WHO WE ARE

Spatha started out as a means to continue a tradition of excellence in martial and firearms training. It has since evolved into a multi-discipline school that offers live and digital instructional courses like no other. Spatha is comprised of a core of individuals of different faiths, beliefs, and backgrounds. All of our instructors are certified, licensed, vetted, and professionals in their respective fields and areas of expertise. Spatha's primary mission and focus is to discover, produce, test, and then disseminate realistic and effective firearms, combatives, martial arts, and self-defense skills, techniques, tactics and strategies to law-abiding civilians, law enforcement, and military personnel.

We believe that people not only have a right to self-defense, but a responsibility. What do we mean? You are responsible for going home to your loved ones every day. Whether it's your wife, husband, children, pets, parents, siblings, co-workers, or friends; as social creatures, we have to live up to our responsibilities to make it back to them every day. If you are unable to fight to save your own life, you are doing yourself, and those you are responsible to/for, a disservice. A famous warrior in Japan once said that the only dishonorable death is to die with your weapons undrawn.

OUR APPROACH

Countless men and women contemplated martial problems and developed strategies to surmount them before we picked up gun or blade or threw a punch under the structure of art. Admittedly, times and tactics have changed and evolved alongside new technology, experience, and societal mores. Core concepts, however, remain the same and so their words and experiences are of value in addition to modern sources. Study is not limited to one culture or system. Miyamoto Musashi's thoughts are just as relevant as Camillo Agrippa's. Sun Tzu and Alexander the Great are as worthy of study as Clausewitz and Mattis. Proven strategies and theory have withstood the test of time. That which is of no use is discarded. New material is added as it proven to be of use.

The building blocks of martial competence in any discipline include an attitude of self-reliance, discipline, and a desire for excellence.

Martial skill is only produced through dedicated training and study that meets the following criteria:

- Based in reality and experience; it's worked under pressure
- Built upon foundational concepts that inform the whole system
- Instills habits and strategies designed to produce favorable outcomes in conflict

Physical fitness is a requirement for martial excellence and a goal to be sought. This includes the attributes of *speed, balance, flexibility, strength, power,* and *endurance*. These attributes are

only developed through dedicated, informed training and we promote and incorporate these activities into our overall training and curriculum. All the skill in the world is worthless if you are not in shape to execute it or recover from the harsh realities of personal combat.

VICTORY WITHOUT VIOLENCE

"For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill." - Sun Tzu

"The ultimate aim of martial arts is not having to use them." - Miyamoto Musashi

Violence and personal combat are potentially expensive undertakings. Even before exploring the possible financial impacts of being involved in a fight, there are other costly consequences to consider. Personal combat, fighting to defend yourself or your loved ones with or without weapons, can lead to life-altering injury or death. You need only consider the hundreds of military veterans coming home missing limbs or bearing other injuries, or victims of rape and assault dealing with physical injuries for the rest of their lives.

The potential negative emotional impact of having to take a life, seriously injure someone, getting injured or assaulted, or having your life threatened, is immeasurable. Countless civilians, law enforcement, and returning military veterans battle daily with what is now called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) because of their bouts with violence. It is difficult to imagine what a victim of sexual assault goes through while recovering from their attacks if you haven't experienced it yourself.

Lastly, the financial impact of being involved in personal combat can be devastating to you and your loved ones. Court costs like attorney's fees or civil judgments and medical bills (yours or the person you injured) can absolutely lead you to personal financial ruin.

The consequences of violence and personal combat can, sometimes, be avoided by utilizing successful and effective strategies to be aware of potential violence, or to avoid violence. We teach and support a three-fold strategy to win without fighting succinctly described as: *awareness, avoidance,* and *deterrence / de-escalation.*

Awareness

The strategy of awareness incorporates being cognizant, or aware, or many things. Most of the things that you need to be aware of fall under the heading of your *environment*. What's in your environment? Well, lots of things. Specifically, when we are talking about environment, we mean the people that are around you, the location you are in, and the potential weapons or tools that can be used to keep you safe.

Take a look at the people around you. Are they potentially friendly and able to help you in a violent encounter? Are they scary and potentially threatening? How close are they to you? How are they reacting to you...are they even paying attention to you? Are you in a restaurant where a couple is arguing or perhaps in a store where a customer is getting angry at a retail clerk? Being aware of the people around you, their actions or emotional state, and letting them know you are aware of them, is an excellent strategy that can keep you apprised of potential danger.

