



Tactical Talk

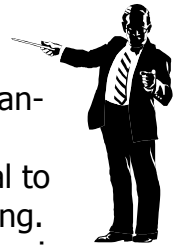
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Talk is
cheap
because
supply
exceeds
demand.

Annual Firearms Instructor Development Course



On July 25-27, 2004, Rangemaster will conduct our annual Firearms Instructor Development Course. This three day course is designed to prepare an individual to teach others the basics of defensive handgun shooting. This course is intended for shooters who have some prior training and know the basics of marksmanship and gunhandling. The emphasis is on teaching others how to shoot, either as an instructor or as a coach.

There is both classroom instruction and a good deal of range training. Students will fire a wide variety of handguns, learning how to correctly manipulate the various types of handguns. All weapons and ammunition are furnished, along with a huge reference manual. Cost of this course is \$399.00.

This course satisfies the requirements of the Department of Safety for a State Certified Handgun Instructor license. Even if you don't plan to teach, this course will help you as a shooter and the State Certified Handgun Instructor status gives you court recognized evidence of competence with your defensive sidearm.

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Jeff Gonzales of Trident Concepts

Jeff Gonzales will be teaching at Rangemaster May 17th-18th conducting his Close Quarter Fighting class. This is a very intense weekend course dealing with the harsh realities of close range fights.

Jeff is a recently retired SEAL, with a lot of combat experience. He is also a gifted trainer, and any shooter will benefit from this class. There will be an all day session on Saturday and Sunday, plus an evening session on Saturday, with lots of shooting plus some other skills. **Cost is only \$350.00.** Jeff only comes here once a year, so don't miss this opportunity to train with one of the best in the business.



Zen and Pistolcraft

The title of this article was written only partially tongue in cheek. There actually is a process involved in oriental meditation systems that can be of great assistance to you in times of high stress, such as the stresses involved in any armed confrontation and in its aftermath. This process is *autogenic breathing*. More on the specific technique in a moment. First, let's discuss its purpose.

Imagine yourself in a confrontation in which you truly believe your life is in grave, immediate danger. You have been confronted by a criminal, who is armed with a deadly weapon, and for whatever reason, he has made it plain that he intends to greatly hasten your shuffle from this mortal coil. You know you may die in a moment! At this point, you can expect to feel the effects of a bit of stress.

Both your body and your mind will at this point undergo changes brought on by this high stress or anxiety. Most people think of these effects as being caused by adrenaline, a hormone released under alarming circumstances such as I described. In fact, these changes are tied more to a rapid rise in your heart rate, and a corresponding rise in your blood pressure. At the scene of shootings, emergency medical personnel routinely check on the shooter, as well as assisting the shootee. Shooters are often recorded, even after the delay involved in response time of the EMTs, at 145-150 heartbeats per minute (BPM). Some shooters hit 175 BPM, and there have been recorded BPMs over 200. Your normal heart rate is 60-80 BPM, depending on your gender, age, and general physical condition, so we are talking about a highly elevated heart rate. Above 145 BPM, capillaries and lesser veins clamp off, blood flow is increased, at high pressure, to major muscle groups. Your perceptions will be distorted. You will lose fine motor control, and have trouble thinking. Obviously then, it is in our best survival interests to keep this heart rate down to as low a level as possible. How do we do this?

The greatest harmful reaction by both your body and your mind will occur if you are startled, that is, if you are suddenly taken by surprise, without warning. If that happens, you may react at a completely instinctive level, running away, or even freezing up completely (hypervigilance). Your training may go completely out the window, as your brain reacts at a lower level than the one in which learned behavior is stored. The single most important factor in self preservation then, is to remain ALERT, to prevent being attacked completely by surprise.

We see examples of this reaction every day. A police officer will undergo forty hours or more of firearms training in the academy learning a two-hand hold on the firearm and aimed fire. He will replicate these same techniques every few months in training and requalification firing at the department's range. Then, when suddenly attacked, he will claw his gun out of the holster, stick it out at chest level in one hand, and empty it without once seeing his sights. After missing the bad guy with every round in his gun, he is shot and killed by the bad guy. What went wrong?

