

Self Defence - (Course Notes)

Notes from various sources regarding self defence

These notes were used at a Zen Judo Martial Arts course around 2003 to support a session on Self Defence by Sensei Stuart Edwards. Stuart holds Black Belts in a number of martial arts, including Judo, Ju-jitsu and Wadoryu Karate. Stuart has experience of night club security work and has now joined the Police. These notes have been taken from a number of sources and remain copyright of the original authors. (webmaster)

Adrenaline

Whenever we sense danger or confrontation be it real or imaginary our adrenal glands situated on the kidneys release a mixture of chemicals commonly known as adrenaline. Adrenaline sometimes referred to as the flight or fight drug feels very uncomfortable indeed but these feelings by themselves cannot hurt you in the short term. Without over simplifying, Adrenaline can be experienced in two main forms, Anticipated and Unexpected. If we expect something unpleasant is going to happen our body will release adrenaline in order to prepare us for confrontation the more unpleasant the experience the more adrenaline is released. When something unpleasant happens that we don't expect adrenaline is dumped into the bloodstream in one go so that we enter a type of "overdrive state". Unfortunately, our nervous system doesn't seem to differentiate between the anticipated physical and non-physical events so we end up with the following:

Situation:

Mad axe man running towards you shouting "Kill! Kill! Kill!"

Body's Response:

Release Adrenaline

Marks:

10 out of 10 for body response

Situation:

Get up and make a speech

Body's Response:

Release Adrenaline

Marks:

Big Fat Zero

The release of adrenaline draws blood into the major muscle groups in anticipation of "fight or flight" but a consequence of this is to also draw blood away from the brain, which is fine if you are running from the mad axe man as cognitive thought processes are not exactly number one on the priority list. However, in a non-physical situation such as public speaking this same body response impairs the thought process and recall, making the task much more difficult. Stage fright is a physical response to a non-physical situation. It is our misinterpretation of our body's natural defence mechanism that confuses adrenaline with fear. In fact, it can easily be argued that there is no such thing as fear.

If we look at the dictionary definition of fear we find fear to be **"A feeling of distress, apprehension, or alarm caused by impending danger, pain, etc."**, we have been brought up to think of fear as something

tangible, as something experienced by weak people when in fact fear is only a description of the symptoms of adrenal release. Fear is such a negative concept because it promotes helplessness and helplessness is the last thing you want to be feeling when experiencing adrenaline because it will make you release even more.

Listed below are just some of the effects you may experience when adrenaline is released. It is more than likely that you will have at some point in your life experienced several of the effects listed here. We are often told that if we have these feelings it is a sign that we are scared and weak when in reality we are becoming faster, stronger, pain resistant and explosive. Have you ever noticed that fear and excitement often display very similar symptoms, or ever wondered why? The answer is simple; they are one and the same! The only difference is our perception of the event, if we perceive a pleasant outcome we feel exited and if we perceive an unpleasant one we feel apprehension. This is why two people doing exactly the same thing can have completely opposite reactions to a situation. Imagine two people about to make a parachute jump for the first time, one may be exited by the prospect and the other scared s***less.

We need to remember two things:

Firstly, our reaction to any situation depends not on the situation itself but purely on our individual perception of it.

Secondly, we can tolerate adrenal response and find our performance enhanced up to a certain point after which we find our ability to function and perform in these conditions greatly reduced.

So ask yourself the following question: If I had a choice, would I prefer to feel scared or ready for action?

Short Term (symptoms)

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_ Butterflies in the stomach or Nausea
Increased heart rate
Sweating
Dry mouth
Shakes
Loss of colour in the skin
Tunnel vision
Fine motor skills become difficult to perform
Your strength and speed increase
Your pain tolerance increases
Cognitive thinking becomes difficult as blood is directed to the major muscle groups
Diarrhoea

Extreme (More likely with Adrenal Dump) (symptoms)

-
_ Paralysis - Being frozen to the spot
Possible loss of bowel and bladder control
Memory distortion (tachypsychia)
Auditory Exclusion (Deafness)
Longer Term
Loss of appetite
Insomnia
Fatigue
Loss of libido
Irritable Bowel Syndrome

General decline in health due to the above symptoms

The key to coping with adrenaline is keeping it within manageable levels. If we experience adrenal release over our personal limit we cannot cope and cease to function properly experiencing symptoms such as being frozen to the spot or talking rapidly and incoherently, in this state we cannot deal effectively with the situation we may be in. So why does it seem that some people cope with adrenaline and others do not?

