

Pitt alum, former Marine teaches self-defense tactics

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What should you do if you ever find yourself in a dangerous situation? For one thing, you can "fight like a girl."

In a presentation on Monday by former Marine and personal security expert Sam Rosenberg, a crowd of almost 100 Pitt students were taught basic defensive tactics and personal safety techniques. The event was co-sponsored by Comcast, the Oh! Oxygen channel and the Pitt Program Council.

The presentation featured Rosenberg and his personal security firm INPAX, which he founded in 2003. During the nearly two-hour session, Rosenberg demonstrated a number of evasive techniques and maneuvers that are designed to create personal space and disarm an assailant.

Rosenberg identified three types of attackers: professionals, potentials and predators. The most common types of criminals are predators, which can most easily be described as opportunists.

"Predators are not looking for a fight, they are looking for a victim," Rosenberg said. He told students that experience is the key and to never end up a victim.

"If you deny the possibility that something could happen to you, then if it should happen, the effects would be devastating," Rosenberg said.

Using volunteers from the audience, Rosenberg demonstrated a number of maneuvers using ordinary objects such as cell phones, keys, magazines and pens. He also showed the audience how it is possible to understand an assailant by "beating the mind."

"Most bad guys, even if they're professional, have never prepared for the eventuality of being disarmed," Rosenberg said.

A 1994 graduate of Pitt, Rosenberg spent 10 years in the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, where he assisted in developing personal combat techniques and tactics. He also spent seven years in the personal security industry, where he provided bodyguard services for such VIPs as former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.



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Sam Rosenberg, president of INPAX Personal Security Training and Consulting, shows freshman Kristen Portland how to fend off a would-be attacker.

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There are three ways to react to a hostile situation, Rosenberg explained. One way is to overreact or freeze, while another way is to under-react or panic. But Monday's demonstration was aimed at teaching Pitt students how to defend themselves from assailants and escape from the situation.

While Rosenberg emphasizes negotiation over confrontation, he realizes that in a real-world scenario, this is not always an option.

"While it's good to have a lifeguard, it's better to know how to swim," Rosenberg said.

"I've known people who have gotten mugged, so it's nice knowing that there are ways to protect myself," said Brittney Roberts, a freshman who attended the event.

After each demonstration, students practiced the moves in pairs, utilizing the three levels of force taught by Rosenberg: push, poke and hammer.

"I liked the uppercut move he showed us," Pitt student Jillian Reilly said. Rosenberg identified a number of pressure points that can literally bring an attacker to his knees.

"Courage is as contagious as fear," Rosenberg said. "And you'll be surprised as what you'll accomplish."