



DEFEATING WEAPONS *ATTACKS*



Manual

Companion to the Defeating Weapons Attacks Course

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Executive Summary - THE BIG IDEA

- The human brain is the most dangerous thing in the universe
- This holds true regardless of who is armed with what tools
- The armed man is not dangerous because he is armed--he is dangerous because he can think and move
- The primary goal in all violence, therefore, is the shut-down of the human brain

The Human Machine – A Universal Weapon System

The human machine is an incredibly powerful and adaptable weapon system. The body can be used as a variable battering ram, taking on all kinds of specialized shapes and orientations to hammer away at problems that require brute force. It can also be unlimbered and utilized as an infinitely configurable catapult and leverage machine to hurl objects and pry apart problems that require finesse.

This amazing tool is held firmly in the palm of the human mind, the whole affair being directed and operated by the most dangerous object in the universe: the human brain.

That brain is, in its long walk down through the ages, ever-questing for new advantages, new tools to snap into the outer edges of the human weapon system to increase effectiveness and range.

We started out throwing rocks and sticks, and then found that hitting things with a rock lashed to the end of a stick worked like gangbusters. We recognized the power of sharp edges and bent that fact to our use, combining the two to get the axe, the spear, the arrow, and ultimately along this path, the sword.

We made the great leap off that path with the development of the firearm; we figured out that when the nucleus of the atom is split it gives up part of its mass as energy--and then we used that fact to flatten two cities and hold our civilization hostage for fifty years.

Never underestimate the power of the human mind--yours or his. Where humans are concerned, there is truly no such thing as being unarmed.

Take the humble human and outfit it with some extraneous tools, like a bronze shield and a short sword. Then stack them in tight rows so they can add their strength and leverage to their companions by acting as a single, great machine. Now you have the hoplite phalanx of ancient Greece.

As awesome as this is, it is hubris to forget that for all its churning might, the phalanx is made up of human bodies operated by human minds. The human form is the font from which its power flows; without bodies or minds the phalanx is nothing more than a pile of scrap metal. It can only do what it does if people are in there making it go.

This is why in violent conflict you have to get past the idea of what he has or what he can do and get to the meat of the matter--separating his mind from his machine. While injury is the goal of violence, separating brain from body is the goal of injury. It doesn't matter which direction you go on this--break the body and you deny the brain its primary tool; shut off the brain and the tool becomes inert. If he can think and move, he's dangerous. Take away either one (or both, for that matter), and he's no longer a threat.

This cuts both ways--what's true for him is true for you, but it also gets to an important idea in violence, that of quitting vs. being shut off.

Never expect him to quit. Expect to have to render him non-functional and then dump him down that flight of stairs one broken thing at a time until it's done. You know pain isn't going to get it done. You know superficial lacerations aren't going to get it done. You wouldn't expect them to.

And now for the best part:

None of these things can stop you, either.

They can only stop you if you choose to make it so, if you choose to quit.

So how do you know if there's nothing you can do? You'll know there's nothing you can do because you can't do anything.

This may seem cryptic but it's really very simple--deciding you can't do anything, deciding you're helpless or 'done for' is a choice--and one that is not always borne out by facts.

Keep going until you can't think or move. Remember that the only reliable way to stop you is to shut you off--if you're still on, everything is a choice, not a foregone conclusion.

One thing that all survivors have in common is that they all believed they could make it out alive. Armed with this belief, their minds used their bodies accordingly, as tools to solve the problem, and ended up walking out alive. They literally forged the reality they wanted with nothing more than the belief that it could be done, and the mind wielded the tool of the body, fashioning it into a hammer for smashing barriers, a key for unlocking problems, a vehicle for escape.

The human brain can figure it's way out of almost every jam and then apply the body to the problem.

This is why you have to shut him off NOW, regardless of what he's 'armed' with, what skills he has and/or what his physical abilities are.

This is why his only hope is to do it to you first.

This is why the most potent weapon system in the universe is a naked human being.

