

Knives, Bottles and Sharp Sticks

PART 2

By Alan Charlton Self Protection Association

In part one of Knives, Bottles and Sharp Sticks I tried to give an insight into the dangers of an unseen knife attacks. I hope you tried out the training drills and that they helped you get to grips with how easily someone can attack and how difficult it is to stop. In part 2 I would like to look at what happens when the knife is in the open. I have been lucky enough to train with some great instructors in regard to knife defence. I'm sure you will understand that I cannot do justice to all that there is to know about knife defence in just two articles. So lets waste no more time and look at the first rule if someone has pulled a knife on you. This rule will work in the majority of situations apart from maybe a telephone box. And any good knife defence instructor will call it the first rule. If someone confronts you and they pull out a knife and you can see it Run Like a Bastard.

It is simple and easy to remember. I'm not joking. If you can run why not? Is it your macho ego that is telling you to stay and have a battle with this knife wielding maniac or because you feel you have to do something physical to win? If you runaway and wake up the next morning you've won. You maybe thinking what if I can't run, point taken. But lets get this first rule across, I personally have the type of figure a company could design a new type of whaling ship on. But if someone pulls a knife on me, I will run and accelerate away quicker than a Porsche.

People who use knives, bottles or even a sharp stick, do so because they feel they have the weaker hand if forced to fight, they need all the help they can get. This is not a justification for stabbing someone just because you like the look of his watch. I'm saying that if you pick up a knife or any weapon you are doing so because you don't like the odds plus the sight of a knife will make a weak person appear a giant. If the attack is for money the person with the knife many show the knife openly, or tell you they have one. This is a terrifying situation and you are very likely to freeze to the spot, this is the effect the attacker wants, you are weak and he feels powerful and in control. Adrenalin and all its affects get to work, your increased heart rate, tunnel vision, shaking and sweating does all the work for him. He can now move in and with luck just take your money, car keys or anything that he likes the look of. After taking your money you are left in a state of shock, for a long time afterwards you will feel bad and angry about what happened. You will play over and over the encounter many times in your head, I could have done something, could I have fought back, why did he have to take my wedding ring? I should have told him to go f*** himself and dropped kicked him in the face.

What you have to do is face the fact that it happened, you survived the encounter without getting killed or having your face cut to pieces. Don't condemn yourself for being scared, learn from it and move on. It could have been a lot worse. Say your attacker was much more aggressive. You could have been walking along a street when he walked up to you asking the time. As you look at your watch he opens the side of your face with a razor or pushes a screwdriver into your chest, you could now be dying on the pavement.

Covering the Ground

If you are face to face with someone who is threatening you with a knife you are in a very dangerous situation, but if you can see it, you have a chance. Look at it this way, if someone wanted to cut you they would just do it. Many victims of knife attacks do not know that they have even been stabbed or cut. Because they did not see the person had a knife and assumed they had just been punched. In fact the realisation that you have been stabbed is more likely to come sometime after the attack.

The distance between you and the knife is where we can start looking at what to do to take control of a knife threat. But I'm going to say this one more time if the person with the knife is not close and you're not in a telephone box RUN. It is very unlikely your attacker will come after you once you have started your own personal land speed record. As I said before the person carrying the knife does so because it makes him or her feel stronger and more confident. If we look at a knife attack as a stand off the last thing in the world they are going to expect is you attacking them.

You have to cover the ground in front of you and take the fight to them. You have to close the attack down. The knife itself is not the enemy, the person holding the blade is. Make the attacker unconscious and the knife becomes no more dangerous than a banana. The point I am trying to make is jamming the attacking arm and striking hard to the face, or grabbing the attacker's arms then head butting him in the face before he makes his attack is practical. Some of you may be thinking that's a bit over the top, how come this person is about to cut you. We are talking about a situation that has developed into an all out nightmare. The threat of a situation should have been dealt with before the person had time to pull out the knife. By hitting first when you were confronted or better still getting away when you first felt the situation developing. If your back is against the wall you have to become your attackers nightmare, taking their comfort blanket of having a knife away by attacking them.

From the Movies

Before I say anymore I would like to cover this point. There is not a different happy answer I can give you to dealing with every possible knife attack, or situation a knife attack can develop from. I was once asked at a seminar, "what do I do if I wake up in my bed with someone sitting on top of me and holding a knife to my throat?" "Any Bloody thing he tells you to do", was my reply. It was not the answer she wanted to hear. She had taken her personal fear of being attacked to her ultimate nightmare. All you had to do was have the attack take place in a hotel room by a man called Norman whose mother didn't say much, and it would have been the scene from a movie. Yes it can happen, so can you winning the lottery. But you are more likely to be faced with a situation in the street or a domestic situation that has got way out of control. You should understand that if you are protecting yourself in a situation with a knife you are going to get cut. If you wake up with a knife to your throat you are in deep shit. But if your attacker is making demands you still have a fighting chance. It comes down to picking the right time, do or say anything that can give you a fighting chance. Or better still make sure your doors and windows are locked before you go to bed.

