



55
creative
inspiring
real-life

stories of women (and others)
standing up against harassment,
abuse, and assault

"I write for those women who do not speak, for those who do not have a voice because they were so terrified, because we are taught to respect fear more than ourselves. We've been taught that silence would save us, but it won't."

— Audre Lorde

Dear friend of Defend Yourself,

Welcome to **55 creative, inspiring, real-life stories** of women (and others) standing up against harassment, abuse, and assault! Thank you for signing up for our email list.

Often we have no idea what we might do in a stressful or dangerous situation. Many of the people featured here* had no idea either. But they found strategies to protect themselves. I hope their stories give you ideas -- and more than that, that they fill your mind with the possibility of resistance.

Defend Yourself teaches empowerment self-defense, which means we provide you with lots of skills and options, but don't tell you what you "should" do. If you've been harassed, abused, or attacked -- and that would be most of us -- we honor and respect what you did to get through it, including going along with it.

And if you've learned self-defense, there's still no "should" about defending yourself. Whatever decisions you make are the best for you. **NO SHOULD!** Resistance is one option, not *the* option.

Here's your **content warning**. These stories are positive in that the defender stood up for themselves, used (in most cases) lots of strategies, and survived. But keep in mind that they're stories about being attacked and can be upsetting to read. You are the best one to decide what circumstances you read them in or even if you read them at all.

A couple more things to keep in mind:

- Defend Yourself doesn't endorse every single thing that every person

did (for example, we don't think it's a good idea to fight back in a property attack). At the same time, we're in favor of **anything that works**.

- Between 70 percent and 90 percent of sexual assaults of women and girls are by someone they know, and (obviously) with abusive relationships that's 100 percent. The majority of the scenarios in here feature strangers, because they come from news media, and the media don't generally publish things like: "Women left her boyfriend because he was disrespecting her." But these skills can work in situations where you know the attacker or where you don't.

Some themes run through these stories. The people targeted were **creative**. They used **loud voices** to scare the attacker and to bring attention. They tapped into their **intuition** and then acted on it. They used more than one strategy. The attackers weren't expecting resistance, and the very **fact of any resistance at all** often made them give up.

I hope you'll find your own themes and wisdom as you read this collection. And let us all hold a place in our hearts for all of those – including those in this book and our own selves – who have experienced harassment, abuse, or assault.

Take care,

Lauren

PS — I hope you'll join us for (another) class someday! Self-defense isn't all about kicking someone in the groin! It's also a ton of fun, and it helps people lead safer, more authentic, more confident lives!

PPS – If you have experiences to share or questions to ask, please feel free to email or call. If you'd like to sign up for a Defend Yourself workshop, or bring Defend Yourself to your group, please let us know. If you're not in the DC area and want a referral to a group closer to you, I'm happy to help out.

*The people in the stories in this book that did not come from the news media gave their permission for their experiences to be shared. Some of the names were changed.

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Weapons are all around you #1

www.fox4kc.com/2014/10/17/local-mom-wards-off-intruder-using-unusual-items-as-weapons/

A new use for ketchup.



The power of a loud voice #1

Angie was in an almost-empty movie theatre. A man sat down near her and was laughing inappropriately. She looked over and saw he was masturbating. Since she had just come from a camping trip, she had a flashlight with her. She took it out of her pack and shined it on his penis. She said in a loud voice: "If you need to masturbate, go do that somewhere else."

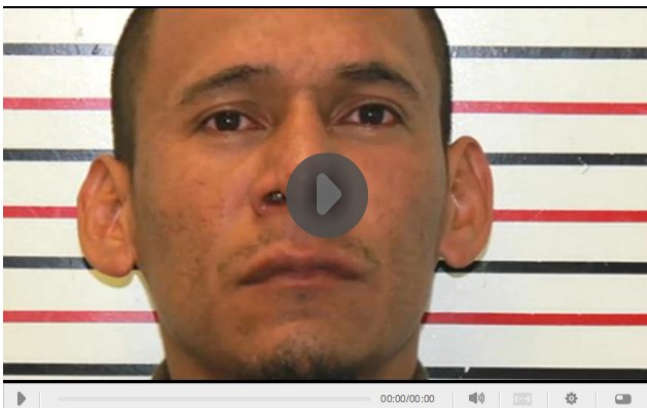


Getting help is underrated

Yvonne was being sexually harassed at work by a superior. She told him directly: Please don't make those kinds of comments; I'm not interested. He didn't stop. She went to the director of her workplace and reported him. He no longer works there.

