

A SPECIAL REPORT:

Inside Target Focus Training...

Secrets For Staying Alive When Rules Don't Apply

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AND

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Introduction

It always surprises people to discover that they...

...can learn the Target Focus Training system of personal protection in as little as a weekend...

...yet it requires at least 3 years of intense training to become a TFT instructor.

Once you understand the principles behind TFT, it's this seeming dichotomy between simplicity and complexity that gives the system its massive range of effectiveness across such a broad spectrum of applications.

It's also why, over the years, we've written literally 100's of blog posts, emails and articles... each offering different insight into the system and its often seemingly 'hidden' nuances.

In this special report we've gifted you with 11 very different writings that enable you to better understand why – when facing unexpected violence – TFT is the ONE & ONLY self-defense program you can, literally... ***Bet Your Life On!***

...Every single time.

Enjoy.

~Tim Larkin

What Is Your Life Worth?

Your car?

Your cell phone?

The contents of your wallet? Twenty bucks?

Everybody's going to have a different answer, and if you don't already have one you should think about it.

But there are a couple things you should know **before you decide where the line is...**

I began training when I was in high school, around the same time I worked as a cashier in a really terrible seafood restaurant.

One night two guys came in to rob us, armed with a handgun. I remember being distinctly aware of having a choice — I could give them the money or get to work injuring them. I weighed the choices, seeing branching outcomes, but in the end my read on the situation — their faces, body language, the tone of voice — was that this was purely antisocial. They wanted the money and to get the hell out there. They were nervous and in a hurry.

Processing what was happening, reading the situation and making a choice all happened in a blink of an eye that seemed to take minutes. I felt no fear, just a cold calculation, and so I made my choice. They could take property, but if they went after people, I would cross the line, too.

It was over in minutes and when the police arrived I was the only person with enough composure able to provide a detailed (very detailed) description of the men. The officers marveled at my recall and commented that they wished they had more witnesses like me.

Meanwhile, my coworkers were shocked into either silence or terrified crying jags.

Of all the people there, I was the only one who slept that night.

I was also the only one who could identify the weapon and point the two men out in a line-up. (My coworkers freaked at seeing the men in the line-up and played stupid so as not to be involved.)

I was the only one to turn up in court and take the witness stand.

Now, while all of this sounds like superhuman braggadocio, the simple (far less legendary) truth is that **the only thing I had that my coworkers didn't was a choice.**

I didn't lose my dignity or have my humanity stripped from me by the threat of violence. Where most people feel as if they have no choice I recognized the robber's threat for what it was: the choice between the money or violence.

If violence is a chaotic unknown that you have no experience in, then the threat presents as the absence of choice. If, on the other hand, you know how to "swim in the pool of violence" it's very much a question.

(This is **why threatening a sociopath is a terrible idea**, but that's a topic for another time.)

I really didn't think much of it outside of my surprise at the weird experience of being able to think, make choices and function calmly under threat of violence.

It all seemed utterly at odds with expectations: It's supposed to be chaos and panic and outsized emotions, right? Or at the very least, freezing up.

So, yeah, didn't really think much of it...

Until years later when an Instructor in the program had the exact same experience. Down to every last detail.

He was working at a bar, taking the trash out back where he was met by a guy with a balaclava and a shotgun. The other robbers were going through the front door at that very moment.

He read the situation and made a choice — they could take stuff, but not people. He was the only one who could describe the men to police. He was the only one who slept that night. He was also the only one who didn't need counseling after the incident.

His take on the experience and outcome were in line with mine — he didn't feel mentally tough, or emotionally hard, or a that he was a "better man" than his coworkers — **just that he just had a choice where others felt they had no choice at all.** And that made all the difference in heading off a psychological aftermath — the typical feelings of anger, fear, and vulnerability after being the victim of a crime.

These incidents happened long ago, 26 and 20 years, respectively, but the exact same experience occurred again several weeks ago when my son and his friend were mugged in a local park.

They were approached by three men, who claimed to have a gun, and asked to empty their pockets. Now, both my son and his friend have trained, and know how to hurt people, put them down and make them stay there.

And both of them felt they had a choice.

I'll spare you the details, since they're identical to the two experiences above.

My son's other friends couldn't believe the two of them didn't "do something".

His response told me he understands violence better than most people:

"It wasn't that kind of situation," he said. "Besides, I don't want to kill someone over a cell phone. Or die for one, either."

Now, before anyone thinks I'm advocating always giving in to threats of violence, know that I've trained plenty of people who's read on the situation was that things were about to get really serious, that the criminals wanted more than just stuff, and that personal safety and lives were at stake — **and they chose violence.**

What I advocate is using violence where violence is necessary.

You need to decide where the line is for you, ahead of time, but you also need to understand that *when you choose violence, you bet your life.*

In 1995, my best friend of 10 years heard someone breaking into his car. He ran outside to confront them and was shot to death in his front yard. His fiancée got to watch him die.

Aside from the predictable wreckage this tragedy caused for everyone touched by it, the single piece of clarity I came away with was that no material possession was worth my life. That's what insurance is for.

The only thing that's irreplaceable is me. You. My son.

For me, I know where the line is. My life is worth my life. And the lives of others. And not much else.

I refuse to kill or die for a social slight, a barstool, a parking space, my car, cell phone, or what's in my pocket.

I'll risk a life for a life, but everything else is bullshit.

Not everyone's going to have the same answer, and that's fine.

But you do need to think about it, make the choice ahead of time and then train to support that choice when you're challenged to back it up.

Your Critical Decision

"What do I want out of training?"

