



## **To eye gouge or to not eye gouge.**

By Alfredo Del-Brocco

While this topic is sensitive, it is still an area of martial arts self defence that must be looked at, & both intelligently & correctly addressed.

The gouge or scrape is used to momentarily blur & injure your opponent from primarily a clinching & grappling scenario. From here it must be understood that we are not looking at taking our adversary's eye out but simply to instill a distraction (for want of a better word), upset, brain blink, stun or whatever you would like to call it on our opponent while we go to work on finishing or closing the scenario. Basically we are using the Wing Chun principle of Diminishment & the eye gouge can be one of many tools used to achieve this objective.

The raking of the fingers across, down or up the face will depend on your body position in relation to your opponent. Obviously from behind with your opponent in a choke, the hand can be raked across the face. Simple training drills for your fingers such as squeezing a tennis ball, holding a 25kg plate in your fingertips & twirling it in a circular fashion both clockwise and anti-clockwise all assist in strengthening the digits and the attaching ligaments, tendons & muscle.

Cross training in activities such as indoor rock climbing will also assist in strengthening the fingers for grabbing, hanging on choking & gouging. Where would you use the gouge? Obviously in Vale Tudo, grappling & street fighting scenarios opportunities to gouge your opponent often present itself. In a controlled environment with a compliant training partner, a student can very easily train & work where a finger rake across the face could be done without having to go as far as actually doing it.

In a multiple opponent incident several years ago, I was confronted with a knife controlling a person with an attitude & his mate. In hindsight, the guy with the knife didn't really know what he was doing. To cut a long story short I was able to grab onto the wrist of the knife wielding assailant while headbutting & then sticking my fingers into this guy's face. I raked my fingers across his face finishing with my thumb on the outside of the eye socket. From here I began to apply pressure forcing my thumb into the corner of this guys eye which, thankfully, caused him to drop the knife & leave the scene with his mate.

So the purpose of sharing this incident with you is not to impress you but to impress upon you the reality of the situation & the opportunity to apply such a simple yet devastating street technique. To this day I thank my Si-Fu for having the insight & openmindedness to allow his students to drill these techniques in a controlled & supportive training environment. Eyesight is one of the most precious senses we have & if you have ever had the opportunity to talk or sign with visually impaired people, you will know what I mean here. The eye gouge however, could be the deciding technique in your repertoire of skill that could be the difference between getting your butt kicked or saving your butt from getting kicked. However, I urge you to talk to your instructor & draw your own conclusions as to the when, where & why the eye gouge would come into effect. In the meantime, enjoy the accompanying eye gouge photos.