

80% MENTAL!

It was in Sodona, as I recall, and we were looking for a place to get out of that God-forsaking hot, relentless sun. As we walked past the gift shop Karen looked in and slowed her walk showing interest in what was inside. Shopping has never been of much interest to me but to Karen is it an adventure. She combed through the hand-made Indian artifacts on her way to the turquoise jewelry counter. The storekeeper turned from his duties and greeted us with a “howdy”. I noticed he was wearing a 1911 on his right hip so I returned the greeting and added: “Did you make the holster for your sidearm”? He nodded a “yes” obviously proud of the craftsmanship of both the holster and the other handcrafted leather items for sale in his shop. Karen paid for her selections and we headed back to our rental car. “Couple of things seemed odd to me!” I exclaimed. “Air conditioning was on but the front door was wide open, and, did you notice the storekeeper was carrying openly?” Karen simply replied, “No tactical advantage there!” We continued on our vacation and I didn’t think about the little gift shop in Sodona again, till now!

Now I’m wondering if all the people with brand new CCW licenses understand exactly what Karen meant. Having attended numerous tactical classes and combat courses the exclamation of “No tactical advantage there!” was a perfectly normal response. But to many who carry concealed and have not attended any formal training the response might be puzzling. What many may not realize is that just the conscience effort of carrying a concealed handgun is the essence of tactical advantage.

Most of you do not have the time or money to attend a formal tactical training or combat course where the implementation of tactical training and tactical advantage are taught. I highly recommend formal training because you will learn and practice basic tactics which can keep you alive if you ever face a combat confrontation. But even if you cannot, or will not attend formal training, the exposure to the meaning of “tactical advantage” and how you can implement it in your every day life will go a long way in helping you prevail, God-forbid, if you ever are faced with having to use your handgun to defend your life.

Tactical advantage gets its definition from the root of the phrase: tactic. A tactic is a predetermined, practiced response to a specific threat or threatening condition. An advantage is any condition or situation that gives you the upper hand or allows you to prevail. Prevail means you ultimately survive, even if you are shot, maimed or confined to a wheel chair. So let’s go back to that sunny day in Sodona and find out exactly what Karen meant by “No tactical advantage there!” But let’s change the situation and make up a scenario to illustrate tactical advantage.

TACTICAL ADVANTAGE #1: KEEP YOUR FIREARM CONCEALED.

It’s 9:25PM and you’re last in line at the ice cream shop. Unknown to you, two perps have been watching the clerk make the evenings deposit for the last 3 days. The perps think it is too risky trying to rob the clerk while he is dropping the deposit bag in the bank’s night depository so they decide a quick armed robbery at closing time is in order. You’ve lived in Arizona all your life and are quite aware of the law which allows open carry and you even think it’s macho and a good idea. Who would ever give trouble to a person who carries an open hand gun on their side? Well, you are about to find out. The robbers burst in the front door and what do they see immediately? A scared teenager dipping ice cream AND an obstacle to their intended quick robbery: You, with your 1911 strapped to your side. Since they perceive you will draw your handgun they fire first and you drop to the floor without even having drawn your weapon. Is it fair, No! Is it real, Yes! What you did that was wrong is you gave up your tactical advantage by displaying your sidearm.

The greatest tactical advantage you can possess is surprise. You lose that advantage when you un-conceal your firearm by wearing it openly or by un-concealing it by bragging. Would the scenario be different if your handgun was concealed? Probably so, although you might be missing your wallet and a little pride, but the advantage you gained is that you survived!

TACTICAL ADVANTAGE #2: PROXIMITY NEGATES SKILL, GET AWAY.

Tactical training involves the discovery and use of options. The more options you can muster and present, the better chance you have to survive. For example, one of the basic tactics (option) when confronted is to move quickly away from the attacker. Moving away from an attacker allows time and distance to become your friend, not your enemy. If I placed a blindfold over your eyes and put you in front of a target which was 3 feet in front of you, do you think you could hit it? I would place \$20 on the ground and say you could! So what! You say, anyone could do that! Right you are, anyone could do that, even a perp standing 3 feet in front of you with his gun pointed at you. Proximity negates skill; this means the closer a perp is to you the less weapons skill is required by the perp to injure or kill you. But, could that same perp shoot a target that was moving fast away from him, or even better, moving fast away at a diagonal angle? The facts are that perps are usually very poor shots and they don't practice like you do. The more distance you put between yourself and the perp, the better your chances of survival. When I say fast I mean an explosion of speed not a gentle walk.