Gouging eyes and yelling worked for this woman

www.kptv.com/story/26760795/woman-gouges-eyes-of-attempted-rape-suspect-to-escape-astoria-attack

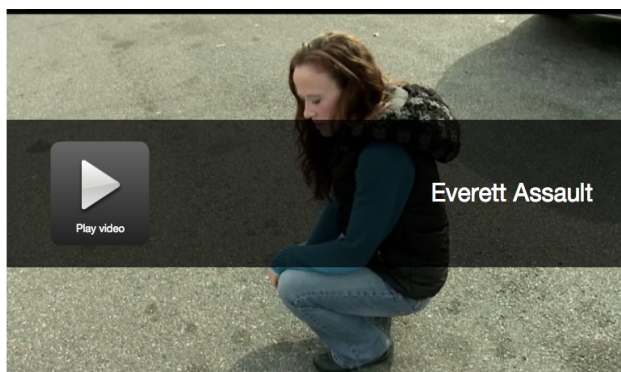


Uh, what was that about 'no means no' again? AKA Weapons are all around you #2

Marta was in her apartment with a man she had been seeing. He was pressuring her for sex, and she didn't want to. She told him no, but he didn't listen. She struggled with him briefly, but he didn't stop. So she took her burning cigarette (this was a while ago, she doesn't smoke anymore) and stuck it in his face. – a **Defend Yourself** student

The attacker wasn't expecting resistance #1

www.q13fox.com/2014/10/16/everett-woman-fights-off-attacker/comment-page-1/



“If it could happen to her, it could happen to anyone”

www.bloombergview.com/articles/2014-10-14/a-mighty-victim-upends-the-domestic-violence-debate

It's not about your physical strength – or lack of it.



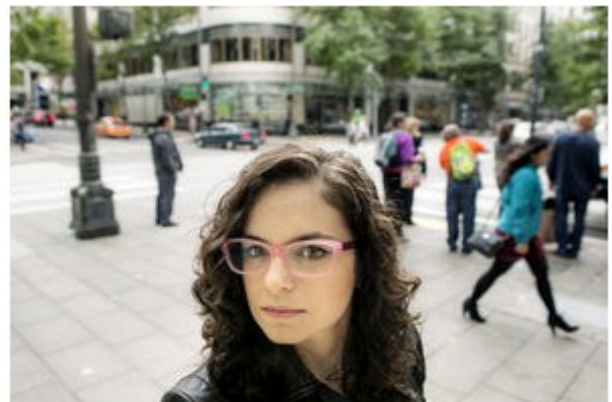
Creativity under stress

“I was attacked in the hallway of my apartment building. I tried several strategies and they didn't work. I found myself unable to yell. So I kicked the door of an apartment, drawing attention, making noise, and the attacker ran away.” – a Defend Yourself student

“If you don't want your picture taken, then don't grope women”

www.seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2024779885_internetshamingxml.html

This woman used many strategies, including yelling, going to the police, and taking it to social media.



Kicking and punching work, too

www.samuel-warde.com/2014/10/14-year-old-girl/



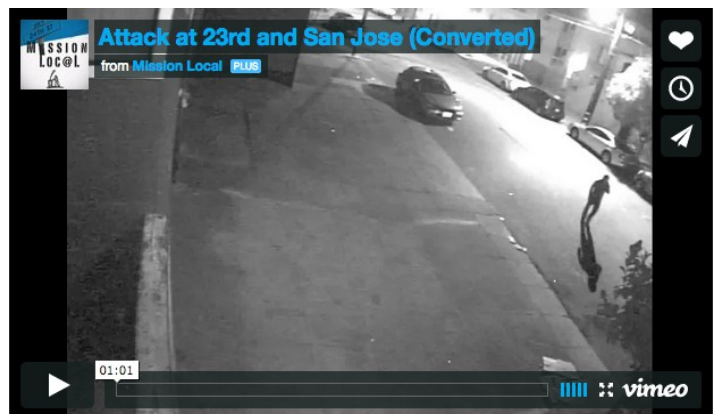
Men shaping men

Witnessed tonight on the subway: Two early-20s hockey fans in jerseys on their way to the game. In conversation, Guy1 used the phrase "rule of thumb." Guy2: You know where that came from, man? It used to be [laughing] that you could beat your wife as long as you used a stick that wasn't bigger than your thumb..." Guy1: "That's not funny man.... [slight look of disdain]... that's not funny." —a **Defend Yourself** student

Anger is your friend

www.missionlocal.org/2014/10/woman-assaulted-fends-off-her-attacker/

And yelling is your mutual friend.



