

By Kimberley Johnston
Contributor

Safeskills Coming To UPEI

Been looking for an excuse to kick random men in the groin? Well, not really; but how does learning to protect yourself sound? Ruth Freeman Women's Centre coordinator and safeskills co-organizer said the free-of-charge one-evening session is specifically catered to women who either don't have the money for self-defense training or the time for a full-blown program. The idea for the safety course came out of talks with Const. Wendy Adams of the UPEI Security Services.

"We were brainstorming ideas about self-defence and (discussing) what would be the most efficient and inexpensive way to teach women to be safe without taking up a lot of their time. Most women on campus, whether they are students, staff or faculty, simply don't have the time and/or the financial resources to take a full-length self-defence course." The course focuses on ways women can keep safe in any setting but also teaches how to deal with a male attacker...

"Just in case being safe isn't enough," she said.

Freeman and Const. Adams spoke with women to find out what they would like to get out of a course like that. Input came flooding in.

"Our talks with women told us that what they wanted was some good practical advice about how to increase their safety whether they were at home, on campus, out on the town, on a trip, etc., and they wanted to learn some very basic self-defense moves that would help them get away from a situation in which their safety was compromised."

And they listened. This is the fourth year safeskills has been implemented at UPEI. Freeman has heard a lot of positive feedback from past participants of the course.

"Women who have attended the session in the past have reported that they feel more confident about handling a difficult situation, and that the safety tips have made them more aware of their surroundings and what they should be doing to make themselves and their families more safe," she explained.

And the women have had to use it, she said.

"I have also heard back from some women who have successfully used the defence moves to break holds and get away from potentially dangerous situations."

The course draws on resources from other safety programs at universities, police departments, and crisis centres across the country. It also includes information from the Women's Centre and UPEI Security Services. The Women's Centre co-ordinator added the course has really evolved since the first program was taught at UPEI.

"Each time we do it we refine it a bit more, and I believe it gets better each time."

The session is open to all university students, staff, faculty, and administration. Although it is designed to meet the specific needs of women, Freeman said anyone would benefit from the advice. The class is limited to 20 so all participants get a chance to practise the self-defence moves and get the personal attention they need to feel confident with the resistance techniques, she added.

The course takes place Thursday, October 28 in Room 265 of the WA Murphy Student Centre next to the health clinic, from 6:30 to 9 pm.

Class size is limited but places are still available. To reserve a spot, contact Ruth Freeman at 628-4332. The course will return in February so don't be too disappointed if you don't get in.

Safeskills is co-sponsored by the Women's Centre and UPEI Security Services. It is facilitated by Constable Wendy Adams, Ruth Freeman, and Jay Gallant.

In addition to the session, each participant will receive a package with all the safety tips included, as well as information on assertiveness and resistance.

For more information, visit the UPEI Women's Centre on the 2nd floor of the W.A. Murphy Student Centre (North Side) or contact Ruth Freeman.

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