The Goal of This Product

Many people believe that violence is comprised of various schools and disciplines--empty-hand 'stand up' striking, grappling, ground fighting, knife fighting, stick fighting, and then, trumping them all, firearms.

This leads to an unfortunate difficulty: if one wishes to become proficient at all of them, it's going to take a very long time. And how, even if you did complete all that training, could you hope to reconcile the differences between them? How to fluidly switch from one to another? What if he has a stick AND a knife?

The goal of this product is to show you that all violence, regardless of how it's being done and with what tools, is the same. It's just one person injuring another.

To this end, we will:

- Examine what makes a weapon a labor-saving tool for violence
- Illuminate the advantages and shortcomings of various tools--what they can and can't do
- Dispel outright myths about how the tools actually work in violence
- Teach you how to effectively deal with anyone, regardless if they are wielding a knife, stick or gun.

How to Use This Manual

This manual is meant to be used in conjunction with the video. Either one used alone will lead to gaps in understanding. The manual itself goes into great detail on points that are merely mentioned in the video; likewise, reading the manual without seeing the principles applied to a human body in real-time makes the whole affair unnecessarily abstract.

The manual is the thought - but the video is the action!

Training Methodology and Safety Issues

Understand that the principles and techniques illustrated in this manual and video product are for a singular purpose: to cause serious, debilitating injury and/or death.

With that in mind, understand that practicing them is dangerous. To minimize this inherent danger, you will need to:

- Work with a partner who understands and can successfully model the basic concept of the Effect State (spinal reflexes)

- GO SLOW
- Work in an environment that is appropriate for safe practice (or 'look out for Grandma's Hummel collection!')
- DID WE MENTION GOING SLOW?

Why Go Slow When Everyone Knows 'Real Fighting' Is Fast?

Because targeting is a skill.

It takes practice - you want to practice hitting targets, dead-on, accepting no errors.

It's hand-eye coordination. It's foot-eye coordination. It's body-space coordination. It's being able to successfully apply your body parts in motion to his body parts in motion.

But even more than that, it's the visceral/spatial understanding of where the targets are on his body, and how to get to them from where you are.

This only comes from practice - slow, steady, and correct - on a real human body.

As far as practice goes, speed only mucks things up.

Fast practice actually hinders your targeting.

Let's be real about this - on the street, in a violent situation, you're going to strike him as hard and as fast as you can. But if you don't have the underlying skill of targeting, you will miss and be ineffective.

If you go fast, without the requisite underlying wetware of targeting, you will not cause injury. You'll smack him around instead of breaking him.

Reliable, repeatable injury ONLY occurs when you strike a target.

Remember: Perfect practice makes perfect performance.

So get to it - but use common sense, take care of your partner, and slow it down so you can get it done right!

Target-Focus Training - Violence as a Survival Tool

The goal of violence is debilitating injury - injury that fundamentally changes the normal functioning of his body and will require medical attention.

Target-Focus Training is a training methodology by which you can learn to wield violence as a survival tool. In short, this means we can teach you how to injure people.

TFT is not self-defense or a combat 'style.' We are not interested in defending against an 'attacker' or competition with a person's skill, speed, or physical ability. We are not interested in modeling all the possible variables found in a 'fight.' Instead, we are only ever interested in injuring people. Real criminal violence is not about competition, it is about destruction.

Violence is the use of physical force to cause an injury.

A 'violent situation' would be one in which the parties involved are trying to injure each other, typically with the prevailing party maiming or killing others.

Simply put, the best way to survive a violent situation is to be the one doing it.

EFFECT STATE - Targets & Spinal Reflexes

Nothing changes in your favor until you injure him; once you've injured him all that's left to do is take out an injured man.

You will be causing injury by striking or otherwise affecting targets, anatomical weak points of the human body that are naturally susceptible to trauma, typically with cascading effects to other body systems - causing an interruption of normal function. For example, a blow to the solar plexus will interrupt normal breathing; he can't walk with a broken knee; gouging the eyes will blind him.

In addition, there is a single universal effect that all targets have in common: a spinal reflex in response to injury.