The power of a loud voice #2

Crystal was walking home from the subway when an attacker grabbed her from behind and put his hand over her mouth. She tried to loosen his hold but couldn't. She bit down HARD on his hand and yelled loudly. Lights came on in nearby houses. The attacker ran.



Teach people how to treat you

"I've been doing particularly good about managing my boundaries with my co-workers, including the new guy who seems to be trying to put my work down. I just tell him, in my most professorial voice, how he didn't quite understand the details of my analysis and tell him that I'm always glad to explain things to new people in the office. He backs down and lately has been coming up with actual questions about projects he's working on, so I think I've redirected how he relates to me." – a **Defend Yourself** student

You're never too old to fight back #1

www.itv.com/news/meridian/update/2014-09-14/woman-in-her-eighties-punches-attacker-in-the-mouth/



Training can help

www.nytimes.com/2005/05/28/nyregion/28assault.html?_r=1&

But training isn't required. Most people who fight off attackers have no training. And the two most effective self-defense techniques — yelling and running — don't require special skills.

And while we're at it, let's shoot down another stereotype. This guy was a vice president at JP Morgan!

Banker Charged With Assault and Lewdness

By ROBERT D. McFADDEN and JASON GEORGE
Published: May 28, 2005

On a sunny Sunday two weeks ago, a man wearing only a condom leaped out of the bushes along a nature trail in New Jersey and accosted a woman jogging. The jogger turned out to be a police officer and, officials said yesterday, the man turned out to be a vice president of J. P. Morgan Chase.



Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office
The arrest photo of John Dee Kelly.

The touchless confrontation - a swirl of sweaty menace, a counterpoint of pepper spray and a huffing, puffing foot race, with victim pursuing assailant - unfolded about 1:30 p.m. on May 15 along the Henry Hudson Trail in Union Beach, a quiet town on Raritan Bay across from the southern reaches of Staten Island.

After a 500-foot chase along the narrow paved trail, the man threw a T-shirt he was carrying over the license plate of his

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The power of a loud voice #3

Linda was getting on an elevator. A man asked her the time. As the door was closing, he grabbed for her. She started to yell and he told her to be quiet. He grabbed again; she yelled "get off, [bleep]." He ran. —a Defend Yourself student



It's not the size of the dog in the fight

www.metro.co.uk/2014/10/09/attacker-beaten-up-by-schoolgirl-martial-artist-4899048/



Bully on the subway

“This morning a guy on the Metro train tries to bully me...really?? Did he not think I was going to defend myself?! Once he realized I was not afraid of him and was ready to go toe to toe, he ran off the train and out the station...what a way to start my day! Special thanks to Defend Yourself for all of the training! It paid off today!” – a Defend Yourself student

You don't have to be a grownup to be an active bystander #1

www.thestir.cafemom.com/parenting_news/142595/awesome_girls_save_7yearold_by

Sometimes the simplest move is the most effective.



'Resistance is not futile' AKA You don't have to be a grownup to be an active bystander #2

Liz was walking and a guy let out a "Heyyyy!" Before he could finish his sentence with "Baby," she said: "I'm not interested in talking to you. Leave me alone." A young teen behind her (maybe 13 years old), shouted: "That's right! You better leave her alone!" and then a group of the young girl's friends yelled, "You better leave her alone or we're calling 911!"

The harasser stepped back and said, "S--t, girl, I was just going to tell you that you're beautiful!" Liz repeated herself ("Leave me alone"), thanked the girls and started to leave. The girls continued to tell the harasser to stop bothering women. He left.

Liz says: "I was very pleased to see a young group of girls standing up for their right to walk down the street un-harassed and standing together with other women. These were children, and they intimidated a grown man. If they can accomplish this, so can I. It was further proof to me that resistance is not futile." – a **Defend Yourself** student

The tiniest bystander AKA You don't have to be a grownup to be an active bystander #3

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sKdDyyanGk

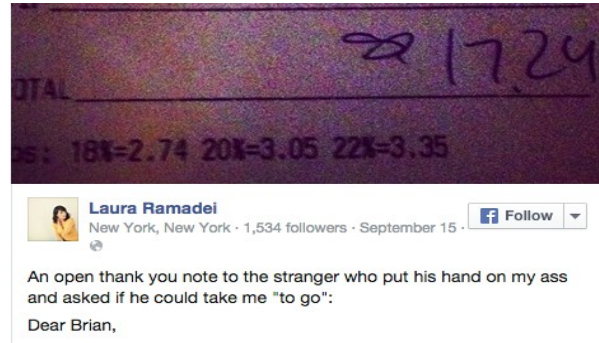
This toddler uses some of the bystander intervention techniques we teach! If she can do it, we can too!



