



For Self Defense

By

Mark McGee

“No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.” 2 Timothy 2:4-5

Rule One

Rules are important. They give us both purpose and direction. The first definition for **rule** in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary is – “a prescribed guide for conduct or action.” Rules tell us what is expected of us if we become participants in any type of life activity.

Most martial arts systems have rules for conduct and action. During the coming weeks we will share with you several “**Rules of Three**” that are part of Grace Martial Arts.

Rules of Engagement

Yon Ch’uan has **3 Zones of Engagement**. Each Zone has its own unique advantages to defending self and others.

3rd Zone – Not within reachable space

Our training begins in **Zone 3**. The advantage of being in Zone 3 is that you probably will not have to engage in physical self defense as long as you are aware of your situation ([situational awareness](#)). We call that 60/360 awareness.

We are aware of our present situation at all times (every 60 seconds) and in every direction (360 degrees). We know what’s happening around us and whether we need to do something to protect ourselves or others. Our

senses are finely tuned toward safety concerns at all time. Spouses, parents and friends will also be looking out for the safety of others as well as themselves. That can be for human, animal or other dangers (e.g. cars, trucks, construction equipment, storms, water hazards, etc.)

2nd Zone – Within reachable space

The next part of our training moves to **Zone 2**. The advantage of being in Zone 2 is that you can use a variety of escape skills to quickly find an exit that keeps you from being physically attacked ([exit strategy](#)).

Zone 2 is anytime you are within reachable distance from a person or persons who may want to harm you. If they are close enough to grab, push, pull, tackle, hit or kick you, you and anyone with you are in danger. In fact, Zone 2 may be the most dangerous place for you since you may have only a split second to decide what to do to keep yourself and others who are with you safe.

The optimal choice is to move yourself (and others) from Zone 2 to Zone 3 so the potential attacker(s) can't reach you without making movements toward you. If the attacker(s) moves toward you after you have moved a safe distance away from him, you may need to use self-defense techniques learned for the 1st Zone.

1st Zone – Force applied

The advantage of being in **Zone 1** is that you can use your training in **evasion** to **escape** or **enter** depending on which option is better.

Zone 1 defense techniques include escaping, blocking, striking, trapping and throwing. Grace Martial Arts instructors teach these techniques from aspects of effectiveness, efficiency and legality.

Rule Two

3 Awares

We teach [basic situational awareness](#) in Grace Martial Arts classes. It's important that we be aware of our situation and surroundings every moment we are awake. Awareness plays an important role in personal safety.

Time

The first **aware** is “time.” The time of day can impact our safety. If we're outside in the early evening, we know that nightfall is near. Nighttime has its own challenges because of the difficulty of seeing our surroundings. If we have difficulty seeing, we may have difficulty defending ourselves against an attack.

Location

The second **aware** is “location.” Where we are at a particular time of day can also impact our safety. While we may feel safe in our front yard in the middle of the day, we may experience a different feeling if we find ourselves in an unfamiliar part of a city.

Distance

The third **aware** is “distance.” How far we are from someone or something can impact our safety. If we are 30 feet from a busy intersection, we will feel safe from being hit by a car. If we are three feet from a busy intersection, we may not feel safe from being hit by a car. We may feel safe walking in a shopping center with many people near us, but not feel safe walking on a country road with only a couple of people near us.

Time, Location and Distance can also combine to impact our safety. We may feel safe getting cash from an ATM machine at our bank on a Monday at 11am. However, we may not feel safe getting cash from an ATM machine at our bank on a Monday at 11pm.

Time, Location and Distance are an important part of “situational awareness” and play a vital role in our safety.

Rule Three

3 Threats

We turn now to the threats that face every person. These **3 Threats** are the reason for the **3 Awares**.

Low

The first threat is **Low**. A threat that is *low* is the **possibility** of harm that surrounds us all. It can be as simple as leaving our home to travel to school or work or walking from our parked car to a store. As we are aware of the possibility of harm around us, we are able to move through life harm free most of the time. Situational awareness (staying alert and aware every minute of the waking day) is a key to dealing with all threat levels.

Medium

The second threat is **Medium**. A threat that is *medium* is the **potential** of harm that each of can face. It can be as simple as standing at an intersection waiting for a light to change so we can cross the street or diving into a big wave at the beach. The potential threat of harm is near us and “could” happen if we’re not careful to watch for cars that might not stop for a red light or for something that may be inside or under the wave that we cannot see. Situational awareness (staying alert and aware every minute of the waking day) is a key to dealing with all threat levels.

High

The third threat is **High**. A threat that is *high* is the **probability** of harm that each of us could face some day. It can be as simple as seeing several men walking toward you in a menacing fashion or as complex as someone grabbing you from behind and placing a knife to your throat. The probable threat of harm closes in on you rapidly and you must move quickly to protect yourself or others from harm. Situational awareness (staying alert and aware every minute of the waking day) is a key to dealing with all threat levels.

