

*The only place where the knife fighting fantasy exists is in the martial arts. There is **no** such thing in the modern civilized world. In legal terms it is attempted murder, assault with a deadly weapon or homicide. To the streetfighter it is assassination, not a "fight" at all. To the criminal it is a tool for robbery Everyone else considers it abhorrent macho stupidity.*

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Knife fighting lies

There are many so-called "experts" who claim to be able to teach you either knife fighting or defense against a knife. The problem is that most of them are just teaching regurgitated martial arts, usually from the Philippines. While I have lots of respect for the martial arts of other lands, the truth is that you live where you do. Odds are you are not in a "knife culture." And that means that whatever you do regarding knives must:

- A)** Work to keep you alive against how you are likely to be attacked by a knife in your homeland and
- B)** If it does work, not put you in prison for murder or manslaughter

While B is important, it only becomes an issue if you survive A. Unfortunately, based on a lot of what I have been seeing taught with my own eyes or encountered while working with the students of these self-proclaimed "knife experts" getting past A is going to be a whole lot tougher than you think. Quite simply, most knife assaults are assassination attempts...how they occur is significantly different than how one "knife fights." While I express my opinions on other knife instructors elsewhere, what this page is for is to help you avoid some of the more common pitfalls with what is being taught out there.

Oh yeah, one more thing, always remember...it's your ass on the line out there, so don't let *anybody* tell you that you don't have the right to ask about these things or think for yourself.

Lie #1 You're going to have time to draw your own weapon

In all the times I have been assaulted with knives, only once was I able to pull my own weapon. And I didn't carry a folder, I carried a sheath knife that I had repeatedly practiced speed drawing. I could, in a crisis, draw and deploy a knife in just over one second. This is not idle boasting, I demonstrate it in many of my videos. And yet, despite this incredible rate of speed, when attacked I didn't have time to draw my knife except for the one time that I leaped wildly backwards to gain space.

That's because by the time I realized there was a knife involved, I was already being attacked.

Not long ago I was involved in a discussion about a young biker who had been blown off his barstool by a shotgun blast. What had disturbed me is that he had been involved in an altercation in the bar earlier and had not withdrawn, thereby signing his death warrant. However, an Australian bouncer rightfully commented that the ages between 18 and 24 is where these kinds of lifesaving lessons tend to be learned -- and those who don't learn them, or aren't lucky, never get any older. It is only the young and inexperienced who make certain kinds of mistakes.

Most knife "fighting" training is predicated on the assumption that you have somehow managed to get a blade in your hand. Quite honestly, if you are attacked by either a young punk, a total incompetent or someone who was brandishing the knife in order to get you to back off then there is a chance that you might have time to draw your own weapon.

However, if you are dealing with anyone with any experience, street savvy or cunning, you will not be able to draw your own blade when you are attacked. Against such a person, there is just not enough time. He won't show his weapon before he attacks. That's because those who are foolish enough to brandish weapons in places where weapons are common don't live long themselves.

And yet that is exactly what you are expecting him to do so you can draw your own knife and defeat him.

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Lie #2 It's going to be a knife "fight"

Shortly before his death, I was sitting at the NRA convention in Phoenix with Col. Rex Applegate, the father of American military knife work. We were discussing the fad of "knife fighting" that we, as old timers in the subject, were both amused and bemused with. He summed up the problem with what was being promoted as knife work as "They're teaching dueling." By this he meant standing there toe-to-toe, with the same weapons and trying to kill each other like civilized gentlemen.

Not to be the bearer of bad tidings, but the reason someone uses a weapon on another human being is to stack the deck in their favor. People don't use weapons to fight, they use weapons to win. The absolute last thing any attacker wants to do is to fight you with equal weapons. If he was looking for a fight he wouldn't have attacked you with a weapon in the first place. And if he knows you have a knife, he is going to attack you with a bigger and better weapon to keep you from winning.

