



WHY SIGHT SHOOTING FAILS

It is my opinion that teaching Sight Shooting for use in CQ situations, sets up students to be shot and/or killed, because it teaches them a shooting method that is not or cannot be employed in most all life and death close quarters situations, where there is the greatest possibility of their being shot and/or killed.

This thinking is supported by the absence of films or videos showing Sight Shooting being effectively used in real life and death CQ shooting situations during the past seventy plus years, by thousands of police officer descriptions of the shooting method they used in combat (NYPD SOP 9), and by science based literature now available.

Below is information from papers that explains why Sight Shooting fails in real life and death close quarters situations. The papers also discuss training and the means and methods for effectively dealing with CQ life and death situations. They were authored by police, or use statements by well known trainers and police.

The first paper is by Lt. Darin Clay and was presented 11/9/2001 at the Criminal Justice Institute of the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR. The title of the paper is: Understanding the Human Physiological and Mental Response to Critical Incidents.

A portion of the paper deals with the physiological effects that one can expect to experience in a life and death close quarters encounter, and includes references to the work of others, notably Grossman and Siddle.

The loss of the use of fine motor skills, which are necessary to Sight Shooting, is not discussed. It is mentioned, but only as a given. The majority of the discussion is focused on the use of complex motor skills.

(As to the loss of fine motor skills, in a real CQ life and death situation, a minimum heart rate of 145 can be expected. And fine motor skills diminish rapidly when the heart rate exceeds 120 BPM, and are lost to use around 130 BPM, according to Siddle.)

Lt. Clay stated that "We operate most efficiently in critical incidents with a heart rate between 115-145 beats per minute. At this level, we still have use of our complex motor skills, visual reaction and cognitive reaction. The body shuts down fine motor skills, such as the ability to write neatly, because it is not necessary for survival.

At 145 beats per minute, complex motor skills begin to diminish. Between 150-175 beats per minute, we experience loss of near vision, loss of peripheral vision (tunnel vision)..."

Here is a portion of the paper that deals with the ability to use the sights....

"We also lose depth perception and our near vision. During an interview with an unnamed officer at my department, he advised me that he had been involved in three shooting situations. He stated that he never took aim with his weapon, but instinctively pointed and shot, striking his target each time. The traditional method of firearms training was to close your non-dominant eye, and focus on your front sight picture before you shot. This works great in training, but when your heart rate reaches 160 beats per minute, it is impossible to focus on your front sight picture. Also when you experience tunnel vision and one eye is closed, you lose even more peripheral vision.

To counter these effects, our department has adapted our firearms training to correspond with the body's natural instincts. We have instructed officers to shoot with both eyes open and on how to present their weapons so that they will be on target by point shooting alone. This is done by resting the thumb of your off hand under the slide pointed toward the muzzle and the trigger finger of your primary hand under the slide on the other side toward the muzzle. When an officer points these two fingers at an intended target, the front sight will be inline with the target."

Lt. Clay also stated that a "no sight" course was designed by his department to teach shooting without the aid of sights. The students were not to rely on prior training that might stress such things as target acquisition, sight picture. etc.. The course requires shooting from a variety of positions and at close quarter distances:

15 shots at 1 yard,
25 shots at 3 yards,
10 shots at 7 yards.

The paper also mentions the topic of using controlled breathing as a means to control the heart rate...."As mentioned earlier, respiration and heart rate are directly related. In lecture, Grossman stated that officers can prevent their heart rate from climbing by controlling their breathing. Breathing is controlled by the autonomic nervous system. This means that it happens without conscious thought. When we choose to control our breathing, we make it somatic and in effect hold the throttle to the autonomic nervous system. Remsfeld (1986) suggests to "belly breathe". The breathing technique completely fills and flushes out your lungs to expel carbon dioxide waste and replace it with essential oxygen at a certain rhythmic rate.

"The effect is to reverse the alarm response, restore your psychological sense of self-control and return your body to a naturally balanced state" (Remsfeld, 1986, p.30).