Threat Level Training

Training in threat levels is a special focus of Grace Martial Arts classes. Each threat level (Low, Medium, High) has a unique response. We are preparing a new series on threat level training that will look at both the legal and martial aspects of protecting yourself and others. That series, *Responding To Threats*, is scheduled to begin at the beginning of the new year and will include photos and videos to help train you to deal with personal threats.

Rule Four

3 Calms

We turn now to one of the most important aspects of martial arts and self defense – staying calm in the face of danger. How do we do that? Through training the mind, body and breath.

First, let's remember what the Bible tells us about that –

“I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.” Psalm 139:14

King David, a man who face many warriors in many battles, wrote this about being calm in the face of danger –

“Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, Like a weaned child with his mother; Like a weaned child is my soul within me.” Psalm 131:2

King Solomon shared his wisdom about the importance of being calm.

“He who has knowledge spares his words, And a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.” Proverbs 17:27

Grand Master John Chung Li wrote a commentary to an ancient martial arts document known as *The Chinese Five Word Song*. He often mentioned the importance of being calm before and during an attack –

“Remaining calm in a dangerous situation...enables us to take care of ourselves; when we are calm we exercise caution and are able to look after everything that could harm us.

In dangerous situations, most people manifest their fear and confusion by immediately resisting the situation, but I remain calm, available, yet not available...so that I might sense how my opponent is going to attack me. Because I remain calm I am adaptable so that I can move hard and soft at the same time – depending on what is called for by the circumstances.” The Chinese Five Word Song, p 42

GM Li also talked about being calm from the perspective of being a Christian –

“Christians are the children of God. If Christ lives in you, you are the children of God. They have a Father in Heaven and no worry. No worry is the natural state of Christians. The Christian mind they no worry. God is their Father. The Father looks after him. No worry. No worry.” The Chinese Five Word Song, p 13

Mind

Your mind is a powerful tool for self defense. The brain is busy running your entire body and it does that with amazing speed and efficiency. The brain processes about 400 billion bits of information per second. It is estimated that if the human brain were a computer, it could perform 38 thousand trillion operations per second.

So, given that phenomenal speed and ability, why do so many people physically freeze when they face immediate danger? Some neuroscientists believe it's the brain's way of getting you to focus all your attention on the danger. That makes sense given that the brain was designed to defend itself at all cost. The amazing brain that lives inside your skull can help you escape danger, especially if it is trained.

How do you train someone to respond to danger by defending themselves effectively rather than freezing? Soldiers, law enforcement officers and martial artists are some of the people groups that train the mind to direct the body to defend itself effectively and efficiently. How do they do it?

We train our minds to understand the need for self defense and methods to accomplish that. Our learning process begins with basic fundamentals of movement that include body shifting/turning and evasion to escape or enter. You can learn more about those basics here –

- [Tai Sabaki – Body Shifting](#)
- [Evade to Escape](#)
- [Evade to Enter](#)

The mind is quick to grasp the purpose of self-defense movement and can quickly move to simple and complex forms/patterns (*Kata*), self-defense applications from the forms (*Bunkai*), and pre-arranged and free form self defense movements (*Kumite*). You can learn about [those training aspects here](#).

Repetition is an important part of training the mind. It is sometimes called “muscle memory,” but it’s not just the muscles of your body that “remember” movement. Your brain is actively involved in directing the muscles of your body to move.

Training the mind through this proven process will prepare you to move quickly and effectively when faced with a dangerous situation.

Body

Studies have shown that the human body moves fastest from a calm, relaxed posture or stance. Here's how Grand Li explained it in *The Chinese Five Word Song* –

“Being calm is to watch the conditions with clarity and perspective. If we are calm, we can observe well and foresee the attack. Calmness lends wisdom in how exactly to meet the enemy. The greater the trouble, the greater the need for being calm.” The Chinese Five Word Song, p 27

Training the mind to be calm will impact the ability of your body to move from a calm, relaxed posture.

We train the body in several areas to assist the mind in defending effectively and efficiently –

- [Strength](#)
- [Endurance](#)
- [Flexibility](#)
- [Speed](#)

The mind and body will work together as a powerful team to defend you during times of danger. The training process in martial arts will prepare you to maximize what your mind and body can do under stress.

Breath

Breathing calmly is important to your success in defending yourself and others. Your brain sends messages to nerves, muscles and organs to go into “defense mode.” That includes increased heart beat and blood flow to muscle groups along with a release of adrenaline. This can impact the speed of your breathing as well. If you can’t or don’t control your breathing, you may soon find yourself out of breath and unable to move appropriately.