Personally one of the things that I really respect the Dog Brothers for doing is experimenting with mismatched weapon contests. ***That*** is a reality. You pull a knife and he gets a club. You pull a club and he pulls a gun. There is no fighting involved, you use the superior weapon to disable your opponent. And you do it before he does it to you.

As far as your attacker is concerned this is not a fight, it is an assassination. He is not going to want to stand there with you and hack it out. Unfortunately, this is exactly the fantasy that many so-called knife fighting instructors promote. The absolute last thing you want to do is to try to "fight."

Another reason that you need to chase the idea of "knife fighting" out of your head is that in many states there is this attitude that "consensual fights" are best resolved by throwing both of the morons who participated in jail. It is true, you have the right to defend yourself against attack, but if you decide to fight someone, it isn't self-defense anymore, and if you use a lethal weapon on someone in a "knife fight" that you could have avoided, then you have yourself a gang of problems ahead of you. That is unless you like being gang raped in a prison shower.

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Lie #3 "But what if I'm cornered?"

Common sense tells us that knife fighting is dangerous. And yet, like a dog circling a bear's den -- where a smarter part of it knows not to wake that sleeping bear, yet another, more instinctive part is urging it on -- many people who train in knife fight have the same torn desires. One of the biggest issues goading these people is "Do they have what it takes?".

Unlike dogs, however, human beings have the ability for self-deception and rationalization. And one of the ways that we human fool ourselves is that we fantasize about situations where we would be able to give ourselves permission to find out if we "have it." Such people strongly resist the idea that knife fighting is a bad place to go. It is literally as though they are seeking to find an excuse.

One of the strongest indicators of this fantasy mindset is the reaction when they are told to flee instead of fighting with a knife, literally the next words out of their mouths will be "But what if I am cornered and can't run?" There are many such similar excuses that they can use and they all start with the word but: "but what if I am with old people or children and can't run?", "But what if I am out of shape (or infirm) and can't run?" In all cases, of the millions of possible options available they always seem to focus on the one that requires them to engage in a knife fight.

The truth is, it is incredibly difficult to "corner" someone who is determined to leave. Basically because he will use your face as traction or squirt through the smallest of holes. However, if the person's desire not to engage in physical violence is stronger than his desire to leave, it is very easy to corner someone. If you ask any experienced LEO, corrections officer or mental ward orderly which they would rather face, a person who wants to fight them, or someone who will climb over them to escape, to a man they will tell you the former. They know the latter will hurt them more and be harder to defeat. That's because that person is fully committed to a course of action. Whereas a person who has allowed themselves to be "cornered" will still be of a divided heart and therefore not able to fight at full capacity. And that is exactly what it will take in order to survive such a "no win" situation that they have put themselves into.

That is the true danger of this kind of thinking. Because part of you does want to know if you have what it takes and "can do it," you can unconsciously trick yourself into not taking appropriate precautions and ignoring danger signals. Your pride and ego will blind you about what you are doing until it is too late. Once there however, your life -- if it continues past that moment -- will be utterly destroyed.

Don't fantasize about being in a situation where you have to use your knife fighting skills, because you can end up tricking yourself into just such a situation by blinding yourself to possible escape routes.

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Lie #4 He's going to attack you a certain way

I have a demonstration that I do during knife seminars. I find the highest ranking Filipino martial arts player present and I tell him to check and pass my attack. I then proceed to do a well balanced, fast, cautious attack. This is a legitimate and fast attack, and they tend to block it. I then tell them to block the another attack - and aiming for the same target - I do a prison yard rush on them. To this day I have gutted everyone of them.

The reason? They are entirely different knife attacks.

Many years ago Don Pentacost wrote a book called Put 'em down, take 'em out: Knife fighting from Folsom Prison. In it Don pointed out how actual knife homicides occurred in maximum security prisons. Putting it mildly, he outraged countless martial artists by what he said in that book, who to this day still disparage the book. Except for one thing, that prison yard rush is exactly what I use to gut so many of them. It is not a sophisticated attack, but it is a very common way to attack someone with a knife in the USA.