Are you here to hone your competitive edge, learn an extra trick or two they've never seen in the ring before, increase your athletic performance?

Or are you here to learn how to take out criminals, how to survive--scratch that--WIN in potentially lethal violent conflict?

I'm constantly surprised by the number of people who never even consider what their ultimate goal in training is. It's not a casual question--your goal should color the way you train, and vice-versa--knowing what you want gives you a yardstick to constantly measure both the appropriateness and veracity of your training, as well as giving you a way to know you're done.

In short, you better make sure you're climbing the ladder under the right balcony, or you could end up eloping with the wrong person...

If you've answered the above question with 'competition,' then you're in luck--there are many great places to get excellent qualified instruction in martial arts and combat sports. You'll really have very little problem finding schools where you can safely pit yourself against others to see who's the fastest, strongest, and who has the most cunning technique under the watchful eye of a judge or referee.

You'll also get hammered into the best shape of your life--the conditioning and athleticism of the modern combat sports competitor is second to none.

Unfortunately, if 'sport fighting' is your thing, there's not much I can do for you. You'll probably find very little utility in this newsletter. In fact, you may even want

to unsubscribe, to save your inbox the clutter. No hard feelings. If you'd like, go ahead and finish this issue to better understand the reasons why.

As for the other answer to that question, if you're interested in knowing how to navigate life-or-death criminal violence, then this is indeed the right place.

You see, in this report I'll throw some provocative stuff at you, give you insights you've likely never been exposed to, challenge other stuff you may hold as absolute.

It's my goal with this report to arm you with the necessary information to confidently seek out the most effective hand-to-hand combat training.

Before we get to that there's one more group I'd like to address, in fact, it's these people I'm hoping to reach most: the ones who answer...

"I want to do both!"

And the answer to that is simple.

YOU CAN'T.

It's nice to think you can. In many ways I wish it were so. But the hard fact is that you do what you train.

Let me say that again:

YOU DO WHAT YOU TRAIN.

What do I mean by this? I mean that whatever it is that you spend your time practicing is what will hop out of you when you need it. If you train to wrestle, and you get in a bar fight, you'll wrestle--and chances are you'll be okay. The price for failure in a bar fight is usually humiliation, not death. But should you find

yourself in a life-or-death situation, guess what? You'll wrestle. Because that's what you trained.

There's no magical transference of skill just because you realize the penalty for failure could be death. You'll do what you've always done. Period.

Now, if you've spent all that time training to hurt people, to put them down so they can't get back up, if you've been training for criminal violence, then that's what you'll do when your life depends on it. Again, no magic, just whatever it is you've spent your time doing. In the end, that's all you've got.

Remember that line about goals coloring your training (and vice-versa)? Here's where that gets so critical. What is the goal of competition? Is it to put your opponent in the hospital? To cripple them and end their career? To kill them?

While some of the ringside rhetoric might have you believe those are the goals, they are most certainly all inappropriate. You, yourself, probably wouldn't step into the ring if any of that were true. In fact, the rules of the game are carefully constructed to prevent any of that happening. The rules are there to allow rigorous competition while keeping you safe. (Not from bumps and bruises, of course--but from disability and death.)

What is the goal of violence? It's hurting people. It's doing all the things that aren't allowed in competition because they're so awful and effective. It's doing the things that put the man in the hospital or the morgue. Not appropriate for the vast majority of situations--but when someone wants to kill you, it makes perfect sense. That's the only time it does.

If you train with rules, you'll stick to the rules when your life depends on you chucking them. If you drag your rules into that life-or-death situation, they'll hold you back and hold you down while the other guy has no such limitations. Think

about it--'criminal violence' is hallmarked by a total lack of regard for rules, everything from common courtesy all the way up to the Big One, Thou Shalt Not Kill.

If someone's chucked all the rules and decided to come after you, your best bet is to do the same. And, of course, everyone assumes they will--you'd be an idiot not to, right? Except for that pesky fact:

YOU DO WHAT YOU TRAIN.

Here's an unfortunate, real-world example:

A skilled and successful combat sports competitor was jumped by two men in a Vegas parking lot. They had knives. He dropped the first one with a classic takedown--knocking him unconscious. The second man came at him with the knife. The competitor got hold of the man's arm, laid back and locked it up in a textbook arm bar.

At this point, things are working out beautifully--his training is paying off.

Until it all went wrong.

The guy tapped out.

And the competitor let go of the arm with the knife.

The man stabbed him multiple times, leaving him with lifelong issues related to the injury.

The good news is that he survived. The bad news is that his training almost got him killed.

I know what you're thinking. "No one in their right mind would choose to let go of the arm with the knife!" And you're correct--no one would willingly choose that action if the choice were presented to them any other time. But that's the funny thing about training--you're ingraining your choices ahead of time, patterning yourself for the way you want to behave in future situations. And you're stuck with it.

No magic, no 'life-or-death effectiveness' even though you realize that's what's on the line. You do what you train.

So, what is your goal for training?

First Principles

Target Focus Training is a “principle-based” system, meaning that instead of starting with moves or techniques we seek to identify and understand the elements at work in every successful use of violence.

Once you know why the winners win and the losers lose it becomes a simple thing to discard useless movement and technique and replace them with action that makes winning the most likely outcome. Instead of doing what’s popular or cool or fun to train — or even what seems to make sense from a sane, socialized perspective — we seek to do what the untrained victorious do, to physically emulate those who spend no time on the mats and yet win in spite of that lack.

The reason an imprisoned sociopath wins is the same as a highly trained military operator... or really anyone who comes out on top in physical violence. Not because of hate or rage or training or practice, but because of **debilitating injury**. Period.