This technique consists of taking in a deep breath for four seconds first letting it fill your stomach, the low portions of your lungs and finally your chest. Next, you hold in the breath for four seconds while you try to relax your mind. Then you exhale the breath for four seconds pushing all of it out. These steps are then repeated several times until the heart rate falls. Our swat team practices this technique on the way to an entry to insure that everyone is calm and in control of their facilities.

Short sessions of this technique can even be beneficial. An example of this is when an officer encounters fire and ducks behind cover. While forming a plan, he can use this technique to remain calm and his ability to effectively return fire will increase."

As most gunfights are over in a matter of seconds, the use of controlled breathing technique to reduce the heart rate in them, would be limited.

His statement about using the index finger to aim the gun, fits in nicely with my thoughts on P&S.

With the use of the middle finger to pull the trigger, the strong hand index finger can be used to aim the gun as each shot is taken. It also follows that it makes sense to use a P&S index finger rest to make correct finger placement automatic, and to keep the index finger away from the slide and the ejection port when firing rapidly.

[Here is a link to the article as a PDF file.](#)

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Another paper that addresses this subject is: The Anatomy Of Fear and How It Relates To Survival Skills Training.

The author is Darren Laur (Copyright 2002). He is a Canadian police officer.

His article reinforces the information in the article above, and also adds to it by a discussion of the neuroscientific research of fear, and its relationship to survival skills training?

Basically there are two ways, or pathways, which can be used in dealing with the emotion of fear.

One is where the..., "action can be based on conscious will and thought. This pathway appears to take effect during "progressive" types of fear stimuli. Here a combatives student will be able to apply stimulus/response type training using the OODA model in regards to gross motor skills and Hick's Law.

A second pathway is known as the "low road" which is triggered by a spontaneous/unexpected attack. Here, the brain will take control of the body with an immediate "protective reflex" (downloaded directly to the brain stem where all of our reflexive responses to danger are stored), which will override any system of combat that bases its ability on "cognitively" applying a physical response. This is especially true if the trained response is not congruent with the "protective reflex"....

So what can we as Instructors, coaches, and teacher do to incorporate the most current research in the field of Fear and Survival Skills Training?....

Train on the concept of "commonality of technique." The initial plan "A" strategy that I use in an unexpected spontaneous assault (be it armed or unarmed), is no different than in an attack that I do see coming. Why, because no matter if the rain goes "high road" or "low road", my "congruent" gross motor skills will work in both paths. This is a definite tactical advantage.

Understand that although the "low road" reflexive motor responses cannot be changed, they can be "molded" to fit a combative motor skill technique that are useable during a spontaneous attack. I use the Somatic Reflex Potentiation response, which I call "penetrate and dominate," in all my programs. Tony Blauer uses the flinch response in his SPEAR system. Richard Dimitri also incorporates the flinch in his training at Senshido."

Here is the URL to the paper by Darren Laur: <http://www.lwcbooks.com/articles/anatomy.html>

[Click here for the paper by Darren Laur.](#)

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A third paper that addresses the subject is titled: Improving Deadly Force Decision Making. The author is Lt. Dean T. Olson and it was published in the Feb, 1998 issue of the FBI Law

Enforcement Bulletin.

It supports the information presented in the two papers mentioned above.

It also makes note of past teaching of shooting methods that were based on opinion and guesswork, and which in some cases, is still done.

Mention is made of training...."conducted in the static, nonthreatening, low-stress environment of the gun range, gymnasium, or classroom, using what psychologists call closed motor skill training. Such training exercises are predictable, planned, static, and low-stress.

A common example is traditional firearms qualification on the gun range in which officers fire only on command at identical paper targets that do not return fire. Techniques that look or feel effective in this type of environment often have little or no application in a stressful, dynamic, real-world environment.

