



Grandmaster demonstrates "Knife & Gun Defense" at the opening of the Katy DoJang

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## The Natural Path of Self-Defense

by Grandmaster Kim Soo, 10th. Dan & Founder, Chayon-Ryu Martial Arts

**B**eing able to defend oneself is a vital skill today. However, despite ever-increasing restrictions on Americans' freedoms by the rising crime rate, few people seem willing to actually learn self-defense skills.

The reasons given might include lack of time or money for training, or the notion one is too out-of-shape. Some myths are that females can't defend themselves against men no matter what they know; that martial arts requires getting injured; or that empty-hand self-defense is no longer useful in a society encouraging increased carrying of handguns.

My own life, and my students' lives, prove that the benefits of martial arts training are rich and varied, and outweigh any perceived sacrifices - provided one finds competent instruction.

I've spent my adult life training in - and studying the process of teaching - martial arts. Over the course of five decades, I've developed and refined a teaching method which enables a student to learn self-defense skills in the safest, easiest, and most effective manner possible. I arrived in Houston from Seoul in 1968 and in 1970 founded the Chayon-Ryu International Martial Arts Association, to promote "The Natural Way" of martial arts. Chayon-Ryu's basic premise is that the best movements for self-defense, exercise, and longevity, used natural human body motions.

This may sound simplistic, but it's a rare concept in the martial arts field. To many people, a martial artist only looks impressive and powerful if he or she engages in stiff, violent, frenzied movements, with screaming noises, or a mean look on the face. An uninformed person may also think martial arts movements are supposed to imitate an animal--a tiger, crane, praying mantis, or dragon.

This impression often leads people to think, "Martial arts is not for me." The toll bad training takes on one's knees, hamstrings, back, and internal organs is severe. Usually, a student cannot engage in such training for more than a few years before being forced to retire from martial arts study.

This kind of "boot camp" training is simply not necessary for practical self-defense. As a matter of fact, 50 percent of what one needs for self-defense, he or she already knows -- because of living within the human body 24 hours a day.

After the average person first learned to walk, he or she has practiced fundamental principles of good martial arts -- such as

balance, rhythm, balance of movements. On the playground in elementary school, kids walk, run, jump, and swing about. These are the same basic movements and principles any good martial artist uses in self-defense. All the beginner needs is:

- An understanding of why this simple method is effective;
- Instruction on how to apply existing natural body movements in a self-defense situation; and
- Instruction on how to focus existing energy to maximize the impact and effectiveness of self-defense techniques.

As faculty martial arts instructor at both University of Houston and Rice University since 1970, I have taught Chayon-Ryu to tens of thousands of beginners. I have used these opportunities to continually refine my teaching philosophy and methods into the safest, most effective empty-hand defense system available today.

In physical education classes at University of Houston, a class of 150 students can learn -- astonishingly quickly -- to apply their existing physical knowledge to dangerous situations. They experience a dramatic increase in confidence and security, without risk of injury. While this is not "Ten Easy Lessons to Black Belt," application of basic principles of natural body motion, mixed with plain common sense, yields a truly effective self-defense.

What does a martial artist's training consist of? At first, one learns a core series of strikes, blocks, and kicks which are a "toolbox" of self-defense movements. This initial period is a fairly quick one, as the classical core of such training consists of five basic hand techniques, and three basic kicks.

Once this core is established, the remaining focus of training is on:

- Continual refinements and focusing of the techniques and movements themselves;
- Increasing one's physical and internal energy, or conditioning one's body.

An individual who may not have the time and resources to make a full-time commitment to classical training can quickly learn this vocabulary of movements, their application, and methods to increase an ability to focus energy for self-defense. By basing the vocabulary of movements on simple acts -- such as walking, running, and swinging the arms -- anyone can begin to make practical use of self-defense techniques in a very short time.

Once this foundation is laid, one can take a few minutes whenever available and practice these movements alone, or with a friend, to increase speed and power. Since the movements are not artificial, in a stressful situation simply use

natural motions to handle what comes. Armed with a strong fundamental knowledge, one gains in confidence and security, determined by the amount of time devoted to practicing. The stress of an actual assault tends to overwhelm any knowledge only superficially learned. The more one practices, the better prepared he or she is to stand up to an actual attack. That's the function of regular classes.

Anyone wishing to go beyond what can be learned from a book, to learn a simple, human-based philosophy of motion will select an instructor who will be able to teach with minimal risk, and without injurious, misguided ideas.