



# 7 CRUCIAL STEPS TO SURVIVING THE FIGHT OF YOUR LIFE





**M**indset is the most important element of the triad of gun-fighting, that triad being the combination of mindset, marksmanship and tactics. Your eyes, hands, feet, trigger finger or firearm will do nothing useful without a well-trained mindset.

The late Jeff Cooper remarked, "Marksmanship and gun handling are in themselves not enough — mindset is what wins." An effective mindset means being aware of your surroundings and inoculated to the stress of a deadly force encounter. Equally importantly, an effective mindset snaps the physical aspects of your emergency lifesaving skills into action with little or no conscious thought.

### GETTING STARTED

The foundation upon which every effective mindset rests is confidence that you are the good guy.

You must have no doubts about whether you are right to be armed or whether it's right for you to defend yourself against the truly evil predators who stalk the innocent.

Because you're alive, you have the right to live. Because you have the right to live, you have the right to protect your life. Because you have the right to protect your life, you have the right to a firearm, the most effective and practical means of self-defense. This is true whether or not the Second Amendment was ever written; without the fundamental human right to self-defense, your right to live means nothing.

Further, there exists no valid argument for someone else to take your gun. None. It is irrelevant what city or state experiences an increase or drop in violent crime when stricter or laxer gun laws are instituted. It is irrelevant what types of firearms existed when the Constitution was

written. None of that has anything to do with you, your firearm or your natural right to self-defense.

John Lott has done and continues to do impressive and important research regarding guns in America, but none of Lott's findings are relevant to your most important and fundamental freedom. You have the right to a firearm because you're a human being and you're alive; end of debate. The armed citizen is the most free of any citizen on the planet. This is because, unlike an unarmed citizen, an armed citizen can enforce his or her rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the moment, on the spot and by himself or herself.

Nothing is more important than that. If the only way you are guaranteed your rights is by the presence of uniformed law enforcement officers, you are not free; you are temporarily exercising privileges on loan from a government.



### THE BODY CAN'T GO WHERE THE MIND'S NEVER BEEN

Mental visualization is essential to training your subconscious. When it comes to emergency life-saving, your subconscious mind can react and execute faster than your conscious mind can think. Some call this instinct, but it's really just the fruit of your commitment to practice, practice, practice and of repetition, repetition, repetition. Mental visualization can be done almost anytime and anywhere. A proven method is imagining how a lethal attack can unfold at any place you find yourself: What if the guy I just walked past turns and attacks me from behind? What if a mass murderer opens fire in this mall right now? What could I do? What would I do?

Visualize yourself responding to the threat, moving and shooting, and staying behind cover when possible.

This mental training conditions you to actively look for the closest cover, to find alternative exits from buildings and to prioritize your tactics. Your first duty might be to remove a loved one from danger and, during this exercise, you'll figure out how. (It should go without saying that you should always picture yourself successful.)

When you mentally visualize various scenarios in which you have to fight to live, you're creating a catalog of responses and solutions. It doesn't matter whether the scenarios you mentally studied ever come to be, because every idea — every scenario you resolve — will be stored as a separate component in your subconscious. If, God forbid, an attack begins, you will immediately ascertain what you need to do to stay alive and how you need to respond to accomplish that.

### CONTROLLING YOUR FEAR

The most effective way to prevent fear from negatively impacting your ability to prevail in a gunfight is to train, train, train and train some more. When one Gulf War fighter pilot was asked how he handled the stress of combat, he replied, "When it hits the fan, your brain turns to mush and your training takes over." As you hammer away at the physical aspects of drawing, shooting, reloading and all the rest of your training, you're programming your mind to respond exactly the way it needs to when your brain crashes in the fashion mentioned above.

It's very important you train perfectly, because your subconscious will only know what you teach it. If you train sloppy, you will fight sloppy, so, as always, start slow for technique and only build speed as quickly as you can maintain proper form and technique.



### ALWAYS HAVE A PLAN

Home invasions are living nightmares — extremely violent crimes that often lead to conclusions too horrific to list here. However, such an attack does afford you one important advantage: The fight will be in your residence and, as a factor in a fight, your residence is under your complete control. This advantage allows you to have pre-ordained plans and to use your knowledge of your home's layout as an edge against an armed invasion.

Depending on how and when the attack unfolds, you might have time to secure yourself and everyone for whom you're responsible in one room, with your weapon trained on the door as you wait for the invad-

ers to come to you or leave. You might decide to meet the invaders as they attempt to enter. You might even decide to escape completely and make your next move from outside the residence.

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Whatever you end up deciding to do, these and any other courses of action you devise must be pre-planned and practiced or you won't think of them mid-crisis. You'll already have more than enough to think about; the option you execute will depend on variables such as when you become aware of the invasion, the time of the attack,

where you are at that moment and who is with you. Since these variables can't be predicted, have several plans for different onslaughts and stay flexible. Most importantly, as in every other area of defensive

firearms use, train often, train hard and train effectively.

### STAY ALERT

Predators prefer victims who aren't paying attention. Surprise

is one of the most effective tools in a violent criminal's repertoire, so conscious attention to your surroundings can, in and of itself, thwart an attack before it even begins.

An exercise I devised is to periodically assess the threat posed by every person I encounter. I look at every person's eyes and hands and ponder how each per-



son could hurt me. This system, common among law enforcement officers, is generally referred to as “eyes, hands, whole person” and is a fast, effective manner in which to ascertain the approximate level of threat any individual might pose.

You can train yourself to do this with minimal effort; doing so will help you quickly acclimate to recognizing the subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) differences between non-threatening behavior and behavior requiring closer attention. Most importantly, never forget that it's always better to avoid an attack than to win one.

### KEEP IT REAL

According to Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, the author of several must-reads, such as *On Killing and On Combat*, effective modern military training is designed to be as realistic to the battlefield as possible. Regular folks can't spend

weekends training with the United States Military, but we can borrow some ideas.

The easiest manner in which to augment your current training is to ensure you're shooting at targets that actually look like attackers. Researcher S.L.A. Marshall discovered simply shooting at human-shaped targets instead of bullseye targets can have a dramatic impact on the development of a person's ability to effectively defend himself or herself. The point here is not to become comfortable with shooting people but to avoid a moment of potentially deadly hesitation when you absolutely must press the trigger.

### REMAIN ON STATION

Be confident that your right to be armed is supreme and bears no relationship to any “social study” or “evolving society” or murderous lunatic. Be as dedicated to honing

your mental skills as you are to honing your shooting skills, for this will afford you a sharper edge over an attacker than almost anything else.

Continually assess your physical surroundings with an eye toward where an attack could be coming from, and, if you must draw and fire, your well-trained, well-conditioned mindset will access your registry of pre-programmed solutions and tactics to settle the matter.

You will win. You will survive. You will live.





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