Most martial arts systems include breath control training. It begins with warm-up exercises that challenge the student to continue moving even as heart and breathing rates increase. *Kata* and *Kumite* training also include many physical movements that demand an ability to control breathing. The key is deep, abdominal breathing – breathing in to the lower part of your lungs that aren’t exercised as much as the upper part of your lungs. Breathing deep into the lungs promotes calmness and relaxation.

Here’s how Grand Master Li explained that type of breath control –

“In China, the ‘heart’ is where the breath moves to when we inhale ‘naturally.’ All breathing should therefore be ‘natural,’ according to one’s needs at the moment the breath is taken or expended.

Generally, you inhale when you raise or lift your body, and you exhale when you sink, or lower your body. But this should never be considered an absolute. Breathe naturally according to your needs.

When we are breathing naturally, we are relaxed.” The Chinese Five Word Song, p 33

Correct Training

My teacher, Grand Master Robert Xavier, studied with Grand Master Li for many years and received the lineage for Hwa Yu T'ai Chi Ch'uan from GM Li. GM Xavier often says that “perfect practice makes perfect.” That saying stuck with me because it emphasizes the importance of learning correct posture, movement and technique and practicing it.

The first step is to learn a martial technique correctly, then practice it frequently with calmness. Here's why –

“The success of this exercise depends on long, frequent practice and, most importantly, on the depth of your wisdom gained from calming both body and mind which gives rise to your dormant [strength and energy]. Meditate on the movement inside and outside of your body. This is the way to reach the high standard of the natural state.” The Chinese Five Word Song, p 49

Rule Five

3 Lows

The martial arts concept of keeping something “low” is to keep it relaxed and under your control. Calmness (see Rule 4) is important in all of the “Lows.”

Shoulders

Shoulders low is the idea of relaxing the upper body to increase speed and power in movement. Raising the shoulders comes from tension, which can impede the effectiveness of a martial technique.

“Don’t make yourself tense, especially when you are in danger.” [The Chinese Five Word Song](#), p 55

Elbows

The elbow is a major joint of the body and should be moved appropriately for martial arts and self defense. Raising the shoulders and elbows inappropriately causes unnecessary tension in the body and slowness of movement.

Elbows, like the shoulders, should be kept low. Keeping the elbows low also means keeping them close to the body rather than moved away from the body. Elbows that are low are in the correct position to defend and counter.

“Now for application, if you meet the enemy he hits you to the side or holds your neck, your hand goes up, then to your eyebrow you turn and bring him into your body When the two hands come down, raise up your head and raise up your knee and your knee goes to this bottom part. Very helpful. Beginners should always remember that the hands raise up lightly, but not the shoulders. Shoulders and elbows are low.” The Chinese Five Word Song, p 67

We move our fingers and hands first in most applications, followed appropriately by our elbows for defending (blocking) and attacking (striking). If our movement follows this pattern, the need to raise our shoulders will rarely be needed.

Energy

Keeping our energy low speaks to our breathing. We breathe deeply to the lower part of our lungs and control our breathing so we have the enough breath to sustain us during defense, counter-attack and escape.

“A cat appears to be very quiet while waiting for the chance to pounce upon its pretty, when actually there is concentrated internal movement. You would never realize this from the cat’s slow and even breathing.

Like the cat, during this period of waiting for the chance to attack, our breathing should be natural. Naturalness is the highest aim of our exercise. If you find there is tension in any part of your body, even in the breath, you are not in a 'natural state.' Instead, you are inhibited and unwillful. All should be natural. Breathing 'naturally' aids our Will to act by exercising our internal muscles." The Chinese Five Word Song, p 35

Posture

Correct posture is an important part of what we want to have when defending against an attack.

"Don't lean. Be straight. The spine is straight. Some students lean back and that's bad. Some lean forward or to the side. Give the work to the legs. When you are straight, there is greater blood circulation to the brain.

Raise up your head.

Relax the shoulders.

Lower the elbows.

Relax the chest.

Weight is lowered.

Eyes straight ahead, forward.

These are important." The Chinese Five Word Song, pp 27-28

Rule Six

3 Strengths

Strength is important in martial arts and self defense. We use physical strength to generate power in movement.

As we've pointed out in previous articles the source of strength in Yon Ch'uan comes from a [relaxed posture](#). Being relaxed doesn't mean you are at complete rest. It means you are aware and ready to respond to a threat, but from a relaxed posture rather than tension. Tension is slow. Relaxed is fast.

We have also looked at exercises that develop strength in previous articles and invite you to [read about them here](#).

Legs

[Power in martial arts](#) and self defense begins in the **legs**. We say that **“power is rooted in the feet and developed in the legs.”** The idea of rooting is that our feet are firmly planted on the ground. When we stand or step we move from a strong position of balance and connection to the ground under our feet. If we do not have a strong stance, we cannot defend ourselves or people we love successfully during an attack.

