

**THE COMBATIVE MINDSET: AWARENESS, WILLINGNESS, AND PREPAREDNESS.**



*above: A firearm in trained hands can be a great equalizer. Competent instruction and regular, realistic practice help develop trained hands.*

# PSYCH YOURSELF TO TRAIN

[ BY BRUCE N. EIMER, Ph.D. ]

## 10 TIPS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR TRAINING

**The aging process is a lot kinder to those who work hard to stay in shape physically and mentally.**

**W**hile going to the gym can be relaxing on days when you choose to engage in mild exercise such as walking at a comfortable pace on the treadmill, wading in the pool, or sweating in the steam room, going to the gym to work out is *work*—hence the expression “working out.” If you want to stay in shape, you need to work out. Similarly, if you want to be able to defend yourself, you need to train. But how?

Effective defense training must begin with a proper mindset. The combative or defensive mindset is a triad. The three components are: (1) good awareness of what is going on in your immediate environment and in the world around you; (2) willingness to do whatever needs to

be done to stop an assault on you and the people who are under your protection; (3) preparedness, which includes having the skills to do what needs to be done and the proper equipment to do it. Having these three components in place makes you more ready to deal with dangerous social confrontations.

Concealed carry of defensive weapons is an essential component of this triad. States and jurisdictions that prohibit concealed carry, or worse, handgun ownership for self defense, simply relegate you, the law abiding and tax paying citizen, into the category of prey for opportunistic violent criminal predators. The latter do not believe they fall under the law and its restrictions.

There is training and then there's *Training*. You have to psych yourself to train and to get the most out of your training. Training time is your time to make mistakes, so get over your ego problems. Are you afraid to look bad? Get over it! Are you afraid of being criticized for not being good enough? Just tell your critics to take a hike. Here are ten tips to get the most out of your training:

**1) Hang out with positive like-minded people.** Join a gun club or attend a public shooting range. Make friends with those who own firearms, who like to shoot, and who carry concealed weapons. Some gun clubs have armed senior citizen clubs that meet regularly to shoot, schmooze, and eat. Do not be afraid to ask questions. That's how you learn.

**2) Join organizations that support**



*As you become more fit, you also become more capable of defending yourself. While simple target shooting requires very little physical exertion, learning to use the firearm under a wide variety of potential circumstances takes more work.*

*right: Stress yourself. It's a good thing! Be willing to extend yourself beyond your comfort level so that you can learn. When possible, train under physical and mental stress because that is what a fight is—physical and mental stress.*



**your rights and also educate**, such as the NRA, Gun Owners of America and the United States Concealed Carry Association. Also become an active member of informative online firearm discussion forums such as the USCCA Forum ([www.uscca.us/forum](http://www.uscca.us/forum)), the Defensive Handguns Forum ([www.DefensiveHandguns.com](http://www.DefensiveHandguns.com)), the PA Firearms Owners' Association Forum ([www.PAFOA.org](http://www.PAFOA.org)), and the The High Road ([www.thehighroad.org](http://www.thehighroad.org)).

**3) Swallow your pride.** Most good defensive firearm instructors will be younger than you, especially if you are an old geezer like yours truly. You can

learn a lot from the good ones. Do not be afraid to look weak or stupid. You are not stupid if you are taking classes and training. You may begin weak, but everyone must begin somewhere and you can only begin where you are when you start your training. If you continue to train with determination and dedication, you will make yourself strong and skilled. Recognize that becoming a

good defensive shooter is not just for the young.

**4) Look for a good school.** Ask around. Read *Concealed Carry Magazine*. Actively browse and contribute to the good online defensive firearm discussion forums. There are many gun schools that will travel to you, such as Suarez International, Yavapai Firearms Academy, Defense Training

International, Massad Ayoob Group, and Personal Defense Solutions, to name a few. Choose defensive firearm instructors who have patience and who have worked with people similar to you. It is always a good idea to speak on the telephone with the lead instructor of a school you are considering in order to check out his or her (and the organization's) training philosophy and methodology.

