

NEWSLINE

WITH ARTHUR GRIBETZ

Gribetz, a father of three young children, was born in New York and has lived in Jerusalem since 1976. He is a third-degree black-belt karate expert who runs the martial arts school Tora Dojo in the capital's Baka community center.

As a karate expert, do you feel safe and free to go anywhere in Jerusalem today?

The most important thing is to take reasonable steps to avoid danger. I wouldn't go to East Jerusalem at night, but I do go freely to the Western Wall from the Jewish Quarter. I live near the Haas Promenade where a jogger was stabbed on Sunday. I used to go in the isolated forest below, but I stopped that when the intifada started. I still do run on the promenade. I would suggest that people go there with a friend to reduce risks, and not alone.

Nevertheless, even though an expert knowledge of self-defense techniques is helpful, people must know that if they are forced to use it against somebody with a knife, they are very likely to be cut, but probably less seriously than if they were not trained. It's not like in the movies, where the attacked person always survives unscathed.

Can self-defense techniques help protect children from attackers?

Youngsters who study self-defense are taught to be constantly aware of what is going on around them. This is good advice for all of us.

Kids don't have the strength to defend themselves. Unless they have no alternative, the best thing to do is run away. Anywhere you are, be aware who is near you. At night, you have to be even more careful. After some training, you begin to sense it, as if you had antennae in your head.

Most of the knife-stabbing victims seem to be young or middle-aged men. How do attackers select their victims? Do age, comportment or size scare off attackers?

Ordinary muggers, like those in New York, prey on weak people who exude fear, so they prefer old people and women. People who have self-confidence scare off muggers. But this rule doesn't seem to work for terrorists, who may be crazed and have another type of motivation.

Should baseball bats and sticks be routine equipment for 11th- and 12th-graders, as Prime Minister Rabin has suggested?

I agree with some of the things Rabin has been saying about trying our best to defend ourselves rather than depending on others, but I wouldn't say that baseball bats are the answer; it's a rather hysterical solution, and pupils could use them on each other. But I would recommend that self-defense classes be offered in all schools as an option.

Judy Siegel