Before we can discuss the principles that underlie game-changing/game-winning injury, we must cover some baseline assumptions for how to make the choice to “pull the trigger” on physical violence, in other words, *first principles* to drive the decision-making process and initial contact.

The essential problem is one of variability in the amount of force used, or the fact that half-measures expose you to greater risk.

If you don’t want to hurt him, chances are you won’t — but you have no idea what’s going on in his head. It’s the old “slap a killer” problem. Letting him know what’s up without shutting him down, pissing him off, or even intimidating him to the point where he pulls that gun are all ways to end up horribly surprised.

If the situation didn't call for an all out response, why are you laying hands on him? "Shooting to wound" is a seductive fantasy, but ultimately unrealistic. **If you had reason to pull it and point it, it's to kill him.**

If we understand that hands-on violence, with fists and boots, is necessarily all-or-nothing as well, then the overarching idea is a single word:

Choice.

Which leads us to the following first principles:

- **When violence can be avoided you must do everything you can to avoid it.**

If you have a choice, the answer is "no". Having options means there are other avenues open to you: using words and reason, disengaging or simply leaving. Plowing in to injure people is inherently risky. If you lose, it can cost you your life. If you win it can ruin your life. The only thing worth that risk *is* your life, or the lives of others. Nothing trivial compares favorably.

- **When violence is not avoidable you must do everything you can to win.**

When there is no choice, the only thing left is violence. And there's only one way to reliably use it — by causing serious, disabling injury and taking full advantage of that injury to get more.

- **You win in violence by attacking and forcing the other parties to react to your actions.**

You don't win a gunfight by not getting shot — you win by shooting the other guy dead.

Likewise, in hands-on violence the defensive posture is the one victims adopt. You want to make things happen — injuries — not react to what he's trying to do to you.

The unfortunate truth of this can most clearly be seen in stabbings — there is no back and forth, no “knife fighting” ... just repeated stabbing. If you try to respond to this by trying to block, control the weapon, etc., you're going to get stabbed to death.

If, instead, you attack and cause disabling injury, chances are good you'll get cut but he'll be down, injured, and helpless to stop you from doing more. **This is why you must foster and train a constant state of attack.**

These first principles give us an uncluttered perspective on why we train as we do, as well as a clear decision-making process (*got choice?*) that can help cut through the obscuring fog of crummy social interactions. It's as close as we're going to get to philosophy, being that we want to hew more toward the operational than the theoretical.

And lest you think these ideas only apply to TFT, I'd go so far as to say they apply to all uses of violence across the entire spectrum.

There are people training in disciplines where “kicking ass” is thought to be mostly harmless, something to be engaged in to defend honor, ego, and as an expression of general inter-male bravado. Coroners, cops and lawyers can all tell you unfortunate stories where the opposite was true; a loaded gun is obvious, a brain slapped against concrete less so. But the results can be the same.

Understanding what you're doing and why can go a long way toward saving you a lot of trouble — whether keeping you from engaging needlessly or to get it done right when nothing else will do.

The Training Principle That Leapfrogs Your Combat Fighting Skills

Traditional martial arts training brings to mind the image of row upon row of uniformed students furiously striking the air, shouting in unison. Much of the class time is devoted to the perfection of punching and kicking drills, with an overwhelming emphasis on form and 'looking good.'

I remember in my early martial arts training being told by a master that I could not hope to understand, let alone use, a specific strike until I had performed the motion a thousand times. Much of my youth was spent on hour after hour practicing the various punches, kicks and techniques to perfection.

In this kind of training, quantity was used as a path toward quality. Everything had to look just so -- and you were judged by your ability to mimic this look. The black belts would stalk the rows, making minute adjustments to the height of your arm, the tilt of the wrist. It was truly an emphasis of form over function. These were adjustments in choreography, with little or no discussion of how such things might affect the end result.

There was something missing between me, my 'performance' and actually doing something useful to the other guy:

A clear definition of the result

When I asked about the purpose of a specific move, I was usually answered in one of several ways:

- A generic or imprecise result: "It rattles his brains."

- An answer that flew in the face of basic physics and physiology: "It shatters his femur."
- Or, my favorite, the 'Thousand-Years-of-Tradition' answer, where I was chastised for daring to question the Master.

Something was definitely missing -- but a 'clear definition of the result' is really just a symptom of what's not there. That missing element was a TARGET. And not a 'target' like 'head' or 'torso,' but a specific piece of anatomy with a specific job to do. What I wanted to know was WHERE to hit the guy, WHAT I'm breaking when I do it, and HOW that's going to affect his normal functioning.

Something straightforward like:

EYEBALL -- LACERATE THE CORNEA -- BLIND HIM

There's a clear-cut target with what you're going for and what it'll do to him when you get it. It's an answer medical professionals can all agree would be a Bad Thing to do to someone (under normal circumstances) and would indeed cause problems for the person getting it done to them.

Why, in the big scheme of things, is this really all that important? Because knowing the specific target gives you an aim-point, a single square inch to focus all your efforts on; it gives you an achievable goal (ruining that single thing so it doesn't work any more); and it gives you a way to gauge your success (if he starts to behave like an injured man, you know you got it).

This is the opposite of 'empty technique,' of kicking the air a thousand times and hoping for the best.

Will you look good doing it? Hell no. But 'looking good' has nothing to do with getting it done right. All that matters is hitting that target -- that single anatomical

feature -- hard enough to break it. That's it. That's the 'secret' of the criminal sociopath.