**5) Inquire about the types of people enrolled in the class you are thinking of taking.** If they are too far below you in skill levels, you might find yourself just going over old stuff. On the other hand, if they are too far above you in skill levels, you might not be able to keep up. So, find a happy medium and be prepared to exceed your comfort level. Recognize that while you do need to be somewhat comfortable to learn new material, you should not be too comfortable! Ideally, you need to be willing to extend yourself beyond your comfort level so that you can learn. You also need to be willing to do some of your training under physical and mental stress because that is what

a fight is—physical and mental stress.

**6) Choose good quality, reliable emergency rescue equipment** for both concealed carry and home defense, including firearms, edged weapons, holsters and lock boxes. You can get quality equipment recommendations on the forums mentioned above.

**7) Choose the right equipment with which to attend gun school.** You should train with the equipment you carry (or intend to carry) on the street and with what you are going to rely on for home defense. There is an old saying that friends don't let friends carry mouse guns. So, be your own best friend: carry and train with a substantial handgun. If you carry a handgun on the street that you don't want to train with or practice with at the range because it is too small, or not accurate enough at seven yards (because it's just a "belly gun"), or because it has too much recoil, or too heavy of a trigger or whatever, then you probably need to re-evaluate your choice of carry gun.

**8) Prepare yourself to get the most out of any class.** Before your training

class, practice at the range with the handgun you intend to use in the class. If you are familiar with your equipment, you will be better able to pay full attention to the instructor and observe other students (from whom you can learn what to do and what not to do), instead of having to struggle with operating your handgun and using your gear.

**9) If you are a beginner, find a competent firearms instructor for a personalized session before you go to gun school.** This also applies if the last time you fired a handgun was in the service and it's been a while. If personal instruction is not affordable, at least familiarize yourself with your equipment before the class. If you have not yet purchased a handgun, rent different handguns at your local public range, and ask for basic instruction from the range staff. Good facilities are typically staffed by "gun people" who are eager to help and teach.

**10) Incorporate your firearms training into a manageable defensive lifestyle plan** so you are prepared to handle a defensive emergency. Recognize that

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although you cannot specifically prepare for all conceivable emergencies, you can make reasonable preparations for the most likely ones. That is why it is prudent to own guns, fire extinguishers, trauma kits, and other equipment, and to train to use them in an emergency.

To quote noted firearms instructor and author, John Farnam, "Emergencies don't make appointments, and no one is excluded! When a can of worms suddenly lands in your lap, you're on center-stage, Bud, ready or not!" However, John is also quick to point out that while we should all have plans for what we will do in defensive emergencies, we should not fall in love with our plans. It is important to be flexible, given that parts of our plans will inevitably fail. We should always keep thinking ahead. We should always keep alternatives in mind so that we find a way to win.

Also, train to expect equipment malfunction. Actually, it is a blessing if it happens during training! That way we can learn what works and what does not, and we can train to work around an equipment malfunction if and when

it happens during an emergency. We should always arrange to have spares on hand so that we can work around equipment issues. As John Farnam wisely points out, "No matter how elaborate or well-maintained, all machines have the irritating habit of breaking at inconvenient times!"

Lastly, when you train, train yourself not to relax too soon. In fact, do not relax at all! Practice keeping your head up and in the game. We will perform under stress as we have trained, and our performance will be at the level of our weakest skill. So, psych yourself to train especially hard on those things you are least competent doing, whether that includes drawing and shooting with your non-dominant hand, shooting from unconventional positions, shooting from behind cover, or some other skill that gives you difficulty. Understandably, these are the things that we least like doing. However, practicing these skills will pay off in the end. ★

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Instructor, trains law abiding citizens in the defensive use of firearms. His company, Personal Defense Solutions, also runs the classes required to obtain the Florida, Virginia, and Utah non-resident multi-state CCW permits. To learn more, visit: [www.PersonalDefenseSolutions.net](http://www.PersonalDefenseSolutions.net) and [www.DefensiveHandguns.com](http://www.DefensiveHandguns.com). ]

## CONTACTS

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