



The Strength of Your Body & The Power of Your Voice

Self-Defense for Safety,
Healing & Wellness

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“Part of the abuse was living in my body and it had to be physically released.”

-- IMPACT Graduate



What is self-defense?



Principles of Empowerment Self-Defense

- Violence & Abuse are social problems
- Emphasis on options & choices, not proscriptions
- Accessible Safety Skills
- Body-oriented healing and resistance
- Un-doing/challenging gender socialization about strength

Individual resistance



Collective resistance



IMPACT Self-Defense Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MAL0SLHJpc>





Why is self-defense
therapeutic?



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- Embodying strength & courage
 - Practicing assertive communication
 - Managing stress response
 - Replacing fear with practical safety skills
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Research: Psychological Benefits

- Increased global self-efficacy and coping skills (Ozer & Bandura 1990; Weitlauf 2000)
 - IMPACT training combined with group psychotherapy reduced PTSD symptoms. Significant reductions were found in avoidance, anxious arousal, depression & shame. (Rosenblum, Taska & Cermele 2007)
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Research: Psychological Benefits

- More positive body image

(Hollander, 2004)

- Women report increased confidence in interactions with men

(Hollander, 2004)

Research: Psychological Benefits

- Mastery of motor responses that were blocked during traumatic events

(Rosenbaum & Traska 2014)

- Integrated body experience

(Rosenbaum & Traska 2014)

Some Examples of Why Clients Seek Self-Defense

- Struggles around assertiveness
 - Healing from abuse
 - Fear or concern about personal safety
 - Connection to body, experience of strength in their body
 - Life transitions— teens heading to college, young adults traveling, adults getting divorced
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Self-Defense As a Healing Experience

- Connection to their bodies: people experience their bodies as powerful
 - Practicing assertive communication under stress
 - An experience of being powerful when feeling fear
 - For survivors abused as children: knowing they can protect themselves as adults
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Some Reasons Trauma Survivors Take Self-Defense Courses

- Feeling unsafe in every day situations because of abuse and trauma
 - Need for a body-based intervention
 - Fear of abusers' retaliation
 - Fear of running into abuser unexpectedly
 - Preparation for interactions with abuser
 - To regain a sense of competence or control
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Does self-defense work?



Tark & Kleck 2014

- Review of National Crime Victimization Survey
 - Forceful and Non-forceful physical resistance were effective
 - No increased risk of injury after resistance
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Hollander 2014

- College student sample, quasi-experimental design
 - Feminist self-defense class
 - 12% of self-defense group and 30% of comparison group experienced sexual assault in 1 year
 - Self-defense group experienced less severe assaults
 - 0% completed rape compared to 3% of comparison
 - More sexual assault survivors in self-defense group
 - Self-defense group's self-efficacy scores increased over follow-up period, comparison group stayed the same
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Senn 2015

- Randomized control trial of almost 1000 Canadian College women
 - Intervention group:
 - 46% reduction in completed rape
 - 63% reduction in attempted rape
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Ullman 2007

- Most recent meta-analysis
 - Forceful verbal resistance & physical resistance decrease chances of rape completion
 - Non-forceful verbal resistance is not as effective
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IMPACT's Ongoing Research

- Quasi-experimental
 - Sample of 100 college-bound teens
 - Girls and LGBTQ people of all genders
 - Comparison group: Alcohol wellness
 - Will be completed in June 2018
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Initial Findings

- Less severity of sexual assault in IMPACT group
 - More use of self-protective behaviors in response to assaults
 - More self-defense self-efficacy
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Qualitative Responses

I have a boyfriend now and I used to feel very safe around him, but recently I feel that he's been pressuring me to do things I'm not comfortable with. I know I won't give in to these things, but I started thinking about things I learned in this course recently just in case I am presented with an uncomfortable situation, I feel more prepared.

I was almost raped but used words and was able to get them to stop. I was also in a similar situation, but me and the other person were drunk, him more than me, and I did have to use physical force, using a groin slap, which I don't think I could have done as effectively without the program, or have been able to even think straight in that situation without the program either.

