

SENIOR CITIZEN DEFENSIVE REALITIES



LFI senior instructor, Steve Denney, demonstrating the handgun flashlight technique.

This time, I am writing about the scope of the problems faced by the armed senior citizen. Actually, I am writing this article for my 83-year-old mother who lives in Florida. She'll only do some of the things that I suggest. Hopefully, I can have more influence on some of you.

The problems stem from our waning abilities as we age, which creep up on us. We must adjust our shooting and training techniques, our choice of carry and home defense guns, and our gear as we get older. The common problems may include: nearsightedness; loss of visual acuity; hearing loss; loss of fine motor dexterity and hand strength; fine motor tremor; stiffness; loss of mobility, range of motion and flexibility; loss of endurance and speed; decreased reaction time; and so on.

PROBLEMS: nearsightedness and loss of visual acuity.

SOLUTIONS: equipment and training techniques.

Wear your prescription glasses when you shoot because if you can't see your target, how are you going to hit it? In addition, wear safety glasses over your prescription lenses to protect your eyes from ejected shells and other flying particles. If you are nearsighted, your shooting will benefit if you wear progressive bifocals. They will enable you to adjust your visual focus and head position to accom-

modate for the distance of the sights from your eyes.

Consider adding high visibility, night sights to your defensive handguns because most lethal force incidents occur in dim light or at night. XS Sight Systems manufactures Big Dot 24/7 Express tritium sights which facilitate fast sight acquisition in all light conditions. The full circle of the Big Dot front sight is easily acquired and superimposed on your point of aim.



Smith and Wesson Model 640, .38 Special revolver with XS Big Dot Tritium front sight.

Consider learning a viable system of point shooting. Most defensive encounters occur in close, within bad breath, range. At the shooting club, practice focusing on your target, choosing a small point of aim, bringing your gun up to the target, and firing. Keep your visual focus on your point of aim. Aim small, miss small. This can work well if you're nearsighted and your "distance glasses" give you a clear picture of the target.

Practice shooting with a less than crystal clear front sight picture when you use your sights. You don't have to see the serrations on your front sight! You can still get good, fast hits by using the alignment of the front post in the rear sight notch as long as your front sight is on your point of aim. This has been variously termed a silhouette sight picture, geometric point index, stress point index, and flash sight picture. The key to success is lots of repetitive practice on the range. You should also do dry practice training with a double- and triple-checked, unloaded gun at home.

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Five cardinal, dry practice safety rules:

1. Check to make sure that your gun is unloaded every time you pick it up.
2. Make sure that there is no ammunition in the room where you are dry practicing .
3. The gun must be pointed in a safe direction at all times.
4. Limit your dry practice sessions to no more than 10 minutes.
5. Never go back to dry practicing after reloading your gun.

LIGHT UP THE NIGHT:

A powerful, portable flashlight is an essential handgun accessory. Surefire makes the best tactical illumination tools on the planet! You should always have one in your pocket and by your bed, and do not forget to carry extra batteries! Surefire makes several models that can also serve as impact weapons. A firm knock on the noggin may work better than a firm, verbal command with "Goofy." In addition to helping you locate and identify threats (as well as your keys), these intensely bright lights can temporarily blind your attacker, giving you a chance to get to safety or take some other appropriate course of action. Surefire lights can be purchased from: Personal Defense Solutions www.personaldefensesolutions.net 215-938-7283



Surefire E2D Defender.

PROBLEM: hearing loss.

SOLUTIONS: equipment and training techniques.

Purchase a good pair of electronic hearing protectors, such as Gentex Wolf Ears. Not only will they dampen the decibels on gunshots at the range and save what precious little hearing you have left, but they will also amplify other essential sounds, such as the sounds of footsteps on the stairs, a door knob turning, the sound of breathing and so forth. I keep my Wolf Ears by my bed. It just makes good sense.

PROBLEM: loss of fine motor dexterity and hand strength, and fine motor tremor.

SOLUTIONS: equipment and training techniques.

