

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
Martial Arts Center of Excellence
The Basic School
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134

DETAILED OUTLINE

BREAKFALLS

INTRODUCTION: **(5 MIN)**

1. GAIN ATTENTION. A warrior is someone who is both physically and mentally tough. We harden and train our bodies to deal with the rigors of combat. If thrown by an opponent, or you fall during a struggle, you can become immobilized by breaking a limb or having the wind knocked out of you. A breakfall technique is executed to absorb the impact of a fall to prevent injury and to allow you to get back on your feet quickly. We must also develop a mental toughness and strength of character to deal with the stress and emotional difficulties of life. Part of our warrior training involves understanding all of the dangers that we face in life and preparing ourselves mentally, emotionally, and physically to handle them.

2. OVERVIEW. This lesson will cover breakfalls including the purpose of breakfalls and the techniques for executing the following breakfalls: front, side, back, and forward shoulder roll, as well as how to identify and prevent an emotional fall; suicide.

3. INTRODUCE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

a. TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES.

(1) Without the aid of the reference, given a mouthpiece, execute breakfalls in accordance with the references. (8550.01.03)

(2) Without the aid of the reference, discuss suicide awareness and prevention in accordance with the references. (8550.01.19)

b. ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVES.

(1) Without the aid of the reference, given a mouthpiece, execute a front breakfall in accordance with the references. (8550.01.03a)

(2) Without the aid of the reference, given a mouthpiece, execute a back breakfall, in accordance with the references. (8550.01.03b)

(3) Without the aid of the reference, given a mouthpiece, execute a right side breakfall, in accordance with the references. (8550.01.03c)

(4) Without the aid of the reference, given a mouthpiece, execute a left side breakfall, in accordance with the references. (8550.01.03d)

(5) Without the aid of the reference, given a mouthpiece, execute a forward shoulder roll in accordance with the references. (8550.01.03e)

(6) Without the aid of the reference, identify persons at risk from suicide, in accordance with the references. (8550.01.19a)

(7) Without the aid of the reference, identify potential suicide risk signs or signals, in accordance with the references. (8550.01.19b)

(8) Without the aid of the reference, identify keys to the prevention of suicide in accordance with the references. (8550.01.19c)

4. METHOD/MEDIA. This class will be taught by E.D.I.P method and guided discussion.

5. EVALUATION. This lesson will be evaluated by performance and oral evaluation.

BODY **(82 MIN)**

1. PURPOSE OF BREAKFALLS (5 MIN)

On the battlefield the last place we want to find ourselves in on the ground. We increase our vulnerability and reduce our chances of survival. However, there will be times during an encounter with an opponent that you will lose your balance or be thrown to the deck. To reduce the chance of injury, break falls are used to absorb the impact of the fall without getting hurt. Additionally, we need to learn to handle the mental and emotional stresses of life in order to deal with emotional falls that can lead to suicide.

a. Physical Breakfall. The purpose of breaking a fall is to absorb the impact of the fall and to use its momentum to maintain motion after hitting the ground. If you know how to breakfall, you can reduce your chances of injury and get back on your feet quickly in order to re-establish a position of control.

Breakfall techniques use the large muscles of your body (back, thighs, and buttocks) to protect vital organs and bones from injury and immobilization.

b. Emotional Breakfall. The emotional breakfall is a mind-set that allows individuals to deal with personal problems and the stresses of life. The emotional breakfall uses positive character development, an understanding of the risk factors and signs associated with suicide, and the bond that exists between Marines in taking care of our own.

2. Safeties.

a. To prevent injuries to students during training, train break falls in stages from the lowest position to the highest position.

b. Break falls will be trained on a soft footed area such grass, sand or mats.

c. Break falls will be executed slow at first and speed will increase with proficiency

2. FRONT BREAKFALL

(10 MIN)

Purpose: A front fall is executed to break your fall when falling forward.

a. Technique. It is difficult to execute a breakfall in training because you need to be thrown to truly execute the breakfall properly, however this would create a potentially hazardous condition. Instead we will learn and practice the front breakfall in stages. The front breakfall will never be executed from the standing position in training.

b. From the Deck.

