

**Teen Ambassador Project:**  
**Self-Defense Class**

Arranged by: Melanie Duhamel and the Staff of Mastery Martial Arts

Objective: to raise the awareness of teenage and college-age girls about dangerous situations and to teach skills to prevent or cope with a dangerous situation.

I became interested in this topic almost by accident; I began studying Martial Arts in June of 2007, and became a member of the Women's Health Advisory Council at the beginning of that school year. I knew that part of my participation in the Women's Health Advisory Council would be in the form of a presentation, and I began thinking about what I would do. I became determined to arrange a self-defense class at my school after reading an article in a magazine about unexpected places where women could find themselves in a dangerous situation. I was shocked by some of the places listed, but I also learned that it is easy to avoid a problem by being aware of potential danger and proactive about ensuring safety.

After making arrangements for a self-defense class to take place at my school, I spent time speaking with my Martial Arts instructor and taking extra classes to learn more about self defense. He taught me that the most important thing to do to avoid getting into a dangerous situation or getting hurt is to be aware of my surroundings and to trust my instincts. The most important thing he told me is that if you ever feel uncomfortable or "not right" about something, change the situation so that you feel at ease, either by finding a friend, companion, or someone in a position to help, such as a security guard or police officer or by removing yourself from the place or situation. As I continued to take Martial Arts classes, I learned many self defense techniques, but at every lesson, my instructor stressed that ever having to use them is a sign of failure. The best guarantee of personal safety is to be aware, alert, and ready to avoid anything that could be hazardous to personal safety. As a future college freshman, I also read books about preparing for college and found that one of the most common crimes that occurs on-campus is physical or sexual assault. I learned that most cases of assault occur when the victim knows that assailant and is familiar and comfortable with that person. The victim often lets his/or her guard down, making it easier for assault to occur. This re-enforced what I had learned about awareness. The final thing that I learned in relation to self defense is to be aware your surroundings but to avoid paranoia. The goal of self-defense and of learning about the dangers that exist is to prepare you for a possibility and to raise awareness. It is good to have fun and develop relationships with people, just know how to recognize what is safe and what is out of control.

The self-defense class was held on May 15 at 10:30 a.m. at La Salle Academy. I presented to an 8<sup>th</sup> grade gym class, and then my instructor discussed the importance of awareness and taught basic self-defense moves. The presentation went well because the students were energetic and eager to learn and because the information reached them at a good time. They will be making the transition to high school next year, and this class helped to teach them how to be safe and make good decisions. I knew this presentation for success because I ran into the students for the rest of the school year and was thanked for the fun and helpful class that I brought to them. I know that they will remember what they learned because it was presented to them in a fun, interactive class and they truly enjoyed it.