I witnessed a girl getting harassed by a man and took her hand and led her away from the man. I didn't know her but I felt the need to get her out of the situation



Evaluating a Self-Defense Program for Therapeutic Benefit



Some questions

- Does the program match the client's therapeutic goals?
 - Do instructors have the skills to create an emotionally supportive environment?
 - Are instructors open to creating a space that is safe for emotional experience?
 - Do they tolerate inquiry or students directing their own experience?
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What makes Self-Defense Trauma-Informed

- Confidentiality & Physical Safety
 - Opening & Closing Circles, periodic check-ins
 - Gradual progressions from less challenging to more challenging skills
 - Coaching during scenarios
 - Clear boundaries between instructor roles
 - Choice about techniques
 - Clear & explicit acknowledgement of familiar perpetrators
 - Grounding techniques
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How IMPACT Works

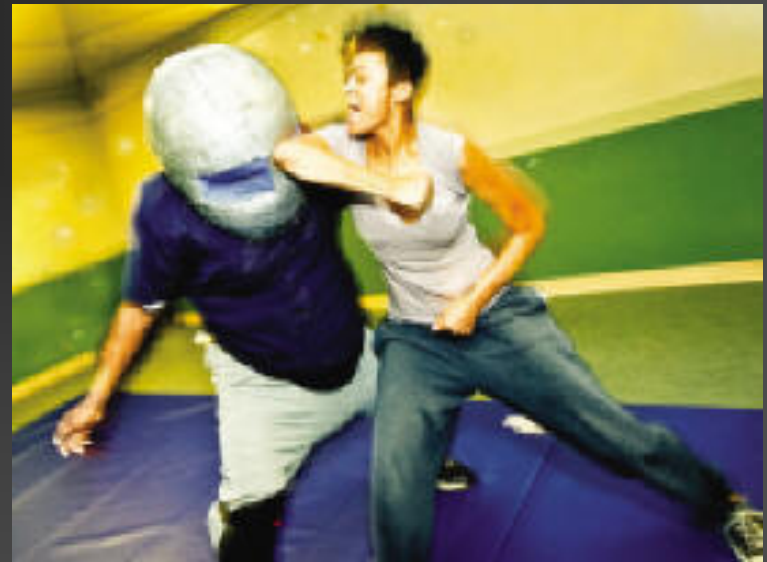


IMPACT MISSION

IMPACT works to prevent violence and abuse by giving people the tools to protect their safety and advocate for healthy relationships and sexual respect in their communities and society.

Managing Adrenaline Response

- Adrenaline= physiological response to stress
- Self-defense tools we can access them under stress
- Practice in simulated assault scenarios to practice managing adrenaline



IMPACT' s Relevance to Trauma Survivors

- Re-trains fight, flight, freeze response
- Practice assertiveness under stress
- People become aware of & change involuntary body language



Prevention and Healing

- Bystander skills
- Sexual assault risk reduction
- Using adrenaline management skills to effect community change



Principles of Physical Resistance Skills

- Strong part of our bodies vs. vulnerable part of assailant's body
 - Using momentum to equalize differences in size and muscle mass
 - Movements that can be done under stress— no fancy back flips!
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Verbal Self-Defense Strategies

- Emphasis on de-escalation
 - Use of strong and neutral tone
 - Body language matches words
 - Matching our response to the level of threat the attacker/potential attacker poses
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Skills for Trauma Survivors (and others)

- Awareness of unintentional body language
 - Communicating strength in stressful situations
 - Staying calm in the face of threats and verbal baiting
 - Staying in control of oneself in the presence of another person's aggression
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Trauma-Informed Approach to Sexual Violence Scenarios

- Guard against victim-blaming and self-blame
 - Normalize crying and other fear response
 - Engage students in using their voices
 - Acknowledge that majority of sexual violence is committed by familiar people
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Teaching Roles