(1) Begin by lying on the deck on your stomach.

(2) Place your forearms and palms flat on the deck, with your elbows bent and your chest and head raised off the deck.

(3) Raise your head and neck so you are looking straight ahead.

(4) Determine proper hand placement that allows your forearms and hands to support your upper torso and keep your head off the deck.

(5) Proper hand and forearm placement will spread and better absorb the impact of the fall and help to keep your head from hitting the deck.

(6) Practice by raising the forearm and slapping the deck with the fingers extended and joined.

c. From a Kneeling Position.

(1) Assume a two-kneed kneeling position.

(2) Bend your elbows and place your palms facing out in the position that will allow you to spread and absorb the impact of the fall.

(3) Fall forward, breaking your fall with your forearms and palms. The forearms and hands, down to the fingertips, should strike the deck simultaneously. Fingers and thumb will be extended and joined.

(4) Offer resistance with your forearms and hands to keep your head raised off the deck.

3. SIDE BREAKFALL

(15 MIN)

Purpose: A side breakfall is executed to break your fall on your side.

a. Technique. It is difficult to execute a breakfall in training because you need to be thrown to truly execute the breakfall properly, however this would create a potentially hazardous condition. We will also learn and practice the side breakfall in stages.

b. From the Deck.

(1) Begin by lying on the deck on your right side. Your right leg should be straight and your left leg should be bent with your foot flat on the deck.

(2) Place your right arm, palm facing down, at a 45-degree angle out and away from your body.

(3) Raise your head and neck by tucking your chin and tilting your head up away from the deck.

(4) Bring your right arm across your body so your hand is next to your left shoulder with your palm facing inboard.

(5) With your right arm, slap the deck making contact from your shoulder or forearm down to your hand. Tuck your chin and keep your head raised off the deck.

(6) Determine proper arm placement that allows you to keep your head off the deck. Proper arm placement will spread and better absorb the impact of the fall.

(7) Practice this step as many times as necessary to determine proper arm placement.

c. From a Squatting Position.

(1) Assume a low squatting position.

(2) Bring your right arm across your body so your hand is next to your left shoulder with your palm facing inboard.

(3) Fall on your side by sliding your right foot to the left and rolling on your right hip.

(4) Break your fall with your right arm, slapping the deck, making contact from your shoulder or forearm down to your hand. The arm should strike the deck at a 45° angle with respect to your body. At the same time, tuck your chin and keep your head raised off the deck.

(5) To spread and absorb the impact, stretch out your right leg to make contact with the deck. Bend your left leg and make contact with the deck with your foot.

(6) Practice this step as many times as necessary to ensure proper arm placement to break the fall.

d. From a Standing Position.

(1) Assume a standing position with the feet shoulder width apart.

(2) Bring your right arm across your body so your hand is next to your left shoulder with your palm facing inboard.

(3) Fall on your right side by sliding your right foot to the left and collapse to the right onto your right thigh, buttocks, and lat muscle.

(4) Break your fall with your right arm, slapping the deck, making contact from your shoulder or forearm down to your hand. The arm should strike the deck at a 45° angle with respect to your body. At the same time, tuck your chin and keep your head raised off the deck.

(5) To spread and absorb the impact, stretch out your right leg to make contact with the deck. Bend your left leg and make contact with the deck with your foot.

(6) Practice this step as many times as necessary to ensure proper arm placement to break the fall.

4. BACK BREAKFALL

(10 MIN)

Purpose: A back breakfall is executed to break the fall when being thrown or falling backward.

a. Technique. The back breakfall is taught in stages and is never practiced from the standing position.

b. From the Deck.

(1) Begin by lying on the deck on your back.

(2) Place your arms at approximately a 45-degree angle downward, out and away from your body, palms down.

