

TACTICS PREPAREDNESS

SKILLS AND SURVIVAL FOR ALL SITUATIONS

MULTI-TARGET ENGAGEMENTS

WITH THE INCREASING ODDS
YOU MAY FACE MULTIPLE THREATS—
ARE YOU PREPARED?



BY: KEN JAVES

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Wherever we go on a daily basis; whether for amusement or obligation, we typically encounter more than one person regardless of our desire to interact with them or not.

Also, looking at the trend in the progression from the Islamic fundamentalist terrorist threat and evidence from recent attacks in Brussels, Paris and San Bernardino where the jihadists have deliberately selected targets with large unarmed crowds and used multiple attackers, the likelihood of having to deal with multiple threats to defend your life, your family or in the conduct of your protective mission is high. There are some training methodologies, tools and a tactical mindset that will help prioritize threats in order to engage them in the

most efficient and tactically-sound manner.

When developing any training program (particularly one with as many potential variables as the situations referenced above) a balance has to be struck between developing the fundamental skills required and ensuring the drills and exercises selected fit the anticipated mission or operational situation. For multiple threat training, much of this is determined by the placement and arrangement of the targets in relation to the shooter. Your operational environment will typically dictate *continued on next page*



I could a tale unfold,
whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul,
freeze thy young blood,
make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
thy knotted and combined locks to part and each particular hair to stand on end,
like quills upon the fretful porpentine. -*Shakespeare's Hamlet, 1602*

Years ago, I taught an evening class segment on shelters to 150 students at a remote lodge in Northern California. The lecture didn't end until 10pm. Afterwards, I answered questions, chatted with students and finally sent everyone to bed. But I was still a little wound up. Knowing I would not be able to sleep until I quieted my mind, I went out onto the building's balcony to relax before retiring to my cabin.

I sat on a bench and looked out over the San Lorenzo valley. In the distance the lights

of Santa Cruz twinkled and I could see a fog bank rolling in from the ocean. The moon crested the side of the valley and I could see enormous Doug Fir trees silhouetted against the full moon. I saw an owl swoop across the meadow below, hunting some unseen rodent. The sound of crickets filled the air. It was a stunning sight and sound experience.

After a half hour or so I felt calm and completely relaxed, so I stood and started to make my way up to my cabin about 100 yards up a fire break from the lodge. I walked slowly and

quietly in the shadows cast by the moon. Suddenly, the hair on the back of my neck stood up. I froze.

I took my flashlight out and scanned the ground, sure there must be a rattlesnake or skunk. Seeing nothing, I continued my scan on the uphill side of the trail into the trees. My hand holding the light froze when I realized there was a full-sized adult mountain lion on a branch of a Madrone tree not ten feet above me to the left. As soon as my light hit the lion, he spun and disappeared back down

AWARENESS

BY: KEVIN REEVE

ALPHA,
BETA,
DELTA
AND
THETA
STATES



FREEMANSTOCK ARCHIVES



MANY TIMES WE MISS OUT ON MESSAGES OUR BODY IS TRYING TO COMMUNICATE BECAUSE WE CANNOT DISCERN THE SUBTLE SPEECH OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS SUCH AS THE GUT TIGHTENING OR THE HAIR STANDING UP ON OUR NECK.

the branch. I saw the black tip of his tail as he retreated.

Needless to say, coming face to face with a lion was startling, though no great surprise; we had been tracking it all week. But to be only a short leap away from an apex predator was invigorating. It is always humbling to be in the middle of the food chain rather than at the top.

I slowly walked up to the cabin breathing deeply to rid my body of the excess adrenaline. The only person still up was Jon Young, a renowned expert on situational awareness and bird language. I told him of my near-death encounter. He whistled and told me that I had some helpers watching out for me. As I reminisced over the experience I mentioned that it also had to be something else. An interesting discussion followed.

After this event I started researching sensory awareness. The human body possesses and accesses many senses. We have been led to believe that these are limited to the five identified by Aristotle: taste, smell, touch, vision and hearing. However, the human body has at least six different types of sensors in the skin that measure touch, temperature, pressure, vibration, itch and pain. The eyes make use of two different types of sensors, rods and

cones that function completely differently, and the interaction between eyes and brain is incredibly complex. We have many internal sensors such as hunger and thirst. There are many ways the brain processes input from the sense of smell, from pheromones and other chemical triggers, to common scents, and scents that trigger gag and vomit responses. Our ears provide hearing, but also a sense of balance and body orientation. Our joints and muscles provide the brain with input about our movement and contact with the ground, but it also helps us feel gravity, measure differences in weight and space-time orientation. There are, I am sure, numerous other senses related to internal functions. Nausea for example, occurs when the body senses a form of poison. Many people experience a sense of dread or fear that they describe as a gut tightening or "butterflies." This enteric nervous system triggers a subconscious reaction to other sensory stimuli.

