

PENETRATION ROTATION INJURY

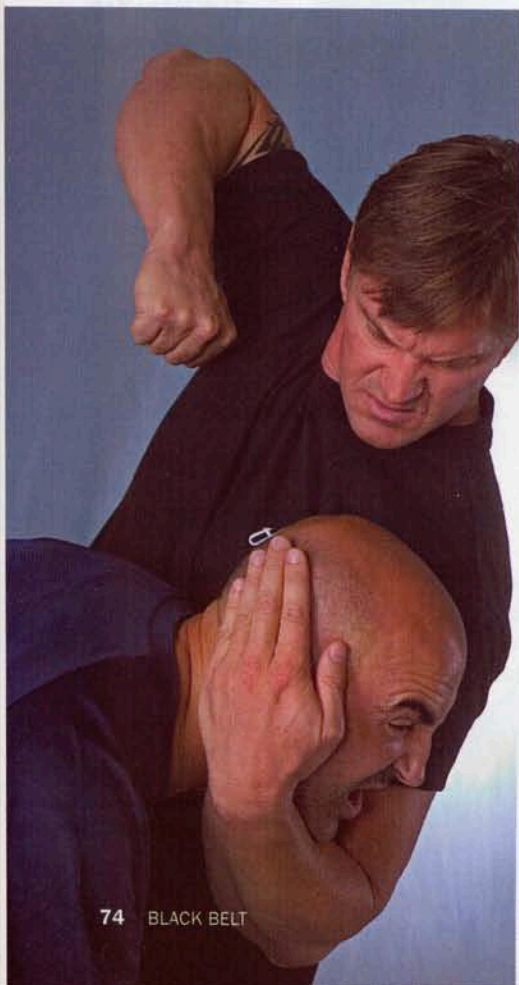
THE TRIAD OF EFFECTIVE SELF-PROTECTION

by Tim Larkin and Chris Ranck-Buhr • Photography by Rick Husted

On a cold, blustery night, you're heading toward your car after the last appointment of the day. An icy winter wind cuts through your coat and numbs your face as you fumble with your keys. All you want to do is plop your body into the seat and get your exhausted bones home to a warm bed.

Suddenly your calf explodes with pain, your feet leave the ground and your head bounces off the asphalt. Although stunned and hurt, you quickly refocus your blurry eyes only to see a ski-masked thug hulking over you, yelling something as he reaches inside his coat. This is your *only* opportunity to change things in your favor. Hesitate and it'll get worse.

Tim Larkin controls his opponent's head as he prepares to unload a forearm strike to the back of the neck. Choosing the right target is an essential component of Larkin's TFT system.





“Real self-protection revolves around sound principles — the physical and physiological laws that govern the effective use of violence.”

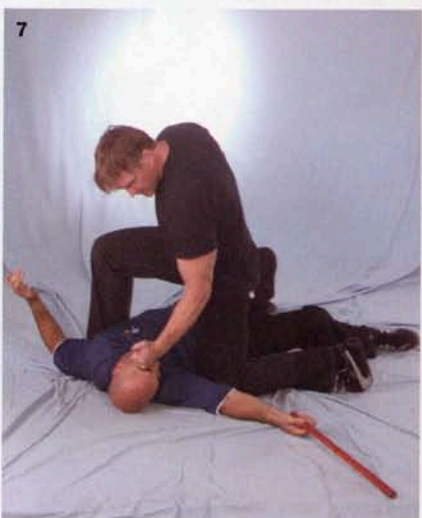
The question is, What's in your toolbox to help you handle this situation?