A spinal reflex is an involuntary, pre-programmed movement, specific to each target, that is activated in response to injury through a threshold switch in the top of the spinal cord.

It does not involve the brain proper, or conscious thought. If you kick a man in the groin, rupturing one or both testicles, he will bend his knees, put his hands over his groin, and bend forward at the hips with his chin up - even if he doesn't want to.

Knowing targets, how to affect them to cause injury, and the associated spinal reflex grants you two major advantages:

- 1) You deny him control over his own body
- 2) You can predict what he will do next—by making him do it.

For example, say you're facing a man who is bigger than you, stronger than you - hell, he's even meaner than you. And he has a knife. How could you possibly overcome his superior size and strength? His cruel tenacity? And what's he going to do with that knife?

All those question marks vanish with a hard boot to the groin—his size and strength are meaningless as he momentarily loses conscious control over his body to execute a picture-perfect groin reaction. He's still mean - but he can't do anything with it. His will has been trumped by the threshold switch at the top of his spine.

And what's he doing with that knife?

He's doing a groin reaction is what he's doing.

Find your next target while he's busy, injure him again and repeat until satisfied.

In Summary

Target-Focus Training is:

- A training method to learn how to use violence
- Not competition, sport, or fighting
- How to use violence to hurt another human

The Effect-State is:

- A response to injury
- Involuntary reaction
- Predictable

The Triad of Violence: Penetration-Rotation-Injury

Techniques are worthless; how many ways are there to kick a man in the groin?

There's only one way to kick a man in the groin - as hard as you can.

You can be in front of him, off to his side, behind him, standing, sitting, on the floor, etc. Though there may be thousands of techniques for getting it done, the base answer is always the same. As hard as you can!

Beneath all possible violent techniques there are three common elements. Effective violence starts with penetration, drives it home with rotation, and winds up with injury.

Penetration

In order to injure someone with your bare hands, you need to be near enough to touch him. Penetration gets you to him and through him and beyond; getting you right on top of him, dominating his space, driving him off balance and maximizing kinetic force for injury. You want to penetrate so you're standing where he used to be.

Rotation

ˆThis is the follow-through; rotation is how you're going to take his balance and beat him down with it. It's the drive all the way through the ribs you just broke by penetrating, above.

Injury

The ultimate goal of violence; this is what you get when you penetrate to a target and rotate through it. And then he's locked into spinal reflexes as discussed above.

Injury is the light at the end of the tunnel. It is the bright hole in a dark shroud of chaos; it is the way through, the way out, the way back home to your loved ones.

Let's take a look at how the three snap together into the triad of violence with the following example:

You step in and punch him in the solar plexus, then grab his hand and break his wrist, slamming him down into the concrete.

This is really two iterations of penetration-rotation-injury:

You step in (penetrate through his space) & punch him (rotating your torso to throw the punch and follow all the way through) in the solar plexus (thereby causing an injury to the target).

You then grab his hand (penetrating) and break his wrist (with rotation & complete follow-through to cause the injury—as well as additional injuries from the fall).

Effective use of violence as a survival tool will always include this triad—it powers everything from striking to joint breaking and throwing. It exists in the use of extraneous tools like knife, stick, curb, etc. The triad of violence makes it all work for you.

In Summary

Violent techniques have three components:

- Penetration (maximizing force)
- Rotation (follow-through)
- Injury (results)

The Human Brain – The Nuke Inside Your Skull

When people think of ‘weapons’ they typically imagine everything from the time-tested stick and knife, up through ever larger guns and missiles, and end with nukes. That’s a pretty crazy spread; I mean, what could everything from the lowly club to a nuclear warhead possibly have in common?

As it turns out, lots. They all came from human brains, they are all are extensions of intent, and they all adhere to the principles that make violence work.

The most profound commonality is that they all came from human brains. Running around naked on the savannah while being taken willy-nilly by bigger, stronger, tooth-and-nailed predators was an incredible motivator. It quite literally got us thinking. Early humans were always on the lookout for advantages, something to even the odds. Hitting things with a heavy stick was the first expression of that. Hitting things with a heavy stick was the nuclear weapon of its day.

