preparedness skills can be taught in just a few hours.*

Myth: *You have to be physically strong in order to deflect an attacker.*

Fact: *Strength is not the issue; mental readiness is your best weapon in an attack. If you can exert just one and a half pounds of pressure on a finger, you can dislocate it; five pounds of pressure can rupture an eardrum or snap the bones of an instep. Sixty pounds of pressure can dislocate a kneecap.*

A good self-defense class isn't about karate chops and kicks. Instead, women learn to avoid or de-escalate threatening situations and, if confronted, to throw an attacker off guard and get away. Classes also guide students through the vulnerable points on an attacker's body—the eyes, ears, nose, throat, groin, knees, shins and insteps—and show them how to hit these points . . . hard. A few hours of practice can instill lightning-quick responses. By repeating basic defensive moves over and over, you'll create a vocabulary of movement that you can call on in a split second if necessary.

"Defending yourself physically is just one option," Bartelstone is careful to remind her students. "Sometimes submitting to the attack is a better idea—especially if there's a weapon involved. There is no right or wrong way to respond—if you lived through it, then you did the right thing."
—Constance Cardozo

Avoiding danger: strategies that work

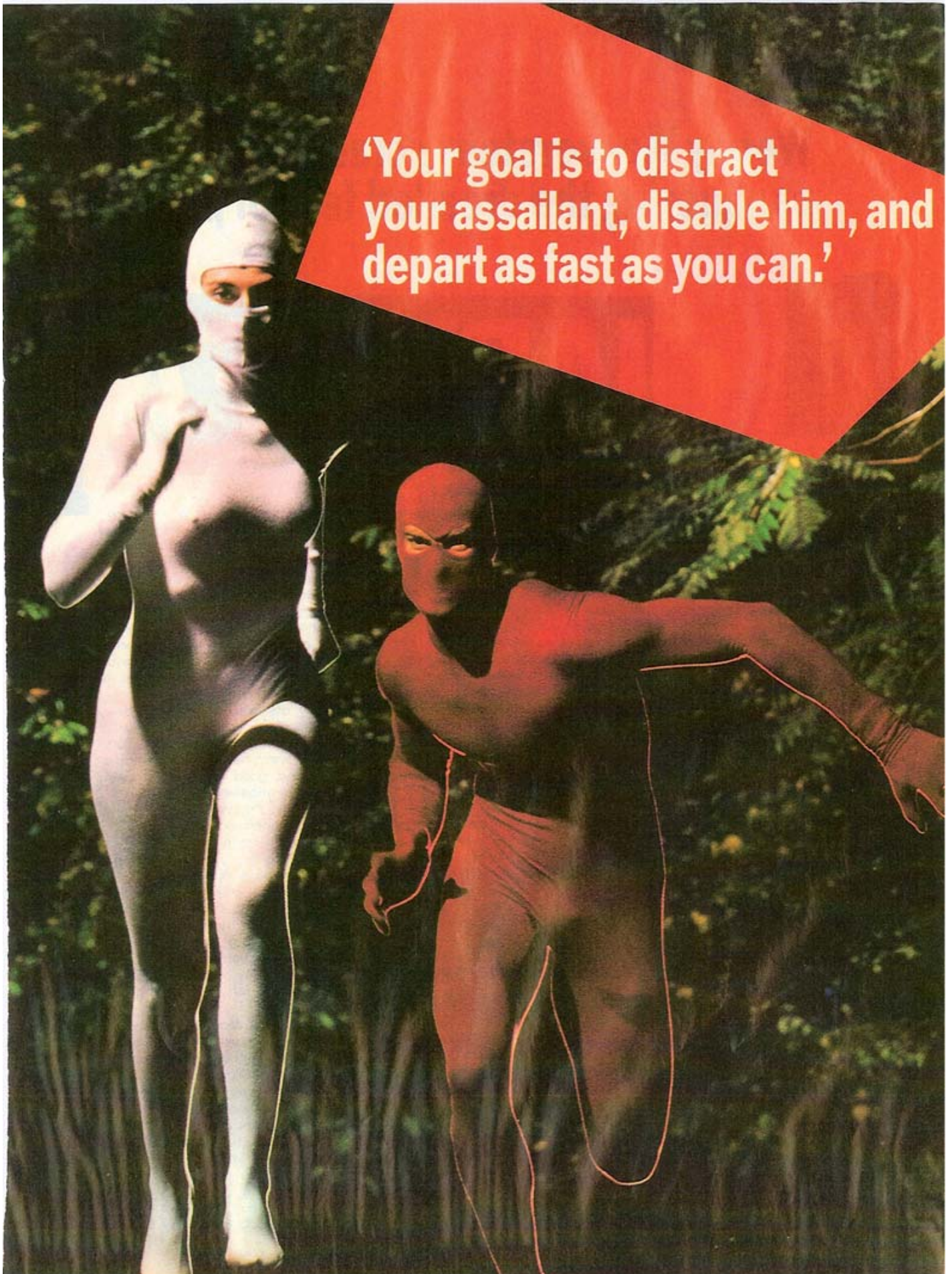
Experts say that we sense danger long before our brain can register it. Our skin prickles at the feeling of being watched; we notice that someone looks unfamiliar or out of place. This is the time to **trust your instincts**. Once this inner radar is trained, your chances of avoiding a conflict increase dramatically.