This is a mental failure, not an equipment or firearms training failure. The officer was complacent, or distracted, and not paying attention. He failed to see or evaluate the pre-attack indicators that were almost certainly present. He was not on guard while dealing with a potentially dangerous subject. The average police officer murdered in the line of duty has seven years' experience (source: FBI study). Thus, it is not the rookie, who is still cognizant of the dangers of police work, and still alert, but the more experienced, jaded officer who has convinced himself, "It won't happen on my shift, or in my precinct, or tonight, or to me...". So we see, as I have repeated, ALERTNESS is the key, as an alert, aware individual (Condition Yellow) will not be so completely startled and overwhelmed by an attack. You needn't EXPECT an attack, you only need to recognize that one may occur and be prepared to deal with it.

Autogenic breathing will be most useful in less common circumstances in which there is time for anticipation of impending conflict, and thus, time to build up anxiety. If anxiety or stress builds up unchecked over many minutes, it may reach the same crisis levels involved in a startle response. Example: you are driving your car and in your rearview mirror you see four young toughs operating a car they obviously cannot afford, and they appear to be following you. You execute two turns in your car, and they are still right behind you. At this point, as you drive and watch them, stress or anxiety will begin to build. If this goes on long enough, you will begin to feel the effects.

To keep your heart rate, and thus the rest of your body and mind under control, use autogenic breathing. Breathe in slowly through the nose, filling your lungs deeply on a slow four count. Hold your lungs full for a slow four count. Exhale, forcefully through the mouth, for a four count, and hold your lungs empty for a four count. Then repeat. While doing this, engage in positive self talk. In your mind, plan out how to deal with the threat. Reassure yourself that you are on top of the situation, that you know more about what is going on than they do. Plan an escape route, or other tactical option. You will be amazed at how well this breathing exercise and the positive self talk will allow you to regain composed and in control.

This same exercise is critical if you have been forced to shoot. You must keep your wits about you, even after the initial battle is won. If you let go and slip out of control, you may do something like turn toward responding police officers with a gun in your hand, or something else equally dangerous.

We wear a sidearm in order to regain control of our environment in an unexpected emergency. We cannot control our environment unless we can control ourselves!

VISUALIZATION, OR MENTAL IMAGERY

Visualization, or imagery, is one of the most effective tools available to you for mental conditioning. This is vital to success in a fight. Under stress, your subconscious mind will immediately take over and direct your body to do whatever the subconscious has been programmed to do. If you have been programmed through training to respond correctly, you will. Panic is simply the lack of a pre-programmed response. Since your subconscious doesn't know what to do, it does nothing. (When in danger, or in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout!) Obviously, your odds of surviving improve drastically if you have pre-programmed the correct tactical responses before a crisis.

How do we program these correct responses until they become automated? There are three ways. First, you could engage in about a dozen gunfights. You would then be adept at making rapid, sound tactical decisions, *if you are still alive!* We don't recommend this method because the test comes first, the lesson afterward. This is a painful and expensive way to learn.

Bismarck said, "A smart man learns from his own mistakes, a wise man learns from the mistakes of others." This is especially true in this business, where mistakes can be fatal. The easiest way to learn from the mistakes of others is to read a big city newspaper each day as you eat your breakfast. Look in the local news and select two instances reporting the criminal victimization of some unfortunate person. Take five or ten minutes to read these two accounts and actually analyze them. Ask yourself two questions, and make yourself come up with an answer.

The first question is, "What did the victim do to put himself in this situation?" . Once you learn a bit about criminal behavior, you realize that above all, criminals are opportunists. They capitalize on circumstances created by inattentive, complacent, lazy, and unobservant victims. Very soon you will learn to recognize the behavior or activity on the part of the victim that facilitated or even precipitated the crime. This will hold true in probably 95% of the cases you study. Once you have identified the specific victim behavior that caused the attack, you are reinforcing in your subconscious that this is negative, or harmful behavior. Day after day, by doing this, you are programming your subconscious to avoid that type of behavior. If you don't present the opportunity, the criminal cannot take advantage of it.

The next question is, "Alright, I was stupid and got into this mess, how do I get myself out of it?" Make yourself think up a solution to the tactical situation. In this manner, you are getting practice every single day in making tactical decisions. If you make tactical decisions every day of your life, they will come easily to you if you find yourself in dangerous circumstances. If you have never practiced this decision making process, how do you expect to do it well under extreme stress?

