

MANAGING UNCERTAINTY TWO: FIVE MORE SIMPLE SOLUTIONS



“Nothing’s ever for sure. That’s the only thing I’m sure of ”

— Akiva Goldsman, *A Beautiful Mind*

In my previous column, I addressed five simple solutions for coping with personal defense uncertainty and mastering your fears of the future. These included: accepting uncertainty as part of life; learning to think tactically; staying present and aware; managing your negative moods; and improving your tolerance for frustration. A more detailed exposition of these concepts (but less personal defense oriented) is available in our book, *Coping With Uncertainty: 10 Simple Solutions* (B.N. Eimer and M.S. Torem, 2002). In this column, I am going to address five more simple solutions to the problem.

1. Carry a gun:

I’ve said this before and I’ll say it again now. Let’s face it. When we leave the house in the morning, (even before we leave the house) we don’t know for sure what is going to happen to us. The world is both predictable and unpredictable. Chances are, in your home, when you leave your home, at the mall, in school, and so on, that nothing hair-raising is going to happen. However, tell that

to the survivors of the Luby’s Cafeteria massacre in Killeen, Texas, or to the survivors of the Columbine High School tragedy! There is that slim chance that something will happen. Remember the old adage: “It’s better to have a gun and not need it, then to need it and not have it.”

Say you’re just taking a ride to the convenience store (a.k.a., “stop-and-rob”). It’s too inconvenient to pack your piece? Well, think again.

I recently trained a beginning female student who never shot a handgun before. She was receiving threats from a local gang who wanted a piece of her successful neighborhood business. She decided to buy a handgun and to get her license to carry. She purchased a Ruger SP-101 .357 magnum snubby revolver and called me for lessons.

After one two hour session, that gun became her constant companion and best friend. After a second lesson, she became a natural at shooting that gun. She became as they say, “one with her gun”.

One day she needed that gun. She was cornered in an alleyway by two gang members. They thought she was a helpless female. Think again. This *femme fatale* made them realize that she was not someone to mess with. Thankfully no one was hurt. While she still had to call in a favor to get the gang members off her back, that Ruger probably saved her from an awfully bad time!

2. Release tension regularly:

Find a way to release tension regularly. The build-up of chronic tension and stress is harmful to both mind and body. Going shooting is a great way to release tension and stress. Thomas Jefferson, from age 19 had a tendency to develop prolonged, incapacitating headaches, usually correlated with stress. He was very fond of shooting as a form of exercise and stress release. He stated: “A strong body makes the mind strong. As to the species of exercises, I advise the gun. While this gives moderate exercise to the body, it gives boldness, enterprise and independence to the mind. Games played with the ball and others of that nature, are too violent for the body and stamp no character on the mind. Let your gun therefore be the constant companion of your walks.” Can there be any doubt that this founding father believed in the individual’s right to keep and bear arms?

3. Evaluate your real risks:

To be alive at all involves some risk. However, with that said, in different situations that create anxiety, evaluate your real risks so you can prepare yourself to deal with any eventuality, and thus manage your anxiety and not become paranoid.

You can do much better at controlling your anxiety about the uncertain future, especially in situations that you fear, by accurately evaluating the real risks involved. When you feel afraid, you tend to believe that your worst fears are just around the corner. Most of the time, this is not the case. Most of the time, “fight or flight” is unnecessary. However, in those

rare circumstances when your worst fears are just around the corner, your odds of survival increase greatly when you are prepared with knowledge, the necessary coping skills, the necessary tools to get the job done, and a clear, cool head.

When you worry, you overestimate the threat or risks associated with uncertainty, and you underestimate your resources for handling it. The bigger you perceive the threat to be and the smaller you perceive your resources to be, the more anxiety you tend to have. Anxiety is a signal that there may be danger ahead. It is associated with apprehension, dread, nervousness, fear, and avoidance. Anxiety is adaptive when it notifies us of real or potential harm and then keeps us out of harm's way. However, it is maladaptive when it acts like a false alarm, triggering fear and apprehension when there is no objective danger to be wary of, or threat to fear.

When fear escalates out of control, it can paralyze you and cause you to avoid everything associated with the object of your fear. It then can lead to inaction or rash actions that are usually maladaptive and self-defeating. For these reasons, at his first inaugural address, President

A proven system to keep your handgun concealed. Concealed Carry vests are the answer to the question: "What can I wear to keep my handgun concealed?"