Often, however, there is no warning. In a sudden attack, your first priority is to keep your fear under control. **Take a deep breath**. When you panic, you stop breathing normally; your heart pounds; your vision and hearing tunnel and your perception of time becomes distorted. "Fear creates a burst of adrenaline—you become wired, tuned-in, afraid," says Rodney Batiste, director of ESCAPE Strategies, a Washington, D.C.-based self-defense training program. "If you understand this burst of energy, you can make it work to your advantage."

On average, the first twenty to thirty seconds of a confrontation determine whether it will escalate into violence. **Assess your situation** before your attacker makes a move. Your first goal is to distance yourself from him. If you can run, do it fast. If not, you need to de-escalate the situation and avoid violence. Your next move will depend on several variables: Does he have a weapon? Is he drunk or on drugs? Is he alone? Can you yell for help? Should you submit? "If he has a weapon and all he wants are your valuables—by all means, give them to him," says Mary Brandl, a Minneapolis-based self-defense expert.

"There is no single 'right' response to an attack," says A. Nicholas Groth, Ph.D., executive director of Forensic Mental Health Associates and author of *Men Who Rape*. "I once asked a group of rapists how they responded when they were kicked in the groin by a victim. One said it deterred him. Another said he never felt the kick. And the third said, 'That's when I

**'Your goal is to distract
your assailant, disable him, and
depart as fast as you can.'**



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Physical readiness

Whatever your age, size or fitness level, you can successfully use some simple moves to defend yourself. The keys to physical resistance:

1. Learn the tactics

Assess the situation Take a breath, remember the vulnerable target areas and focus on the parts of your body that are free to strike with.

Get in a fighting stance Movement is more efficient when it comes from balance, and any force—a kick or a strike—is enhanced by a rotation. To get into the stance, step back with your dominant foot—the right if you're right-handed, the left if you're left-handed—rotate shoulders and bring back the dominant hand, using the other hand as a block.

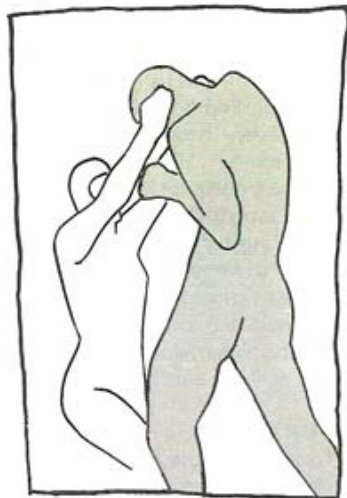
Remember your weapons You have five natural weapons: your two hands, your two feet and your voice, and you can augment them with pens, umbrellas, The Persuader (a Kubotan-like device) and keys. Use them in the self-defense moves shown here.

2. Practice

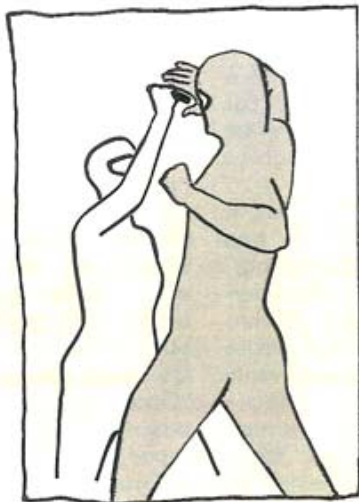
The way to make these moves instinctive is to practice them, both physically and through visualization. Find a friend and take turns being the victim and the attacker, moving in slow motion (so you don't hurt each other). Practice yelling, "No!" with every move. If you have access to a pummel bag like the ones used in football practice, use it as a target bag, with a partner behind it.

