

# The Unexpected

Obviously, change can be hard. Unexpected change is often worse than hard, winning the lottery or getting a pony aside...

Still, life keeps happening and is frequently out of our control. Some people thrive on chaos. My discipline is a great refuge for those who don't.

We're not a "flashy" school. I don't mean that in a negative way—we're just not the place to come to if you want to compete or win trophies. If that's your liking and what gets you going, that's great for you. That's just not us. My whole training life has been about preparing for the person who unexpectedly brings trouble—chaos—to you.

Good self-defense skills come from repetition, from doing a move so many times—and with so many minute tweaks during that time—that the technique is second nature. Muscle memory takes over and active thought isn't much of the reaction equation. Your body knows what to do automatically, instinctively, hopefully giving your brain that needed time to understand what's

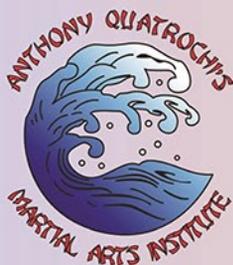
By Anthony Quatrochi  
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happening, deal with the problem and get you home safely—away from chaos.

I'll give you an example of what I mean. I was on vacation with some buddies a while back. We might have been having an adult beverage or two while they teased me a bit about my martial arts lifestyle (fixation?) in the way that old friends will. Unknown to me, they foolishly told the waitress to sneak up behind me and shove something in my face. Everything ended well; no worries! As she came up behind me, without even thinking about it, without seeing her, but feeling her movement, I knocked her hand away and made her immobile—without hurting her, I promise. I hadn't processed what was going on. It was pure reaction to the chaos. Yes, I scared her a bit—and my friends are undoubtedly idiots—but the meaningful takeaway is that the rest of the week we were on vacation, whenever the waitress saw me, she was asking me for self-defense tips.

She wanted to learn anything I could or would show her, because her job has a lot of potential for chaos and she wanted to feel a level of control. Nowadays, unfortunately, it seems almost any job earns that description. Expecting to have some power in the face of chaos makes a lot of difference in your life. It's preparation. It's experience. It's confidence. It's safety.

So, as always, I encourage you to come try a class. Bring your friends and family, too. I'm biased, I admit, but I believe completely that martial arts can—and if you stick with it—WILL change you for the better and prepare you for the unexpected. Come find out. ♦

Photo courtesy of AQMAI