The FMA are predicated on one basic assumption, that you will be fighting a trained knifer. The problem with that assumption is that not everyone attacks the way that someone trained in the FMA will attack you. This is problematic because the counters of the FMA are designed to work against how people with FMA training will attack you. Against these kinds of attacks, the counters work great.

The bottom line is, in the Western culture, someone who is attacking you with a knife is attempting to murder you. They are not going to be hanging back cautiously in fear of your weapon and your fighting skill. Instead they will usually attempt to overwhelm you and quickly kill you by whatever means necessary. Such an attack is totally different than the well balanced and liquid attacks of the FMA. And that is totally different than how someone from Italy will attack you with a knife. And that is different than how someone from Venezuela is going to attack with a knife. And that is different than how someone from Brazil will attack you with a knife. And that is different than how someone from South Africa is going to attack you with a knife. And that is totally different than how someone from China will attack you with a knife. I know because I have traveled around the world and encountered knife fighting systems from all of those places.

I know that those who are selling knife fighting training and others who haven't seen these other systems will deny it, but: Just because you know how to handle one, doesn't mean you know how to handle the others. Each are different, and each are equally lethal. And those differences CAN kill you.

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Lie# 5 And then he is going to passively stand there while you carve him

Just like in the magazines and in the training drills.

What few people realize is that a wild defensive flailing while holding a knife, is just as dangerous and damaging as an intentional strike. In fact, it is often more dangerous because of its unpredictable nature. If you are indeed tearing someone up, his defensive moves can hurt you badly -- especially if he is flailing around trying to stop your next attack.

I have seen a serious over emphasis on defense before closing and a serious lack of emphasis after closing -- either one will get you mauled, if not killed.

BTW, this is over and above the fact that he might not be willing to let you carve him and he might do something different after his initial attack fails...like attack again in a different manner. Or if his first one did succeed to attack again.

Fights are never static...and his ability to move is his ability to hurt you...and do it before you have a chance to do your really cool moves.

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Lie #6 Trapping and stripping

Defanging the snake is something that is commonly taught at higher levels. Subtle and complex moves are drilled into the advanced students so they can either knock the knife out of their attacker's hands or carve the knife out of his hand.

There's just one problem with it, you have a snowball's chance in hell of making it work. The truth is these are what we call "green moves." They have very little to do with actual knife defense and very much to do with keeping the student involved in the system and paying money (which in the U.S. is green, ergo the term green move). Such moves rely on the attacker moving "just so" and thereby putting you in the perfect position to do the move.

The thing is even the older masters tell you that these moves are purely opportunity and chance. And yet, these moves are often over-emphasized at the expense of more effective altercation ending moves. In short, they train in elements as though they were the most important element or the highest degree of the art. Call me silly, but I feel that getting out alive is the best proof of skill, not how many subtle and complex moves you know.

In truth, unless an attacker is drunk or pathetically slow the odds of successfully catching his hand and doing all these marvelous joint locks or controlling moves are very, very slim. Furthermore you are not going to be able to effectively control a wildly struggling opponent's arm with only one hand. Odds are that he will be able to wiggle free of it and cause you some degree of damage.

This does, however, bring up an issue that I made a passing reference to previously. I often see too much of an emphasis placed on controlling your opponent so you can safely close. The raw reality is that you cannot effectively control someone out at such a distance. While there are things that you can do that will give you momentary advantage, it is nowhere complete control. Unfortunately, I have seen too many people try to establish control so they can enter safely. It has been my experience, that you cannot do this. What you can do is create an opening, enter and then prevent him from countering. But if you attempt to hang back until it is "safe" to enter, then you will take more damage staying back trying to create the perfect solution.