3. Get stronger and faster

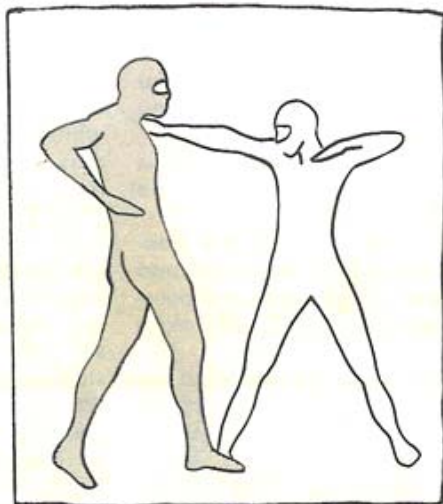
These techniques are meant to be followed up with running. You can improve both endurance and speed with *long-distance running* (even two miles twice a week can give you an edge and put running back into your movement vocabulary). —Peg Moline



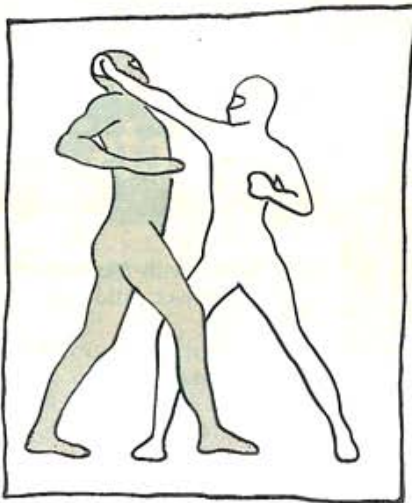
Slam ears Using fists or cupped hands, bring one or—most effective—both hands together hard over ears. The object is to pop the eardrums.



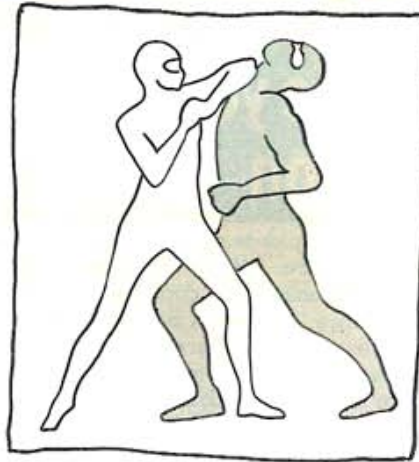
Jab or peck eyes Think of sliding your hand up the cheek (so the attacker doesn't see it coming) and poking with a finger, a key, a pen or The Persuader, shown above. This is the most effective move of all.



Jab to throat The windpipe, at the base of the neck, is very vulnerable to the slightest pressure. Imagine jabbing it with the fingertips, the V between your thumb and forefinger or with The Persuader, a pen or a book.



Forearm to neck With your arm pulled into a backhand position, swing the forearm to either side of the neck. The carotid artery—the chief supply of blood to the brain—is located here, and if struck can cause blackout.



Elbow to chin Pretend you're holding on to a pin (with both hands) located high on your chest, between your breasts, and swing either elbow hard.



Elbow to sternum or stomach (Especially effective if you're grabbed from behind): Cock your elbow and swing it hard into the sternum or stomach of your attacker.



Knee to groin This isn't the most effective initial move since the groin area is easy to protect, and a male attacker may expect it; better to jab eyes, ears, nose or throat first, then grab assailant, pull him in close and jam up with the knee.



If you're thrown to the ground Get on your back as quickly as possible, with knees bent and feet up (ready to kick), arms at your sides to protect your body from kicks, hands up. Aim for the same low targets—knees and shins—keeping your own limbs in tight, so your attacker will have to come in closer and possibly lose his balance. If he falls, you can jab his eyes and run.

Not shown: **Kick to knee** From the side or front or to the back, use your heel or toe to hit the kneecap, trying to kick through it. **Kick to shin** Lots of nerve endings here, and it may be easier than aiming for the knee. Again, use your toe or heel and aim to kick through the shinbone. **Stomp on instep** Bring the heel of your foot down hard, trying to break all those little bones on top of the attacker's instep.

(continued)