How you look has no effect on the result -- if you can target that single square inch, and put everything you have through it -- eye, throat, groin, knee so that he's blind, can't breathe, in agony and crippled... it's immaterial whether you did so with dance-like grace and agility or with the ugly 'thumpitude' of a back-alley beat-down.

That said, our definition of what 'looks good' differs from the 'millimeter-adjustments-of-the-fist' crowd. In the end, efficacy and efficiency are what 'looks good' in violence:

- spot-on, surgical targeting
- complete follow-through
- moving dynamically with the injured man -- staying right on top of him so he can't get away

Since everyone moves differently (we each have a unique gait, for example) this is going to look slightly different from person to person. Proper biomechanics have general rules for what works (throw your weight through him and make sure you're braced to make it stick) -- but the specific way you get this done will be unique to you.

I will never try to make you move like me -- I'll show you how to move like YOU. And break people in the process.

Noise Vs Results

The laundry list of things that seem important in hands-on, violent conflict is enormous, and dauntingly so: *assessment of the situation, distance, stance, how to engage, blocking, countering, etc., etc.* And we haven't even gotten to do anything to him yet. When we do get around to actually doing something—anything—it's another list fraught with pitfalls and anxiety: *dealing with the chaos of limbs and furious motion, shifting gears between striking-grappling-disarms as the situation develops (or deteriorates), trying to match technique with opportunity, etc., etc.*

What the above paragraph **has in spades is noise**. What it **lacks is the clarity of results**.

With so many aspects vying for our attention it becomes incredibly difficult to discern what's important, like trying to pick out a single spoken word in the audience during the crescendo of a madman's symphony. And that word is "results".

Chaos in violence is a given. It comes on as a bewildering mess... and doesn't change until someone does something specific to change it. The sword that cleaves that Gordian Knot is debilitating injury, where you take away his ability to think and move, or both. The first one to get it done—and knows what to do with it—wins. Not the first to move, or the first to strike... but the first to injure.

Instead of trying to unsnarl the knot of chaos by paying attention to the tangle of strands, it's best to look at it already cut in half and then work backwards from there. The answer lies in three questions:

Where is my target?

We're talking about a specific piece of important anatomy, ideally a single square inch that he would really rather a bullet never went through, let alone your entire mass in motion. It must be something with an important job to do, like seeing, breathing, or walking. Or thinking. It's not "the button" or "the breadbasket" or "the side of the head". That's not nearly specific enough. It should light up whenever you see it in public—not the cheek, or the forehead, but exactly the eye. Learn the anatomy, then learn the signposts to find it on anyone, anywhere, anytime, e.g., the clavicle lies along a line between the tip of the shoulder and the suprasternal notch at the base of the neck. Stomp that line as hard as you can when he's on the ground and you'll break his collarbone.

How do I wreck it?

Finding the target is one thing; breaking it is a completely different story. You need to replicate an accident on purpose. People fall down all the time with no ill effects; only occasionally do they brain themselves and die. If you need to make that happen you need to know what went exactly wrong when it resulted in death and the differences between tragedy and comedy. In general, you need to do sufficient work on the human machine to disrupt tissue. And with the body being surprisingly resilient—as well as mobile and squishy—we can't go at it like we would to break a board. If we slap at it, short and sharp, it bends and moves to dissipate the force and we're less likely to break things. We need body-weighted, penetrating strikes that flex ribs beyond their rated elasticity, that distort organs to the point of rupture, that knock the brain convincingly against the skull... all the while overrunning the man to unbalance him and put him down.

What is the result?

If you answered the first two questions correctly, this last one becomes obvious. When that critical piece of anatomy stops doing its job he loses an ability, moves

in response to the injury and begins behaving like an injured person. This is what you're gunning for all along—the previous idea-action combination exists purely to get you here. This is all the criminal sociopath cares about because it's the only thing that matters. Learn from his experience and make results your goal as well. Know what you'll get: what he loses, how he'll respond (so you can recognize success), and what new opportunities arise from the results.

Minimize the anatomy, maximize the physics, know the result. This is all that matters; everything else is useless, distracting noise.

You want a useful result above all; breaking something important gets you there. The symphony will always play on, crashing out its discordant cacophony... your job is to find the sociopath in the audience and read his lips. Because he *knows*.

Step Into the Real...

'Forbidden' Videos that Skyrocket Self-Defense skills

A comment from a client at our most recent Vegas course struck me as significant:

"I've never had any kind of martial arts or combat sport training — I've never even been in a fight — but because you guys showed videos of the actual injuries in action I know what it takes to get it done. And seeing the results of those injuries allowed me to build my confidence. I mean, it was *right there*."

This is precisely why we show these videos — *people being knocked unconscious from a blow to the side of the neck; dropping, incapacitated & winded, from strikes to the liver, spleen, kidney or groin; crippled & taken offline by a broken knee or ankle, and so on* — because **it's not enough for us to say it or even walk through it in a training environment.**

You have to see it with your own eyes. [*...even if it means getting banned in a few narrow-minded countries like the UK.*]

His enthusiasm struck me because even though this is our core training ethos — make sure your training mirrors reality — I'm so close to the center of it I often forget the impact it can have.

Making the jump from seeing violence as nothing but insanity and chaos to understanding the base principles that drive it and then knowing what to do to cut through all the noise is an enormous, mind-altering leap.

It's moving from the realm of hopeless loss... to that of the determined winner.

Seeing the actual process and results of human-on-human injuries does things mere words cannot:

1. It shows, in no uncertain terms, the all-out effort required to break the human machine.

It's a rugged piece of gear, resilient and incredibly tough in so many ways. It only fails when conditions are *just right* — a vulnerable single square inch subjected to forces it can't handle.