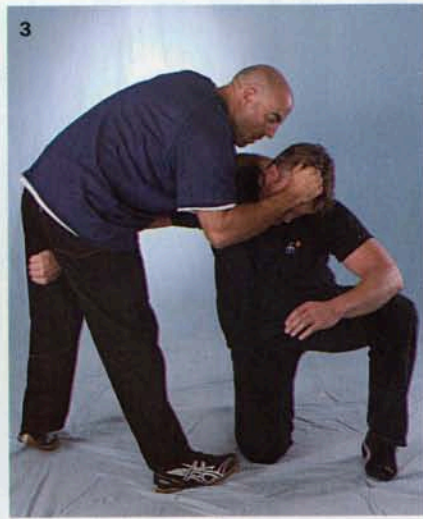
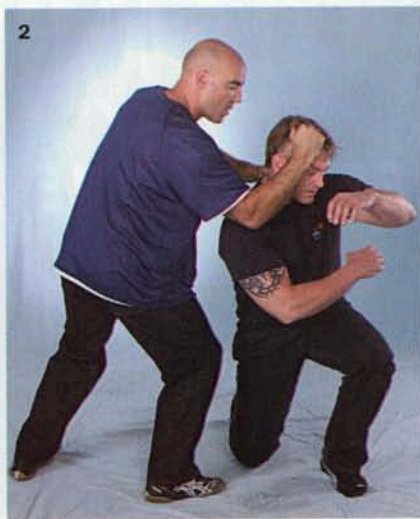
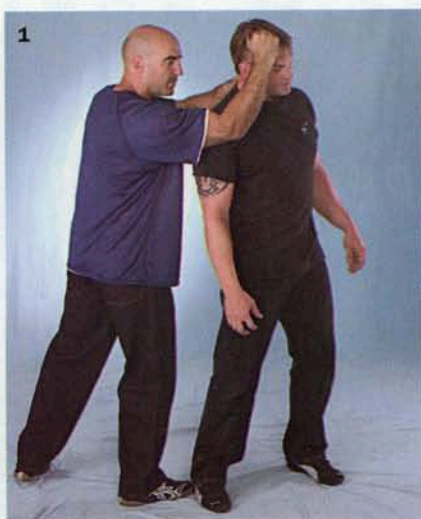
Will your response be a rehearsed self-defense technique? If so, you may soon discover that none of the moves you learned in class was executed from this position. You know the ones we're talking about—the three techniques your instructor told you to memorize because they'd get you out of anything. Yeah, right! Anything but this.

It's almost funny—it would be if it wasn't such a dire situation—how useless that information can seem at a time like this. It's a lousy way to learn that real self-protection has nothing to do with memorizing moves or techniques. Real self-protection revolves around sound principles—the physical and physiological laws that govern the effective use of violence.

Principles can save your life; techniques can get you killed.

STICK DEFENSE: The assailant threatens Tim Larkin with a stick (1). Larkin strikes first with an elbow to the inner thigh (2) and an open-hand blow to the ear (3-4). He then hits the man in the abdomen (5). Once he falls, Larkin plants a knee on his torso (6) and a hammerfist on his face (7).





Violence as a Survival Tool

When battling for your life, you don't use ground fighting, kickboxing, grappling, knife fighting, stick fighting, reality fighting and so on. You use violence, pure and simple.

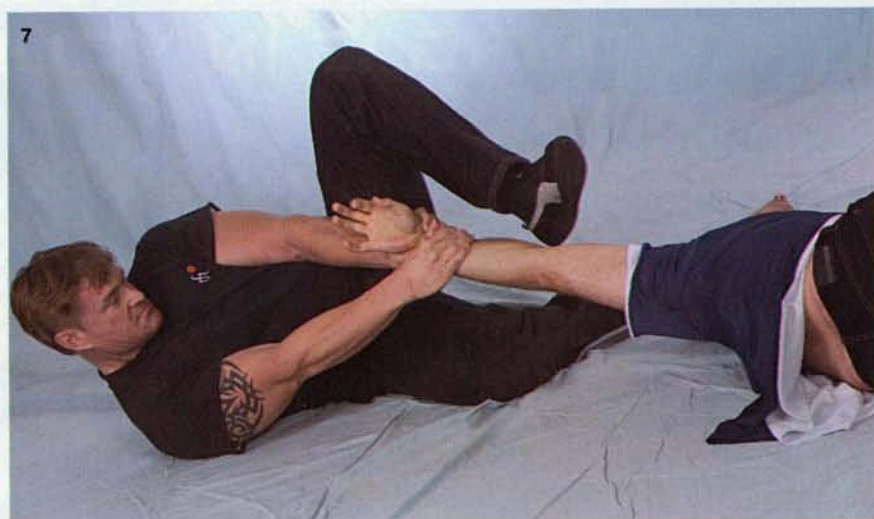
When someone is intent on hurting or killing you, you can't change his mind with a technique. The only reliable course of action is to inflict violence on him—to physically shut down his brain by wrecking his body. It's simple, it's ugly and no sane person wants to be involved in it.

Yet surviving violent conflict means getting past the stigma carried by the word "violent" and coming to grips with the fact that understanding violence and studying it doesn't make you a bad person.

In today's society, we've gotten away from directly examining violence and thus put ourselves one step behind the predators who understand it and have no problem using it. In fact, the best practitioners of violence have virtually no formal training in any combat sport or martial art, nor are they well educated.