The first lessons in martial arts are aimed at teaching new students how to **stand**. Learning how to strengthen one's ability to stand properly and powerfully prepares them to move quickly through a series of defensive and offensive stances while remaining rooted to the ground. The purpose is to move opponents while remaining unmoved. It takes time to master the skill of standing, but it is essential to defeating a stronger opponent. The same is true in the spiritual arena. The first lesson is how to stand – “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore ...”

Our success in life depends to a great extent on how we “structure” our thoughts, beliefs and actions. Structuring in martial arts is the idea of how we stand (stances) and move through those stances without losing the “rooting” necessary to defend ourselves against attack successfully. The key to a strong stance is understanding both the purpose and motivation in combination with the elements we can access and train. (“... when in motion one is still rooted” – *The Chinese Five Word Song*)

Bones, muscles, ligaments, tendons and tissue are elements we are able to access and train in the physical realm. Our stretching routine is part of training our body to stand properly and move through a combination of stances with maximum flexibility and strength – both internal and external. We learn the “truth” about the physical realm we live in and how to best use the tools God has given us.

Having a strong stance means we need to have strength in our feet and ankles. The feet and ankles are often referred to as the “rudders” for our movement in martial arts.

The next step is to move that strength from our feet and ankles to our legs. That’s where power is developed. Continuing the boat or ship illustration, the legs are like the boat. The shape of the boat and thickness of the hull and sides are vital to the power of the boat to cut through choppy waters to the destination.

“The legs should be curved like a bow. This is the balance of our advance and retreat. If our legs curve like a bow, we can advance and retreat smoothly, evenly, and circularly.” The Chinese Five Word Song

“Your legs will feel hardship. Oh, my bones! You will experience much pain while you train your legs to rest like trees rooted deep within the earth. Once trained, however, you will stand sturdily like a rooted tree.” The Chinese Five Word Song

Waist

The waist is like the captain of the ship. The captain determines the direction the ship will go. We say that **“power is rooted in the feet, developed in the legs and directed by the waist.”** The captain depends on the strength of the sides and bottom of the ship along with the stability of the rudder to ensure that it can withstand any decision he makes about turning the ship in a new direction.

“Our legs work like a bow, and our advance and retreat should be controlled from the waist by the spine.” The Chinese Five Word Song

“Your retreat and advance should be controlled by the waist.” The Chinese Five Word Song

Arms

The arms are like the sails of the ship. They reach out to take full advantage of the wind and are available to the captain and crew to change movement when necessary. We say that **“power is rooted in the feet, developed in the legs. directed by the waist and manifests in the fingers.”**

We do the same thing with our arms. We extend them to take full advantage of the power of the **unbendable arm** ([read more about the unbendable arm here](#)).

The rules of engagement in self-defense are simple – **face the enemy, stand strong, defend well.**

“Movement of legs and hands all work together.” The Chinese Five Word Song

Rule Seven

3 C's

The three C's are **Contact**, **Control** and **Counter**. However, it's import to note that before we make contact we do two other important things: **Yield** and **Clear**.

We yield to oncoming force and clear our midline. That places us in a better position to Contact, Control and Counter.

Here are some excellent insights into Yield and Clear from *The Chinese Five Word Song*.

- “Yield to heavy attack.”
- “Follow the opponent’s attack by yielding with circular motion.”
- “Open and close oneself and be able to yield and stick.”
- “Without anticipating your opponent’s move, you lightly stick with his every movement, at once yielding to oncoming force, while leaving him no change to advance.”
- “Yield to force when it reveals itself.”
- “If the opponent is quicker than you and his strength has reached you, yield. I yield and lead my enemy into an empty space. I guide his advances into emptiness.”

Contact

If you are able to yield and clear before your opponent touches you, you touch them. That's first contact. If they touch you first, that's first contact (e.g. grab, strike that is blocked). Whatever the first contact, your movements are a demonstration of power and speed.

“When contact is made, the inner force comes forth at once.” The Chinese Five Word Song

As soon as you make contact with your opponent, you are able to control the fighting situation – able to steal his strength and bring his attack to a quick end.

Control

Contact moves instantaneously into Control. Your movements are so quick that is difficult to see where one ends and the other ends. Our goal is to Yield, Clear, Contact, Control and Counter in less than two seconds for most attacks.