Nuclear weapons come from the same place. Much like the stick, we developed nukes by looking at the natural world around us, figuring out how it worked, and then harnessed that power into a device for violence. This makes the human brain arguably the most dangerous object in the universe.

This is a very important point, and cannot be understated: your brain is your most powerful asset in violent conflict.

Your brain is the ultimate weapon. Nuclear weapons came from there, this entire re-thinking of violence as a survival tool came from there, every solution you need for every violent situation will come from there.

It cuts both ways, however—his brain, allowed to function normally, is your ultimate problem. This is why, one way or another, you have to shut it off.

Labor-Saving Tools For Violence

Weapons, whether a balled-up fist or a cruise missile, are extensions of our intent to do violence. They are tools to make the commission of violence easier and more efficient. We created them to magnify our efforts. This is why we often refer to the human brain as the ‘only true weapon,’ with everything else, from sticks to nukes, as just being snap-on accessories.

A ‘weapon’ is simply a tool for expressing the violent intent of a human brain.

This is why everybody gets deadly serious when someone waves a handgun around. He has just pulled out a tool that is really only good for one thing: killing people. He’s carrying it to realize his intent to do harm, whether to actually shoot someone dead or to simply convey the seriousness of his intent and make everyone around him capitulate through fear.

The gun, by itself, cannot do either of these things. Without a human mind, without intent, the tool is inert.

On the flipside, intent without a tool is harmless. If we look at the idea that the human body, being driven around by a human brain, can be deadly effective, you can see that separating the two fixes everything.

Shutting off the brain takes the intent away from the tool. If he's unconscious or dead he can't stomp you when you're down.

Crippling the body takes the tool away from the intent. A conscious man with four shattered limbs is just a lot of noise.

Fists, Sticks, Knives And Bullets—Degrees Of The Same Idea

Every useful tool in violence follows the principles that make violence work—penetration and rotation culminating in injury.

The fist driven by bodyweight through a target does. A stick is simply a fist that hits harder, the knife one that penetrates more deeply into the body. Even bullets follow these principles: they penetrate to the target and punch through, causing injury.

Looking at weapons as tools for violence, and the human brain as the instigator, driver, and motivator behind them all, we can rank our priorities in violence from most important to least important, most dangerous to least dangerous thusly:

1. Brain
2. Body
3. Everything Else.

As far as you are concerned, your brain is your greatest asset; it is your primary weapon system. After that comes your body, a nearly infinitely-configurable tool for causing injury. This is why being armed or unarmed doesn't matter; what's important is that you can think and move. If you can think and move, you can cause injury. You don't need anything else. A stick, knife or gun would be nice; but while they magnify your efforts they aren't what makes you dangerous. You are what makes you dangerous.

As far as you should be concerned about him, the exact same things are true. Just because he's unarmed doesn't mean he's ineffective. He doesn't need a gun to kill you; he just needs the will to get it done and the physical ability to do it. Remove either one of those and he's no longer a threat.

Remember: What he's holding in his hand isn't the problem; what he's holding in his head is.

Facts About Weapons as Tools for Violence

The following facts hold true no matter what the tool:

Weapons are for killing.

A weapon is designed to kill someone. A shotgun does not protect your home. It does not look out the window and call the cops because it sees someone breaking into your car. You must pull the trigger

while pointing it at a man, with the intent of killing him, for a shotgun to work best. And the same is true of a knife. It does not protect you, unless ‘protection’ is a euphemism for ‘making someone die.’

What Weapons Do

Any weapon should be able to confer greater trauma than your empty-handed effort. Weapons will do one or both of two things:

1. Increase Trauma

A stunning blow dealt with a weapon becomes a crippling blow. A crippling strike becomes fatal, and a fatal strike is more efficient.

Weapons can be seen as simple tools for efficient injury.

2. Extend your reach

A firearm extends your reach in an obvious manner, but a knife can extend your reach into the torso of a man. All weapons extend your reach in some way.