You don't have to respond in the moment

www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/18/bartender-open-letter-investment-manager-grab_n_5843738.html

Later works, too.



Picture perfect

A woman was approached in the park by a threatening man. She had mace but didn't know how to use it. She remembered the picture on the package that the spray came in, planted her feet wide, pointed the spray at him, and put her other hand up. He left. Defend Yourself is not in favor of mace, but we are in favor of anything that works! And this experience shows that even one brief image can empower someone.

Yelling, hitting, getting help

An 8th grade girl who took Defend Yourself training was attacked on the school bus by two boys. She used yelling and hitting to stop the attack and then went to get help from the bus driver. She said she what we taught her flashed in her mind so that's what she did!



Notice a theme? A small woman gets the better of a large man.

www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2014/09/03/U-S-deputy-marshal/stories/201409030177



Another brilliant bystander #4

www.storify.com/sassycrass/how-you-can-help-stop-street-harassment

Lying is a great strategy!

How You Can Help Stop Street Harassment

Many of us see street harassment happening around us and don't often know what to do. This method is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED for assisting minors. I'm placing it under the #YouOKSis tag. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO ADD THIS TO YOUR #EndStreetHarassment PROTOCOL FOR PROTECTION OF MINORS WITH THE PROPER CITATION.

by Fighah · 4 months ago · 5 Likes · 4,604 Views

Self-defense works...again

www.edmontonsun.com/2013/11/27/two-19-year-old-women-fight-off-attacker-man-arrested



The two most effective self-defense techniques? Yelling and running.

www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/crime-scene/post/jogger-grabbed-on-alexandria-bike-path/2012/09/12/9edfd7b6-fcea-11e1-8adc-499661afe377_blog.html?hpid=z5



The Crime Scene
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ABOUT THIS BLOG
What's The Crime Scene all about? Read our mission and tell us what you think. Then **meet the team** behind The Post's crime and justice coverage.

Posted at 11:19 AM ET, 09/12/2012
Jogger grabbed on Alexandria bike path
By *Allison Klein*
A woman who was jogging on an Alexandria bike path Wednesday morning was grabbed by a man, but was able to break free and run away, police said.

'Don't mess with marching band girls'

www.nbcnews.com/id/30493653/ns/us-news-crime-and-courts/t/girl-fights-thugs-marching-band-baton/#.VAONlfmwJNm

Crime & courts on  **NBCNEWS.com**

Girl fights off thugs with marching band baton

'Moral to this story is don't mess with the marching band girls,' official says

While we don't recommend fighting back in a property attack (the safest thing is to give the attacker what they want), in this case the intended victim made some excellent choices.

Weapons are all around you #3

www.dailytelegraph.com.au/woman-shoos-off-attacker/story-e6freuzO-1226451772012?nk=ae81eabf01de20f4448bdoad8aa653eo

The Daily Telegraph
 SYDNEY **15C-23C**

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BREAKING NEWS	LOCAL	NSW	NATIONAL	WORLD	WEIRD	TECHNOLOGY

Woman shoos off attacker

AAP AUGUST 16, 2012 1:17PM

Active bystanders rock! #5

www.boston.ihollaback.org/2013/11/07/she-said-i-dont-really-want-to-talk-and-he-kept-trying-to-chat-with-her-andrews-story/



This is bystander intervention in action. If you're like -uh- nearly everybody and not sure what to do when you see something, read this for ideas and inspiration.

We always love the "she yelled and he ran away" part!

www.westseattleblog.com/2013/04/west-seattle-crime-watch-runner-reports-attack-writes-a-warning/

Way to take action! This woman warns others about an attacker!



Pretending to know someone is another way of getting help

www.washingtonpost.com/local/crime/police-search-for-man-who-sexually-assaulted-woman-outside-minn-ave-metro-station/2014/03/11/01ccobe2-a90b-11e3-8d62-419db477a0e6_story.html



Self-defense works...again!