Everyone feels adrenaline, no exceptions, the only difference is the way we react to it, we control it or it controls us. In order to address this problem we need a way of lessening the negative impact of adrenaline on our ability to handle high stress situations and the key word is **DESENSITISATION**.

As you can see from the small list of effects, if we allow ourselves to be at the mercy of our adrenal glands then this alone will cause us long-term health problems.

In much the same way as raising the heart rate through regular exercise will produce a lower overall rate, exposure to higher than normal levels of adrenaline on a regular basis will produce a lower day-to-day level. This happens because once we overcome a stimuli of adrenal release e.g. a phobia of spiders, then it disappears you either have a phobia of spiders or you don't! Only through exposure to causes of adrenaline on a regular basis can we become desensitised to its effects and therefore reduce overall levels. This can be done in a number of ways but in our opinion the best and most practical method is The Fear Pyramid. Devised by **Geoff Thompson (British Combat Association)** the Fear Pyramid systematically exposes us to gradually more powerful sources of adrenaline.

Of course, this cannot be achieved overnight; it is a process that will take many years. The benefits of persevering with this method are incalculable but this is not the end of the story. In order to react effectively in a high stress situation it is necessary to train with adrenaline, in other words, train with reality.

Only by testing your techniques under extreme conditions will you truly have confidence in them. It's fine sparring with someone you know and feel at ease with trying out fancy moves but put someone in front of you who will shout, swear and yell abuse, will try and knock you out, will try to choke you out, will kick you when you are down, will bite, scratch and gouge and the emphasis changes from point scoring to survival. This example is, of course, at the higher end of the syllabus but reality is the theme throughout, steadily building in intensity and ferocity. You simply cannot afford to use techniques in a real situation that you do not have 110% confidence in and the only way to achieve this is to pressure test.

Unfortunately, there is not enough space here to do justice to this subject but if you would like to find out more about adrenaline I can personally recommend a couple of Geoff's books "[Fear: The Friend of Exceptional People](#)" and "[Animal Day](#)".

Body Language

Communication consists of body language, voice tonality and words. This in itself may not seem remarkable but when you realise that body language accounts for 55%, voice tonality 38% and words only 7% of communication you may begin to understand what a vital role body language has in self protection. Most opportunistic assailants will have already decided who their victim is before any words are exchanged so it follows that a person's body language is a major factor when an assailant is looking for a victim.

In interviews Geoff Thompson (British Combat Association) conducted with muggers, rapists, etc., the general consensus was that the victims had 'asked for it'. In one case the attacker had walked past the victim

no less than 4 times! It was obvious to the mugger that this individual was not aware of their surroundings and therefore would be easy to approach. With little or no warning a victim will almost certainly experience Adrenal Dump (see Adrenaline) with the likely outcome being paralysis through fear, in other words, they will be at a loss to take in what is happening let alone put up a fight.

We make decisions and assumptions about others by their body language and they do the same to us although we often do not realise why or even how. This often takes the form of feeling an instant like or dislike of someone for example. Just as common is the inability to quantify these feelings.

"There's something about him I don't trust. I don't know what it is but I just don't trust him". Sound familiar?

It is important to recognise the way in which we communicate to ourselves with feelings because they are vitally important when it comes to reading a situation and if we can learn to trust these "feelings" or instincts they will give us an edge.