“Let your attacker advance as he desires. Don't mind how he comes. Yield. Don't be in his way. Guide him towards his desired direction. The more force with which he advances, the farther he will go where you desire. Thus causing him to lose his balance, you guide him into emptiness. When his balance is lost, you move to attack. Only a small force need be used since he is moving without control and with great

force ... “we use four ounces of force to push away 1,000 patties of strength.” I yield to heavy attack; guide him to the empty. At that moment he loses his balance I use four ounces of force. That much is sufficient to make my attacker fall.” The Chinese Five Word Song

Counter

When we have stolen the opponent's strength and taken control of the attack, we can choose many counters including strikes, traps, projections and throws. Our goal is to escape to safety, so we determine the best counter(s) based on our needs.

“For self-defense, we yield to our attacker with softness, then follow soft with hard, and with a little force, a little touch applied to his oncoming force, he is sure to lose his balance. The heavier the attack that is coming to me, the heavier my opponent's fall will be. When I yield to heavy advance (by swift movements from my relaxed muscles), his attack will follow towards my emptiness, and he will fall.” The Chinese Five Word Song

“... like guerrilla war tactics, yield at first, but attack at the end.” The Chinese Five Word Song

Rule Eight

3 Protections

The purpose of learning self defense is to be able to protect yourself and others if attacked. Training to protect is about preventing harm or injury.

So, what parts of your body would you like to protect? Above the neck in front of your body? Below the back of your knees? Of course not! We want to protect front, side, back, high, middle and low. Every effective self-defense system will focus on protecting the whole person. If we train well and remain alert, we can protect ourselves and others in any direction.

“Meet the attack with cleverness. Wait like the cat, who springs to catch the mouse. Control the situation.” [The Chinese Five Word Song](#)

High

The idea of protecting “high” usually means above the shoulders. When we execute a “high” block in self defense it is usually because someone is attacking the upper part of our body (neck and head). That can be in the front, side or back of our neck and head.

When we learn how to defend “high” we focus on defending neck and head from the front first. We then learn how to defend “high” from attacks to our left and right sides and from attacks behind us.

Defending often begins with a “block” or “stop,” but it does not end there. Making contact with the attacker is only the beginning. “Contact” quickly moves to “control” and “counter.”

Our goal is to quickly steal our attacker’s strength and take control of the fighting situation. If the attacker pushes, we pull and off-balance. If the attacker pulls, we push and off-balance. We steal their strength and lead them to emptiness – a place where they can consider their bad behavior.

“To remain fearless, you must be well practiced in every movement. Through initial hardship you will gain something that will make you more than healthy and strong. Your arms will be like steel bars; your footing will be like a huge tree rooting deeply into the earth. Who can push you down? Who can attack you? You are not afraid.” [*The Chinese Five Word Song*](#)

Middle

The idea of protecting “middle” usually means from bottom of waist to top of shoulders. When we execute a “middle” block in self defense it is usually because someone is attacking the middle part of our body. That can be in the front, side or back of the middle part of our body.

When we learn how to defend “middle” we focus on defending our torso from the front first. We then learn how to defend “middle” from attacks to our left and right sides and from attacks behind us.

“Every action is self-initiated. In the art of self-defense, how to meet my attacker is my decision. Sometimes we do not use ‘yield;’ sometimes we use ‘stop,’ and counter his advance.” The Chinese Five Word Song

Low

The idea of protecting “low” usually means below the waist. When we execute a “low” block in self defense it is usually because someone is attacking the lower part of our body (feet to waist). That can be in the front, side or back of the lower part of our body.

When we learn how to defend “low” we focus on defending our lower body from the front first. We then learn how to defend “low” from attacks to our left and right sides and from attacks behind us.

“For self-defense, we yield to our attacker with softness, then follow soft with hard, and with a little force, a little touch applied to his oncoming force, he is sure to lose his balance. The heavier the attack that is coming to me, the heavier my opponent’s fall will be. When I yield to heavy advance (by swift movements from my relaxed muscles), his attack will follow towards my emptiness, and he will fall. Relaxation of the muscles is an important lesson for the beginner. That is the secret of this exercise. As a merchant should have capital for business, we should have relaxation for self-defense. ” The Chinese Five Word Song

Rule Nine

3 Changes

If we find ourselves in a position of defending self or others, one of the keys to ensuring victory is to “change” the attacker in three primary ways. Though we’ll look at each aspect of change individually, the self-defense techniques we use will “change” the attacker in all three ways in two seconds or less.

Your opponent stands and moves from and with a basic structure. What we do in defending against an opponent’s physical attack is change their physical structure. We sometimes refer to it as “breaking down” or “dissolving” the structure. Here’s how we do it.

Height

First, we want to change the attacker's height. We do that by pulling or pushing them in a downward direction. That bends their spine and helps off-balance them. We want their structure to be shorter.

Width

Second, we want to change the attacker's width. We do that by pulling or pushing them to the side. That continues the off-balancing process. We want their structure to be thinner or wider.

Depth

Third, we want to change the attacker's depth by pulling or pushing them forward or backward. That completes the off-balancing process. We want their structure to be deeper or shallower.