Keep your training techniques simple. Learn and practice handgun manipulation techniques that rely less on fine motor dexterity and more on gross motor dexterity.

From the standpoint of handgun choices, carry a gun that you can handle and shoot! A revolver is the easiest to manipulate. You don't have to pull back a heavy and tight slide as on a semi-auto. You just open the cylinder and load or unload 5, 6, 7, or whatever number of cartridges. The trigger is the safety because it requires a long and deliberate pull to discharge. In my humble opinion, Smith and Wesson manufactures the best personal defense revolvers on the planet.

If a semi-auto is your thing, make sure that you can operate the controls. Make sure you can firmly grasp the slide. Make sure you can operate the magazine release button, the slide stop and any manual safeties. Make sure you can charge and unload the magazines, and make sure you can manage the trigger pull. Some semi-autos require more dexterity and strength than you may have to grip and retract the slide all the way. Also, some semi-autos have magazines that are very uncomfortable and difficult to charge and unload. Stay away from semi-autos that have slides with very little surface area on the sides of the slide to grip, as well as those that have slide mounted levers that will bite you.

By way of recommendations, Beretta's .32 caliber Tomcat and .22 caliber Bobcat both have tip-up barrels. You don't even have to retract and cycle the slide to chamber

a round! These are great choices if this is an important consideration. Sig Sauer's Model 232 in .380 is also an excellent concealed carry pistol that is simple to operate and shoot. Similarly, heads up to the L.W. Seecamp .32 caliber pistol, the Beretta Model 84 Cheetah in .380, and the Bersa Thunder .380. Sigs and Glocks in 9mm are great, but not for people who will have difficulty operating the slide.

Of course, fine motor tremor can be a problem. However, you would be surprised at how possible it is to keep your shots within the torso area of a man size target at 7 yards, even while you are shaking the gun considerably, as long as your front sight or the end of your barrel is superimposed on your aim point.

In this regard, adding a laser sighting system to your handgun can be a great idea. Excellent systems are manufactured by LaserMax and Crimson Trace (Laser Grips). They also greatly assist aiming in low light and stress-fire conditions, vastly improving shooting accuracy and speed. An additional benefit is their possible deterrent effect on an attacker once he sees a pulsing dot aimed on his chest. It spells,

Crimson Trace Laser Grips on S&W 642 .38 Special Revolver.



Beretta's .32 Tomcat, .380 Cheetah & SureFire E2D Defender. Boy, do these cats purr!



Gripmaster hand exerciser.

“I got you covered!” A laser sight can also help you practice sight picture and trigger control, as well as reinforce trigger and muzzle discipline in both live and dry fire.

A great way to improve your fine motor strength and dexterity is through the use of a “Gripmaster” hand exerciser, which strengthens and conditions each finger individually, and also increases endurance, dexterity and control in the hand, the wrist and the forearm.

PROBLEMS: stiffness, loss of mobility, range of movement and flexibility.

SOLUTIONS: equipment and training techniques.

Cold Steel makes a classy walking stick/cane called the “City Stick” that might be just what the doctor ordered. It is

Cold Steel “City Stick” cane.



just as at home at the opera as it is on a stroll through the urban jungle. The City Stick fits in at just about any social situation. Its glossy black shaft is made out of eleven layers of fiberglass, and in Cold Steel’s extreme impact tests, it has proven to be virtually unbreakable. For eye appeal (and who knows what else?), it’s topped with a mirror-polished head made of stainless steel that’s highly resistant to rusting and just about begs to be fondled. To keep you from slipping on the mean streets and cracked sidewalks, the City Stick is capped with a thick, rubber ferrule that looks good and gives excellent traction.

If you have difficulty with flexibility and range of motion, a small-of-the-back holster is probably not a good idea! You may want to experiment with appendix or hip bone carry (inside-the-waistband or outside-the-belt) so you can easily access your holstered gun. Pocket holster carry for a pocket gun is also an excellent way to go armed.