In order to be worthwhile, weapons must confer improved injuries.

Whenever you are using something that doesn’t provide large-scale mass benefits, such as a bottle or keys, make sure that it does something you can’t do with your hands. A broken bottle can cut him, but unless you are applying that to deep tissue, it’s a bigger distraction than an effective tool. Breaking a bottle across his head might do less for you than hammering him across the back of the neck. Throwing a bottle at him increases your reach, as discussed above.

You must make sure that the weapon you are choosing does more for you than your empty hands. Always seek to improve targeted injuries.

Weapons require structure.

Hold a tool loosely in a limp hand and you’ll be sure to lose it. No matter what you’re using—knife, stick or gun—you need to hang onto it with a nice tight fist.

What Weapons Don’t Do

Weapons don’t confer ability. A knife does not make you good at using a knife, and a gun in your hand doesn’t make you a good shot. The use of the tool is a skill separate from the tool itself.

They can’t protect you from harm, or otherwise ‘defend’ you. Guns do not project a magical force field around you. If showing the weapon scares someone off, disengaging was something they chose to do, not something the weapon did to them.

Edged Tools

We've established that the human weapon system is what makes one powerful and effective in violence; the brain operating the tool of the body is what gets everything done. Now we can start to look at the extraneous end-tools that can be snapped into the outer periphery of that weapon system, tools that increase the range of effectiveness while magnifying the trauma inflicted.

Edged tools come in a variety of different forms—from the improvised shiv, screwdriver, ice pick and box cutter to the more purpose-built steak-and hunting knife. (Tools like the machete, though edged, behave much more like an impact tool in general usage.)

Regardless of form, edged tools do one thing very well—they allow the user to open up the circulatory system—most effectively arteries—to cause massive bleeding, incapacitation through shock, and ultimately, death.

Slashing vs. Stabbing

While slashing can seem dramatic with plenty of spilled blood, it's not nearly as effective as deep body penetration. A single deep stab wound, through the liver and into the aorta, will kill a man much more quickly and efficiently than multiple slashes. Slashing that doesn't penetrate the fascia or cripple by severing critical muscles or tendons might only result in a slow, venous bleed. This does not decrement his functioning. The deep stab to the aorta, on the other hand, will plunge him into a state of shock and initiate a fatal arterial bleed; every time his heart beats it will be pumping blood straight out of the circulatory system. He'll be unconscious in moments, and dead not long after that.

This is why being stabbed is far worse than getting cut. You can survive serious lacerations; multiple deep-body stab wounds are more problematic.

Because of this, bleeding is not a good indicator of success; spinal reflexes are much better. While nosebleeds can look like something out of a slasher film, it won't slow anybody down. An objective injury, like a broken knee, is a different story.

While slashing typically penetrates the skin, fat layer and some muscle tissue, it rarely goes deep enough to open up arteries or puncture organs. Slashing will open up veins, which are closer to the surface, resulting in what looks like a lot of blood—but never forget that venous bleeding is slower than arterial bleeding. Such slashing injuries are no doubt painful and messy but they are slow to shut the man down. He may choose to stop, recoiling in horror at the carnage, or he can keep coming. Either way, slashing injuries are not objective man-stoppers.

So what injuries are?

Deep, body-penetrating stab wounds. Stab wounds that penetrate the fascia and get into the major arteries and organs. Target-wise we're talking about the upper torso:

- Solar plexus (liver & aorta)
- Liver
- Spleen
- Kidneys
- Lungs
- Heart

Deep puncture wounds to these targets are meant to perforate the organ and supplying arteries to facilitate a rapid bleed-out and get his body to go into shock. Getting more than one just speeds things up. It's important to note that there may or may not be a lot of blood; a small puncture wound that gets him hemorrhaging internally might not look like much but can kill him rapidly whereas a broad slash looks like it's getting the job done (hanging flaps of meat, blood everywhere) while in reality the venous bleed is slow and doing nothing to shut him down. This idea is nothing new. Remember the hard-won wisdom of the Greeks and Romans, who maintained world-dominating empires with short swords (the xiphos and gladius) used for small stab wounds rather than for slashing and hacking.