Do all three at the same time and you will steal your attacker's strength. They will lose their balance and ability to control you. You "seize control" of their attack and move it where you will.

We don't wait for the attack to unfold before we move. We take the first opportunity available to stop the attack.

"Attack as the arrow – quick and straight ... I stop the strength of the enemy by taking the first chance. In Chinese we call 'Stopping the

strength' Chit King. We must train to be loose in the muscles and joints so we can be quick to stop." *The Chinese Five Word Song*

Rule Ten

3 Directions

Learning to defend yourself and others means understanding directions: front, side and back. Primary ways of considering direction include:

- Map (North, East, South, West)
- Degrees (0 – 360)
- Clock (Clockwise .. 12:00 to 11:59)

We will use the Clock example for this article.



“The Spirit of your eye watches in all directions because the enemy will come from different directions to attack you.” *The Chinese Five Word Song* – #58

Front



Sensei McGee Defending Attack to Front



Absolute front is 12:00 o'clock, but in self defense we view front as anything from 10:30 – 1:30. That's the range you have with your eyes as you look straight ahead.

In martial arts we use the terms **forward** or **advance** for moving toward what's in front of us.

We can **evade and enter** or **evade and retreat** depending on the self-defense determination.

“Movement to and fro is not revealed. When you retreat or advance, don't show your feature. it should be smooth and concealed. All movements are rounded in circles. There should never be hesitation — once you have decided to move, do so evenly, smoothly and gracefully.

In this way you train yourself for self-defense. Otherwise, you will resist your own movement and become vulnerable.” The Chinese Five Word Song – #17

Side



Sensei McGee Defending Attack from Side

Absolute left side is 9:00 o'clock, but in self defense we view left side as anything from 7:30 – 10:29. That's the range you have with your eyes as you turn your head to the left.

In martial arts we use the terms **gaze left** or **look left** for defending what's to our left side.

We can **evade and enter** or **evade and retreat** depending on the self-defense determination.

Absolute right side is 3:00 o'clock, but in self defense we view right side as anything from 1:31 – 4:30. That's the range you have with your eyes as you turn your head to the right.

In martial arts we use the terms **look right**, **defend right** or **beware right** for defending what's to our right side.

We can **evade and enter** or **evade and retreat** depending on the self-defense determination.

Back



Students Defending Attack from Behind

Absolute back is 6:00 o'clock, but in self defense we view back as anything from 4:31 – 7:29. That's the area you cannot see without turning your body to the left or right to enhance behind-sight.

In martial arts we use the terms **look behind**, **defend behind** or **beware behind** for defending what's to our back.

We can **evade and enter** or **evade and retreat** depending on the self-defense determination.

Defending 360

True self defense is the ability to defend oneself and others in all directions. We call this **360 Degrees Defense** and **Situational Awareness Defense**.

Rule Eleven

Structure and Foundation

We often speak of **structure** and **foundation** when training in martial arts. Think about building a house (structure). Builders begin with a good plan (blueprint), then move to lay the foundation, followed by building the walls and roof that will support and protect both the house and those living in it.

Structure and foundation in martial arts is similar. We begin with a plan, then move to lay the foundation followed by the walls and roof that will support and protect the martial arts student. We use a proven blueprint (the martial arts curriculum) for our plan. The foundation is the physical and mental structure in both stance and moving from position to position. The walls and roof are the strength and ability to protect oneself in all directions. Structure and foundation begin and ends with rooting. Verse 13 of *The Chinese Five Word Song* reads – “When in motion one is still rooted.”

Grand Master John Chung Li used to tell his students:

“It is the same with tall buildings; the foundation must be good. Build on rock, not sand.”

Jesus Christ referred to that principle in His Sermon on the Mount:

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. ‘But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.’” Matthew 7:24-27

Verse 33 of *The Chinese Five Word Song* reads – “Conceal one’s force like the bow: round and ready to spring” – which leads us the next **Three Rules**.

Three Brackets

“Make your body round outside and round your force inside. In Hsing-I we train the three brackets (round spaces).” GM John Chung Li

Shoulders

The two shoulders should be round. Relax your chest. Force will travel to your elbows and then to your fingers.

Hands and Feet

Round the backs of your hands. Your feet should root firmly and grip the ground. There is roundness in your palms and the bottoms of your feet.

Teeth

Your upper and lower teeth should join together slightly. The force travels to your bones and blood vessels, tendons and nerves.

Rule Twelve

Three Rounds

“Round” is a term we use often in Grace Martial Arts and there is good reason for it. We train so that all of our movements are circular. It’s vital for beginners, but also important for intermediate and advanced students.