Are you aware of your surroundings? If there was trouble and the exit/entrance you came in from was blocked, how would you get out? We recommend playing a game we call the '3 Exit Game." It's simple to play. Any building you walk in to, you should immediately try to identify at least three (3) exits out of. You already know one exit...it's the one you used to get inside the building. As an example of a secondary exit, if you are in a restaurant, what have movies taught us is the location of an exit? Through the kitchen out the back! And lastly, the third exit, is your "*OH $%^$, THINGS ARE SERIOUS-EXIT".* This is the window or other *get-out-of-dodge* exit; grab a chair and granny and throw it through the nearest window (the chair...not granny) and get moving.

Beyond the people in and exits out of your surroundings, it's important to be aware of the potential weapons or tools around you. Is there something you could use to defend yourself? What about if you had to break a window to get to safety? Is there a first-aid kit around? Take stock of where you are and what potential tools that can help you are available. If you routinely find yourself in situations where such tools aren't available, maybe consider bringing your own.

Last, but certainly not least, is being aware of yourself. Take a moment to *honestly* and *unflinchingly* assess your physical fitness level and capabilities. Are you fit enough to go a full one minute in a high or full intensity physical exertion (think sprinting up stairs or pulling something incredibly heavy)? If you aren't sure, maybe you should find out. It is only through this true and honest assessment of your capabilities that you will know what you need to work on. Knowledge is power. Know Thyself -- *Nosce te ipsum.* This idea of brutal self-assessment is embodied in the Stockdale Paradox, which we encourage you to look up and read about.

Avoidance

Awareness is good. It keeps us informed of potential problems. But once a problem is identified, then what? Well, the easiest way to not get punched is to not occupy the space that is being punched. Or, more simply put, don't be there...avoid it. When we teach firearms, we joke about people who only carry when they go into 'dangerous' places or in areas where they might 'need a gun'. We joke, "If I knew I was going to get into a gun fight there that day, maybe I just won't show up!"

We've learned, and teach, some rules to live by to maximize our ability to avoid violence.

1. *If there is any doubt, there is no doubt.* If we are in a situation where things are about to get violent, or our '*spidey sense'* is tingling, what is forcing us to stay there? If there is any doubt that a situation might escalate into violence, and you have the opportunity to leave or remove yourself from the situation, do so, without hesitation. If you have a funny feeling about your safety, don't ignore it, listen to it.

2. *3 Exit Rule*. We discussed this in the previous section. Don't go into situations or environments that you don't know at least three exits out of.

3. *Listen to your intuition.* This rule is the partner to rule #1. If something doesn't feel right, or someone gives you the creeps, don't ignore the feeling. In his excellent work, The Gift of Fear, by Gavin De Becker, the author talks about how this intuition is something that we all innately are born with, is only designed to protect us, and only responds to outside stimuli. Listen to that inner voice telling you that something is wrong, and act on it.

Deterrence / De-Escalation

When awareness and avoidance have failed, the last lines of defense before violence occurs are deterrence and de-escalation.

Deterrence

Deterrence is focused on making yourself an unattractive target for violence. One of the easiest ways to deter an ambush style attack is to project awareness. Confidence, also, goes a long way to deterring would be attackers. Career criminals admitted, in later jailhouse interviews, that many of their targets of violence, including police and security personnel, were chosen based upon appearance, gait, and lack of awareness. As such, we argue that being in shape, aware, and squared away is an excellent strategy for avoiding violence. Move and walk with a purpose while in public. Get your face out of your cell phone. Keep in mind, however, there is a difference between confidence and arrogance. The projection of arrogance, or feeling of being better than those around you, can actually make you a target.

There is an excellent example of deterrence in ancient history in the story of Alexander the Great and his conquering of the Sogdian Rock fortress. During his campaign to conquer the known world, he came to fight against a man named Oxyartes of Bactria. Oxyartes, and the nation-state of Bactria, had a 'strong place' fortress called the Sogdian Rock to the north of Bactria. Oxyartes sent his daughters and wife to this fortress. Alexander moved to besiege the fortress, and the residents mocked Alexander's army, stating that he would need 'men with wings' to capture it because of the steep rock face that led to the approach.

Alexander asked for volunteers who knew how to climb and, during the night, scaled the rock face to a position of advantage above the fortress. When the sun came up, Alexander told the

besieged Bactrians to look up and they would see his 'winged men'. Even though the Bactrians outnumbered the mountaineers who had reached the summit, they were so demoralized and surprised that their 'impregnable' fortress was, in fact, attainable (if only be a few men) that they surrendered.

