



Understanding Violence:

Prioritizing Self-Defense Training in the Canadian Jiu Jitsu Council

Violence is an unfortunate reality, and as martial artists, our training must prepare us to respond with skill, awareness, and composure. For members of the **Canadian Jiu Jitsu Council**, understanding crime trends and tailoring training priorities is essential for developing a well-rounded approach to self-defense. Whether focusing on empty-hand techniques, knife defense, or gun disarmament, the decision should be based on crime statistics, practical considerations, and personal safety goals.

The Nature of Violent Crime in Canada

In Canada, violent crime encompasses various threats, including assaults, knife-related incidents, and gun violence. Recent statistics provide valuable insights into the prevalence and severity of these dangers.

Firearm-related violent crimes have been rising, with a reported 8.9% increase in 2022, marking the highest rate on record according to Statistics Canada. While firearm incidents are less common than other forms of violence, they pose a significant threat due to their lethality.

Knives, however, are among the most frequently used weapons in violent crimes. Their accessibility and the strict regulations surrounding firearms in Canada make knives a common tool in both urban and rural altercations.

Yet, the majority of violent incidents involve empty-hand assaults—physical altercations where no weapon is present. Statistically, individuals are far more likely to face unarmed attackers than those wielding knives or firearms. These realities emphasize the need for a thoughtful and prioritized approach to self-defense training.

Prioritizing Self-Defense Training

For Jiu Jitsu students, prioritizing self-defense training begins with understanding the likelihood and severity of various threats. Empty-hand defense forms the foundation of all other skills. Most violent encounters are unarmed, making techniques such as striking, blocking, evasions, throwing, and joint locks essential for personal safety. Learning to de-escalate confrontations and practicing situational awareness ensures students are prepared to avoid or defuse potentially violent scenarios whenever possible.

Knife defense should follow as the next focus. Knives are frequently encountered in violent incidents, requiring students to develop specialized techniques for evasion, blocking, disarming, and minimizing injury. Training should emphasize controlling the attacker's arm, redirecting the weapon's force, and following up with throws, joint locks, or come-along techniques to neutralize the threat.

Gun defense, while statistically less common, is critical for addressing high-risk, life-threatening situations. Training in firearm disarmament and evasions demands advanced proficiency and mental focus. Incorporating throwing techniques to destabilize attackers and come-along skills to gain control adds practical versatility to gun defense scenarios. These skills should be introduced only after students have a solid grasp of fundamental self-defense techniques.

Training for Real-World Application

Effective training must reflect the realities of violent encounters. Weekly and monthly sessions should focus on building foundational skills while progressively introducing more complex scenarios, incorporating striking, blocking, evasions, throwing, joint locks, and come-along techniques.

In weekly classes, students should consistently practice striking and blocking techniques to handle empty-hand attacks. Drills for evasions and counter-attacks, such as sidestepping or redirecting an opponent's force, teach students how to minimize danger while maintaining control. These sessions should also include basic throwing techniques to off-balance an attacker, joint locks to immobilize them, and come-along skills to safely escort or neutralize a threat without escalating the situation.

Knife and gun defense techniques should be gradually introduced, starting with slow, controlled practice. Students can develop confidence through drills that emphasize recognition, evasions, and safe disarming techniques. Incorporating follow-up responses such as takedowns or joint locks ensures that students learn to control the attacker after neutralizing the immediate threat.

Monthly training should include scenario-based exercises that mimic real-life environments. Practicing in confined spaces, outdoor areas, or with multiple attackers challenges students to adapt their techniques to unpredictable conditions. Combining strikes, throws, and joint locks in these scenarios helps students develop a fluid, adaptable response to violence. Reflective discussions and feedback sessions provide opportunities for both students and instructors to evaluate progress and refine techniques.

For Black Belt instructors, leading these sessions requires humility and a commitment to teaching versatility. Demonstrating how to adapt techniques for different body types, threat levels, or environments emphasizes the importance of flexibility in real-world situations. By modeling adaptability, instructors show students that the principles of Jiu Jitsu apply across all challenges.

For martial arts practitioners in the Canadian Jiu Jitsu Council, understanding the nature of violence and prioritizing self-defense training is essential for personal safety and the advancement of Jiu Jitsu practice. Beginning with empty-hand defense, then progressing to knife and gun defense, provides a logical and effective training pathway. Incorporating techniques such as striking, blocking, evasions, throwing, joint locks, and come-along skills ensures students are prepared to handle a wide variety of situations. By tailoring training to reflect real-world threats, students and instructors alike can build the confidence, skill, and awareness needed to respond effectively and responsibly to violence.

Canadian Jiu Jitsu Council Directors