The last technique in imagery we will discuss has to do with mentally rehearsing confrontations, to prepare beforehand for a confrontation. In your mind, as a normal, healthy person, there is a very fine line between reality and fantasy. A psychopath no longer has this distinction in his mind, and his fantasies become his reality. A normal mind blurs this distinction under several circumstances. If you are an avid reader, for instance, you "see" the action of a good novel or historical account unfolding in your mind as you read. You form mental images of the characters and events, as if you had seen them yourself. How many times have you wakened from a vivid dream and took a few seconds to orient yourself? These are examples of that blurred distinction between reality and fantasy.

Airline pilots periodically receive training in a flight simulator, which is an enclosed box mounted on hydraulic jacks. Upon entering the simulator, the pilot is seated in a cockpit seat, a control panel is arrayed before him, and the "windshield" has a back projected image on it, just like the view from a plane. As the pilot applies control movements to the stick and so forth, the "plane" responds with motion. Within a few moments, the pilot's brain is fully convinced that he is flying a plane, although intellectually he knows he is bolted to the floor of the training building. At some point, the control panel will advise him of an emergency, and the "plane" will simulate the movement involved, as in a sudden dive. The pilot must immediately take corrective action to keep from "crashing". Although they are in no real danger, these guys come out of the simulator white knuckled and sweating, because the mind blurred the distinction between reality and fantasy. If, at some future date, the pilot is confronted with that actual emergency in a real aircraft, he will automatically respond, quickly and correctly, because his brain has learned that the correct action will save its life.

You can do the same thing with your mind in a self defense context by using visualization exercises. Go to a quiet room and sit in an easy chair. Relax, and clear your mind of all thought (easy for some of us!). Now, in your mind vividly imagine a tactical scenario. Think of it as a daydream, if you like, but get into it and project yourself into the action. For every imagined action by the bad guy, direct yourself through a proper reaction. "If he does this, I'll do that." Always direct the action to a successful outcome.

Let me give you a couple of examples. If you work in a retail environment, ask yourself, "What am I going to do when they stick this place up?". Visualize your work station, and the surroundings. Where is cover? What direction could you fire in without endangering coworkers? Is there an escape route available? Don't wait until a hold-up man is standing across the counter from you to think about this. If you are a boss, ask yourself, "What am I going to do if a disgruntled employee comes plodding down the hall with a shotgun?". Is there any other way out of your office? Is there any real cover available? Where is the secretary? You might find you want to rearrange your office. Find out now, not while under fire!

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The opening page of our website, rangemaster.com, now features a photo gallery. Just click on the “Photo Gallery” and you’ll find fourteen photos from various Rangemaster activities, with detailed captions.

Winter Indoor Championship & Tactical Conference 2004

Some of us have to plan pretty far in advance, so here are the details on the Seventh Annual Winter Indoor Championship and the 2004 Tactical Conference. This event will be held at Rangemaster on the 28th and 29th of February, 2004. There will be a very challenging low light match, plus we will feature classes and seminars from some of the very best trainers in the United States. Attendees will be able to take part in any or all of these seminars at no charge. This is a great opportunity to get first rate training from instructors from all over the US in one place.



We are working on some new technology for this match, which will improve the learning experience and make for a very exciting and enjoyable shooting match. We also already have several top trainers lined up to give presentations during the Tactical Conference. Gabe Suarez is coming back, John Farnam is working on being here, D.K. Pridgen and Tiger McKee will be here, and several more are in the works. Entry fee for the match is only \$85.00, and entry will be limited to the first 85 shooters to sign up.

(continued from page 3 . . .”Visualization, or Mental Imagery”)

There are really only a dozen or so ways for a thug to criminally victimize you. White collar crime has endless opportunities for innovation, but street crime is pretty straightforward. Over a period of time, you can visualize your way through just about all of the likely forms of street crime, and have pre-programmed responses filed away in the back of your mind (the subconscious) ready for deployment if faced with a similar circumstance.

If you are faced with a life threatening crisis in a form you have never seriously considered or given any thought to, you will likely hesitate just long enough to lose. If, on the other hand, you take a little time to practice these “simulations”, you can program ready responses and be able to retain control of yourself and your actions. Your mind needs to know that there is a way out, and that you know what it is. This avoids panic, and allows you to act decisively, which is your salvation.