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We now know that giving women the right skills, and building the confidence that they can use them, does decrease their experience with sexual violence. This is our best short-term strategy while we wait for cultural change

”

~ Charlene Senn

## Violence risk reduction program

## Empowerment through self defense

### Is self defense training really an effective deterrent to sexual violence? Yes it is, and here is the evidence!

Available evidence in support of a “physical” response to sexual assault are not anecdotal. There are several documented cases of real women in real threatening situations who succeeded in avoiding assault simply by fighting back, examples include, French journalist **Jackie Parker** (“**I’ve been attacked, but I’m fine**” <http://www.madmoizelle.com/agression-mais-ca-va-134439>), ESPN Executive **Keri Potts** (“**How I Escaped a Rapist**” <http://www.marieclaire.com/sex-love/relationship-issues/escape-from-rapist>) or **Adele Barber** (The Telegraph <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/11384689/Mother-bit-off-sex-attackers-tongue-to-secure-DNA-evidence.html>), and many others. Research conducted since the 70s has consistently supported the conclusion that fighting back is actually the most effective strategy to thwart sexual assaults.

Studies such as Kleck & Tark (2005) or Reekie & Wilson (1993) or Ullman & Knight (1992), provide sufficient evidence to support the fact that women who respond with physical and verbal resistance to the offender's violent attack significantly reduce the probability that rape will occur.

In the 1990's, German commissioner **Susanne Paul** examined 522 cases of rapes and attempted rapes to see whether fighting back was a good strategy. Result: fighting back had an 85% success rate. (<http://www.zanshin-siegerland.de/Wehren.htm>)

**Irène Zeilinger**, director of the NGO Garance, says that data they collect indicate a 90% success rate (“Ladies, against assaults nothing matches fighting”). (<http://www.rue89.com/2013/01/30/mesdames-contre-les-agressions-rien-ne-vaut-la-baston-238912>)

Violence, especially of a sexual nature is a serious problem that can have lasting, harmful effects on victims, their family, friends, and communities. The goal of sexual violence prevention is simple—to stop it from happening in the first place. The solutions, however, are just as complex as the problem.

Prevention efforts should ultimately decrease the number of individuals who perpetrate sexual violence and the number of individuals who are victims. Many prevention approaches aim to reduce risk factors and promote protective factors for sexual violence. In addition, comprehensive prevention strategies should address factors at each of the levels that influence sexual violence—individual, relationship, community, and society.

The most common prevention strategies currently focus on the victim, the perpetrator, or bystanders. Strategies that try to equip a potential victim with knowledge, awareness, or self-defense skills are referred to as “risk reduction techniques.”

Self-defence training is about empowering women. It's about giving them the choice. It is naive to think sexual violence will ever go away completely. We cannot control the thinking or the actions of rapists, but we can empower women to defend themselves to prevent and survive an assault. As a society, we have a long way to go towards eradicating sexual harassment and sexual assault, and until then, teaching young girls and women to defend themselves may hold the key to avoid becoming a victim of sexual violence

### About the Program

The “Train Tough, Smart, Safe” (TTSS) TTSS is a violence risk reduction program that trains women and girls to avoid becoming victims of violence.



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**Our promise is that every student will become better mentally, physically, and emotionally prepared to stand up for and protect herself - and that the confidence she gains on the journey will transform her life**



~ Girls Who Fight

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**Jocelyn Hollander**, professor of sociology who studied violence against women, recently ran an experiment to assess the effectiveness of self-defense training for women. (<http://cascade.uoregon.edu/spring2013/social-sciences/are-women-safer-when-they-learn-self-defense/>)

The results of her study indicate that "women who took a ten-week (30hrs) self-defense training were significantly less likely to experience unwanted sexual contact than those who didn't."

While risk reduction approaches do not address the underlying conditions or causes of sexual violence, they are considered to be valuable within a continuum of prevention efforts. Recent research has built a case supporting the effectiveness of programs such as TTSS at thwarting physical assault, and providing a sense of empowerment to women.

TTSS is an intensive program with (3) three classes per week delivered over a period of 12 weeks. Each class lasts about an hour and a half.

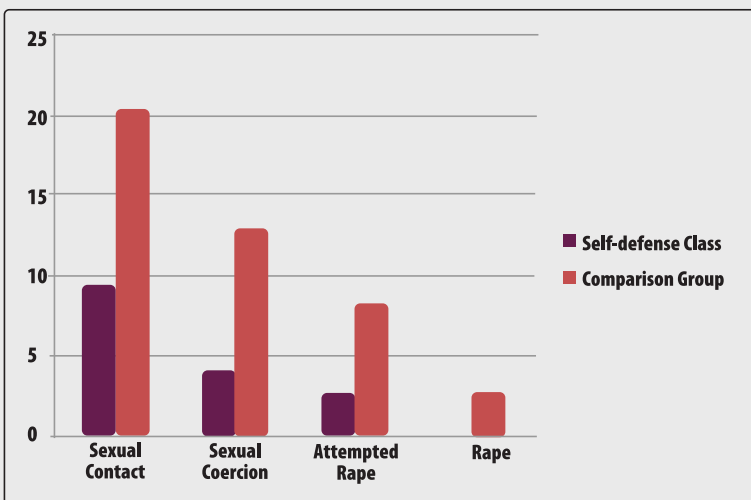
TTSS teaches techniques based on quick reactions, swift movements and leverage rather than physical strength, which make the techniques ideal against bigger and stronger attacker. TTSS techniques are easy to assimilate regardless of age, athletic attributes or body type.

In addition to self-defense techniques, TTSS teaches de-escalation, awareness, avoidance, learning how to be more assertive and how young girls can stand up for themselves.

### Program Implementation

The TTSS program is implemented in Nigeria by Hayche Lifestyle (HLife). HLife is committed to promoting the safety, wellbeing, and quality of life of women and girls. While the program is presently offered only in Abuja and Enugu, trainers interested in implementing TTSS in other locations are invited to be trained and certified. Upon completion, each certified instructor is provided with the TTSS curriculum as well as ongoing support.

The program has been developed by Andrew Igbo in collaboration with a number of international martial arts experts. Andrew Igbo has over 30 years experience training and teaching martial arts and self defense to diverse populations.



Women who completed a thirty-hour self-defense class (blue) and those who did not (red) reported different types of unwanted sexual contact over a one-year period.



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