It doesn't break because you wish it would, or because you touched the target, or because you "did the move".

Seeing actual video of what it takes is sobering and incredibly instructive. You realize you need to absolutely plow your entire self as far through that target as you can get.

2. You also see the dramatic results of success.

True debilitating injury is not ambiguous — it's startling and game-changing.

Seeing a bigger, faster, stronger professional athlete drop and become completely incapacitated is a huge confidence builder. All you have to do is get it right and break something and that injury buys you the time to do it again.

As I like to say, ***"Fighting is hard — injury is easy."***

On the flip side, we also show videos where people fail to cause injury, either through poor aim, lack of effort (no body weight and/or follow-through), or a combination of the two.

The classic “slap a killer” problem — person A takes a lazy swing at person B and bloodies B’s nose to “teach him a lesson”, B pulls his gun and shoots A dead.

When you juxtapose these with injury videos it becomes abundantly clear what’s required to get the job done — and what we risk when we go physical and put hands on people. Screwing around is not an option.

The goal of training is not to create a new reality that only works on the mats, but to mirror the often disappointing and inconvenient reality outside.

Physical examples from the real world go a long way toward killing illusion & wishful thinking and replacing them with knowledge and confidence.

I was taken aback by this client’s comments (delivered with the enthusiasm of enlightenment) because I had forgotten what these videos show when compared to the common wisdom that the fight always goes to the bigger, faster, stronger, meaner antagonist.

To me they have ceased to be instructional and have become obvious and everyday. It was refreshing to be able to see them through new eyes again, to appreciate anew why the winners win and feel the surge of resolute confidence that comes from knowing what to do and how to do it.

Self-Defense vs. Violence: Can't Get There from Here

Let's take a look at two successful acts of violence:

1. ***An intruder breaks in, surprises a housewife in the kitchen. He grabs a knife off the counter, stabs her in the neck and she bleeds out.***
2. ***An intruder breaks in, surprises a housewife in the kitchen. She grabs a knife off the counter, stabs him in the neck and he bleeds out.***

What we have here are two acts that are wildly divergent from legal, social and moral perspectives.

The first one is a **tragic murder**, an outrageous crime, a truly evil act.

The second is **justifiable homicide**, acting in self-defense, and though harrowing, an act most of us would laud her for.

From a mechanical perspective, however, the two acts are identical. They used the same tool in the same way and were successful for the same reason.

So clearly we should all hew our training toward what is demonstrated to work, every day, all around the world, right?

After all, this is what the criminal sociopath does. He learns by modeling, observing the violent trial and error around him, notes who wins and what they did to get there and then seeks to emulate their behavior. He further refines his process with his own personal trial and error and eventually ends up with a short list of "go to" techniques for dropping people so they don't get back up.

Of course, ***this guy's not hampered by the term "self-defense" like we are.***

The problem for sane, socialized people is that the initial question in response to the first scenario above is:

"How do I prevent him from stabbing me in the neck?"

And then we seek training to answer that question. We train to get into a wrestling match over a knife. We train to satisfy our desires for how we'd like

violence to work rather than how it's actually demonstrated to work on a daily basis.

It's out there. It's right in front of us. *If only we could see it clearly, without the distorting lenses of our desires and social considerations.*

Do you really want to stab somebody in the neck? I know I sure don't. I would say it's last on my list — if it were even on my list. Which it isn't. While it's a simple thing mechanically it's very complicated psychologically. Though it may secure my survival it will change my life in unpleasant ways. So, no, if I get to choose, I'd really rather not.

Does the Good Guy stab people in the neck? No, that's the sort of thing the Bad Guy does. The Good Guy prevents neck-stabbing and saves the day.

Is it legal to stab somebody in the neck? No, it isn't. And in order to get a pass on it you're going to need a really, really good reason. A reason so good it will convince a number of people that your behavior was "reasonable".

Is it moral to stab somebody in the neck? No, it's pretty much the definition of an immoral act.

This is why saying "self-defense", thinking "self-defense" and practicing "self-defense" keeps you from looking at the first scenario and realizing that neck-stabbing works great and having your initial response be "How do I do that?"

With self-defense... you just can't get there from here.

A defensive perspective will also make it unlikely that you'd seek out training to do what worked in the second scenario — even though it is justified and laudable. It is still, from a social perspective, unsavory. If given the choice between neck-stabbing and knife-wrestling most people are going to choose to go to knife-wrestling class. It just "feels better".

Again, it jibes with our desires and wishes for violence to yield to fitness, skill, and good intentions. It's a very comforting lie.

But the truth is out there every day — successful violence is indeed "nasty, brutish and short". It is as mechanically simple as it is socially, legally and morally unsavory.

Look to the winners and see what they do to win. Train to do what they do and see if you can't improve on their process.

You are either training to win or to merely delay the other man's victory.

Which would you rather do?

Slow is Smooth, Smooth Is Fast...

A singularly misunderstood element of TFT is the fact that **we preach slow practice.**

It's easy to dismiss what we're doing at a glance since everyone knows that violence happens at full speed, right?

And, unfortunately for us, it requires several layers of explanation and then a fair amount of hands-on experience to get what we're up to.

The two things you need to make injury the most likely outcome are **accuracy** and **correctness**. You need to strike a part of the body that can actually be broken (and gives good results when that happens) — but you also need to strike it hard enough and with enough follow-through to actually break it.