TACTICAL ADVANTAGE #3: YOU CAN'T OUT-DRAW A DRAWN GUN

No one knows if they will ever have to draw their weapon to protect themselves or their loved ones. No one can even tell you when is the right time to draw and when is the right time to shoot. You mulled this around during your CCW class and even asked your Instructor: "When does a threatened person know when it's time to shoot?" Your Instructor probably gave the same answer as other Instructors all over the country: "You will know when it's time". It was an honest answer and the best answer the Instructor could give without knowing the exact circumstances of the combat confrontation. But here's a better answer and one you can apply to any confrontation whether combat or non-combat: "If it's not worth dying for then it's not worth shooting for". But what do you do when a perp has a gun drawn on you? For starters, you must realize that you cannot out-draw a drawn gun. A drawn knife, maybe, but a drawn gun, no way! If the perp simply wants your wallet now is the time to swallow your pride and anger by complying. But if the perp wants more than money (wants to take you from the area) you may have to decide, and very quickly, whether or not you are willing to take a bullet. You still have options since your handgun is still concealed but please don't ever think you can out-draw a drawn gun. What other options could you be choosing from right now? Would the scenario change if you had a small handgun in your jacket pocket and could you shoot through the jacket? Would yelling at the perp draw attention? Like holding your hands up, slowly backing up and yelling "Don't shoot me man!" Now you are using several tactical advantages (noise, distance) and you still have one option left in your jacket pocket. Just remember, it's a lot easier for me to make up scenarios than it is to experience one in real life. And don't forget to use time to your advantage, that is, respond immediately, don't wait or "dawdle".

TACTICAL ADVANTAGE #4: KEEP YOUR DOORS LOCKED.

Do you lock your doors? Do you think locks are just to keep the honest people out? Believe it or not, there is a tactical advantage to locking your doors. Remember the previous statement: "time and distance"? Well time and distance can be your friend or

can quickly become your enemy. We lose the luxury of time the second someone unwelcome tries to enter our space. So what does a locked door have to do with a tactical advantage since the perp is going to break through the door anyway? Locked doors provide two very important functions, they SLOW the perp down AND that gives you time to REACT. With a couple of seconds to think, you can use that precious time to quickly decide on a course of action: Where is your defense gun, phone, flashlight, the kids! Keep your doors locked in both your house and car and you will be participating in a very simple, but effective, tactical advantage.

TACTICAL ADVANTAGE #5: LISTEN TO YOURSELF

Remember that scary movie? The one where the hair on the back of your neck stood up? That was 2000 years of human response in action. Your body was responding to a threat, or in this case, a scary movie perceived threat, and was telling you to prepare for fight or flight. Problem is, that in this modern time we don't always listen to ourselves or the response of our body. We all have built in auto-mechanisms which respond whenever we are threatened. In cave-man days, it might have been the sight or growl of a sabre toothed tiger. In these modern times, it might be some strange people that shouldn't be there, or a couple of guys hanging around your car at the mall. In any event, if your body is talking to you, if the hair on the back of your neck is standing up, if it just doesn't look right, then don't go there. Avoidance is a tactical advantage but only if you allow that little voice inside you to be heard. Remember, the voice will always speak, it's your job to listen and believe.