Do Anything to Survive

Let's put it this way, say you are asleep in bed one night and you wake up in the early hours of the morning desperate for a drink of water. So you make your way down stairs to the kitchen. As you stand there in the early morning light drinking the cold water, you hear someone run out of the darkness and up the stairs behind you. What would you do? All the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. You know that you are the only one up, the kids are asleep up stairs. On the kitchen table is the family bread knife, would you pick it up, would it make you feel happier to deal with the monster that has just run up you stairs? Suddenly you hear one of your children screaming. You grab the knife and run up the stairs, the bread knife in your hand is your equaliser. You say to yourself, "If that monster's attacking my children he's going to have to have a gun to stop me".

Anyone of us would help a loved one, we would not worry about having or needing a knife. The above story is made up; to get you to understand that we can all, if fighting for the right reasons, do anything to survive. If anyone is willing to use a knife to attack you then they have no right to expect anything less than if the fight is hand to hand and anything goes. You should feel that if I die in defending a loved one or myself, before they do the post-mortem on my body they will have to remove my attacker's testicles from my left hand and his eyeball from my right hand. I never want to be in that position. But if I am, I need to train with the right attitude and with techniques that will work under the intense pressure I will face within a knife attack.

Covering and Attacking

The following drills will get you working very close to your partner. You can use them for attacking as someone is reaching for a knife or if the knife is out and the attack has started. The hard part is getting to grips with the idea of moving in and closing down the attack. Also you can add to any of the drills throwing something at the attacker. For training purposes you could use a focus mitt, plastic cup or a boxing glove, to simulate throwing an ashtray or a hand full of coins at your attacker. The idea being, if what you throw hits and causes damage to you attacker, great. At least you will get a reaction that can give you an extra second to move in. Also add dialogue; don't train as if you're in a silent movie. By shouting something out of context to distract them or by being passive and talking softly to distract them before you attack.

Inside-outside hard and soft

The drills can be looked at in two ways. First inside means you are moving inside the attacking arm and face to face with the attacker. Outside means you are outside the attacking arm or have jammed the attacker's arm across their body. The idea with the drills is to make the attacks as real as possible. Remember this is your last chance because you should have taken the person out before they started the attack.

For safety in training use rubber knives or felt tipped pen. Training soft means the attack is still determined, but your strikes to the target are controlled but not pulled back. Always strike through the target. Training hard means the attacks are fast and determined with the defender moving in and striking as hard as they can, BUT striking the attacker's chest or shoulder.

1. Face your partner, with your lead hand covering the angle of attack. Move in jamming your lead hand and forearm against the attacking arm. Strike hard to the face, throat, eyes or groin. Keep striking until threat is over, driving forward all the time.

Don't try and grab the knife hand, jam and cover the attacking arm between their wrist and elbow. The attacker can stab or slash to the leg, groin, body, chest or face. You will find that the quicker you move in the less you have to think about where the knife attack is going. Control the bigger target the arm holding the knife not the smaller fast moving wrist.

2. Face your partner; your partner attacks with the knife coming from across their body. Simulating someone pulling a knife from inside their jacket or having concealed the knife by folding their arms. Your lead hand jams and pushes the attacker's forearm into their body as you make your attack. If your partner is side on jam the attacking arm between the shoulder and elbow.

Covering techniques can also be used if the attacker moves away then comes in from say 2 or 3 feet. Your leading or rear hand moves across your body, as you move to the inside or outside of the attack. You do not move back from the attack you move in. You will find out quickly its not a different technique for each attack but confidence in just one or two ideas that work under pressure. All knife attacks to head, body or legs all start at the same point the first movement of the attackers arm. Ideally make the attacker unconscious before he gets his hands on the knife, failing that close it down give them no room to move and inflict as much damage as possible. Don't try and perform a 22-piece take down doing your best Jackie or Van Damme impression. I am sorry to say that it doesn't work that way. Leave that fantasy where it is enjoyable and belongs on the big screen.

Awareness must be the most important part of training for knife defence. So you should practise how to spot someone who could be about to attack. Practise closing down your partner before they have made their attack. You will soon find that the longer you wait the more you get stabbed, so please when practising only use rubber knives. Anything you are carrying can be replaced, you cannot. This must be your first thought if confronted. Do everything you can to avoid getting involved but if you are in fear of your personal safety and the threat of an attack in imminent DON'T WAIT. Survive first, deal with the outcome later; defend yourself in court afterwards, if you have to. Unfortunately muggers and their ilk don't wear labels so any approaching individual unknown to you is a potential attacker. This may sound a little bleak but it's just the way it is.

I hope that you will try out the ideas in this article. It doesn't matter what system you practise you can always add to your knowledge. Enjoy your training and remember it's your right to protect yourself and only you can do anything about it.