If you miss, nothing happens. If you hit it but not hard enough to break it, nothing happens. **The problem is that accuracy and correctness cannot be learned with speed in the mix.**

Trying to learn accuracy and correctness at speed in hands-on violence is as effective as learning to shoot by working on your speed draw and then emptying the magazine as fast as you can at the target. The results will be terrible. And those terrible results will convince you that you need more practice — at speed. This is not a sustainable path to mastery.

It would be far better to start slow, get used to pointing the thing downrange, firing a single shot and making adjustments based on where that shot went. In essence, being aware of your mistakes so you can fix them.

And so it is with hands-on violence.

Go fast and you make so many mistakes you can't possibly be aware of them all. Most of the time you'll miss. The rest of the time you won't be striking hard enough — not enough of your mass crashing through — to cause that injury you absolutely need. **Train fast and you're training for haphazard chaos.**

What you really want is to go slow enough to get everything exactly right. One square inch of you through one square inch of him. Your mass driving it three

feet through him, trying to make the tool come out the other side. Displacing him and ending up standing where he was. You want to be acutely, embarrassingly aware of every mistake you make — missing the target, using an improperly configured tool (like a loose fist), losing your balance. You want these errors to pop up one at a time so you can register the error and adjust to correct it, training your brain to do exactly what you want, the way you want it, when you need to do it at speed later.

For training purposes, there are three limiting factors on how fast you can go:

1. **You get everything you want exactly right**

If you miss, slow down. If your mass wasn't involved, slow down. If the joint break, throw, etc., didn't work the way you intended, slow down. Adjust the rate to make your practice perfect.

2. **You are always in balance**

When you're in balance you control where your mass goes — you can swing it like a sledgehammer. When you're off balance, it's no longer in your fists. Work at the rate where your balance is constant and absolute.

3. **Your partner can give you clean, clear reactions**

You want to train with useful sight pictures for success — every injury changes the shape of the human machine into a new configuration of targets and balance. Learning these shapes (reactions) allows you to use injury tactically, as well as increasing your rhythm and timing by learning to predict when and where different targets will appear. If you go faster than your partner's ability to give clean reactions — if you make them afraid of what you're doing — they'll ball up and/or put a lot of useless noise into your learning. **On the street, people have perfect reactions.** On the mats, uninjured, it's less so. Work at the rate where your partner can execute perfect reactions for you.

As long as all three of these remain true, you can work however fast you want. But if one or more are violated the answer is "slow down".

Even with perfect targeting/movement and the balance of an Olympic gymnast your rate will be governed by how good your reaction partner is. An expert working with a beginner can only go as fast as the beginner's reactions allow. A

beginner working with an expert will be limited by their lack of skill and balance challenges.

The goal in training is to work slowly to increase both partners' abilities in these three areas, gradually adding in speed as the skill-sets allow. **Working at speed — successfully — can be achieved faster than most people would believe, but only if you take the slow road to mastery.**

Real violence is indeed done at full speed — you need to do it as hard and as fast as you can — but your success will depend on how you trained for that moment. And for our purposes **slow is perfect...**

...and perfect is nonfunctional.

Lethal Self Defense vs MMA

R. R. writes:

“My concern is facing someone who is trained in MMA or some reality-based system.

“I’ve followed you since the beginning — and it all makes so much sense — but I still wonder ‘Can I do what these guys [TFT] are saying to do?’

“I have a family member who’s been training for almost three years in MMA and he’s the kind of guy who shouldn’t be allowed to train in any system. I’ve read your book and I need some additional insights just in case I have to fight with this family member. He thinks he’s the toughest guy around.

“I’ve already had an altercation with a MMA guy and even though he didn’t beat me up he still got an ankle lock while I was standing and it bothers me to this day. I hope you can help me out with what to do and go into some detail about facing an experienced martial artist or athlete involved in MMA.”

Chris Ranck-Buhr answers:

You bring up a number of issues; I’ll do what I can to address them all.

Facing Someone Who’s Trained

You can compete, or you can destroy. To compete, all you have to do is go strength-to-strength, skill-to-skill and will-to-will with someone. If you’re stronger, more skilled and want it more than him, you’ll win. If not... he’ll get you on one or more of those.

Or you can cheat and just take his eye.

There's a reason they don't allow that in competition — it blows the competition all to hell. If you're serious about injuring the man I recommend you do all the things they don't allow in the ring: eyes, throat, groin, stomping the neck and head of a downed man, etc., etc.

Training for competition has two primary goals:

1. To make for entertaining fights, and
2. To ensure that fighters can have actual careers.

If we allow the gouging of eyes, etc., bouts are over in moments, and people just aren't going to pay good money for five-second matches. Also, serious, debilitating injuries like that are going to cut careers down to a single fight.

In order for MMA to make money fights need to be exciting, dramatic competitions that pit fitness, skill and heart against another man's, with the best of the best prevailing and the losers having the opportunity to improve themselves and return for another chance at glory.

Facing someone who's trained is only going to matter if you throw yourself against their training and try to overpower, out-maneuver, or outlast them.

Regardless of fitness, skill and desire, everyone's eye comes of their screaming skull the same way.

(This is why Tim & I don't walk around like badasses — there's nothing about Tim's size & strength or our training and willingness to use it that prevents us from being injured. **Training makes you good at injuring people, but does nothing to prevent it from happening to you.** Imagine a world where everyone

has a gun but there's no such thing as ballistic armor and you've got a good picture of the reality of laying hands on people.)

All you have to do is look at MMA videos online where a serious injury ended the fight — the most prevalent being concussions that cause unconsciousness, but also things like torn knees, accidental fingers in eyes, etc. What we're saying is that you should start there rather than going the five rounds preceding the fight-ending injury in the ring.