On top of the already unpleasant realities, there is something else that is far more important. Okay, so it's only important if you **don't** like taking showers with lots of guys with tattoos. Once you disarm an opponent whether by leverage or your own blade, if you continue to use the knife on him, that isn't self-defense anymore. At the very least it is attempted murder, probably manslaughter and -- if your lawyer isn't very good -- you can possibly go down for murder if the DA is having a particularly bad hair day.

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Lie #7 Bio-mechanical cutting

Technically this should not be on this page at all: First because I respect Bram Frank, and secondly -- as far as it goes -- it is a sound concept. The simple fact is that cutting tendons, muscles and nerves *does work*. A slash will destroy/hinder motor abilities. There is no argument about it's effectiveness.

However, like Jeff Cooper's well-thought out and considered "Better to be judged by twelve than carried by six" was bastardized by Bubbas and "gun nuts" into a cliché of ignorance of the legal issues, I have seen this idea seriously misinterpreted and bandied about by those ignorant of the laws, precedents and legal nuances regarding use of lethal force. Much of the discussion about using a knife to inflict this kind of wound is the same fantasy thinking as when a toothless redneck, after being called upon his statement of "ah'd jes shoot 'im," responds with the Cooperism. Neither of them are taking into account that the law has a slightly different outlook about their use of a lethal force weapon on another human being.

In the eyes of the law, a knife is a deadly weapon. Its use on another human is classified as lethal force. And the only time you are justified in using lethal force -- in most states -- is when you are "in immediate threat of death or grievous bodily injury." In other words, if it is bad enough where you have to use a knife on someone, it is bad enough to kill them. If you are at a point where you are just trying to wound someone, you are not in enough danger to justify using a knife.

This is the ghost of the old "shooting him in the leg" misconception so many people had. People would shoot an intruder and then tell the police that they were only trying to wound him. This left them open to all kinds of criminal charges and civil litigation -- from the person they had shot. There is a natural hesitation to take another human life. However, when this manifests in seeking to "wound" someone in order to make them "go away" you end up in a very dangerous legal grey area. And the fact that you were even in a situation where a knife was used is going to make that grey area more dangerous. Remember, a knife is considered a thug's weapon.

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Lie #8 Knowing how to stickfight means you know how to knife fight

I have a friend Randy Brannan who is a physicist. The man is basically brilliant and when he starts talking physics, I shut up, sit down and listen, because he knows what he is talking about. Thing is Randy and I used to fight with broadswords at the California Renaissance Faire. These live-steel bouts were not only unchoreographed, but were basically wild brawls (it helps to understand that at the time, we were both young and often slightly drunk -- conditions known to produce "it seemed like a good idea at the time" thinking). Later Randy would go out and study Kali/Escrima. Having experience using a far wider range of weapons than many of his fellow kali students gave him a slightly different perspective. One day while discussing this very subject he said:

People claim that a stick is an average weapon. That it has similarities to all weapons. This is true, it does. But then they claim that if you know how to use a stick you can use all weapons. This is not true. What they don't understand is that the differences are just as important as the similarities.

Give that man a cigar...although I might tweak his last sentence to read "what they don't want to understand." Just because you are proficient with one type of tool doesn't automatically mean you can translate that skill to another weapon. And yet a great many people tell themselves that this is the case, in fact, they rather emphatically insist it is so. Apparently the appeal of being a "master of all weapons" is greater than being proficient with just a stick.

The simple truth is that different weapons handle differently. They have different weights, different sizes, different timing, different requirements and different uses. There are indeed

certain similarities, but unless you want to end up kneeling in a dark parking lot trying to hold your guts in, you had better stop telling yourself about the similarities and start looking at the differences.

To begin with a stick doesn't have an edge. With blade work the point and the edge are critical components, but not necessarily so with sticks. Edge control is pretty much the indicator between someone who knows how to use a knife and a stick jock trying to tell you that he knows knife work. If you know what to look for you can spot the difference with just one move -- even if it is a fast one. In fact, the faster the move, the more obvious it is.