“I attended your Defend Yourself workshop at [my college] last semester and I wanted to thank you for a successful and effective program. I unfortunately had to use some tactics I learned from the workshop as I was assaulted [at the beach] this summer. I found the techniques that we used on an attacker when assaulted from behind to be the most useful. I honestly believe that I avoided a rape from your training.” – a Defend Yourself student

Learn from the children

www.jezebel.com/off-duty-pilot-allegedly-gropes-sleeping-14-year-old-gi-1454503822

The girl allegedly elbowed him and asked "What the hell are you doing?" A great self-protective response. So many of us have had that socialized out of us.



A bystander flips the 'creepy guy' script #6

www.chrisbrecheen.blogspot.ca/2013/07/changing-creepy-guy-narrative.html

Treating the harasser the way he's treating the target.



Momma bear

"My nine-year-old daughter and I were dropping by our local high school this evening after dark to drop off some forms for my son. We parked in the lot, which was pretty deserted.

"As we approached the school, we went past a car that was parked at the curb, with two teenage boys inside, with the engine running. The driver had just gone inside the school. I heard a young man shout 'Owww!' out the window as we walked by.

"I stopped, turned toward the car, and said 'Excuse me?' No response. I told my daughter to stay where she was and I took a few steps toward the car. It had two passenger side windows rolled down, with two teenage boys inside. Their driver was gone, and there was nowhere for them to go.

"I asked them if they were talking to us. One said no, that it was an 'inside joke.' I was calm but firm and told him: 'Do not direct it at me or my daughter.' He apologized. They were completely taken aback. I think I even saw a bit of fear in their eyes, like they were caught doing something wrong by mom or something. Hey, whatever works."

'Every woman's worst nightmare' AKA Don't give up

www.startribune.com/local/north/211075781.html?page=1&c=y

"Her survival instincts and her own hands, feet and voice were her most effective weapons." And the skills she learned in a long-ago self-defense class.



Finding a way out

For Gail Thompson, the moment of truth came when her husband of 13 years threatened to murder her. "He said, 'I could be just like O.J. and get off,'" said Thompson. "I thought about Nicole Brown Simpson—I could be her. And he may say 'I'm sorry, I didn't mean for this to happen,' but my kids would be without their mother."

Thompson had been abused for years. At first it was verbal: Her husband put her down, accused her of infidelity, blamed her for imagined infractions and shortcomings and tracked her every move.

After he started hitting her, Thompson thought she could control his outbursts by meeting his demands. But over the years the violence escalated. He beat her badly enough that she needed to be hospitalized, and the threats got more intense—threats to kill her, and even the children. She tried to leave him more times than she can count. But realizing that he might kill her strengthened her resolve, and now--almost four years later--she feels free of him.

Grab, twist, pull

www.14news.com/story/23066849/woman-says-self-defense-move-saved-her-from-bathroom-attacker

Another fabulous/horrible story. So awful that this had to happen, so great that this woman took charge of the situation: "During the struggle she grabbed the man's genitals and 'twisted real hard' causing him to fall backward, allowing her to escape and lock herself inside the bathroom until help arrived."



Charles Robert Rickard, 47. (Vanderburgh County Sheriff's Office)

Let's hear it for creativity under pressure (you'll never guess what this woman did!)

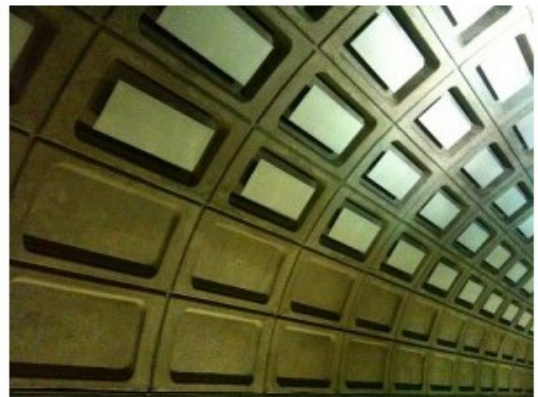
A woman took a cab home after a night at the bars; new to the country, she went along with the driver when he told her she had to sit in the front seat. He touched her leg and then started moving his hand up toward her crotch. She tried to get him to let her out but he wouldn't. So she gagged into her hand, pretending she was about to throw up. He stopped the cab and let her out! — a **Defend Yourself** student



She did it for 'all of us'

www.collectiveactiondc.org/2012/10/16/it-was-for-all-of-us/

A DC woman chases down the man who sexually assaulted her in a subway station. "Putting in the effort to catch him wasn't just for me," she said. "It was for all of us who are subjected to disgusting behavior day in and day out."



