

Self Defense Starts with the Right Mindset



Living in rural Arizona, I expect to see a snake every time I step outside. While I almost never see one, I expect one to be there. As I move about in this environment, I expect to see scorpions, coyotes, mountain lions, bobcats, loose dogs and bad people, among others. Just the other night, I saw a mountain lion at my gate while I was outside looking for my dog. I looked at the lion, it looked at me, it strolled by and quickly disappeared. Things happen, and I expect them.

You might ask if I'm paranoid, but I assure you that's not the case. I know there are dangers in my world so, rather than close my eyes and hope for the best, I expect them to be there even though I live in a very safe place.

People sometimes ask me how to prepare themselves to act quickly and correctly in dangerous situations. How can they train? Are there special drills or exercises they can practice? The answer is, yes, but it's a mental, not a physical exercise.

The first step in developing a personal defensive mindset is awareness. You're aware the world can be a dangerous place. There are people, places, situations, animals, and even things that can be dangerous to you. These days, you're aware there are violent mobs in places. You're also aware there are people in the world you don't want to interact with such as criminals and terrorists. Some places may be more dangerous to you than others and there are dangerous situations you can avoid if you're aware of them. Then, as in my

example, there are all sorts of critters I would rather avoid by being aware they might be present in my environment.

Being aware, you can begin to develop avoidance strategies as well as asking yourself, “What am I going to do, if...?” Thinking these things through and making these decisions in advance are the key to having the mindset to act quickly and correctly. Remember, denial gets you nowhere, you must expect things to happen and have a solution to problems in advance.

Once your mind is right, it’s time to get high-quality training to give you the skills you might need to implement your plan. Is advanced first aid training a good idea? How about top level firearms training? Close quarters combat or defensive driving training? Are there things you can train for to help you in the situations you have imagined might be problems for you?

Remember, paranoia isn’t what I’m suggesting here, but rather a rational view of your world, your situation and the tools and skills you’re likely to need. I believe it was Theodore Roosevelt who told us, “You don’t have trouble if you’re prepared for it.”

You might ask, should I be armed? Jeff Cooper instructed it’s nice to be armed if you can arrange it, but not necessary. You see, if you’re in the right mental state you will avoid problems and avoid the need to fight your way out with a firearm.

However, being trained, armed and alert provides you the means to command your environment. What do I mean by that?

I mean, nothing you don’t allow can happen in your presence. Do you exercise that level of control at all times? Of course not. If the rotten kid wants to yell at his mother in the supermarket, you ignore it and go on about your business, but when the thug pulls a knife in the parking lot and threatens your spouse, you have the ability to control the situation, whether it results in using your firearm or not. Knowing you have the training and means to command your environment and control these situations results in peace of mind.

Jeff Cooper, [founder of Gunsite](#), also taught us, “Man fights with his mind, his hands and his weapons are merely extensions of his will.”

Being prepared, trained and alert, you have the ability to assert your will over people and situations by expecting you might have to deal with...well, whatever comes your way. If you are mentally prepared, you have the means to act quickly.

So, what do you expect?