Specifics? Take his eye. Crush his groin. When he's down kick him in the head as hard as you can. **The real question is: does the situation warrant this?**

Can I really do it?

If you're having doubts about whether or not you could seriously injure someone, it's because on some level you realize it's inappropriate for the problem at hand.

For the situations we're actually training for — life-or-death violence where what you do will determine whether you live or die — **there is never any question.** If you had a gun, you'd shoot the man (or men) to death. But you either don't have one, can't get to one immediately, or the one you have has failed. That's the time to do the work of a bullet as best you can with your bare hands and boots.

We're not training to best someone, change their mind or overpower them without any serious social repercussions any more than we'd expect to be able to do those things with a firearm.

A firearm is not a universal or even multi-use tool. It does just one thing really well: killing people at a distance. When skillfully employed it causes debilitating

injury that leads to the shutdown of the brain (or an interruption of the brain's ability to control the body), whether by opening up the circulatory system and causing the person to bleed out or by the direct destruction of the Central Nervous System.

With TFT we are training specifically to do this same job – cause debilitating injury that leads to the shutdown of the brain — only using our bare hands.

Because we use our own bodies to do this work it is often confused with fighting, competition and the mistaken belief that we can do it without really hurting anyone.

Here's the deal: tearing into the other guy to seriously injure him and stomp him to nonfunctional — **being willing to take it all the way — is where the real power is.** In actual use this approach allows you to stop as soon as you recognize he's nonfunctional, without having to kill him. But it only works like that if you step in to do it 100%.

If you go in half-assed because you don't really want to hurt him, don't worry — you won't. And you'll have a real fight on your hands.

The answer is, yes, you can really do it, the same way you can point and fire a handgun. The only question is one of appropriateness. And just as the need to shoot someone during your everyday activity with your family is thankfully rare, so is beating a man into unconsciousness... or to death.

Fighting With a Family Member

If you take all of the above commentary, hopefully the answer to this one is clear.

If the use of violence can be avoided, then you must avoid it. Period.

If you wouldn't use a firearm to kill him, then you wouldn't do what we train!

It sounds like he's into social domination and pushing others down to push himself up. Classic bully behavior. If it can't be worked out in a social context, with words, then stay away from him. You'll have to find a way to deal with what he will inevitably say about such behavior, ignore it and get on with your life.

If you want to play his game then start lifting weights and training in MMA. If you're going to compete with him, then train to compete with him.

Personally, I don't recommend you play his game. It's stupid antisocial bullshit. I'm sure you've got better things to do.

Find a way to minimize it, get around it, and move on using your social skills.

Suboptimal Altercation

Any situation you make it out of alive and intact is a win.

Our baseline assumptions for using violence are that...

...you will get punched and kicked...

...if there's a knife you'll get cut...

...if there's a stick you'll get hit with it...

...and the gun always goes off...

...And it's always armed multi-man (multiple attacker) until proven otherwise.

The goal is to break people, shut them off and get the hell out of there — not to walk out without a scratch. (If you do make it out without a scratch it wasn't that you were good, just lucky.)

A couple questions you have to ask yourself about the situation:

- Was it avoidable?
- Did you work to defuse it?

Or did you help bring it to blows by choosing to engage with threatening language?

What you have to understand about what we train is that it's for seriously injuring people — doing things that will, in all probability, give them life-long issues. If you're not willing to do this, then, no, it doesn't work.

The number one reason for not being willing to do it is because you realize the situation at hand doesn't warrant such an apocalyptic response.

What we do does not make you a badass or the best fighter in town. It doesn't solve social problems or improve your social standing.

It just means you can seriously injure people if you need to.

It's kinda depressing, actually — **being fully briefed on this whole violence thing means you can't play the games anymore**, can't "teach people a lesson", or kick ass to make a name for yourself.

You're stuck avoiding the avoidable... while training for the unthinkable.

Personally, I prefer it that way. I don't have to play the games, or even engage; besides, I've got better things to do with my time than bet my life on a mere ass-kicking, ruin my clothes and good looks and spend the night in jail — and that's if I win. (And I completely forgot about the civil suit from the loser!) None of that is worth my life.

When I use what I know it is because I have no choice and **the situation not only warrants, but requires, serious, life-long debilitating injury.**

Injury works identically on the trained and untrained; if you're unwilling to use it with all necessary force, "pulling punches" or putting certain targets off-limits then **it's either because you realize the situation doesn't warrant violence or you would really rather compete with the man.**

Both cases are something completely other than what we're working on here.

The Easy Way Out

Training newcomers in our weekly sessions can be labor-intensive, especially when they show up with expectations and assumptions that are out of whack with the simple brutality of violence.

Most recently I worked with a man who had a laundry-list of worries that was so long he was never going to get to *just crack him*. His focus was entirely on what the other man might do to him, and as a result he worked really hard to assess the situation, create distance, get in a fighting stance, try to block, counter and look for an opportunity to counterattack.

Of course, this put him far behind the power curve of the person who no longer cares about proper engagement etiquette and chucks it all in favor of *just crack him*. It was a very frustrating training experience for both of us.

Frustrating for me only because I really wanted him to “get it” and know what the criminal sociopath knows; frustrating for him because of the difficulty getting any good work done. His assumptions were the primary impediment to effectiveness, and not for want of trying. He was giving it his all, but as soon as things got murky he would revert to his old assumptions and end up struggling.

For example, if his partner moved to wrap him up and take him down on his turn he would back up, moving into his partner’s workspace and making himself easy prey; once on the ground he would resist strength-to-strength and try to out-wrestle his partner instead of simply gouging an eye.