The physics of a stick do not require this exactness of edge control. This is because a stick is an impact weapon, were as a blade is designed to cut, slice, stab and sometimes, hack. If you do not have your edge on target, then you create a totally different set of physics and reactions other than the one you want.

If you are learning stick fighting then accept that you are learning stick fighting, that is a legitimate pursuit. If you are learning knife work, then you are learning knife work...while there are similarities there are radical differences. Don't tell yourself or allow yourself to be told different. If you don't believe me, try working out with a wide variety of weapons and do the exact same move. These differences especially become manifest when your weapon encounters flesh.

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Lie # 9 Knowing kali makes you a knife fighter

Kali, Escrima, Arnis, FMA, all of them have the aura and mystery of being weapons based arts. Deadly, savage arts of the Filipino warriors. Lurid stories about guerrilla actions against Japanese invaders, duels and death matches that the founder of the style was involved in abound.

Quite honestly what these maestros survived is incredible and is more than worthy of kudos. These older gentlemen survived a totally different culture, socio-economic environment, time and, in some cases, a World War and foreign invasion of their homeland.

That having been said however, just because the founder of the system or lineage was a walking piece of bad-assed real-estate doesn't make you one.

They weren't knife fighters, those people were survivors. It's what comes from living a hellishly hard life. While they had physical skill that helped them, what kept them alive, what allowed them to strike fast enough, hard enough and brutally enough wasn't their art - it was the commitment not to die. It was that grim savagery to do whatever is necessary and to do it faster and harder than the other person that kept them alive. In the lexicon, they had "heart."

Their art just allowed them to do that faster.

Knowing an art doesn't give you that kind of commitment, that kind of ruthlessness, that kind of grim endurance or that willingness to descend into savagery to stay alive. Just knowing the art doesn't make you a knife fighter. You have to have "heart" as well -- that willingness to wade through hell and come out the other side.

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Lie #10 Grappling with a knife

I was in Germany with a group of martial artists teaching "street knife work." While demonstrating an empty-handed with one of them, he tackled me and took me to the ground (This is no big deal as when I do demo's I don't allow "courtesy attacks." I insist people attack me like they would were it a real fight -- this occasionally means that I get slugged or taken down. This was one of those times). Anyway, when we hit the floor I realized that there was no way I could contest this guys strength, he was a bull, full of muscle and grappling skill. The thing was I had landed next to a practice knife that I calmly picked up and dragged it across his throat.

We stood up and his eyes were the size of saucers because he realized what the significance of what had just happened. A knife had come out of nowhere and had this been real, he would have been dead. The amazing thing was is there were only a few other people there who did too. On of the bigger proponents of grappling stood there and said, "He tackled you." To which I replied, "Yes, and I slit his throat" "But, he tackled you."

In their minds there was no difference in the levels of damage. The fact that I had been taken down counted the same as a knife across the throat. Personally, I'll take getting slammed to the ground any day over getting my throat slit.

The myth of grappling is that it works everywhere. The fact that it proved so successful in the UFC ring has blinded many people to the fact that there are critical differences between fighting barehanded and fighting with weapons. While empty-hand fighting might easily turn into an endurance marathon, where size, strength, physical shape and ability to endure punishment significantly influence the outcome of an altercation, that is not applicable to weapons work. In that arena, every man bleeds the same.

Oh yeah, remember how I said bio-mechanical cutting did have validity to it about the damage a knife can cause? What makes you think you can keep on fighting with that kind of damage being done to you? All a guy has to do is cut you a few times to seriously reduce your ability to move and then wait while you bleed out. Now the really bad news, being pumped up on adrenalin is going to make that happen faster, the higher your heart rate, the faster you bleed out and lose strength. All he has to do is out wait for your strength to fail before finishing the job.