(3) Tuck your chin.

(4) Offer resistance with your arms to raise your head, neck, and shoulders off the deck.

(5) Determine proper arm placement that allows you to keep your head off the deck.

(6) Proper arm placement will spread and better absorb the impact of the fall.

(7) Once proper arm placement is determined, cross your hands in

an "X" in front of your chest. Tuck your chin to keep your head up off the deck. Bend your knees to raise them off the deck.

(8) Swing your arms out and slap the deck, making contact from your forearms to your hands. The forearms and hands, down to the fingertips, should strike the deck simultaneously. Finger and thumb will be extended and joined.

(9) Offer resistance with your arms to raise your head, neck, and shoulders off the deck.

(10) Practice this step as many times as necessary to ensure proper arm placement to break the fall.

c. From a Squatting Position.

(1) Squat down on the deck on the balls of your feet.

(2) Cross your hands in front of your chest. Fingers and thumbs will be extended and joined.

(3) Tuck your chin.

(4) Roll backward and slap the deck with your forearms and hands to absorb the impact of the fall and keep your head off the deck. The arms should strike the deck at a 45° angle with respect to your body.

(5) Keeping your back rounded when rolling backward will prevent injury during training.

(6) Keeping your head off the deck will protect your neck and spinal column from injury.

(7) Practice this step as many times as necessary to properly break the fall.

5. FORWARD SHOULDER ROLL

(15 MIN)

The purpose of the forward shoulder roll is to break a fall from an opponent's attack and use the momentum to get back on your feet quickly.

a. Technique. To learn the forward shoulder roll we will practice in stages:

b. From the Kneeling Position.

(1) Place your right knee on the deck and your left leg bent with the foot flat on the deck.

(2) Extend your left arm down through your legs, tucking your chin into your chest. Lower your head and shoulders to the ground.

(3) Push off with your feet to roll over your left shoulder to your right hip executing the proper finishing position for a right side breakfall.

(5) With your right leg straight, slap the deck to absorb as much of the impact as possible. Your left leg is bent and the foot hits flat on the deck.

c. From the Standing Position.

(1) Place your feet shoulder width apart with your left foot forward.

(2) Extend your left arm down through your legs, tucking your chin into your chest. Lower your head and shoulders to the ground.

(3) Push off with your feet to roll from your left shoulder to your left hip and buttock, allowing your forward momentum to bring you back to your feet.

(4) Rapidly return to the basic warrior stance.

6. SUICIDE; AN EMOTIONAL FALL

(12 MIN)

a. Even the toughest warrior will be faced at some time with serious emotional or mentally stressful situations that can throw us off balance. We need to understand how to recognize and deal with these types of situations to protect ourselves and regain our balance from emotional falls (suicide). To begin with we need to identify personnel who may be at risk for an emotional fall.

b. Signs of an Emotional Fall. As a warrior we are always aware of our surroundings and alert to danger. This applies to our awareness of signs of an emotional fall in others or ourselves. Just as we train to

identify danger on the battlefield we must train to identify the dangers signs of suicide. A person who is about to take an emotional fall may react in one of the following ways:

- (1) Believes the situation is hopeless.
- (2) Appears depressed, sad, tearful; may have changes in patterns of sleep and/or appetite.
- (3) May talk about or actually threaten suicide, or may talk about death and dying in a way that strikes the listener as odd.
- (4) May show changes in behavior, appearance or mood.
- (5) May increase or start drug or alcohol use.
- (6) May injure self or engage in risky behavior.
- (7) Abandons planning for the future.
- (8) May start withdrawing from others, including family and close friends.
- (9) May give away possessions.
- (10) May appear apathetic, unmotivated, indifferent.

Now that we know the signs of an emotional fall (suicide) we need to understand the factors that may have led to this situation.

c. In order to identify the signs the warrior needs to know his fellow Marines and to be able to identify the factors that can lead to a potential suicide situation. These factors or stress events can attack the spirit of a Marine. The following is a partial list of these factors and includes::

- (1) Depression.
- (2) Substance abuse.
- (3) Difficulties in relationships.
- (4) Legal or financial trouble.
- (5) Performance or work difficulties.

