

The Defensive Mindset

Part 6 in a multiple part series on the Safe and Proper use of your defensive tool

By Klint Macro

FOAC News Letter

The cornerstone of all firearms training, no matter the context is safety. All Americans who exercise their 2A Rights must also exercise them responsibly; this requires an understanding of safe gun handling, responsible storage, choosing the most efficient equipment, and making smart choices and being aware of the people and things in your environment.

A responsibly armed American is aware of all the potential dangers in the world; that is why they choose to arm themselves and carry the gun, but not all Americans recognize when danger is near them. Educated Americans understand that the best way to defend against physical danger is to avoid it all together. But we must also accept that we need to protect ourselves from the legal, financial, and moral damages that we are very likely to encounter if we need to use our tools of self-defense in a dynamic critical incident.

Many Americans make very poor choices about where we go, when we go, who we go with and what we do while we are there. A wise man once said, "Don't go stupid places, with stupid folks, at stupid times of day".

In one of my classes a woman once asked me, "What do I do if someone attacks me at Sheetz at 4am in the morning?" I replied, "If you never go to Sheetz at 4am you will never get attacked at Sheetz at 4am in the morning." I felt that this was reasonably sound advice.

The "gun" is not a magic trinket that scares away evil. Just by having it on you doesn't mean that you are automatically safe. We cannot discount that EVERYDAY 1000's of Americans produce a firearm and the will to use it against a would-be attacker, and that bad guy often chooses to rethink his evil plan. However, just because we carry a firearm does not mean we should tempt fate and go places or do things that we wouldn't do if we were unarmed.

It is important to understand that in some jurisdictions we could be charged with a higher degree of crime by being armed. If you and I had a heated argument in public we could be charged with disturbing the peace, however if we had guns on our person we could be charged with terroristic threats or worse, even if the guns were not introduced into the situation. Right, wrong or otherwise, gun owners are often held to a higher standard legally. This is part of that potential legal damage I referenced before. Taking the "I'd rather be judged by 12 than carried by 6" mantra dismisses the fact that if we pay attention and make smart choices, we may be able to avoid both.

Action is faster than Reaction.

If we spend our day, immersed in technology, buried in a book, blasting our ears with earbuds, not looking around as we move through the public, we rob ourselves of the opportunity to collect and process information. We want to give ourselves the gift of CHOICE. I have written about situational awareness before, [check out this article on Personal Defense Network](#).

If I am playing catch with my son in the yard and he throws a ball, I see it coming, I calculate the speed and distance and then I place my mitt in the right spot and "Whammo" the ball lands right in

the mitt. This is RESPONSE, physical action based upon cognitive process, decision making and choice. On the other hand, if I am on the porch burning hotdogs on the grill and I see a white flash in my periphery as my son throws the ball at my head, I will likely (without choosing to do so) lower my center of gravity, orient towards the stimulus, put my hands protectively in the line of the stimulus and protect my head. This is REACTION, physical reaction without cognitive process.

Under normal circumstances, we take in stimulus via sight, sound, hearing, touch, and our brain decides, calculates, chooses, and then we initiate a deliberate physical action. Under surprise, or ambush, the brain takes in stimulus (loud noises, flashes of light, sudden movement, unexpected objects in our path) and trips the "Fight or Flight" mechanism. This is put into motion by the part of the brain called the Amygdala and the "thinky-thinky" part of the brain is bypassed and the motor cortex (the part of the brain that makes you move) jumps into gear. There are external and internal reactions that are likely to take hold. The way we see, hear, perceive time, and remember are very likely greatly skewed under stress.

The only possible way, outside of luck or divine providence, that we are to avoid REACTION, is if we collect and process information, and make smart choices. Then we MAY have other options than go straight to our tool of self-defense.

People get ambushed all the time. The fact that someone gets ambushed does not mean they can't or shouldn't defend themselves. However, criminals look for people who are not paying attention. Just by looking around, making eye contact, keeping your head up, you will look less "attractive" to that criminal, and they will likely pick on someone else.

A friend of mine has season tickets for the Pens. As you can imagine these tickets are not cheap. In an effort to "stick it to the man" he has a secret parking spot behind a dumpster in the Hill where he can park for free. I quote another wise man, "Just because you can, don't mean you should". One night after a game he marched up the hill to his car and found broken glass and items missing from the vehicle. It was at this point that he realized that it might have been smarter to park in the well-lit parking garage. After all, the cost of parking would have been much less trouble than dealing with his vandalized car. Also, had he been assaulted in that alleyway would the \$20 bucks he would have saved been worth being attacked, having to physically defend himself from an attack, dealing with police, getting a lawyer, and possibly getting charged and maybe jailed?

Keep in mind that even if you do everything right "legally" you still might get charged and maybe go to jail. This IS a possibility because what is deemed reasonable in town "A" may not be reasonable in town "B", also we must not lose sight of the fact that although it shouldn't be a factor, politics plays.

The best way I can describe the legal aftermath in a self-defense shooting is like this; Imagine you are in a straight jacket ratchet strapped into the front car of a roller coaster. Once you are in that position there is NOTHING YOU CAN DO. You can only ride it out. You are at the behest of the system. I hope you have a good lawyer(s) and money to pay them. Knowing this, consider these 2 rules:

1. If there is ANY WAY POSSIBLE to avoid conflict, confrontation, or dangerous situations... do so.

2. If you are left with no other choice other than using righteous violence to defend yourself or your family from an attack that you did not instigate and could not get away from; and you can clearly articulate why it was reasonable and necessary (through your lawyer) be ready to deal with the consequences.

An educated American is less likely to use a gun to defend themselves because they understand the great responsibility we take on when we arm ourselves. They understand ALL of the damages they could encounter if they use deadly force. An educated American is more likely to be able to articulate (through their lawyer) that IF they did use deadly force to defend themselves or their loved ones that it WAS reasonable and necessary.

The [USCCA](#) Concealed Carry and Home Defense curriculum does an EXCELLENT job at explaining that a personal and home defense plan should keep you physically safe, by hopefully avoiding violence all together, but also keep you legally, financially, and morally safe as well. [Check out the USCCA website to find a USCCA instructor in the area.](#)

Keep your eyes open, collect and process information, make smart choices, and you will have a much better chance of avoiding conflict. Learn and train in a way that embraces what the body does naturally under stress so that if you are caught off guard in an ambush situation perhaps you will be more efficient in stopping the attacker.

Lastly, as I wrap up this installment, I remind you of “The Big Picture Rule”. Every time you take a gun from or put it back into a holster consider this:

Recognize that YOU are in control of a firearm, if YOU use this firearm carelessly, ignorantly, or with malice, YOU have the potential to harm or kill yourself or someone else.

Act accordingly. Don't just be an armed American, be a responsibly armed American!

Stay armed, alert, safe, and be well regulated!