Do not attempt to "grapple" with a knifer. Once on the ground, you are not guaranteed to be able to control his knife arm well enough to prevent him from carving you up. If it were a barehanded fight, then you can often prevent him from being able to generate enough power to effectively strike you, but a knife doesn't need power, it just needs to touch you. And if you are attempting to control his arm while on the ground, he will wiggle free and repeatedly cut you until you can no longer continue to resist.

Now for the fun news, I know of a small knife being manufactured that is called the "clinch pick." A small concealable -- and easily accessible -- knife, that can be rammed into a grappler's guts and chest three or four times before the grappler knows it is there. Where it is carried makes it nearly impossible for the grappler to prevent its deployment. When you realize he has it, it is too late.

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Lie #11 The knife is an extension of your hand

This lie is most often promoted by empty-handed stylists who insist that they can teach you how to either defend yourself against a knife or to use one. Unfortunately, many people who started out in such systems have transferred over to supposed blade arts and continued promoting this often misinterpreted saying.

Empty hand fighting is not the same as weapon fighting -- it requires different body mechanics, different ranges, different timing and -- most importantly -- an emphasis on movement that is not found in most kicking and punching arts. At least not in how they are taught in Westernized countries.

This emphasis on the hand largely stems from the sports influence of modern martial arts. However, the problem is that most empty handed fighters lack the understanding of how to generate force from a moving state, instead seeking to generate force from a stationary/rooted stance and a twisting the hips. While this works for barehanded fighting styles, it fails to address the needs of weapons fighting.

It is my personal belief that the idea that the "knife is an extension of your hand" encourages a lack of bodily movement, instead relying on the hand to do all your work for you. In these circumstances your not being cut relies on you speed and reflexes, rather than more reliable means. Basically, because you might not be fast enough to counter, parry or block what he is doing. I further believe that this lack of motion largely stems from attempting to extend -- whether unconsciously or intentionally -- the thought process of empty handed fighting into a field where it does not belong, or work.

For reasons beyond the scope of this Web page I prefer the more encompassing and flexible term: The knife is an extension of your will.

What I will say is that if it is an extension of my hand, my body may or may not move. However, if it is instead my will, everything in between my will and my knife will be likely to move to achieve my ends. And that is far more effective for staying alive.

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Lie #12 There is such a thing as a master knife fighter

Despite all the fantasy self-defense scenarios so-called "knife experts" concoct in their minds and are always talking about -- where they would be justified in using a knife on another human being -- the flat-out truth is that in 99.9% of the times that a knife is used on another human being it is a criminal act. Not to burst anybody's bubble here, but those famous challenges and death matches that the old maestros engaged in were wildly illegal - both in the United States AND in the Philippines.

Now having said that I will be the first to point out that hot-headed, young bucks looking to prove themselves will often engage in extremely stupid, dangerous and criminal behavior in the name of pride or anger. But you know what? If they live, they often wind up in jail, if not prison. The law tends to frown on fights, much less duels.

Something Brian Curl, the cameraman on my knife videos and ex-SEAL said to me that I will always remember is "There ain't no such thing as a professional knife fighter." Truer words were never spoken. Nobody gets paid for knife fighting. On top of this, you don't survive multiple knife fights without getting carved up pretty badly yourself. But most importantly,

long before you stacked up enough murders to be qualified as a "master knife fighter" you would have found yourself on death row.

So look long and hard at anyone calling themselves a blademaster, knife fighter or knife fighting expert...because more likely than not, it is a self-imposed title that has no bearing on reality. And if he were such a master knife fighter, how come he ain't got more scars and isn't in prison?

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Lie #13 That this is a "fight" at all

If you want to live, you don't go in with a "fighting attitude" to any altercation involving weapons.

Weapons take it out of the arena of fighting and put it in the realm of combat.

And if you aren't ready to go there, there is no shame in that. But don't let your pride or anger push you into there, because the rules are totally different, and if you don't know that, then you are the one who is going to get hurt.

If you see a weapon deployed, run. If you stay, don't even think of fighting. It left that three counties back...someone is going to get seriously hurt if you stay. Now the question is, will it be him or you? Or both?