When someone gets too close to us we feel uncomfortable, they are "in our space". Again, unconsciously we all know to respect the space of others and avoid getting too close. In a crowded train when we are forced to be in very close proximity to others, sometimes even touching, we display our unease by standing rigidly a clear signal that says "I know I'm in your space but I don't want to be here, I feel uncomfortable with this and I'm not a threat". This situation is very common so next time you are on a train or bus and you find that it is crowded try to notice the change in the body language of others and of course, yourself.

If we now apply this situation to the street we find the rules have changed slightly. You never see people as close to each other as they would be on a train or bus, unless of course, they were intimate. The area which we call our "space" expands and contracts according to the situation, less than a foot on the train, four to five feet in the street, twenty or more in an empty street at night etc.

For self-protection purposes we need to understand if an invasion of your space is a threat or not and for this I will give you two examples.

Example 1:

You are walking along a street and you are approached by a man who walks right up in front of you, smiles and asks for the time of day.

So what's wrong with that? It seems quite innocent until you look a little deeper. This person has quite literally blocked your path, he may be smiling but his actions are totally aggressive. He is in your face and in your space, you cannot move forward and because of his proximity he is taking up most of your field of vision leaving you open to a blind side attack if he is not alone.

Do I sound a little paranoid? Let me explain. Ask yourself this "How would I approach someone if I wanted to ask the time?". I cannot speak for you but if it were me I would probably lean into their field of vision to get their attention (not block their path), smile and say "Excuse me, do you have the time please?" and I would probably lean into their field of vision at a distance of four to five feet. I must point out that this is not a strategy I devised for asking the time I just paid attention to my body language and noticed my behaviour, something we can all do.

Can you now see the difference between the first and second approach, how the first is a threat disguised behind a smile and the second is normal innocent behaviour?

Other clues to help you:

The Eyes:

Is the person looking at you or are they looking to see if the coast is clear (i.e. Witnesses)?

Breathing:

Is the person breathing heavily or quickly? (Possible sign of adrenal release)

Voice:

Does the person's voice quaver? (Possible sign of adrenal release)

Skin Colour:

Does the person's skin appear abnormally pale? (Once again, Possible sign of adrenal release or

drug abuse making them less susceptible to pain or reasoning)

Asking someone for the time of day or asking for directions should not give anyone cause to experience adrenal dump (see Adrenaline). This is a major sign that the person is possibly hyped up prior to an attack.

Paying attention to body language allows us to build a picture of the intentions of the individual. One sign alone does not confirm our assessment but when three or four point to a possible threat we had better pay attention, and quickly. If someone intends to rob or attack you they will experience adrenal release, look for the signs but bear in mind that an experienced person may be able to disguise them so focus on body language and proximity.

Example 2: (This is more applicable for women)

You are on a crowded train or bus and you notice that a man touching you with his body but it seems innocent.

I know a lot of women who have been in this situation and they have reacted in many ways but one of the constant features was that initially, they did not want to make a scene because they were not sure whether or not the contact was intentional. I must underline that none of these women are martial artists or contacts through training circles, I want to point out that these are people I have met socially or at work to underline how common this type of incident is. Some of these women later found they had been sexually assaulted and no, I won't go into details.

Many people find it hard to believe that you can be sexually assaulted in a crowded train or bus in the middle of the rush hour but although it is not an epidemic it occurs regularly enough to be highlighted here. Don't forget that most incidents will not go this far and sexual gratification does not necessarily involve groping someone, this could mean rubbing your leg with theirs, standing next to you when you are sitting with their crotch close to your face or (as a woman friend of mine noticed) placing their hand on one of the poles on the train so that when the train moves your breast touches their hand! The possibilities are endless.

Another common feature was that the women were (at the time) not confident people. In other words they didn't look like the type to turn around on a crowded train and shout "F*** off you pervert!".

So how can you tell if the contact is more than innocent? As stated above you need to be aware of body language and when we get too close to someone we show outward signs of discomfort by changing our posture. In most of these cases the person who was too close did not display these signs which means they did not feel uncomfortable in the situation this is all the more prominent when everyone else is displaying discomfort.

