

The Importance of Training by Bill Godfrey Firearms Instructor at Eagle.

Food for Thought

Personal defense is serious business and it is more than carrying a cell phone and calling 911. Something to dwell on, in a crisis situation – any crisis – involving you and your family, you will be the first responder.

Inevitably whenever we talk about self-defense, it usually starts by making the decision whether or not to buy a gun, and unfortunately, most of the time that is where it ends for most people. Choosing to protect your-self is so much more than going out and buying things. It's a comprehensive choice to take on the responsibility for your own safety, and it means you've got to have the will, the skills, and the equipment to protect yourself when no one else can. The fact that you're reading this indicates that you have the desire, now we talk about skills.

Skills are far more important than stuff and skills you can start learning and using immediately. It is important to remember, skills are perishable and require practice. We have always heard that practice makes perfect. This phrase is more myth than fact - mastering a skill depends on how quickly you are able to fix your mistake – not how much you repeat what you know.

There is a perception that any type of personal defense training is all about shooting or fighting; shooting and fighting with a gun will play a big part in the training. However, Personal Defense Training is really about making people smart enough that they don't need to shoot or fight. The very best example of good training is never having to use it and seasoned fighters - people who have been there, go to extreme lengths to avoid a conflict.

Unfortunately, defensive training is something of a growth industry right now. Much of the training that you will find out there is based on violence of action or fighting by teams and fire support. The average homeowner doesn't need to know how to use a machine gun to cover the hallway of their house or is interested in acquiring skills to become a member of SWAT. What they are looking for – what you want, simply, are solid fundamentals allowing you to safely defend yourself and your family.

Keep in Mind

Most of what gets a person into trouble is a lack of personal awareness; followed by a lack of personal tactics to address a fight. Simply put ... you didn't see the threat coming and now that there is a fight – you lack the skills (knowledge) to do something about it.

First and foremost is mental preparation – a personal awareness or a daily reality check that in fact it can happen to you. What a “bad guy” is looking for is someone unprepared, someone walking with their head down, using a cell phone ... basically someone not paying attention and has no idea of his or her surroundings. Sound like anybody you know?

When it comes to personal safety – we all have developed some really bad habits. We seldom take responsibility for our safety. Statistics show that you are more likely to be injured or die in a house fire than in a gunfight. Yet how many of us have a \$20 fire extinguisher in our home? If you wake up and your house is on fire aren't you glad you bought it and then know how to use it.

You need training, but it must be balanced out with practice. A big trend is to attend lots of training with a wide variety of instructors. However few people will practice what they are shown in class. It is important to learn the difference between firing a gun and fighting with one. These disciplines require professional supervised instruction from a qualified instructor. Remember one day you may be betting your life and /or your family's life on these skills.

When it comes to training, the biggest problem (if you call it a problem) is you will have a substantial investment in equipment, ammo, and time; all of this is a pre-emptive strike. Put the practice time in ... otherwise you can and probably will be disappointed when you have to use a firearm for real.

There is this premise that when faced with adversity, one will rise to the occasion. This is not true; however one will fall back on training. In a crisis situation, you will do what you trained and prepared to do ... and if that was nothing ... well you get the idea.

Ok so why take a firearm or personal defense course? Perhaps there either has been an event that has happened, you simply realize there may come a time in your life when you and/or your family are not safe and you want to do something about it. The goal then is to develop skills that will help you avoid becoming a victim of a violent crime.

As I said earlier, defense shooting should be taught by an instructor, a professional instructor, you simply can not teach yourself. The only way to learn is to have good solid "hands on" training. No book, magazine article, friend or family member who is "good with a gun", TV show or instruction video is going to take the place of going out and doing some hard work - meaning practice.

Preparation

Hoping for the best is not an emergency plan – and failing to plan and prepare your-self for an emergency – well it just may be the last thing you do or don't do.

Now it will be impossible to prepare for every unexpected situation in life. However, you will find that the more you plan the easier planning becomes and planning is always the best action for anything from a home invasion to an extreme weather event, even a weekend trip.

By playing the "what if" game, you can review scenarios based on experience or exposure that may occur in your world. Think about the accounts you have heard from a victim of a robbery or home invasion - a common statement heard is "Well, I never thought it would happen to me." Well nobody does ... till it does.

Imagine yourself stopped at an intersection in a part of town you have never been in - you may be nervous. Now think about what if "this" were to happen; what would you do? Now do that "what if" for your every day life; an intersection you are at everyday; in your home – where do you keep the flashlight, the cell phone, is the alarm set? How would you react?

Security starts with personal awareness and protective skills and tactics; skills that are impossible to acquire in an emergency situation. In fact, the ability to give accurate information on 911 calls will save lives, perhaps yours or your family's and realistically is a skill and technique that should be learned.

The worst possible time to attempt to learn skills or develop a plan is during a crisis or emergency situation; at that time it will be impossible to acquire those "new" skills.

Carrying a gun is much like having a fire extinguisher in your home or wearing seatbelts when operating your car. Having a fire extinguisher doesn't mean you want a fire – just like wearing the seatbelts does not mean you are looking to be in a car accident – so carrying a gun doesn't mean you want to be in a gunfight.

The gun, like the fire extinguisher is a tool to be used in an emergency situation involving you or your family. Both tools enable you and/or your family to get clear in a life-threatening situation and these tools may give you the time and possibly the distance to survive until trained professionals arrive.

The odds are, neither you nor I will need a gun tomorrow and the same can be said for the fire extinguisher. However we both have fire insurance and wear the seatbelts for the same reason we carry the gun; we have no way of knowing when or even if such a crisis will strike. However the loss is to catastrophic to be acceptable – forcing us to take action.

Remember, every plan is a good one until it makes contact. Absolutely the very best example of good training is to never have to use it. Anyone can get into a fight, what I want you to do is use the space between your ears. Avoidance and awareness are always the best practice.

Stay safe ~ Bill