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Lie #14 Expect to get cut

Remember that thing called bio-mechanical cutting? I said the major problem with it is on the legal front, but, on the "a knife is going to do a shitload of damage to you" front there's a lot to be said for it. What amazes me is that some people can talk about the damage that their knife will do to an attacker, but at the same time blurt out the old cliché of "expect to get cut" as though getting cut were only a minor inconvenience.

HELLO! Wake up and smell the coffee!!!!

Where I really hit the roof on this mindset is when I see someone who comes from a empty hand fighting system attempt to "fight" an armed opponent in the same way that he would an unarmed opponent.

The thing is, these same people are the ones who often talk about "expecting to get cut." And then, having said that, *they take no effective measures to prevent it from happening!* I have literally seen such people wade into a cuisine-art.

Now who ever came up with that term originally was speaking about a very important idea. That is that you will be cut in a blade altercation and that you need not to panic when it happens and that you must continue on to the best of your abilities in order to increase your chances of survival. To that intent and meaning I say "Amen!" I couldn't agree more.

However, like the idea of biomechanical cutting has been bastardized by people into a dangerous misconception, so has this one. In fact, from having watched people who study so-called "blade arts" many of them have apparently taken it to mean allow yourself to be

sliced up, making no effective defensive moves in order to try to get in one good hit. Apparently, if you nick him once to his twenty seven slashes, it is an acceptable exchange rate.

The other side of the pendulum swing is however, overly focusing on trying to control his knife arm before entering. Hanging back and trying to catch this fast moving blade so you can safely enter is one of the best ways I know to make getting cut a self-fulfilling prophecy.

This is what really results from trying to extend a "fighting mindset" into weapons combat. It simply just does not work. Would you like to hear our philosophy on this subject?

Trade a cut for a kill, but nothing else.

That's the difference between fighting and combat.

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Lie #15 The FMA are the ultimate knife fighting systems

Let me lay it out on the line here. When it comes to knife fighting, they are all fucking dangerous.

There is no "sun source" of knife fighting. There is no land of ultimate knife fighting arts. There is no race who hold the monopoly on the "right way" to use a knife. As I said, I have traveled around the world and seen knife fighting systems from even more places and what I will tell you is that each of them will make you just as dead, just as quick.

What I will be the absolute first to admit is that the FMA have done wonders for organizing and explaining the ideas behind how they do what they do. And for that I take my hat off to them. And I salute and respect the skill and prowess of their eskrimadors, kali gurus and arnis masters. But I draw the line at even sitting quietly when someone tries to elevate one group of fighting skills above all others so they can swagger around saying that they study the ultimate "knife fighting" system. This above my immediate gag reflex when someone -- who has never faced a knife in the hands of someone who wishes him ill -- swaggers around and tells me that he knows everything there is to know about knife fighting because he studies under (fill in the blank).

There is no right way, one way or only way to use a knife...and the more you know about all the different ways the more likely you are to be able to come up with an effective counter if you are attacked in one of those ways. But if you have only studied one system, the odds are against you being able to come up with something that works. And I have to tell you, although Western practitioners like to claim that the FMAs do, those arts don't cover all the ways a knife can be used on you. There is literally a world full of differences out there.

I have said it before and I will say it again: *Nobody* has a monopoly on the truth about knife fighting. The whole of the subject is just too big. Everybody has a slice of the pie. And learning what they have to say about it and how they do it where they are from is the best way for you to increase your chances of survival.

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Lie #16 It's easy to disarm an armed opponent

Every time I hear someone say this, I cringe. Because A) they have just told me that they have never dealt with someone intent on trying to kill them. B) Odds are that they are a bully and braggart. And C) If they are teaching people this nonsense they are going to get someone killed.