The most prominent example involves the transition from the instinctive shooting style of the single-handed point, or "FBI crouch," and modified isosceles shooting stances to the Weaver stance decades ago. Generations of law enforcement officers learned the Weaver stance - essentially a field interrogation stance in which the officer assumes a three-quarter side stance, gun side and groin bladed away from the target with the strong arm and gun hand fully extended and almost locked, stabilized and supported by the weak arm. Firearms instructors extolled the virtues of the Weaver stance as an improved shooting platform. Unfortunately, research has shown that it is extremely difficult to assume the Weaver stance when confronted by a sudden, close threat.

Why? Humans are binocular animals that process 90 percent of sensory input visually when they experience survival stress. During a deadly force encounter, officers instinctively and uncontrollably crouch and square off facing the threat to maximize visual input to the brain. This instinctive stance was first documented in the 1920s based on observations of soldiers in combat. Because most deadly force encounters are sudden and close, teaching officers to use the Weaver stance made them rely on a technique ineffective for the deadly force situations they encountered."

Lt. Olson supports innovative training methods and states that.... "the use of Dynamic Training Practice through realistic simulation offers one of the best ways to prepare officers to handle deadly force decisions. This training strategy integrates classroom instruction on policies and decision-making models with open motor skill training to enable officers to apply their knowledge in dynamic, stressful situations that approximate real life.

Dynamic training serves two purposes in improving the decisions officers make during deadly force situations. It allows them to implement survival stress management techniques in conjunction with effective tactics and procedures in a realistic environment, and it meets higher training standards imposed by recent court decisions."

As to shooting stances/methods we find that...."at ranges less than 3 yards when time is minimal, officers should use the single-handed point stance. The brain recognizes that there is not enough time to acquire the target with a two-handed grip; therefore, the officer extends the weapon, or punches it out, toward the target at stomach or chest height in a one-handed grip. Officers should use the modified isosceles two-handed stance at ranges greater than 3 yards when time allows and greater accuracy is needed."

Again, the P&S method fits in well with this type of thinking. And P&S can be learned with little or no training. That however, does not take away from the need for appropriate and/or repetitive training to meet mission requirements of operators.

[Click here for the article as a PDF file.](#)

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The fourth paper is more than a paper. It is a book on the web site of the Violence Policy Center, which is an "antigun" organization.

The book title is: Unintended Consequences - Pro-Handgun Experts Prove That Handguns Are a Dangerous Choice For Self-Defense.

The middle chapters reiterate much of the basic information in the above referenced papers, but in a "tell'em like it is" earthy style that incorporates quotes from various well known trainers and police.

The remainder of the book is very critical of guns and the gun industry.

If nothing else, it is a LOUD wake up call to the gun world that there is a real and immediate need for a simple, practical, effective, and applicable self defensive shooting means and/or method that can be utilized by the general population with a minimum of training.

Apparently, the VPC plan is to use a public health and safety approach as the means by which handguns may be restricted to specific persons, or banned outright.

"The key question the public health and safety approach asks of any consumer product is, what are the product's relative risks and benefits? If a product inflicts more harm than is reasonable compared to the good, the inquiry then is whether the cause of harm is a defect in design or some factor inherent in the nature of the product. If the source of harm is a design defect, like a motor vehicle with a tendency to roll over on curves, it may be possible to correct the design. Some products, however, like highly toxic pesticides, are so inherently dangerous that no amount of design modification can make them reasonably safe. In such cases, the product may either be restricted to specific persons or banned outright."

Again P&S and the P&S finger rest aiming aid, may just be the answer to meet and resolve that approach.

Here is the URL to the VPC material: <http://www.vpc.org/studies/unincont.htm>

[Click here for the VPC material if you can access the web.](#)

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Just below is a link to a paper titled: No Recall of Weapon Discharge by Alexis Artwohl Ph.D..

The paper deals with the fact that it's possible for officers to discharge their weapons in the line of duty yet have no memory of that.

[Click here for the paper: No Recall of Weapon Discharge.](#)

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