De-Escalation

"Build your opponent a golden bridge to retreat across" --Sun Tzu

Ego or arrogance is one of the largest contributors to violence that exists. Ego fuels feelings of entitlement and magnifies the effects of a slight or insult. How many fights or conflicts could have been avoided if the combatants were willing to de-escalate the situation? The above quote from Sun Tzu is a powerful idea. It means to allow your opponent to save face. Is your ego worth your life? How hard is it to apologize? When embroiled in a conflict that is approaching violence, why not allow your potential opponent a way out that allows them to save face? Apologies are simple things...but they are powerful. The Golden Rule, as modified by William S. Lind in his work 4th Generation Warfare Handbook, states that we should avoid doing anything to someone else that if done to us would *make us engage in violence*. So, if you're in a situation that might escalate to violence, are your actions contributing to your potential attacker's desire to do harm? Or are you actively trying to de-escalate the situation. A fight avoided is a fight won, and an enemy converted into a friend (or at least a non-enemy) is a victory in and of itself.

VICTORY THROUGH VIOLENCE

All power, political or otherwise, is just a cloak for naked force. Violence is the ultimate, but necessarily last, resort. Louis the XIV had an inscription on his cannon, the pinnacle of weaponized violence at the time, that read - "Last Argument of Kings." Other options should be exhausted before violence is used. Its use should be regulated to specific times and places. For our purposes, we argue that violence should only be used in the defense of life and liberty.

Further, the use of violence should follow some guidelines to make it effective and to avoid sinking into meaningless brutality devoid of reason. When violence is used, it should be overwhelming and decisive; quick; governed by strategic thinking, and goal oriented (goals of and goals during).

Overwhelming and Decisive

If violence is being used to stop or destroy a threat, its use should be overwhelming and decisive. It should overwhelm and sweep aside defenses so as to produce a decisive victory. What victory looks like doesn't necessarily mean that your opponent is broken on the ground. It could just as well be enough violence to get you to an exit if one is available. It should be decisive enough so as to produce the desired results such as ending the threat or buying you

time to get away. When engaging in violence, full commitment is required to produce the desired effect. Half-hearted, indecisive, and ineffective attempts at violence will likely only empower and enrage your opponent.

Quick

The use of violence should be quick. The least amount of time should be expended to produce the desired result. The longer you are engaged in violence, the more exposed you are to danger. The more likely you are to make a mistake. Also, physical violence is *tiring*. Being tired in high-stakes situation can lead to missteps and mistakes.

Governed by Strategic Thinking

In his work, The Gallic Wars, Julius Caesar (arguably one of the most brilliant Captains of history) argued that the Romans enjoyed a 3-fold advantage in war. Namely:

1) The holding of strategic points
2) Entrenchment and continued holding of said points (via the Roman fortified camp)
3) Breaking up of enemy communications

So at the start of campaigns, the Romans would march to the positions of dominance and advantage, fortify them, and then begin to disrupt the enemy lines of communication and supply.

Our combat philosophy follows this proven strategy:

1) Seizing of strategic points or tactical advantage
    - The strategic or dominant points for us are a positions of dominance or tactical advantage. These are context sensitive to the fight you're engaged in and could be in the form of gaining the mount in ground fighting, or fighting to clear enough space/time to get access to your firearm.
2) Entrenchment of strategic point or tactical advantage
    - Once you've seized the advantage, do what is necessary to maintain it. This Includes doing the requisite work *before* the fight in the form of training and development. Don't give up the tactical advantage once you've achieved it. Once recognized and seized, fight to keep it.
3) Disrupt the enemy
    - All of your actions in combat should be to disrupt the enemy's strategy, destroy their advantage and momentum, and aimed to achieve your goals. Every time you touch the enemy, you should be causing damage.

Goal Oriented Violence

Violence, when used, should have specific goals in mind. Both the goal of violence, or combat, and the specific goals *during* combat.

Goals of Combat

The goal of violence in personal combat should be to stop or destroy the threat or to get away from immediate danger.

Goals During Combat

The goals of your actions, techniques, and strategies should be pointed towards during combat are three in number:

1) Deal with the incoming/immediate attack
2) Create distance / time / or opportunity
    a) Distance can create time
    b) Create time to get to better weapon or to locate exit
    c) Opportunity to seize dominant position / tactical advantage
3) Destroy threat

PRINCIPLE BASED TRAINING

The preceding discussions on victory without violence, and victory through violence comprise the principles that inform all of the training and courses produced by Spatha. Our firearms, weapons, and combatives training are based upon these principles. Tactics and techniques are discarded if they don't embody these principles or if they don't work across both the armed and unarmed realms of personal combat and violence.

As you explore and evaluate your own training, ask yourself, is this training technique based or principle based? Without a solid foundation in worthwhile and efficacious principles, you are unable to evaluate the worth of the the training or technique.