We have 5 styles of Concealed Carry Vests:

- ☆ Holster Vest ☆ Hot Weather Vest
- ☆ Professional Vest
- ☆ Western Vest ☆ Patriot Vest




Holster Vest \$179

www.concealedcarryoutfitters.com ☆ 866-802-4356

Franklin Delano Roosevelt told the world that "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

The lesson to be learned here is that we must learn to manage our fears. We must first acknowledge them, as opposed to denying their existence. Then we must take appropriate action to deal with the source of our fear. Not acting or dawdling is usually self-defeating. Indecision creates more anxiety. We must be decisive and act with courage. We all have inner strength to draw on, but it helps to build this strength up through healthy

mental and physical exercises. For more on the mental aspects of doing this, see our book, *Coping With Uncertainty: 10 Simple Solutions* (B.N. Eimer and M.S. Torem, 2002).

4. Change obsessive thoughts:

Change obsessive thoughts so you don't waste energy worrying. It is quite common to deal with uncertainty about the future by thinking repetitive thoughts and worrying about what possibly could happen to you. Sometimes these

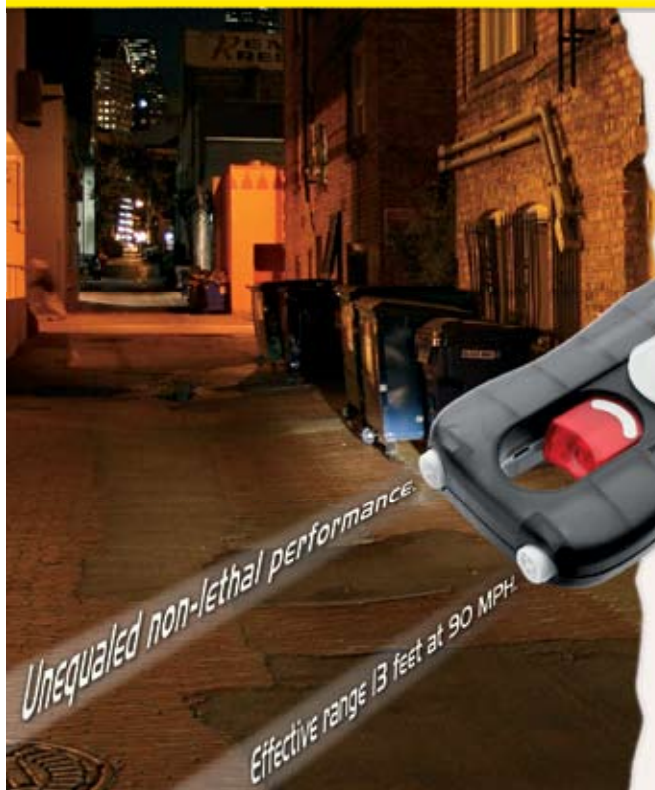
Continued on page 36

LifeAct. Powerful non-lethal self defense tools from Kimber.

STOP THREATS AT A DISTANCE.

STOP THREATS AT A DISTANCE.

STOP THREATS AT A DISTANCE.



The new Guardian Angel® is the most powerful and technologically-advanced non-lethal self defense tool available today. Small, light and ergonomic, it carries easily and clips to belt, jacket, waistband or seat belt. Each unit holds two blasts of liquid agent containing a devastating payload of OC (oleoresin capsicum), the effective ingredient of pepper sprays. A single blast will incapacitate an assailant for up to 45 minutes.

- Instantly incapacitates an assailant.
- More effective than sprays.
- Revolutionary non-aerosol delivery.
- Jet delivery stops cross-contamination.
- Suggested retail is just \$39.95.



For more information on LifeAct™ non-lethal products, please contact Kimber®

Kimber, Dept. 926,
One Lawton Street, Yonkers, NY 10705
phone (800) 880-2418 or visit
www.kimberamerica.com.

May be unlawful to own or possess in some states or jurisdictions. Use for any purpose except lawful self defense may be punishable by imprisonment, fines or both. Avoid use where it may harm children or persons with respiratory disorders. Names of other companies and products may be property of their respective owners. Guardian Angel® protected by U.S. Pat. 6,951,070B2. Copyright 2006, Kimber Mfg., Inc. All rights reserved.

thoughts can take on a life of their own. It is your mind's way of trying to control the underlying anxiety and fear you have of uncertainty. However, sometimes this solution can become the problem when these repetitive thoughts and worries turn into obsessions.

Having obsessions is like paying interest on trouble before it falls due! This is because they not only fail to control the underlying anxiety adequately, they also make us more uncomfortable because we experience them as intrusive and alien to our sense of self. Our failure to stop and control these thoughts feeds uncomfortable feelings of helplessness, incompetence, and vulnerability. As the old Swedish proverb states, "Worry gives a small thing a big shadow."

