

Gracie Survival Tactics: The Key to Law Enforcement Safety

As a law enforcement officer, have you ever asked yourself whether you are truly prepared if you should come under physical attack? What would you do if you were attacked and found yourself with a stronger and larger opponent on top of you? If you're lucky enough to find yourself on top of the suspect, how will you control him or her without making it look like you are engaging in excessive force? If you have no answers to these questions, it is clear that your department has not invested the time and resources into properly training you to defend yourself. Recently, I had the opportunity to attend Gracie Survival Tactics Level I (GST), a five day, 30 hours, hands-on, practical training on how to defend oneself against physical attacks and how to properly control and restrain suspects. On completion of the course sworn law enforcement officers are recognized as instructors and can bring the training back to their departments to teach other officers these proven self-defense and control techniques. Additionally, by going on-line to the Gracie University web-site, instructors will have 24 hours 7 day a week access to video breakdowns of the tactics taught.

<https://gracieuniversity.com/default.aspx>

I am a retired Deputy Chief of Police of an urban area and am currently a private investigator and recognized police policy and procedures expert. If your department has not heard of GST I suggest that you bring this real world practical training to your department. I have been involved in police and military style training and education for over 30 years and have attended many defensive tactics courses. I have also been involved in many physical encounters with noncompliant suspects. I found GST to be superior training. Once properly trained, any officer can effectively apply these tactics, regardless of their size. For a full reading of the course description go to: <http://www.gracieacademy.com/gst.asp>

Why is GST important?

First and foremost, it may save your life. If you are physically attacked, it is clear that the suspect is trying to hurt or kill you. Therefore, it is paramount that you possess the training and skill set to defend yourself, protect your weapon, and bring the suspect quickly into compliance. An untrained officer under attack will most likely resort to street fighting techniques. While this may work for some officers, others will not be as successful. In a street fight scenario, both the officer and the suspect will be exhausting tremendous amounts of energy and the fight will often come down to who has the most stamina in the end. Using GST training, you will learn how to conserve your energy while forcing the suspect to exhaust his or hers. Once the suspect exhausts his or her energy, you will start to have the upper hand. Once you have the upper hand and have successfully defended yourself from the initial attack, you can now apply one of the 23 techniques your GST Level I training has taught you.

Your main objective is to bring the suspect into custody by using a reasonable amount of force. For example, if you are on top of the suspect and in control, but the suspect is noncompliant (not wanting to give you his or her hands or passively resisting), continuing to punch or strike the suspect in the face or upper body may not be wise. We live in a world where every physical encounter a police officer is involved in is reviewed by his or her department, and more often than not, the encounter is also video-recorded. Perception is reality; if a police officer is on top of a suspect and the suspect is lying on the ground (refusing to surrender his hands) it could appear that the suspect is compliant. If the officer is punching, kicking and kneeing the suspect,

the perception will be that the officer engaged in excessive force. Whether justified or not, you will be called upon to explain your actions. GST places you in a position of strength. Once you are trained in GST and continue to hone your skills, you will be in a position to defend against the attack, drain the suspect's energy, place yourself in a position of control, and bring the suspect into compliance.

Departments who take the initiative to send 2-3 of their officers to GST Level 1 training and then allow those officers to implement the training with their departments are sending a message to their officers: We care about your safety and want you to have the best training available. Additionally, the GST training will help in reducing the level of force any untrained officers would typically use and will assist in reducing excessive use of force complaints. This, in turn, will assist in reducing civil liability.

About the author:

Joe Blaettler is a retired Deputy Chief of Police from Union City, New Jersey. Joe is currently the President of East Coast Private Investigations of New Jersey. He is a recognized police policy and procedures expert and has rendered numerous expert reports on behalf of both plaintiffs and defendants. Joe has been approved by the New Jersey Patrolman's Benevolent Association, The New Jersey Fraternal Order of Police and the Suffolk County Police Department to render, and has rendered, expert opinions in support of their members. He is also an adjunct professor of criminal justice and a veteran of the United States Marine Corps.



GST Level 1 Training May 2-6, 2016 Montgomery County, MD. Left to right: Instructor Sam Fernandez, Joe Blaettler and Head Instructor Rener Gracie