The epiphany for him came with the idea that it’s not about what the other man wants to do, or is even doing — ***it’s all about what you do to him***. Worrying about what the other man is up to gives him the time and space in which to

execute his will. Going straight for injury deprives him of this and tilts everything in your favor.

After numerous physical examples of this idea and getting to experience the difference a constant state of attack makes, the **lightbulb moment** was almost audible. He was able, if only for a short time, to flip the switch from “prey behavior” to “predator behavior”. And though when pressed he still tends to default to his old assumptions, he recognizes when he’s flailing... and with a little effort he turns it around.

After the breakthrough some of the other instructors and I were talking about people we knew who came to the training pre-configured with the switch in the “predator” position. Though they were not all the best practitioners from an efficiency standpoint (having a real, visceral understanding of *just crack him* can lead to a lack of caring for good balance, structure or technique... why bother when you get good results?) **they were easy to train.**

All you had to do was show them what to do and they stepped in and executed. This is what we mean when we say **intent trumps technique** – you can have the most brilliant, beautiful technique but it’s nothing without the intent to stick it in.

And ***while technique requires intent to be functional, intent needs nothing other than itself to get results.***

It’s not about being mean, thinking bad thoughts or uncorking your rage; intent is the simple overarching willingness to injure the other man. It’s not just the first thing you want, but the only thing. Instead of a laundry-list of engagement practices it’s *just crack him*.

If you weren't born with the switch preset in "predator" mode (and most of us aren't) or had the unfortunate life experience to flip it for you, you have to do it manually. What gets you there is the paring away of all the assumptions between you and injury and then the repeated experience of going after that streamlined goal of simple injury on the mats.

In other words, it takes work. Figure out what's holding you back, keeping you at arm's length and then chuck it for injury. Do that enough and you rewire your thought processes, your brain, and best of all how you operate.

Complexity, it turns out, is not the path to effectiveness in violence. Simplicity is. The answer to every problem in violent conflict really is *just crack him*. It's the easy way out.

Your Roadmap To Destroying The Other Guy

It's Either You, or Him

Someone's going to get it right first. Someone's going to get stabbed in the neck, and someone's going to be doing the stabbing.

So...In a life-or-death situation, which do you pick?

While 'none of the above' is the hands-down best choice, that's not always an option. So of the two, 'do' or 'get done,' which one is you?

Yes, it's a stupid question--when given such a stark, limited choice we'll all choose to be the one doing it, right?

And yet, unless you're actually training to be the one doing it, you won't pick the obvious answer, even though you know in your gut it's the right one.

When viewed through a social lens, taking into account self-defense laws, societal mores, and even spiritual concerns, 'hitting first' is wrong. It's aggressive, offensive, and only the 'bad guys' do it--it's a defining feature of the violent criminal.

When taken at face value, the facts of violence show that second place is first loser. The first one to get it right--the first one to cause a serious injury and take advantage of that fact--is almost always the winner. The first one to take an eye, break a leg or bounce a head off the concrete usually gets the chance to do it again.

Training to wait and see, to block and counter is training to die. It's training to let the other guy dictate what happens--it puts him in charge and sets you up for disaster. It puts you permanently a half-step behind.

Such training causes people to try to block having just been stabbed--they get stabbed, they try to block it as he pulls the knife out and sticks it in them again, they try to block that over and over and so on to the inevitable end.

Violence, as a survival tool, has but one purpose--shutting off a human brain. To that end you have to focus your efforts on injuring the other man. Instead of worrying about what he's going to do to you, you want to make him worry about what you're doing to him.

Hit first, break things, and keep going until you're finished with him.

(Now, context is everything--violence, the way I'm talking about it, is only appropriate where you could expect him to do the same to you if you didn't act, and where inaction could cost you your life. It's stupid to do this to someone over a barstool... but it becomes chillingly 'normal' during a workplace shooting.)

It's simple cause and effect. You can either:

- 1) ACT to cause injuries in him, or
- 2) REACT to what he's doing, setting yourself up for failure.

It's funny how when this is presented as it was in the beginning of this letter (stab or be stabbed?), everyone agrees that the choice is obvious; whereas when it's time to train everyone gets into their defensive 'fighting' stance and wants to wait and see what the other guy's going to do.

There is no scale to the facts of violence--either you're the one doing it, or the one getting done. Period. Guns, knives, sticks, fists & boots... it doesn't matter. You're either on him or he's on you.

Injury is the fact that makes the difference. If you don't know how to reliably cause crippling injury, and what to do with it, I don't blame you for wanting to ball up and hang back. Without injury violence is a chaotic crapshoot.

But once you know how to ACT on him to make him REACT--once you know how to injure him & drop him so he can't get back up, once you know how to cripple a criminal who was dead-set on doing it to you, so that he has NO CHOICE in what happens next, well, then you'll understand what I'm talking about and you'll always want to be the one doing it first.

Knowledge breeds confidence--the confidence to be the one doing it instead of the one getting done. Knowing how to injure a man--and knowing what to do with that injury--is the shortest route to victory in life-or-death violence.

To Learn More...

Excited to learn more?

The easiest & quickest way to ground yourself in the basics of Target Focus Training is with our new **TFT Survival Pack** training program.

The package gives you access to our book & audio recording program, together with over 3½ hours of video taken directly from a live TFT training seminar.

To learn more about this exciting new program simply go to:

<http://www.targetfocustraining.com/r/gbtv-gun>

If you have any questions about this **TFT Survival Pack** training program or Target Focus Training, in general, please direct them to Sarah at 206-686-3469 or email her at:

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