My point is simple. Our bodies are a collection of extremely complex sensory systems. Many times, the sensory input does not come into our conscious mind because we are in an agitated state. Many times we miss out on messages our body is trying to communicate because we cannot discern the subtle speech

of the subconscious such as the gut tightening or the hair standing up on our neck. We are great at awareness, but not great at interpreting and understanding the messages we are sent, but there is hope.

Most of us spend a great deal of our day in an agitated mental state called Beta. If you measure electrical activity in the brain using an electroencephalogram, the beta state is a pattern of 18-24 cycles per second. In that state, we are processing data and cycling through what we are reading, replaying conversations and carrying on conversations inside our head. I would describe this state as focused on past occurrences and future occurrences, but not on the here and now. And because we are cycling so fast, it's difficult to consciously perceive the subtle signs the body is sending.

In contrast, the Alpha state represents a much lower number of cycles per second, around 12-16. In this state, we are focused on the here and now. We are paying attention to what is going on around us. In my story, I sat on the back porch for a long time, just observing. This process of sitting and watching not only raised my awareness, but slowed my mind down to an alpha state, so the subconscious messages alerting me to the pres-

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ence of the lion were much clearer. Had I not taken that time, I doubt I would have sensed the danger until it was too late. There are two lower states, theta and delta. Theta is a deep meditative state and delta is sleep.

I do not know exactly which senses were triggered by the presence of the mountain lion. Perhaps it was a musky predator smell or the halitosis of a meat eater. Perhaps my hearing picked up a growl or other sound, or some combination of sensory input. All I know is that whatever the combination of input, my body responded to the danger by causing my neck hair to stand up, a surge of adrenaline contracting the muscles around each hair shaft like the raised quills on a porcupine. Had I not stopped and shined my light on the lion, I may well have been jumped. I had been “the hunted.”

So what does this mean to our daily awareness? It means that we need to allow our conscious mind to tap into our subconscious and pick up the clues we would otherwise miss. In *Thinking Fast and Slow* Daniel Kahneman observed, “Intelligence is not only the ability to reason; it is also the ability to find relevant material in memory and to deploy attention when needed.”

Most every religious practice includes some form of solitary meditation time. One of the most useful things I learned from my friend Jon Young is spending a few minutes a day in a quiet natural location, away from smart phones and other distraction devices, focusing attention on the immediate surroundings.

For me, this was critical to developing a whole range of awareness skills. I learned to achieve an alpha state, the key to awareness. I learned how to put myself into that state in a few seconds. I learned to read the baseline and recognize variations to it. I learned to hear the alarm system of the forest, the birds and their language. I learned how to apply the lessons of the forest to the city. A concentric ring in the forest indicates the presence of a predator, just as it does in the city. This daily twenty minutes of solitude and quiet is essential to my awareness.

One of my most trusted friends, a retired Green Beret (not the hat, the soldier), says if you have a feeling about something, a hunch or nagging feeling or gut tightening, act immediately. Do not fear social conventions that might make you look ridiculous. Act. Trust your body, senses and brain to know danger.

I often ask classes if they have ever met an individual who creeped them out for no apparent reason; they just didn’t feel good about that person. That is your subconscious warning you that this person may be threatening in some way. That reaction, along with additional information can help make a final determination. So many times I hear of people who go along with or give in to a predator because they didn’t want to offend them, even though their body was screaming “No!” You have to give yourself permission to recognize threats, be it a mountain lion in a tree or a human predator who is acting friendly. Gavin de Becker, in his book *The Gift of Fear* reminds us that someone “being nice” is a social strategy, designed to get people to drop their defenses, and not a character trait, like honesty.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to work around some industry professionals I would consider dangerous. What impresses me about them was that in spite of their high level of training, they still made decisions based on gut feel, intuition or body awareness. These were “been there, done that” guys. When I asked one of them why he made decisions that seemed to be based on feelings over logic, his response was that he never abandons logic, but when he gets a strong feeling in his gut, he trusts that over anything. This is the essence of body awareness. Trust the messages your subconscious brain is giving you through that array of sensory input. Weigh it against logic, but recognize your body may be picking up on things your multitude of senses cannot communicate to you in a way that you understand in the moment.

Our bodies possess an astonishing hidden intelligence. We have to get ourselves into a state where that intelligence is manifest. Then we have to trust that intelligence and act accordingly. This is how you dodge bullets and mountain lions, literally and figuratively. ✓

BIO

Kevin Reeve is the founder and Director of OnPoint Tactical Tracking School (www.onpointtactical.com). Kevin has provided training to law enforcement, SAR teams and the U.S. military in the arts of tracking, survival, escape and evasion and urban operations. Kevin also worked at Apple Computer for five years doing organizational development and executive coaching, as well as platform training and curriculum development.