“Conceal one’s force like the bow: round and ready to spring. Make your body round outside and round your force inside.” [The Chinese Five Word Song](#), Verse 33

So many physical attacks are linear – a straight line. Training to be round in structure and move circularly is a good way to respond to linear attacks.

“All turning and bending is curved.” [The Chinese Five Word Song](#), Verse 115

Training in roundness (circularity) also prepares the body to respond to an attack in a spring-like fashion. Your movement should be round and smooth.

GM John Chung Li used the analogy of the rounded bow strung for the arrow:

“... as the bow is rounded, creating greater 'emptiness,' more force is stored for the arrow's release.” GM John Chung Li

Back Bone Round

“The arms and back should be round as if hugging.” The Chinese Five Word Song



Grand Master Robert Xavier

Chest Round

“In Hsing-I, the shoulders should be rounded by slightly hollowing the upper chest ... In Pa-Kua you are instructed to hollow the chest, thereby creating a bow with the two shoulders.” GM John Chung Li

Tiger-Mouth Round

*“... hands cupped, leaving space between the thumb and forefinger.”
The Chinese Five Word Song*



Senior Instructor Mark McGee

“Each movement should be clearly distinguished from the other. In the advanced stage, the movements in the T’ai Chi form are smoothed into spherical, fluid, continuous movement patterns. Relaxation should be overall, throughout the entire body. The goal of the body’s feature is to move every joint and muscle of the entire body, together in unison, without hindrance or obstruction anywhere.” The Chinese Five Word Song

Rule Thirteen

Three Smarts

Your mind plays a vital role in self defense. We often refer to it as the *mind/body connection*. It's the way God created us. We can gain an advantage in defending against an attacker by **focusing** our mind on the situation and using our eyes and hands quickly and efficiently.

In the Mind

An important aspect of being *smart* in the mind is being **calm**.

- A mind that is calm can move very quickly and effectively to defend.
- A mind that is calm can see a situation clearly and make right decisions.

In [Yon Ch'uan Martial Arts](#) we say:

“The Yon Ch'uan Martial Arts System incorporates three zones of self-defense training. The Three Zone Defense theory is a seemingly simple action, however it is loaded with subtleties that require years of practice to perform them succinctly with total relaxed mind/intent and body integration. Mind/intent is the neutral point between cause and effect. As you relax the mind and body to reduce tension, your physical body and conscious mind will find a neutral point between cause and effect so that

your thoughts can cleanly and succinctly be expressed through unconscious physical action.”

Here are some other insights from [The Chinese Five Word Song](#):

“The body moves fastest from a calm, relaxed posture or stance.” Verse 4

“Don’t mind how fierce your opponent is. Whatever moves he makes will be seen and interpreted with clarity and quickness when the mind is calm, focused and relaxed. Calmly watch your opponent with an inner stillness. (Look for nothing and see everything; look for something and see nothing). Your mind must be as calm as a mirrored lake which clearly reflects all its surroundings. Calmness and stillness of the mind will provide crystal-clear expression within the idea and timing of your movement. This calmness is needed to meet any opponent’s attack, the instant he comes into reachable space. A calm, relaxed mind is equipped with the capacity to think, calculate and be logical with immeasurable speed.” Verse 7

“One must meet attack by being calm. Being calm is to empty the mind. Being calm is to watch the conditions with clarity and perspective. If we are calm, we can observe well and foresee the attack. Calmness lends wisdom in how exactly to meet the enemy. The greater the trouble, the greater the need for being calm.” Verse 19

“When to attack or to protect is according to one’s decision. With a calm mind, you can do whatever you like to attack or to protect. During this fighting time, there should be no fear; only calm. If I can, I am quick to stop the opponent’s strength. If my opponent is quick, I yield to guide his advancing into emptiness.” Verse 30

“Our mind is made up to study by patience, meditation, slowness, calmness and circularity. It is especially important to concentrate on what we learn at first, for these are the basic movements. If they are mastered in the proper way it is easy to learn more and more.” Verse 109

The Bible is also clear about the importance of the mind for *faith defense*:

“Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ Matthew 22:37

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” Romans 8:5

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:2

“Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.” Romans 12:16

“Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 15:5-6

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!” 2 Corinthians 11:2-4

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.” 2 Corinthians 13:11

“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given

themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” Ephesians 4:17-24

“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.” Philippians 1:27-28

“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.” Philippians 3:15-17

The Eye

We also want to be *smart* in the eye. The smart eye feeds information to the smart mind and is able to move quickly and correctly to defend.