It is very important to view obsessions not as your enemies but rather as your brain's unsuccessful attempts to control your underlying fear and anxiety about the unknown. Viewing obsessions in this new way allows you to change the way you think about this problem. Instead of fighting the obsessions by telling yourself to "stop obsessing" or "stop thinking this way, this is crazy," you can begin to re-educate your brain to control the underlying anxiety in a new and more functional way. This redefinition of the problem is the key to the solution.

As you repeatedly practice this solution, it will become a habit. You will experience satisfaction as you notice ongoing changes in the nature of your thoughts and how you respond to your thoughts. This process involves the following four steps:

1. The first step is to redefine the problem as a thinking habit that needs to be changed.

2. The second step entails reeducating your brain to believe that repeatedly thinking about the worst possible disaster is dysfunctional, ineffective, and does not solve the problem. In fact, it becomes a problem of its own. Re-educating yourself helps you to recognize that this circular, repetitive way of thinking must be changed into a more functional and effective way of managing your anxiety.

3. The third step involves refocusing your thoughts. Refocusing entails an active shift into thinking, feeling, and doing something different. One of the most successful ways to refocus your thoughts is to change what you are doing at the moment you become aware you are obsessing. For example:

Imagine walking down the street in a seedy section of town and becoming aware of your obsessive thoughts about possible disasters on the street ahead. An effective way to refocus would be to shift your awareness to what is going on around you. Be aware of your 360, watch your back, your front, your sides. Keep moving. Remember the verbal tape loops you have already rehearsed, verbalizing with confidence and conviction should you run into a potential problem. Keep your hand in your pocket on your personal defense weapon, or keep your hands ready to access your personal defense tools wherever you carry them.

This solution shifts your brain's present awareness into a new focus; one associated with a feeling of control, awareness, preparedness and mastery, as well as different, positive images and thoughts. This is one way to change the channel your thoughts are tuned to, or to change the station broadcasting in your brain.

4. The fourth step involves reframing your view of the problem, changing the way you think about it. This is best accomplished when you are in a calm state and in a safe place where you can think about the problem and possible solutions without getting anxious or hot under the collar.

5. Live honestly and consistently and develop healthy self acceptance:

Healthy self acceptance develops from a lifestyle based on consistency and honesty. Do not say one thing and do another. Hypocrisy does not lead to good self esteem! Noted defensive firearms trainer and author John Farnam writes:

"In our Advanced Classes, I often find it necessary to remind students that many pay lip service to the Way of the Warrior, but few actually live it. Heaven knows, we've all fallen short, but professing one personal philosophy, yet living another, smacks of 'Do as I say, not as I do.' No place is this more evident than among 'professing' gunmen. Here is the way a great general put it:

'You profess to have boldly claimed your own magnificence, yet you act as if you were worthless! Where are your weapons? Why do you wear them only when at the range? Why does your professed "plan" include things that you won't have?

You profess to be the proud protector of your family, and that they can all count upon you in an emergency, yet you act as if they were all expendable! Are you really in a position to protect them? How?

You profess great faith, yet you act as if God has abandoned you! Warriors are dashing and daring, animated by unshakable belief and righteous élan. But, you are fearful and confused. Instead of acting boldly, with strength and audaciously, you exhibit only timidity and disarray.'

Again, when we think wrongly, we will act poorly, no matter how thoroughly we've deceived ourselves. Self-esteem, when it has no legitimate foundation, is little more than groundless arrogance. It will fall apart when the first shot is fired."

Summary:

Learn to manage uncertainty and stay safe and secure. Remember to pack your personal defense tools on and around your person every day, and don't forget to be as prepared as you can be for every conceivable emergency.

References:

Bruce N. Eimer, & Moshe S. Torem (2002). *Coping With Uncertainty: 10 Simple Solutions*. Oakland, Ca: New Harbinger Publications.

John S. Farnam. Defense Training International. P.O. Box 917, LaPorte, CO 80535. www.defense-training.com Tel: 970-482-2520.

Bruce N. Eimer, Ph.D. is a licensed clinical and forensic psychologist, NRA Certified Firearms Instructor, Florida and Utah Concealed Firearms Instructor, and a Professional Writer in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As a co-owner of Personal Defense Solutions, LLC, Bruce offers individual shooting instruction and teaches concealed carry and handgun safety classes that prepare people to apply for the Florida Non-Resident Concealed Carry Permit which is honored by 28 states. For more information, he can be reached by phone at 215-938-7283 and by e-mail at:

Dr.Bruce@PersonalDefenseSolutions.net

For a schedule of upcoming classes, you can log on to the PDS website: www.PersonalDefenseSolutions.net

Bruce is also the co-author of the "Essential Guide to Handguns: Firearm Instruction for Personal Defense and Protection."