Who are these people? None other than the men who make up our nation's prison population.

The criminal sociopath—a nice way of saying "thug"—may not be able to explain how to use violence, but he sure can show you what works. He's not in prison because he lost a fight; he's there because he's good at using violence. And his blunt effectiveness can be seen time and again in news clips on the In-



ternet and television.

The mistake we make as law-abiding members of society is shunning the very idea that we can use those same principles to stop predators like that from using violence on us. That's why we've got to begin seeing violence for what it is: a tool anyone can learn how to use.

Here's what you need to consider: Violence is rarely the answer in most situations. All of us can tick off the inappropriate times to use violence—road rage, bar fights, sports competitions and so on—but what about those rare circumstances in which violence is the answer? Under those conditions, a different set of rules applies:

- When violence is the answer, it's the *only* answer. Effectively, it's your ultimate survival tool.
- When it comes to survival, your

combat sport, martial art or reality-based training simply provides the methods and principles you'll use to successfully employ violence. And employ it you must, for statistics show that in violent criminal confrontations, the person who dominates is the one doing the violence.

Once you've established that violence is the only response to handle the situation at hand, it becomes clear that you must be the one doing the violence. Remember that violence, as we've outlined here, is merely a tool. It doesn't care whether the good guy or the bad guy uses it.

That gets you out of the useless game of comparing "martial art X" to "combat sport Y" in an attempt to see which is superior. Such turf wars are worthless when you're in the precarious position of fighting for your life. Under these circumstances, there's only one thing you



HAIR PULL: The opponent grabs a fistful of Tim Larkin's locks (1). Larkin immediately drops to one knee (2) and unleashes a hammerfist to the groin (3). He then seizes the man's hand (4) and leverages him to the ground (5-6). The TFT stylist lies back (7) and finishes his foe with a stomp kick to the neck (8).

need to compare your methods against: the universal standard of violence. How do your responses, learned from style X or sport Y, fare in the realm of violence?

Luckily, physics and physiology provide us with unbiased standards to judge a successful act of violence. From these standards, we've learned that every successful use of violence has three components:

- Penetration
- Rotation
- Injury

They occur in no particular order, but when you view real violence, you can see that all three are actively employed by the person who gets to walk away at the end.

Each component of this "triad of violence" needs to be understood, so let's start with the idea that techniques

are worthless. For example, how many ways are there to kick a man in the groin? There's really only one: as hard as you can. You can be in front of him, off to his side, behind him, standing, sitting or on the floor. Although there are thousands of techniques for getting it done, the basic answer is always the same: as hard as you can.

Instead of technique, the effective use of violence is about understanding and employing the principles at work in every violent act. Effective violence starts with penetration, is driven home with rotation and ends with injury.

Penetration

To injure someone with your bare hands, you need to be near enough to touch him. Penetration gets you to him and through him—and beyond. It puts