TACTICAL ADVANTAGE #6: UNDERSTAND COMBAT STRESS

A human body facing death or injury initiates certain protective mechanisms to help ensure survival. These protective mechanisms are often referred to as combat stress, although many who have experienced combat stress refer to it as disturbing. If you understand what combat stress is, and what it does to your body, you will have an easier time recovering from it and hopefully this understanding will keep you from "freaking". When your gun is drawn, your sights are on center-mass of another human being, and you are taking the slack out of the trigger, your body reverts to its self-preservation mode and combat stress sets-in. You will get an immediate dump of adrenalin in your body's attempt to make you stronger and faster. Also, a phenomenon called "tunnel vision" takes over and reduces your peripheral vision similar to looking through a paper towel holder - this makes you totally focus on the threat. Your hearing also becomes focused on the threat, just like your vision, and you will hear every single sound coming from the direction of the perp. Police involved in shoot-outs have reported actually hearing each and every empty brass hitting the pavement during the gunfight.

But here is the problem. The same adrenalin dump that helped make you stronger and faster is still rushing through your body after the confrontation. With nowhere to go and nothing to do the adrenalin commences to make you shake - violently. You may think you are having some kind of spastic heart attack. Chances are you will respond by crying. Try to remember, if possible given the conditions, that it's the adrenalin dump that is making you shake and it will subside quickly.

During combat stress you will lose the ability to perform fine motor skills. This is why you are taught the Weaver Stance and full-combat grip in tactical schools. This stance and grip uses major muscle groups to hold and fire the handgun and these major muscle groups are the only one's most people will be able to call into action when under combat stress. If you do not know how to shoot using the Weaver Stance and full-combat grip

then seek instruction so you will have the tactical advantage of being prepared for combat stress.

TACTICAL ADVANTAGE #7: CLEAR YOUR SPACE

Some tactical advantages are less subtle and involve the use of psychology. Perps have a jaded view of the success of their evil endeavors. They think a crime is successful when they end up with your money in their pockets. They also think a crime is successful if they get away scott-free, even if they don't get any of your money. Many crimes in the U.S. are halted just by the presentation of a handgun by the victim. I'm talking about de-escalating a combat confrontation by presentation of a firearm and letting the criminal leave if that is possible. Your world can turn 180 degrees if you try to be macho or play policeman and try to apprehend the perp. Remember, all the while you are holding the perp they are think of ways to get away, and now that you've shown you are a true adversary they are also thinking of ways to hurt you. Since you haven't shot him up to this point the perp may even be thinking that you don't have the guts to shoot him. The real consideration should be: "Are you safer with no perp in the picture?" At what point can you say: "I survived!" I would say when the perp drops his knife and is out of your sight. Get the perp out of your space as quickly as possible and let the police find him later. Clear your space and leave.

FINALE

Learn tactics and tactical advantage by attending a tactical handgun class. The entire purpose of tactical training is to ensure that you survive a combat confrontation. Tactics are not tricks, they are strategies learned from numerous gunfights and numerous deaths of both good people and criminals. Tactics predict response of the perpetrator to basic maneuvers and include strategies for attack, defense and retreat. Tactics allow you to fight with your brain, not just your handgun because a gunfight is 80% mental and 20% handgun. Tactics are about surviving, not being fair; about hitting hard and hitting fast; about fighting with extreme prejudice just to survive, and about being able to stand up after it's all over. After tactical training you will change the way you think and act about your safety. Ask a person who has never attended a tactical training class the following question: "What is the purpose of carrying a firearm?", and the answer will most likely be "to protect myself". Ask a person who has attended a tactical training class the same question and the answer will most likely be, "The purpose of carrying a firearm is to provide you with the means to control your immediate surroundings". Both answers are correct, but the second answer includes tactical information: A plan, a purpose and a resolve.

Keep this in mind until you get a chance to attend a formal tactical training class: "I AM the weapon, my pistol is just a tool!" This statement is the essence of formal tactical training and it emphasizes the importance of using you brain in a combat confrontation. For those of you who might be looking for a good tactical handgun course may I suggest Front Sight Training Facility in Parumph, Nevada (45 minutes West of Las Vegas) or at www.fronsight.com. Of all the tactical schools I have attended, Front Sight is the most family friendly and has the most professional Instructors. Many tactical training facilities can be found on the internet by searching for gun training, handgun training or tactical training. Another good source for tactical training facilities is at www.packing.org, www.firearmstraining.com, and www.shootguns.info/other.htm#Training.