— by brownpau via [Flickr](#)

I give the orders around here

www.nbcnews.com/id/47534029/ns/travel-news/t/female-pilot-boots-passenger-sexist-comments/#.T71h9kXDCAg

Travel News on  NBCNEWS.com

Female pilot boots passenger for sexist comments

If only we all had this kind of power when we heard someone making sexist (racist, homophobic, etc.) comments. "You will be required to leave this street-workplace-restaurant now because of your oppressive attitudes...."

This is what a survivor looks like

www.nytimes.com/2012/08/03/sports/olympics/kayla-harrison-overcame-horror-to-win-judo-gold.html?_r=3&pagewanted=1&hp&%20

A survivor says her sport helped her put her life back together.

The New York Times

August 3, 2012



We (heart) active bystanders

A friend of Defend Yourself hugged his friend goodbye and was walking down the sidewalk. A man came up behind him, slugged him in the side of the face, and yelled “faggot!” The target turned, shocked and bewildered, trying to figure out what to do, and saw two more men coming up behind the attacker. He thought, “Oh no, there’s no way I can fight three of them.” The two approached the attacker, their friend, grabbed him by the arms, and pulled him away, saying “What the heck are you doing?” Let’s hear it for stepping up -- “bystanders” make the difference!

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/subway-rider-taught-perv-lesson-forget-article-1.1838044>

Loud voice and getting help — plus a lot of determination.



The attacker wasn't expecting resistance #2

www.eagletribune.com/news/woman-fights-off-attack-holds-suspect-for-police/article_d789c20f-0d5a-51c6-af86-f465b9ba467f.html?mode=jqm



Not a nice welcome to college

Kat took a Defend Yourself workshop with her mom before heading off to college. Her mom reports: "She already had to defend herself from a drunk frat boy who was harassing her -- calling her a 'dyke' because she has short hair, she warned him not to say it again or she was going to hit him.

"He got up really close to her face and said it again and she slapped him in the face. As she and her friend walked away, she heard one of his friends murmur, 'Hey dude, are you ok?' We are so proud of her standing up for herself. While it had a good ending, her experience points out just how prominent things like this are for young women. Your training came in handy; she stood up for herself and surprised the heck out of the guy when she hauled off and slapped him hard after he didn't heed her warning." – a Defend Yourself student's mom

She fought like a girl!

www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1299920/Home-girl-foils-burglar-groin-kick-draws-police-picture-him.html



You're never too old to fight back #2

www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2009/09/as_sault_victim_xuan_t_nguyen_8.html



The power of a loud voice #4

"I was at Value Village. It was almost closing time when a man walked up next to me, 'accidentally' brushing my bottom with his hand. I moved to the next aisle, looked right at him, and said in a loud voice (so everyone could hear), 'YOUR HAND JUST BRUSHED MY BUTT! PLEASE DON'T TOUCH MY BUTT!' He muttered something to himself and slithered away." — a **Defend Yourself** student



Pizza or police?

[http://www.voiceofthevalley.com/
community_news/news/article_cdfeedec-
5eff-11e4-bc47-0017a43b2370.html](http://www.voiceofthevalley.com/community_news/news/article_cdfeedec5eff-11e4-bc47-0017a43b2370.html)

Getting help is an often-
overlooked self-defense
technique.



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Letters to the Editor									

Emergency Hotline 911 receives a 'pizza order' from a lady who needs help

That scary dream where you can't scream

"I sometimes have these dreams where someone is going to hurt me and I could prevent it if only I could yell for help, but somehow my voice is gone and I can't get any sound out. It feels very helpless and horrible. Well... last night I seem to have overcome this recurrent dream!

"I dreamed that this very big guy was forcing me to kiss him, and he was holding me really tight with my arms pinned to my body -- I was trying to yell but at first I couldn't. And then I was able to get the word 'NO!' out and I stomped his foot, just like we learned in class! He let go and I smashed his nose (just like we learned in class!), all the while yelling 'No! No! No!' I could finally use my voice! Wow -- what a powerful dream, especially after years of having the helpless kind of dream!" -- a **Defend Yourself** student

and though
she be but
little, she is
fierce.