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A wall can hinder the movements of unenlightened martial artists, but a little knowledge will enable you to use it as your secret weapon.

THE AGAINST WALL

8 Strategies for Using the Environment to Defend Yourself

by Frank E. Sanchez

When I was young, I was a good fighter, almost to the point of being cocky. Nothing pleased me more than a good brawl. More often than not, it was at close quarters with someone who used only his hands—kicking was considered sissy stuff at the time because the Asian arts weren't widely known—and it was relatively easy to



7 Frank Sanchez (right) faces a grappler (1). When the man charges, Sanchez positions his hips to absorb the impending impact with the wall (2). He spreads his feet for balance and braces himself against the structure as he raises his right arm (3). A downward elbow smash lands on the opponent's spine (4). Sanchez then hooks his left arm under his opponent's arm and lifts his limb (5). The defender locks the man's arm against his neck and turns to slam his head into the wall (6). Continued pressure on the elbow forces the opponent to the ground (7).

overpower such an adversary using hand and foot techniques.

Nowadays, most people are familiar with the martial arts. They know what to look for, and when things turn ugly,

they'll try to crowd you so you don't have room to use your natural weapons. Or they'll attack you in a group, intending to overpower you with numbers. The latter can be addressed in the *dojo* with free-form drills and scenario training, while the former requires you to learn how to employ your techniques, or variations of them, at close range.

One often-overlooked element of close-range fighting is the environment. From my indiscretions as a youth, I was able to forge my own techniques for exploiting my surroundings. Of particular value was learning to use limited space to my advantage. For example, a wall can seriously hinder your movements while

presenting a real danger to you—particularly if your enemy is trying to split your skull on it—but if you know how to use it, it can serve as an extra appendage for you to fight with.

Absorb the Shock

If you're being pushed backward into a wall, you can stop yourself from being slammed by driving a back kick into it and letting the resultant thrust push you forward and to the side of his attack.

If it's too late and he's imparted too much backward momentum, you can thrust your hips into the wall. When they hit first, they will protect your spine and the back of your head from the impact.

Should the assailant push you from

keep your face from being smashed.

Collar Grab and Face Punch

If the opponent grasps your collar and pushes you backward into the wall, lean forward and let your hips absorb the impact. To maintain your balance, use the hand on the same side as his grasping hand to hold the wrist of the hand he's placed on your lapel. As he punches at your face, block his arm from the inside with your forearm directly in front of his striking arm, then quickly raise your other hand from underneath to "fan" the limb across his body. This action will bind his arms briefly.

Once his arms are out of the way,

Using both hands, smother his punch downward. Before he can recover and deliver another blow, raise your hand and hit him in the temple, jaw or neck with an outside-wrist strike.

Then grab him in a head lock. To make it more secure, use your free hand to restrain the wrist of his attacking arm. Next, slam the top of his head into the wall. You can then throw him to the ground if need be.

Double Lapel Grab

Being grabbed by the lapels often serves as the lead-in to being punched or being lifted and held against a wall. The way out involves letting your hips make first contact with the wall, then



1 The attacker approaches Frank Sanchez from the rear and shoves him toward the wall (1). Sanchez lets his forearms absorb the brunt of the impact (2), then uses his hands to support himself as he unleashes a back kick (3). If necessary, he can follow up with additional strikes or a takedown.

the back in an attempt to slam your face into the wall, you can stop your forward motion by extending your leg as if you're executing a front thrust kick. If you're too close to the wall when he pushes, you should absorb the brunt of the impact on your bent forearms and hands (fingers up) while turning your head to the side to



reach up to secure the back of his head with your free hand, then strike his chin up and to the side with your fanning hand. Continue the motion by twisting his head up and back, with the hand you've placed on the back of his head pulling and the other pushing.

Meanwhile, maneuver your body to the front, thus positioning his back to the wall. Then release the hand on the back of his head and use your other hand to slam his cranium into the wall.

Collar Grab and Stomach Punch

As the opponent pushes you against the wall, let your hips take the impact.



dropping into a low squat while grabbing your opponent's elbows. Simultaneously pull him forward and down to break his balance. With one hand continuing to pull downward, spring up from the squat as you alter the direction of your other hand so it lifts and circles up across your body.

