

Fighting Back Against Attackers

MOTHER OF 5 DAUGHTERS DEVELOPS
TINY, WEARABLE PEPPER SPRAY BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN

KRISTI GORINAS was featured in the January 2013 *Inventors Digest* (“How I developed a product on my own”), when she spoke about her experience in developing the GoWithMe chair.

Now the Georgia mother of five daughters has a new, totally unrelated invention: a wearable, self-defense item a little over 1 inch in diameter that is cleverly named “Defendables.” Given the growing momentum of the #MeToo movement, this is a timely innovation.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): What is your background, and do you consider yourself a serial inventor?

Kristi Gorinas (KG): Prior to my inventing journey, I was a Human Resources professional for over 20 years. I have continued to consult in HR during my inventing years to help finance several product ideas.

I do consider myself a serial inventor, having dozens of product concepts but capable of only bringing a handful to market. However, several inventor friends have books with hundreds of inventions, so it's hard to compete with that type of prolific idea person.

EGT: Why and how did Defendables come about?

KG: During a consulting gig, I noticed an end-cap filled with pepper spray. I casually said to myself, “I have one of those ... somewhere in the house or garage and really should take it on my jogs.” As I stared at the conventional canisters of spray, I realized that I don't keep it handy because it's not convenient to carry. I actually carry weights as I jog and wouldn't have a free hand.

Additionally, if I did carry it in my purse or car, I'd have to search for it at the time of attack. And that brief conversation with myself sparked a fire to design something more convenient, discreet, smaller and even more fashionable.

The most important feature to me was for the product to be “wearable,” because I like simplicity: Take a shower, dress and attach a wearable pepper spray pod anywhere on me for easy access when I need it most. As a survivor of sexual assault and now a mom to five girls, I knew this product was a mass-market product, a necessity for women and men, seniors and those with special needs.

EGT: How does it work?

KG: The plastic pod has a trigger that requires some pressure to move forward. The pepper spray dispenses in a cone shape, spraying out at least 3 feet.

My intention for this miniaturized pepper spray pod was for use in your personal space: 1-3-foot distance when you shoot the spray. Research confirms that in most cases, you are not aware of a physical attack until someone is touching you, therefore in your

personal space. At that time, anything you are holding (phone, purse) most often is dropped as you respond with your hands to defend yourself. With the pod attached to your bra strap, shirt or pants, you can reach for the pod to spray the attacker.

I have also designed a patent-pending ring version which works similar to how Spiderman sprays his web. The pod is attached to a ring and worn discreetly in

Defendables has the key feature of being wearable, which provides convenience as well as quick access when an attacker approaches.





“As a survivor of sexual assault ... I knew this product was a mass-market product, a necessity for women and men, seniors and those with special needs.”—KRISTI GORINAS

the palm of your hand. With the ring accessory, you don't even need to grab the pod off your clothing. Just point and spray.

EGT: Did you get help with your prototype(s), or need many before you got it right?

KG: I am not an engineer nor a graphic designer. I network and find the talents needed for industrial design and mechanical engineering.

We are currently in our final design and testing phase, having gone through a dozen design changes and five or so prototypes. Although starting out my focus was in how fashionable the pod could look, I've transitioned my focus to functionality. It first must function properly 100 percent of the time and since it's designed to be worn discreetly, the fashion part of Defendables will be a close second in the next generation of pods.

EGT: Are you currently manufacturing? Domestically or overseas?

KG: We will import the plastic pods to the United States and fill them with the proprietary pepper spray, then package and ship from the U.S.

EGT: Can you share your experience in working with overseas factories?

KG: My first juvenile product inventions were imported from China, after trying to make them here in the United States. I have worked with Chinese and Taiwanese factories for the most part.

During the 10 years of importing, I have found that utilizing a native to the factory is most important to ensure accurate communications. I lost nearly 10 months of design time with my diaper bag designs because I was trying to communicate directly with the factory and dealing with language and time barriers.

EGT: Is funding difficult for this type of invention? Did you have any help?

KG: Unless you are independently wealthy, which

I am not, funding has always been the biggest barrier to execution for any of my products. That's why in my interview for *Inventors Digest* in 2013, I stated that I would never bring another product to market again on my own.

But for such an important product like Defendables, I am back on the path of funding the entire project on my own—using many different personal outlets for funding. Investors aren't lined up on the street corners, and I've found most are investing solely in IT and apps. Finding the right consumer goods investor has been a big challenge for me. I'm still actively searching for one!

EGT: Was developing Defendables different from the development of your children's chair invention?

KG: Yes, very different. I've had eight years of experience, mistakes and accomplishments to refer back to in streamlining the design, engineering, testing, packaging and scaling processes.

EGT: What difficulties did you have?

KG: The difficulties always seem endless. Besides the lack of finances, losing my co-founder and trying to put together the right team who will work for sweat equity, my own mental exhaustion and stress begins to take its toll.

Bringing a consumer goods product to market from a napkin takes 10 times as long as you want it to, and 10 times as much money as you could ever plan. Having patience, perseverance and prayer is the only way to make it through. Knowing the struggles upfront and getting a good night's rest help to push through those daily struggles. Validation of the product from industry experts is also critical to ensure the product will be a success.

EGT: What was your patent experience?

KG: As a one-person company, I rely on experts in every field to advise and assist me with each step of the design and patent process. This has

not stopped me from making horrible and costly mistakes, though.

Oftentimes, the patent process becomes last on the list of priorities due to money and time constraints. Don't make those same mistakes. Work with a patent agent (attorneys tend to be much more expensive) to understand the absolute correct timing to file a provisional patent application. Oftentimes you can file this on your own, and there is also software as well as templates available to assist. Plan to spend at least \$500 getting questions answered and to file the P.A.; it's a necessity.

EGT: Have you begun to sell Defendables?

KG: I am hoping to be on the market sometime soon.

EGT: How will the product be packaged and sold?

KG: Defendables will utilize a pepper spray distributor who has current retail distribution in all major retailers in the United States and internationally. This will ensure a successful and scalable product.

EGT: How are you handling your own PR?

KG: At this point, I am handling every aspect of the business with the help of consultants for design,

packaging and engineering. My goal is to partner with a large PR firm to assist with the very important message to protect oneself from harm and to "Be Your Own Hero."

EGT: Are you planning other Defendables-related products?

KG: Yes, we have many line expansions for Defendables to include GPS/emergency notification, as well as a line for kids and other types of personal defense products.

EGT: Do you have any advice for novice inventors?

KG: Research, research, research your idea prior to spending any money to bring it to life. Ask friends to research for you in case you missed something. And my mantra is "Patience, Prayer and Perseverance." 🙏

Details: defendables.com

Books by **Edie Tolchin** (egt@edietolchin.com) include "Fanny on Fire" (fannyonfire.com) and "Secrets of Successful Inventing." She has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. Edie has owned EGT Global Trading since 1997, assisting inventors with product safety issues and China manufacturing.



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Mary Boney Denison,
commissioner for
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