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Fighting violent crime: Class teaches ladies personal security

[Arlene Hittle](#)

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In a city the size of Prescott, many people may not give much thought to violent crime. That's a mistake, say local people in the self-defense business.

"We don't think about it because we're in a small town," said Roxanne Hull, a Damsel in Defense consultant from Chino Valley. Damsel in Defense is company that offers nonlethal personal safety devices such as stun guns, door alarms, pepper spray and noisemakers.

Prescott is a relatively safe place, seventh-degree blackbelt Mark Bryans said, adding that violent crime happens anywhere.

"It could happen at any time," he said.

Bryans, who runs Real World Self Defense (prescottcombatives.com), has been teaching self defense - both with and without weapons - for more than 25 years. His studio regularly offers co-ed classes and occasional ladies-only classes.

"Sometimes a woman is a little more comfortable starting that way," Bryans said.

The studio's next Ladies Self Defense class is set for 9 to 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 10, at Champions Gym, 22 Kiji Dava Circle, Prescott. Cost is \$55 and the class is limited to 12. Participants must be at least 18, but there's no upper age limit.

"You're never too old to learn to defend yourself," he said.

The class will cover personal security and protective tactics; confidence building; methods of striking effectively with hands, elbows, knees and feet; and how to cultivate the combat mindset.



Matt Hinshaw/The Daily Courier
Geri Bryans demonstrates a self-defense technique on her instructor and husband, Mark Bryans, while from left, Lindsey Ward, Cori Gutierrez, Nancy Davis and Christen Buchheim look on at Champions Gym Wednesday afternoon in Prescott.



That mindset is key: "Ladies have to be willing to injure their attackers," Bryans said.

With the way women are conditioned to be kind and gentle, coming to that willingness isn't always easy.

"It's a hurdle," he said. "A woman often doesn't think she can deal with an attacker."

Among the class' focuses will be how and when to use basic strikes and how to handle attacks from the rear.

"An attacker never expects a woman to fight back," Bryans said.

Doing so gives her the element of surprise - and she gains confidence from knowing how to use that element of surprise, he added.

The class also will touch on improvised weapons. Attendees will learn how to use keys and other everyday items to aid in self defense.

"You don't have to be an expert to defend yourself," Bryans said, adding that the techniques, while not physically difficult, do take practice.

Awareness is another key to self defense.

Women have a little more intuitive capacity, and they should trust it, Bryans said. That means using common sense. If she's out somewhere and gets a funny feeling, go with her gut.

"You hope for the best and plan for the worst," Bryans said.

The products Hull sells are designed to help women do exactly that.

In addition to offering in-home parties called "empower hours," Damsel in Defense does demonstrations at senior living facilities, apartment complexes and real estate agencies. Hull also hopes to work with those giving self defense classes, though she has no affiliation with Bryans' class.

Hull got involved in Damsel in Defense almost a year ago, in February 2014. She attended an event at which Damsel in Defense products were featured. She was drawn to a child-tracker that sounds if a child gets too far away from the base unit, or if it gets wet.

"I was instantly hooked," she said.

The company's focus is educating women.

"The mission of the company is to empower, educate and equip women," she said. "You don't have to be a victim of sexual assault or physical abuse. You can fight back."

Hull's empower hours stress education and awareness of surroundings.

"Look people in the face. Stop texting. Pay attention to where you're going," she said. "It's a whole new mindset."

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