

# Practical Self-Defense and Exercise for Travelers

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## **On traveling with a cane:**

Let me start this way: About 2 years ago AARP Magazine wrote an article about Cane Masters and our Cane-Fu System of Self-Defense and Exercise. I received numerous phone calls when the article broke from people who were traveling; some even out of the country (one family that comes to mind was touring Germany). In addition, I have also been contacted by a lot of retired people who enjoy traveling around the United States. It's not obvious, but it should be, that the cane is a legal tool of self-defense. When interviewing potential new students I ask why they want to take the cane self-defense program. The answer that I get most is "we like to travel, and we travel a lot in our motor home". Many of these people have an underlying fear of the unknown. They want to have a means of self-defense to help keep them safe in the event something bad should happen, such as a mugging or an assault. As for most of the people that I train, many are thrilled that the cane has a fantastic exercise system attached to it as well as the self-defense system. The fact that the exercise system works in both an isometric and isotonic way, and that it is so completely portable, has real appeal. Many of the people that enjoy traveling by RV or motor home told me that they do not have the opportunity to work out in a gym, as most RV parks do not maintain a gym on site. Add to that fact that these folks are very cramped for room inside their RV or motor home. So the cane, and the resistance bands used in the system, is a perfect fit for these intrepid travelers.

A hot topic for this group, as previously mentioned, is the self-defense system. The ability to take a walk in a strange area and have a cane in hand equips a person for an immediate response to any attack. Plus the cane is legal to carry throughout the world. This is due to the fact that the custom canes offered by Cane Masters have the wood bend in the crook and are considered by authorities as a medical device which of course it is. This places the cane under the protection of the Americans with Disabilities Act in the USA, as well as in many other countries. The impact is that this type of cane can not be taken away or discriminated against as it is considered a tool for support and mobility.

## **On self-confidence and empowerment:**

As I train this demographic of people I can see the confidence building. Many travelers contact me upon their return home and are deeply grateful for the cane classes that they took before their trip. They express a feeling of overall confidence and a complete change in mindset. They no longer accept playing the role of the victim. They feel more confident about themselves and about being in strange places. Often the air of confidence instilled in one of these folks is all it takes to keep them from becoming a victim.

I discourage students to walk like they are crippled or injured unless they actually need the cane to walk. Even if a person does in fact need the cane for support, they still have the information at hand to evade or protect themselves from a confrontation. The criminals or bad guys out on the street are looking for an easy mark or an easy target. The mindset is if you

walk, look, and think like a victim, or an easy target, you most likely will become one. This is exactly what the criminal mind is looking for.

### **On using a cane versus a gun for self-defense:**

We have also had many gun clubs call us and set up seminars. Some might wonder why those who hold a Concealed Carry Weapons Permit (CCW) and regularly carry a concealed firearm might want to walk with a cane. The truth is that once you draw a firearm you are committed. One makes the choice to pull the trigger and the firearm discharges possibly maiming or killing the attacker. When that scenario plays out and it results in a death will you have to worry about litigation for wrongful death? Most likely the answer is yes and most likely there will be a lawsuit. Also once you draw or display a pistol – even if you do not fire it, you have opened many doors to adverse litigation. Law enforcement, the court system, attorneys, and the like become immediately involved. You can count on it being expensive and you can count on it becoming a long process. I've seen cases that have taken 3 to 5 years before reaching closure. It will most likely be very stressful and very expensive even if acted upon correctly.

Along those lines, often the criminals get arrested, pass through the judicial system, and eventually go to jail or prison. The prison can be a school of learning on how to become a better criminal. It's a cold hard fact that some of these guys actually study and train on scenarios such as how long it takes an average CCW permit holder to pull a concealed weapon, cock it and fire. Those few seconds are all the reaction time a trained criminal needs to be on top of you and wrestling that firearm out of your grasp. It is also important to remember that a firearm is a "turnaround" weapon. As soon as the criminal takes it away from you he or she "turns it around" against you.

With the cane, however, it's basically like having a firearm strapped to your side in plain sight. Back in the old days it was legal to carry a firearm in an exposed holster and people would see the weapon. It was easy for the carrier to draw as apposed to being in a pocket or other hidden area. The criminal often decided that this was not a good day to get shot and would make the choice to move on to another potential victim. Nowadays many States do not allow the open carry of firearms. When the weapon is concealed there is no visual deterrent to the criminal. With the cane on the other hand, along with an air of confidence, it is almost like having that firearm in plain sight. The criminal will look at the cane, will look at your face, and will evaluate confidence level as well as your attitude in general.

When one is trained with the proper mindset and determination the criminal will likely conclude that this is a potential confrontation with a possible bad outcome for the criminal. The trained criminal will reason that this person equipped with a strong cane along with the right confidence and attitude is not a confrontation that they want to have. The criminal will likely conclude that they want an easier target because, "I may get hurt and I may get caught in the process". This is how the criminal mind thinks. So in many ways when you equip yourself with a good cane and a correct attitude (along with some training), you have won the fight without having to engage in a battle. And you will never know that you were being sized up that day as a potential victim. If you don't make yourself an easy target it's not likely you will become one.

### **On legalities around using the cane for self-defense:**

Also important to remember is if you find yourself in a situation where you are forced to defend yourself with a cane it's important to understand the legal ramifications in your area of

the country. It is 100% legal to carry a cane in all 50 States but it's important to understand "use of lethal or less than lethal force" laws for your given area of the country. Regardless of your use of a knife, gun, stick, or cane you need to understand the law and conduct yourself accordingly. If you use your cane to disarm or even put an aggressor down, it's a system of self-defense at that point in time. It's not likely that the criminal attacker will want to draw any attention to his or herself. Chances are the would-be attacker will retreat and attempt to leave the scene as soon as possible. You can not predict every situation, but this is most likely what will happen.

On the other hand there are situations where the person with the cane becomes more aggressive. If you continue to beat someone once they are down, you have become the aggressor and I do not recommend that you assume that role; once the attacker is down, he's down – end of story. The cane is used for defense and never for attack. We teach folks to defend themselves, not to attack other people.

So I return to my point of the visual. Walk with your cane with an air of confidence, maybe even swinging it or twirling it if you have room and it's safe. Always beware of your surroundings and be alert. You may well win the war without having to go to battle. The criminal element wants to find you as helpless as possible and they want to intimidate you. They may use a knife, a firearm, or whatever it takes. A larger opponent will try to use size and power to his advantage over a smaller person. This is why the elderly or smaller people are often targeted as victims. When they see that you are not going to be intimidated they often decide to go elsewhere because they would rather avoid conflict. These guys don't want to get hurt either. Their primary objective is to get what they want and get away fast.