PROBLEMS: loss of endurance and speed, and decreased reaction time.

SOLUTIONS: equipment and training techniques.

Build your endurance through supervised weight training and cardiovascular exercise (e.g., brisk walking, bike

riding and swimming). Work out with a personal trainer at a gym if you can. Purchase a shot timer, such as a “Pocket Pro” made by Competition Electronics. Use it at the range to speed up your gun presentation from concealment and your shot-to-shot transitions, while at the same time, improving your shot placement accuracy.

Take some one-on-one instruction with an experienced shooting instructor to improve your shooting skills. Also, take a defensive handgun class. Practice with your carry gun at the range at least twice a month. Aim for quality (not quantity) of rounds fired.

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S&W model 640 in a Don Hume, cowhide, pocket holster and a Seecamp .32 in a Galco, horsehide, pocket holster. Don Hume holsters can be purchased from:

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Smith & Wesson model 640 in a Don Hume inside-the-waist-band, clip-on holster.

PROBLEM: feeling vulnerable.

SOLUTIONS: training techniques and disciplines.

Build your network of personal safety and defense resources. Keep a cell phone with you at all times, and keep it with its charger by your bed when you sleep.

Be cautious, but not timid. Don't walk where angels fear to tread. A gun does not make you invincible. Basically, don't go anywhere with a gun that you would not go without a gun. Carry pepper spray.

Lock the door to your house, apartment or condo as soon as you enter your dwelling. Watch that you are not being followed. Practice awareness drills. Look all around you. Watch your 360, especially your back! Every time someone comes up on you and surprises you, shame on you! Give yourself an "X." Practice noticing others before they notice you. For this, give yourself an "O."

Get to know your neighbors. Be friendly, but not overly so; let people earn your trust. Don't be overly trusting with acquaintances. Don't volunteer unnecessary, personal information about yourself. However, be a good, helpful neighbor. Make friends. Help each other. Keep an extra key with a trusted neighbor or two. Do the same for them. Don't lend out your key to handymen, etc.

In your home, have some sort of quick access lock box or gun safe near your bed. If you live alone, you might want to consider keeping your home defense gun by your bed, but remember, a caliber and size that you can handle! Do not keep it on the night table or in the nightstand dresser! This is the first place an intruder will look. By the

side of the bed, on the floor or in a holster that is mounted to the side of the bed or floor would be much better. But whenever you leave the house, lock it up!

COMMAND VOICE:

Practice issuing commands with authority in front of a mirror to get the gestures and non-verbal behaviors down. Use a tape recorder to record your voice and play the tape back. You'll learn to be convincing faster that way. Also, practice your moves and your draw in front of a mirror regularly (with a triple-checked, empty gun and no ammunition around, or with a dummy gun). Eventually, you'll be convincing to yourself, and if you can convince yourself with your demeanor, you'll surely sound and look convincing to others. The hardest person to convince of our conviction is ourself! If someone is bothering you, tell them in a firm voice, with good eye contact, "Leave me alone! Get away from me. Go away. Do not assault me!" Practice telling strangers who approach you, asking for help, "Sorry Sir [or Ma'am], I can't help you."

MOUSE GUNS:

A so-called "mouse gun" is better than no gun at all. If a small caliber (e.g., .22 or .32) handgun is all you can handle or comfortably carry concealed in your house, then that gun could be the mouse that roared and drove the wolves away. It is probably easiest and most doable for your "house carry gun" to be a small caliber, pocket gun. Your bed-side gun is a different story. Also consider keeping a

quick-access, locked up handgun in a few strategic locations, spread throughout your home. Hope these suggestions are helpful. Stay safe.

SOURCES:

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815-874-8001.

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www.ayooob.com 800-624-9049.

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215-938-7283 (938-SAVE).

Spitfire Pepper Spray.
www.Spitfire.US 800-SPITFIRE.

Surefire.
www.Surefire.com 714-545-9444.

XS Sight Systems.
www.XSSights.com 888-744-4880.

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