(6) Family problems.

(7) All the above and many others have three common denominators; loss, hopelessness, and stress that impact the mental, emotional and spiritual balance of those effected.

d. All of the above are situations that each of us has had to, or will have to deal with in life either personally or with fellow Marines. The possibility of suicide or contemplation of suicide rises when an individual feels overwhelmed (attacked) by one or a series of these factors. Additionally, many of the same stresses we face in combat, discomfort and fatigue, risk and fear, and boredom can aggravate or have the same effect as the factors above.

7. SUICIDE AWARENESS; THE EMOTIONAL BREAKFALL (13 MIN)

a. To begin with each of us must embrace the warrior ethos and live our core values each day. While this will not prevent personal problems or tragedies from coming into our life it will prepare us to better deal with these problems when they do arise. A man or woman of strong character will possess the mental toughness to deal with most situations. This is not to say that a person who needs help with a problem is flawed. On the contrary, warriors are like tempered steel. We all train hard to develop the sharpest edge combined with toughness. But even the hardest metal has its limit. We must recognize this in others and ourselves in order to avoid the breaking point. While not the only solution, this will help us develop one counter to suicide situations

b. If a situation does develop we need to be personally aware that no matter how bad a situation appears there are always better ways of overcoming this situation besides suicide. A Marine should be ready to ask for assistance and know that fellow Marines are there to assist him. One of the most important counters to an emotional fall is to trust your fellow Marines and ask for help. Every Marine needs to understand that there is no shame in asking for assistance and it does not make them any less of a man or woman for doing so. The capacity to ask for assistance at a time like this is in fact a sign of spiritual strength, judgement and maturity.

c. Every member of a Marines chain of command is ready and willing to provide assistance. Additionally, leaders have access to a host of support agencies and trained personnel that are provided to assist Marines through any situation.

d. As warriors each Marine is responsible for fellow Marines. This is especially true of those in leadership positions. On the field of battle we fight as units not as individuals. We need to be aware of potential problems that can lead to thoughts of suicide in fellow Marines and be prepared to assist. The fire team must come to the aid of a fellow Marine or the entire team suffers. Rapid intervention is a key element in suicide prevention.

e. In order to be prepared personally and as a leader every warrior needs to educate themselves concerning suicide prevention, be aware of the resources that are available to help Marines, and constantly be on guard for the possibility of a suicide situation. Only in this way can we develop a counter to suicides. To do this we have an acronym that we can use to aid us in executing the emotional breakfall. It is:

AID LIFE

A Ask: "Are you thinking about hurting yourself?"

I Intervene immediately.

D Do not keep a secret concerning a person at risk.

L Locate help (NCO, chaplain, corpsman, doctor, nurse, friend, family, crisis line, hospital emergency room).

I Inform your chain of command of the situation.

F Find someone to stay with the person. Do not leave the person alone.

E Expedite! Get help immediately. A suicidal person needs the immediate attention of helpers.

SUMMARY:

(5 MIN)

To prevent injury to yourself during a confrontation with an opponent, you must be able to break your fall to absorb the impact. Proficiency in break falls comes with practice. Adopting our Core Values, developing mental toughness and always remembering we are a team will develop the same proficiency in developing the emotional break fall. As warriors each of us has a responsibility to ensure that we are fully trained and prepared to deal with the falls of life, both physical, and emotional. By developing a strong body and character along with mental toughness we will be able to absorb the impact of these falls and return to our feet to continue the mission. As we train our bodies today we also need to train our minds. And finally, we must continue to develop teamwork and build cohesion so that the strength of the Corps is the Marine and the strength of the Marine is the Corps.

In this way each of us knows that we can trust and rely on each other whether on the field of battle or in our daily lives.