You cannot though rely on body language alone as the person might just be unaware or inept at social graces but there are ways of finding out. Most men would be horrified with the thought that other people thought they were acting in such a way as to appear "creepy" and when aware that a woman is uncomfortable in their presence will often apologise (whether guilty or not) and make sure they keep their distance. This can be used to gauge a situation by checking their reactions.

Here are some suggestions.

Make sure the person knows you are there:

You can do this by coughing or making seemingly accidental contact. If we are already in contact for any period of time we soon become unaware of it so movement will draw attention.

If the person is behind you:

Try and move away, if they persist and move with you "accidentally" step back onto their foot with the heel of one of your shoes making sure you use all your body weight. Immediately turn and face the person and apologise sincerely for your mistake ensuring plenty of eye contact and then keep facing that way.

If you are sitting down with the man facing you:

In this situation make sure you use your legs as a barrier. The person is going to look away as if they are unaware of the proximity, if you want to take action you can get up and move to another carriage or part of the train or bus but as you do so firmly but "accidentally" catch their groin

with your elbow or handbag and immediately apologise profusely.

If you are sure it is deliberate:

Often this is difficult but you must be strong and say something. Either step away or if necessary push him back and shout out something like "How dare you!" or "Get your hands off me". This is guaranteed to grab the attention of those around you although you cannot rely on anyone else to intervene. Remember that the only knowledge of the incident other people on the train will have will be from what you shout so a simple "F*** off" might imply familiarity with the person and many people do not like to get involved. Obviously your first course of action should be to seek assistance but this is not always possible, if you need help ask for it.

I remember a situation whilst shopping with my wife in Oxford Street when a young woman pushed a grey haired man through doors of the shop we were in and repeatedly slammed him against them. She was shouting "How dare you touch me! Who do you think you are?" as she did this I was thinking "What's going on?" and then "Good luck to you". Several slams and a few choice words later, she turned around and shouted to everyone "Are you just going to stand there? Can someone help me?". After that I went over and stayed with the man until the police arrived. When I spoke to the woman it turned out that the man had groped her on a bus, she lost her temper, dragged him off and forced him into the shop. After the initial adrenaline rush had expired she was exhausted and upset that no one had helped her! I can't speak for anyone else but from where I was standing it looked as if she was doing just fine.

Now here is my point, it "looked" as if she was doing just fine. Unless you let people know exactly what you want they will judge a situation the way they see it. It took this girl all her strength and courage to tackle this man but when the reserves were empty she needed help, if she hadn't asked for help she might not have got it. Remember that!

Awareness and body language are inter-related. Your body language will broadcast for all to see your current state of awareness and it is extremely obvious to anyone looking for the signs. Being aware will alter your body language and being aware will also give you time to assess the situation. This in turn will again alter your body language letting everyone who is looking know that you are aware. In other words, a mugger who may see you as a victim will realise that you are aware and find you less easy to approach. Without surprise on their side the prospect of resistance is vastly increased and this will hopefully force the mugger to look elsewhere.

Unfortunately muggers and their ilk don't wear labels so any approaching individual unknown to you is a potential assailant. This may sound a little bleak but it's just the way it is. Being aware is not paranoia but subconsciously scanning your surroundings and when you have mastered it (which doesn't take long) you won't even realise you are doing it.

Assault Not Imminent But Possible:

- Head, neck, shoulders go back (person making themselves look bigger)
- Face is red, twitching, jerking
- Lips pushed forward bearing teeth (you see the same things in dogs before attack)
- Breathing is fast and shallow (oxygenating the body preparing for fight, flight, hyper vigilance)
- Beads of sweat appear about the face/neck
- Thousand mile glare
- Exaggerated movements
- Finger pointing/ head pecking

- Totally ignores you
- Gives you excessive attention during normal conversation such as direct uninterrupted eye contact
- Goes from totally un-cooperative to totally cooperative (people do not go from hot to cold they de-escalate over time)
- Acts stoned or drunk
- Directs anger towards other inanimate items such as tables, chairs, walls

If you find yourself confronted by a subject presenting these signs, awareness/self protection strategies should go up, and distance should be created. Your body language should be assertive but not threatening and don't be afraid to allow the person to vent verbally.