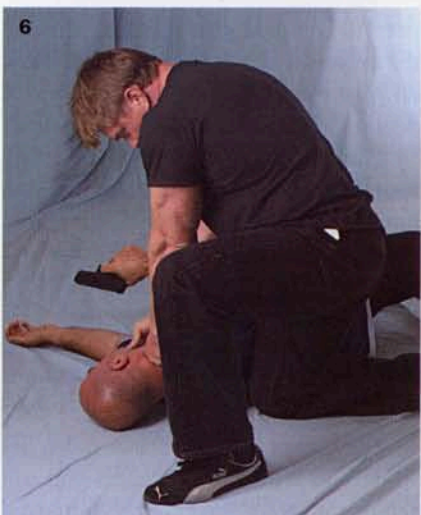
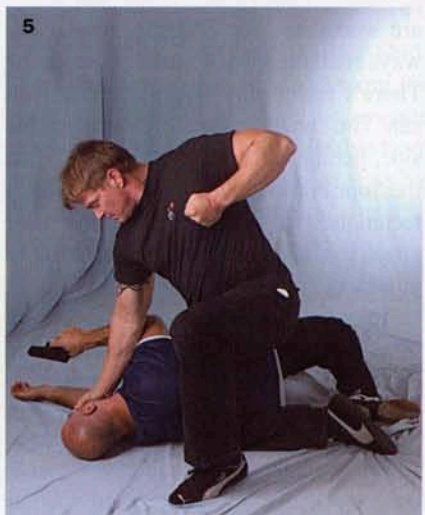
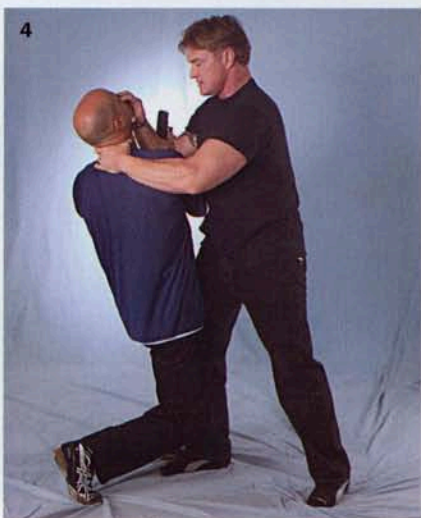
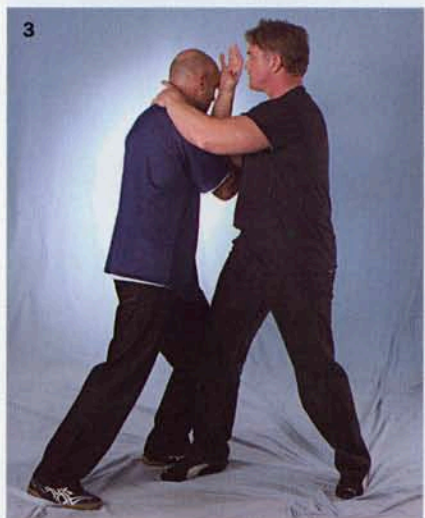
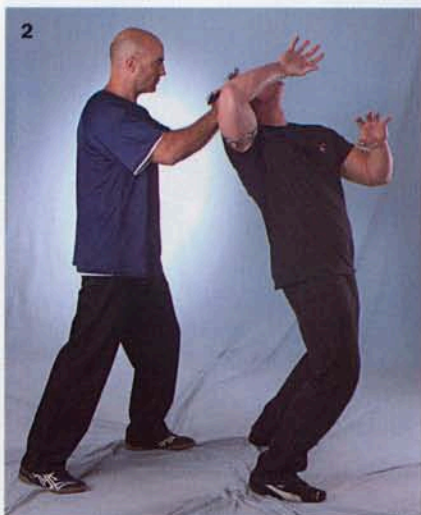
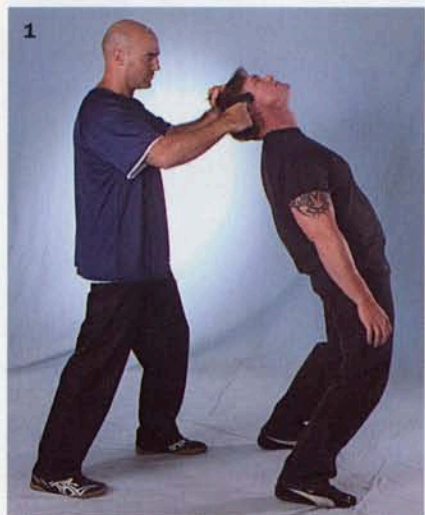
you right on top of him, dominating his space, driving him off-balance and maximizing kinetic energy for injury. It's your entire body weight in motion, slamming into a single target. It's your fist driven through his ribs by the locomotive of your mass. It's often referred to as stepping into the strike.

Rotation

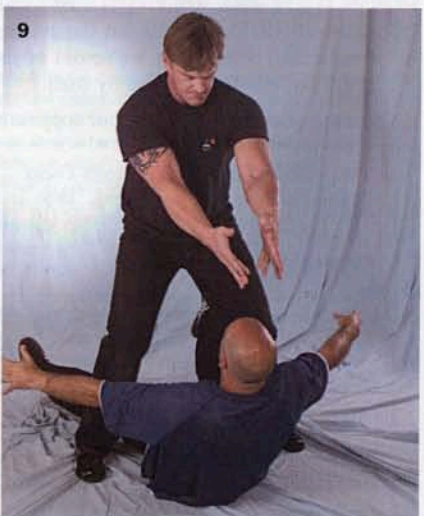
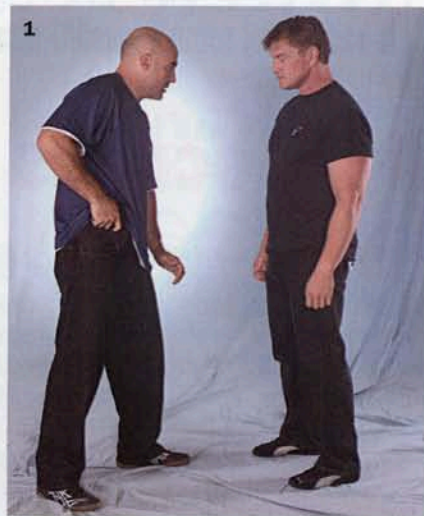
This is the follow-through. Rotation is how you take his balance and beat him down with it. It's the drive that propels your fist all the way through the ribs you just broke. It's the engagement of your entire musculature, rotating on the axis of your spine, to launch your arm forward and through the target. It's the deep follow-through required to distort bones far enough to snap them.

