

First, Break Their Balance

By Stephen Petermann

Assailants may go beyond punching and kicking, in their effort to hurt or control us. They may grab our hair, clothing, head, leg or wrists. When grabbing our wrist, they may grab the same side or across our bodies. They might grab two hands on one, or two hands on two. Their hand position may be thumb up, or inverted, or in the case of two-handed grabs, they may have one each.

In addition to its wide variety of kicks, Hapkido is well known for its self-defense technique covering the dizzying array of situations outlined above. The curriculum of any excellent Hapkido school will cover all of the various attacks listed and more.

Turning an opponent's effort to control us into our control of them, and getting control of the situation is integral to the study of Jang Mu Won Hapkido. Jang Mu Won Hapkido, founded by the late Grandmaster Chong Sung Kim, uses strikes, pressure points, twisting and throwing to disable any attacker. Grandmaster Dr. Chong Sung Kim is recognized as one of the world's foremost instructors and practitioners in the Korean martial art of Hapkido. Grandmaster Kim's teaching style placed emphasis on timing and precision in the execution of Hapkido techniques.

If you were one of the fortunate people who got to study with Grandmaster Kim, you heard him say over and over, "First, break their balance." This was an effort to engrain into our minds that a static, bal-



Master Petermann has been grabbed "cross-handed" by the attacker, Gregory Castle.



Sliding right, and circling down and right on a wrist pressure point, the attacker's balance is upset, and Master Petermann encircles the neck with his left arm.



Applying counter force to the attacker's shoulder (not visible) and continuing to pull on the captured arm, the attacker's body is arched, and his balance totally lost.

“If you can disturb your assailant’s balance and/or escape; counterattack becomes possible.”

anced opponent has advantages that we would like to remove. When you remove someone’s equilibrium, you greatly improve your likelihood of success.

Trying to counter an opponent’s force with force is what they expect, and they are ready for just such attempts. You are at even more of a disadvantage if you are smaller, and try to match strength with strength. The squirming and writhing of a captured wrist within the grasp of a strong opponent only succeeds in hurting yourself, chafing your skin and wasting precious time and energy.

However, if you can disturb your assailant’s balance and/or escape; counterattack becomes possible, even for the smaller and weaker among us. His loss of balance takes priority in his mind, holding and controlling you becomes secondary. This dividing of his efforts and disruption of control creates the opportunity we are looking for to get away, secure a more defensible position, or even turn events completely around and achieve control over him. Only a person highly skilled in falling can entertain thoughts of anything other than self preservation when headed for the ground.

Your Own Balance

Of course, before you can entertain thoughts of disturbing someone else’s balance, you need to develop good balance yourself. Feet should be a comfortable distance apart, knees bent, and your weight divided 50/50 between your feet. Good balance can be enhanced through the rigors of sparring, which helps to keep your feet under you while you are moving, dodging, blocking and attacking. The motions of the health related arts of Tai Chi or Dan Ki Gong also improve balance.



Releasing the counter force, and continuing to pull on the attacker’s arm, his balance is redirected, and momentum is created.



Capitalizing on the momentum and loss of balance, Master Petermann throws his opponent.



Compliance is attained using an arm bar.

Reversing the Force

One of the ways to break an opponent's balance is to reverse the force used against us. In their effort to control us, our assailant must exert energy. The Hapkidoist can take advantage of this by adding to and reversing that energy. Grandmaster Kim was fond of saying, "If they pull, you push. If they push, you pull." This is the basic application of the "harmonious power" principle of Hapkido. Everyone knows what happens in a tug of war when one side suddenly lets go of the rope. However, with Hapkido, we can go beyond the simple "letting go" and add some of our energy, making the reversal even more devastating. In the event that our opponent is not pulling or pushing hard enough, we can increase their power expenditure by temporarily resisting their efforts. By pulling back on a pulling opponent, his desire to overwhelm and control us causes him to pull even harder—this is when we reverse and push!

Emotion

Another method to disturb an opponent's balance is through the use of emotion. If we can trigger an emotional response, such as fear, or on the opposite end of the scale, overwhelming anger, we may succeed in getting our assailant to lean backward or forward. For example, by attempting a punch to the face, we may be able to make them lean backward to avoid contact. For our purposes, it doesn't matter if the punch was a fake, or if we intended contact, as long as we are prepared to handle the eventuality of him leaning backward. On the other side of the coin, if we make them angry enough to lean in and raise their height, such as in an effort to loom over us, we can take advantage of that lapse in balance.

It is understandable, that in a bad situation, we may not wish to make our opponent even angrier, but if we choose to fight, a non-thinking, off-balance adversary may prove easier to beat!



Master Petermann makes eye contact with the attacker, Gregory Castle.



Using his left hand, Master Petermann steps in, grabs around the attacker's head and applies a hold to attack the pressure point on the head.



Master Petermann brings the attacker close to his body and hits the attacker with his left shoulder.

The Circle Principle

Another method, the one demonstrated in the pictures, is to use the “circle” principle of Hapkido to break your adversary’s balance. Shifting weight and applying pressure to the pressure point on the inside of their wrists, opponents can be manipulated in such a way as to be taken off balance and made vulnerable. An important part of the motion involved is a circular movement of the captured hand. This, along with the pressure point attack and the twisting of the wrist bones, can cause the opponent to move awkwardly off balance. Once the opponent is off balance, we can execute various counterattack and control measures.

Calling this concept the “circle” principle does not do it justice. It is not just a two-dimensional ring of limited motion. The principle is one of motion in any direction throughout the sphere we can create. Imagine a bubble surrounding you, from your toes to the tips of your fingers. The circle principle is more like that. You can move in any direction, and even reverse. You can make the diameter of the sphere bigger, by stepping, or as small as your wrist motion. It is in leading your opponent along the edge of your sphere, and beyond the edge of their sphere, that you create havoc for them.

Lastly, one other advantage of taking your opponent’s balance is that any attack they had brewing when you took their balance will be considerably less effective. Their punches or kicks will die on the vine. Their attempts to control and manipulate you will be stymied. Your chances of coming out on top and uninjured go up, and that is what self-defense is all about. **TKD**

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Still maintaining the hold on the pressure point, Master Petermann circles his body around, forcing his attacker to move.



The attacker is forced to fall due to the pressure maintained by Master Petermann.



After throwing the attacker, Master Petermann strikes the neck to disable his attacker.