In a very real sense, someone standing there brandishing a knife is not trying to kill you...he is trying to scare you away. Now I will admit that it is often easier to overwhelm such a person because he is not in attack mode, but it is never easy. Such people can be surprised and often they cannot react in time. However, someone who is genuinely intent on attacking you with a blade is **never** easy to disarm or overcome. And promoting this lie is literally begging to get someone killed - especially if they encounter a committed attacker.

The problem that I have encountered with bullies is that they are very selective on who chose to bully. I have seen individuals who have savaged weaker opponents -- as if by magic -- disappear when trouble starts with true hard-cases. These individuals may have taken blades away from intimidated kids, but somehow they never seem to be around to try it against someone who is an experienced and hardened streetrat or former convict.

So again, proving that the exact choice of words is important we are left with a small, but important modification of what is commonly taught and what needs to be said: The concepts behind disarming an armed opponent are simple, they are not, however, easy -- and neither is the actual disarm itself

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Lie #17 You can successfully fight an armed attacker

This entire page has been dedicated to disproving this lie. The main reason it is a lie is that you cannot "fight" an armed opponent. You can survive against one and you might even be able to successfully put him down before he causes you any major damage...but, whatever you do, it must be fast, effective and brutal. If it isn't, then you will not stop him before he causes you major damage.

You cannot stand there and engage in a long, drawn out contest with an armed opponent. If you try to do so, you will lose. It is not a matter of if, but of when.

Simply stated, every time he touches you with the knife he will cause serious damage. How can you hope to launch a long drawn out retaliation against him when every time he touches you he causes "biomechanical cutting" on you? You are going to bleed out and cease to function long before your strategy comes to fruition.

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Lie #18 Drills teach you how to knife fight

Drills teach principles. They teach ideas. They are the map, not the territory.

Unfortunately, many people mistake the map for the territory. One of the most unrealistic tendencies that drills teach is they do not teach you proper ranging. The object of an attack is to stab/slash your partner. However, often in training you will see people standing back ranging their attack against their partner's stick or their training knife falling at least a foot

short of their partner. Furthermore they are not attacking with the same commitment and force level that a real knife assault will occur with. Therefore the training drill, while important is missing several critical components.

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Lie #19 You can use a knife on another human being without legal repercussions

I have seen videos by so-called "knife fighting masters" who actually show the fool encouraging his students to slash someone with a knife for trying to slug the student. I have also seen videos where after disarming their attackers with several slashes to the arm, these knife killers proceed to slash their -- no longer armed -- attacker to ribbons. I have stood in a convention hall and seen a martial artist doing a demo, leap back while slashing the weapon arm of his attacker, and then .. after "defanging the snake," he leap back into range and executed a disemboweling move on his ... now... unarmed former attacker. Later, when I asked him about if he understood that any student doing that move would be committing manslaughter instead of "self-defense" his eyes bugged out because he'd never considered how that move would be viewed in court. I have stood in my front room with attorneys and use of force experts and watched a tape on knife fighting where a supposed "expert," not only starts a bar fight, does a suicide move that would have gotten his throat slit and then kneels down and stabs a downed opponent -- in front of witnesses! Actions that everyone agreed would be prosecuted as murder.

As such, don't even get me started on the bozo's who insist their students cut a person multiple times because "one cut may not stop him." Unfortunately, this kind of training often goes awry when the attacker attempts to withdraw and the knife fighter keeps on slashing, even after the ex-attacker has turned his back on the knife fighter. Now, this once upon a time attacker has been slashed many times after he was disarmed and is slashed more on his back while attempting to retreat...guess who is going to go to prison for attempted murder?

A knife is considered a lethal force instrument...and the use of lethal force is **very** narrowly approved. If you use one another human being you had better damned well be firmly within those parameters...if not, then you are -- in the eyes of the law and society -- the bad guy.

Before you even think of picking up a knife for "self-defense" go out and take a course on Judicious Use of Lethal force. Do **NOT** take any knife fighting experts word on the subject, go to the source lawyers and expert witnesses on use of force.