Injury

This is the ultimate goal of violence. It's what you get when you penetrate to a specific target and rotate through it. Injuries don't happen on their own or just because you wish they would. Serious, debilitating injury requires a large wallop delivered with a big slug of momentum (penetration) and then driven home and pushed all the way through the target



REAR GUN DEFENSE: The gunman holds Tim Larkin off-balance as he points his weapon at his head (1). Larkin raises his right arm and pivots (2), pushing the gun to the side (3). The martial artist then claws the man's face (4) and forces him to the ground (5). His finishing move is a downward punch to the jaw (6).



PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE: As soon as Tim Larkin realizes that his opponent is deploying a concealed handgun (1), he closes the gap (2) and slams a forearm strike into his neck (3). He then grabs the man's neck and sends a knee thrust into his groin (4). After pulling his trunk down (5), Larkin uses his left leg to entangle the man's left leg (6) and trip him (7). Once he's down, Larkin applies pressure to his neck by pushing downward on his head (8), after which he shoves him backward (9) and stomp-kicks his throat (10).

(rotation). Good targeting skills and a working knowledge of the body parts that are especially prone to injury are also critical.

How the Triad Works

To see how the three components fit together to form the triad of violence, consider the following self-defense scenario: You're accosted by a thug, so you step in and punch him in the solar plexus, then grab his hand and break his wrist while slamming him down to the concrete. This entails two iterations of penetration-rotation-injury:

- You step in (penetrate his space) and punch him (rotating your torso to throw the strike and follow through) in the solar plexus (thereby causing an injury to the target).
- You then grab his hand (penetration)



and break his wrist (with rotation and follow-through to cause the injury—and additional injuries as he falls to the ground).

The effective use of violence as a survival tool will always include this triad. It powers everything from striking to joint breaking to throwing. It exists in the use of extraneous tools like knives, sticks, clubs and so on. The triad of violence makes it all work.

Merging It With What You Know

As we've seen, effective violence has three synergistic components: penetration (maximizing force), rotation (follow-through) and injury (results). That gives you an objective yardstick for assessing how well the techniques and fighting sets you have in your arsenal will serve you


when your life is on the line.

Also, you can easily add any or all of the missing principles to what you already know. For penetration, step in and make sure you're moving into the strike, not standing still or moving away. For rotation, make sure you're following through, extending your arm or leg past the target as your body moves into the strike. For injury, make sure you're hitting a target that's susceptible to trauma; punching someone in the forehead isn't nearly as effective as gouging his eye.

Now, back to that cold, blustery night ...

The ski-masked thug bellows at you again and starts to pull something out of his coat. Your dizzy, unfocused mind suddenly snaps it all together with painful clarity: This is the real deal, and you're fighting for your life. Without a second thought, you roll onto your side and into him, driving your fist into his groin and throwing your torso against his knee. With a yelp, he goes down, and you stay on him, rolling up his leg and over the top with a full-bodied back elbow strike to the solar plexus. He curls around you reflexively, and you grab his head and smash it backward against the ground. You regain your feet and kick him in the ribs, breaking them and making him curl up. You then strike him in the side of the neck hard enough to knock him out.

You stand there in the glare of the streetlights, breathing hard white plumes into the chilly air. Your technique was ugly, and you probably looked like crap, but your principles were sound.

And because of that, his gun lies glinting in the light, quiet as a stone. 

About the authors: Tim Larkin is a close-combat instructor with more than 20 years of experience. His Target-Focus Training system has been taught to thousands of military, law-enforcement, civilian and corporate clients around the world. Chris Ranck-Buhr is a TFT instructor with 20 years of experience. For the past 15 years, he's specialized in designing instructor-training programs. For more information, visit <http://www.blackbeltmag.com> and click on Community, then Black Belt Authors.