Team Teaching: Role of Coach instructor

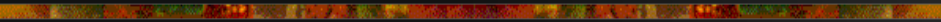
- Teaches and models physical and verbal techniques
 - Provides emotional and practical support to students while practicing scenarios
 - Students are never alone
 - This instructor never plays the perpetrator so students get consistency
 - Ensures physical safety
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Role of Suited Instructor

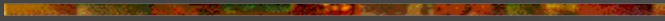
- Portrays a realistic perpetrator
 - Realistic verbal assaults help students learn to become less immobilized by verbal abuse in real life
 - Physical attack simulations help students find power in their bodies
 - Enables clear boundaries
 - Suited instructor is the only member of the team who portrays a perpetrator
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Role of Suited Instructor

- For some survivors: Importance of a supportive man
 - For some survivors: Ability to use techniques that are effective against someone who is physically larger than they are
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Self-Defense as a complement to therapy





Experiencing
voice & body
strength

Integrating,
making meaning,
connecting to
ongoing work

IMPACT as a complement to therapeutic intervention

- Purposeful, body movement
 - Safe place to practice a range of responses to intimidation or coercion
 - Safe place to practice a range of responses to non-abusive challenging conversations
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- Body-oriented healing
 - Practice at using breathing and movement to calm anxious feelings
 - Practice being physically powerful
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Abuse Survivors Involved in Court Cases

- Practice resisting intimidation
 - Practice staying calm when being verbally abused
 - Confident demeanor can make a person come across better if they are testifying
 - Instructors can play the role of attorneys, perpetrators and other people the victim finds intimidating in order to help build confidence
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When is the right time?



People typically get the most out of IMPACT when...

- They are feeling immobilized by fear they don't intellectually understand or can't intellectually change
 - They have kept their lives too small to avoid triggers and want to change that
 - They know what changes they need to make in their lives, but can't maintain them under stress
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- They want an experience of being powerful in their bodies
 - Can make time commitment & have space in their lives for emotionally processing the material
 - Can stay present or return to presence when feeling fear
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People don't get as much out of IMPACT when...

- They are dealing with instability and crisis
 - They do not feel ready to put themselves in situations that may be triggering
 - They have difficulty talking about their plans to take the class
 - They are not particularly interested and are taking the class at someone else's suggestion
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IMPACT Courses



Women's, Men's and LGBTQ Basics Self-Defense Classes

- Comprehensive self-defense for single un-armed attacker
 - Class make-up is survivors and non-survivors
 - Intensive weekend format
 - Involves assaults from the front, rear, and sexual assaults
 - Includes material on date/acquaintance rape
 - Faster pace than survivor classes, not as strongly geared toward survivors
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College Bound Safety

- 12-hour course for teens transitioning to college
- Focus on familiar sexual assault
- Safety & Bystander skills



The Take Your Power Curriculum

- 12 weeks: some physical/verbal self-defense and some group support
 - Media images of women's sexuality & power
 - Relationships After Abuse – Survivor Stories
 - Negotiating in Relationships
 - Negotiating in Sexual Relationships
 - Autonomic Nervous System
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Take Your Power

- Assertiveness, Healthy Relationships, Healthy Sexuality & Physical Safety
 - Emphasizes building confidence to negotiate with dating/intimate partners
 - Helps survivors address the fear they feel about advocating for themselves in relationships
 - Opportunity to practice negotiating in relationships
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Strength & Balance

- Designed for survivors of serious trauma or survivors who are still in crisis
 - Slow & gradual introduction to full-force self-defense and using verbal skills
 - Self-Defense skills are interspersed with Tai Chi or other relaxation techniques to help students manage their anxiety
 - Helps students feel calm and present
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Assertiveness & Boundary Setting

- All verbal self-defense and self-advocacy
 - Body oriented approach to helping people learn to communicate their needs while under stress
 - Scenarios involve strangers & familiar people
 - Customized scenarios
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Introduction to IMPACT for Trauma Survivors

- Two-session 6-hour class
 - Slow introduction to physical and verbal self-defense skills
 - Introduction to calming and grounding techniques taught in survivor classes
 - Autonomic Nervous System
 - Individualized support for choosing the best fit class
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Questions & Discussion

For further information

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