Assault Is Imminent:

- face goes from red to white (during a physical confrontation the blood will leave the surface of the body and pool to the big muscles and internal organs of the body needed for survival) In my job as a police officer I see this all the time and when I do one of two things are going to happen, the suspect is either going to fight or run
- Lips tighten over teeth
- Breathing is fast and deep
- Change of stance, their body blades and shoulder drops
- Hands closed into a fist (not uncommon to see the whites of knuckles due to hands being so tight)
- Bobbing up and down or rocking back and forth on feet (this is the bodies way to hide/ mask the initial movement of a first strike)
- Target glare (here you will see your opponent look to where he is going to hit, or where he is going to run/escape)
- Putting head and shin down (body wants to protect the airway, this action does so to a degree)
- Eye brows brought forward into a frown (again the body wants to naturally protect the visual system, this action does so to a degree)
- Stops all movements/ freezes in place
- Dropping centre or lowering of body (no different to that of a cat or dog getting ready to pounce)
- Shedding cloths (very common, you will see your attacker take his hat, coat, shirt, or bag off just prior to the assault)
- One syllable replies (go from full sentences to one syllable replies..... reptilian brain is clicking in)

In this group of signs, you have about 1-1.5 seconds to act before your attacker either attacks or runs. If walking and talking your way out is inappropriate or unreasonable, then I teach "First Strike" philosophy, and continue on with a compound attack until your attacker is no longer a risk.

In both the Assault not Imminent and Assault Imminent phases, I do teach my students (in some situations) to bring to the attention of the attacker what they are seeing why:

- 1) The attacker may not know what they are doing. A lot of these signs are autonomic in nature, meaning they happen without conscious thought.
- 2) The bigger reason, I believe, is for this purpose; most attackers will only attack you when they believe that they have the element of surprise. By sharing with them what you see, you take this primary tactic away from them.

IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN YOU SHOULD NOT LET THE PERSON KNOW WHAT YOU ARE SEEING, THUS USING THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE TO YOUR ADVANTAGE!!!!!!!!!!!!

REDUCING RISKS

There are many simple ways for reducing risks whilst 'out and about'

- : Choose your route home. Remember, well-lit streets & main roads are safest.**
- : Must you be alone. Try & arrange for someone to accompany you.**
- : When walking, face on-coming traffic.**
- : Do not take short cuts through dimly lit areas.**
- : Don't ever hitch hike. If you've missed the last bus or train, get a taxi. It is worth the extra expense.**
- : Appearance is important. Keep expensive jewellery covered.**
- : Walk confidently with your head up. Walking with your head down says to an attacker, 'victim'.**
- : Do not walk close to hedges or dark doorways.**
- : When shopping, don't put your purse in a visible place.**
- : Have your car or house keys in your hand before you reach the front door.**
- : Avoid top decks of buses & empty train carriages.**
- : If you have a hand held alarm, keep it in an easily accessible place.**
- : Carry your bag close to you with the clasp facing inwards.**
- : If you run/jog, alter your route & time.**
- : If you think you are being followed, cross & recross the road a number of times and observe the possible pursuer.**
- : If raped, do not shower or bath, even though you will feel like it. This will destroy valuable forensic evidence.**
- : If your attacker goes off in a car, try and memorise as much info about the car as you can (make, model, etc).**
- : Never put your name on your keys.**
- : Never shout 'rape'. Shout 'fire' instead.**

: Always try & avoid trouble & run away. Better a bruised ego than a damaged body. If you have no other choice & have to fight back, you must hurt him enough to stop him.

: If you go out into town, don't get too drunk.

: If attacked, with a knife, accept that you will get cut.

: Avoid clubs/pubs that are know to be rough.

: If you sense trouble (in a pub) & getting away may be a problem, inform the door staff.

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