When you execute the technique with sufficient speed, you'll throw him down. You can follow up by grabbing the wrist of his closest hand and slamming the elbow of the extended arm into the front of your shin just below the knee.

Knife to the Throat

When an assailant has a blade to your



The assailant places his knife against Frank Sanchez's throat (1). Sanchez moves the blade away with his right hand and strikes the man's groin with his left (2). He then controls the weapon with both hands (3) and sweeps the arm overhead (4). Next, he leverages the attacker into the wall while locking his right wrist (5). A downward elbow strike bends the man's arm (6), and a wrist twist and body pivot send him falling backward (7). If the thug isn't incapacitated, the defender can disarm him or continue striking.

throat, quickly push the knife away so the edge doesn't slice your neck. Simultaneously strike him in the groin with your other hand.

Secure the wrist of his knife hand with both your hands and, in an arcing motion, turn his arm so his elbow points up. Use your forearm and bent elbow to press against his straightened limb, flexing his hand inward in a combination elbow-and-wrist lock. Your actions will slam his face into the wall at the same time.

If you need to take him to the ground, you can either continue the pressure of the hold or reverse the direction by striking the crook of his elbow to bend the arm before you twist his wrist outward



to throw him. (Note that if the edge of the weapon is held palm-down against your neck, you should skip the armbar and go directly into the wrist twist or another technique that takes the sharp part away from your skin.) Once he's on the ground, you can follow up with any number of techniques or simply take away the weapon.

Being Tackled

Because the attacker initiates the tackle to smash you against the wall and knock you senseless, it's once again essential to absorb the impact with your hips. Instantly drop into a horse stance while you deliver a downward elbow smash to the spine, kidney or back of the neck.

Follow up by wrapping your arm around one of his and lifting it so his

After being pushed against the wall, Sanchez faces a lapel grab and a high punch (1). The martial artist blocks the blow (2) and uses his right arm to sweep the punching limb to the right (3). Sanchez then grabs the back of the man's head with his left hand (4) and recruits his right hand to torque his head (5). The confrontation ends when Sanchez pivots and slams the fellow into the wall (6).

forearm lies against your neck. The crook of your elbow is positioned over his straightened elbow, and your other hand grasps the wrist of your bent arm. Apply pressure by pulling his elbow toward your body while leaning toward him and turning in the same direction. Your force will cause him to bend forward and smash his head into the wall. You can continue the pressure against his arm while you turn to the right and force him to the ground.

Attempted Kick

When your enemy tries to kick you, deflect the attack to the side with your hand. That will turn his body in the same direction. As he struggles to regain his footing, close the gap and wrap your arm around his neck so his throat lies in the crook of your elbow. The fingers of your other hand should be on his back to keep him steady.

To throw him, take a long step forward (to his rear) while removing your hand from his back, then extend that arm around his neck as if you're trying to jab your fingers at a 45-degree angle into the ground behind him. As he falls, retract your extended arm and wrap it around his arm just above the elbow. Complete the lock by grabbing your wrist with your other hand. The weight of his falling body, combined with the pulling action of your hands, will hyperextend his elbow as he hits the ground.

Pushed From the Back

When you get shoved from behind, your defense involves immediately relaxing your body to reduce the effect of his energy transfer. Use your forearms to make contact with the wall, ensuring your head is turned to the side to protect your face. Slide one hand down the wall to relieve the pressure on your back and act as a brace as you kick backward into the opponent's groin or solar plexus.

While he's stunned, move sideways into him and wrap your right leg around his right leg so your knee is on the ground pointing outward, your lower leg is behind his heel and your instep is on the ground. (Note: Stay off your toes, or you'll risk hyperextending them.) To throw him backward, push your hip against his shin as if you're attempting to sit on your own heel. Once he falls, place your hands on the ground in front of you and blast a back kick into his groin.

Although many other situations can arise when you're caught between a wall and an adversary, most can be addressed using the strategies described above. They will be of immeasurable benefit should you ever find yourself with nowhere to turn and with your back against the wall.

About the author: Frank E. Sanchez is a 45-year veteran of the martial arts and the founder of san-jitsu. For more information, write to 6035 Ft. Caroline Road, Unit 22, Jacksonville, Florida 32277. Or send e-mail to San-Jitsu@yahoo.com.

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