Insights from *The Chinese Five Word Song*:

“Eyes straight ahead, forward.” Verse 20

“Your eyes move about like lightning. In the T'ai Chi principles they talk about the eye being like the cat at the moment it is about to catch the mouse. The cat's eyes are like windows through which we observe the cat's will (intent), before the strike. Therefore, we have to pay attention and watch our own movement — here and there like the cat's eye watching his prey. Your spirit watches in all four directions (front, back, left, right). This sentence is also talking about the eye. The Spirit of your eye watches in all directions because the enemy will come from different directions to attack you.” Verses 57 & 58

The Bible is also clear about the importance of the eyes for *faith* defense:

“Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling,

what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.” Ephesians 1:15-21

The Hands

We also want to be *smart* in the **hands**. We use our hands to defend against attack including “contact, control and counter.”

Insights from *The Chinese Five Word Song*:

“In pushing hands we use stick-and-follow. Without anticipating your opponent’s move, you lightly stick with his every movement, at once yielding to oncoming force, while leaving him no chance to advance. In this manner we can thoroughly understand our opponent’s intentions — how he wishes to attack. Only he is never certain of where you are because your touch is so light. Because we stick to the enemy, my hand touches the enemy and knows what he wishes because you have learned by feeling.” Verse 11

“Judge the chance and take the opportunity. In pushing hands, we call this the ‘chance to follow’ and move in time. We develop good judgment by sticking, by turning with the waist, by measuring the distance. Don’t

overextend. Raise up the head, straighten the spine, lower the weight, root firmly. Wait for your chance. As soon as there is a chance suitable for you to attack, attack at once.” Verse 25

“Attack as the arrow – quick and straight. This means that the inner force comes forth at once, because the arms and hands are rounded. The hand is circles, but the force moves straight ahead. The force comes from the whole body. This is good for pushing hands and self-defense. Remember to balance all sides. Your weight goes down to your abdomen. Raise your head. Lower your shoulders and elbows.” Verse 34

“The hands are 30% to the front and 70% to the rear. People do not understand. When attacking, they use all strength to go forward. But this is not our principle. In this soft exercise, we need 70% at the rear hand. If we draw our attacker to advance with 70%, the enemy will more easily lose his balance. Only 30% on the other hand is needed to attack our enemy, and the enemy will suffer double weight from our blow because his heavy attack is helped to advance by my 70%. At the time I use 30% to attack him he could be badly hurt. To protect uses 70%. To attack uses 70%. This is the principle of our exercise.” Verse 60

“Movement of legs and hands all work together. Whenever you take a step, your hands should work with it. This means your hind leg pushes forward your body and hands without delay. Legs should be well rooted into the ground. Working together is very important. The Mind’s idea

goes to the kidney for movement. Now, hands and legs move together without delay.” Verse 104

The Bible is also clear about the importance of the hands for *faith defense*:

“But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.” 1 Corinthians 12:20-22

“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.” Ephesians 4:28

“But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.” 1 Thessalonians 4:10-12

“Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.” 1 Timothy 5:22

Rule Fourteen

Three Raise-ups

The idea of raising something up deals with both the structure and form of movement in martial arts and self defense. Grace Martial Arts instructors work with students to improve how they stand and move.

Raise Our Head

Raising our head has to do with correct spinal alignment. Our stances and movements are more powerful and effective when we our spine is straight and strong.

“All movement is controlled by your spine and spine we do according to what wishes. Also raise up your head.” The Chinese Five Word Song, Verse 116

“One’s head is held as if it were suspended from above, yet relaxed ... The rise is very important. The chin is a little lower and the eye looks forward...To be a good exercise, you raise your head.” Verse 11

“The movements must be circular, the head up-raised, the abdomen relaxed. All attacks must be balanced, forward with backward, up and down, left with right.” Verse 105

“... by straightening and lifting the cervical vertebrae of the neck. The circulation will then go to the top of our head, and this will help the mental process.” Verse 93

Raise the Palm Forward (as if to push)

“... energy will flow to the tip of our fingers, which will cause our inner force to be stronger.” Verse 93

Raise up Our Tongue

“... to the roof of the mouth. This gives us more energy as it transmits energy from the back portion of the body over the head and down the front portion of our body.” Verse 93

“... the tongue is rolled toward the back of the mouth with the teeth and lips lightly touching together. ” Verse 11

Rule Fifteen

Three Steps

“All the joints of the body move together. We should take notice of these three steps:

- 1. Boxing requires movement, but first the internal requires stillness.*
- 2. To defeat the enemy requires strength, but first the internal requires softness.*
- 3. Fighting requires speed, but first the internal requires slowness.*

These steps: stillness, softness and slowness are all the joints of the body moving together.” [*The Chinese Five Word Song*](#), Verse 92

We hope you have found this series about **Three Rules For Self Defense** helpful. If so, please share with a friend and let us know if you are interested in Grace Martial Arts training. We have classes available in Alabama (Huntsville) and Florida (Tampa area, Bradenton and Sarasota).

You can contact us at gracemartialarts1@gmail.com.

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