The Knife – Getting To the Heart of the Matter

The razor's edge is humanity's second killing machine. It allows you to get beyond the surface of the body and plunge deep inside, into the organs and arteries.

As an end-tool the knife gives you an edge for cutting, a point for penetrating and a hammer for smashing. The edge and point let you do things you can't do with your bare hands while the butt works well as an impact tool.

In addition to the highly-effective thoracic targets, stabbing to the eyes and groin are worthwhile in that they will produce objective, spinal reflex-inducing injury--but they don't 'end it' like the thoracic targets can. (Meaning that they do not reliably set into motion the process of rapidly bleeding out. As a side note it's important to mention that all of these wounds will take time to actually kill him--the initial injury, like a knife punched into and through the ribs to penetrate the liver, let's say, will produce a spinal reflex just like punching him to the ribs and breaking them would, but he won't simply 'drop dead.' Expect it to take time for him to bleed to death. You're going to want to continue injuring him until he's non-functional. Stabbing him once, even in the heart, and then stepping back to see what happens can get you killed. Once he finishes the initial reaction he could, with a 'never say die' presence of mind, still pull a gun and shoot you dead before he bleeds out.)

Going for the throat/neck is good as well, to open up the carotid and jugular (the main blood supply to and from the brain), but just keep in mind that you have to go deep into the neck to get at them. This is probably the only target we're going to use the edge on--for cutting-- but, once again, remember that this is going to take work. You're not simply going to cut or slash, you're going to dig and saw to get deep enough. This is going to look much less like a swipe or slash and much more like a neck break.

That's not to say you can't use the edge on other targets--to cut muscle, sinew and nerves--you can, it's just that using the knife in this way is esoteric and getting into the realm of technique. You're much better off opening up his aorta with a single shot than trying to get him into a funky position to hamstring him. This isn't 'knife fighting'--this is stabbing a man to death.

Make no mistake, all of this is hard work. It doesn't happen just because you have a knife, or because you wish it would--it happens because you drive your entire body into the task all at once. In short, you will strike him with the knife.

Striking Is Striking, No Matter the Tool

The knife is just the tip of your engine of violence. To get the job done you have to drive it in with striking: bodyweight in motion, good structure to drive it home, and complete follow-through.

Of course, you can use a knife any way you want--just don't expect to retain it or have it work quickly or well.

When held loosely for speed-slashing, you can expect two things: to lose the knife at some point and a lot of blood, but very little real injury as we define it. You can't hang onto it with a loose hand. It's going to get smacked out of your loose grip or get caught on his jacket or whack the doorjamb and go flying.

You Have to Grip It to Rip It

First, and most important: hold it in a fist. A tight fist. Hang onto it like your life depends on it. It just might. It takes force and effort to punch a blade into a body, and holding in a loose hand just means he won't get stabbed and you won't have your knife anymore. It's going to bounce off his ribs and come right out of your hand. Drive it in with your bodyweight behind it--in a nice, tight fist--and you'll seriously injure him and get to do it again.

You can hold the knife with the point up or down, it doesn't matter as long as it's in that tight fist. With the point up you'll be able to drive the blade upward into the body and backhand with the butt. With the blade down you'll be able to stab down into the eyes and neck as well as stab him while he's laying down.

Again, the important part is the tight fist. To drive that blade in with your entire mass behind it you're going to need structure and never forget that the first place where your structure interfaces with the knife is in your hand. So make it a fist. This will ensure you don't lose it and will give you the structure to punch it through meat and ribs. Repeatedly.

If it gets stuck in him, don't sweat it. Let go and continue to cause injury--don't get caught by his accomplice while struggling to get the blade out of him. The knife is not the important part of what's going on here--you are. You are far more dangerous than any knife. Introduce his accomplice to that fact.

So What If He Has A Knife?

No matter what he's got, your problem is the brain, not the tool being used by the brain. Just as with the stick, attempting to counter or otherwise focus on the knife can get you killed. You need to injure the man and force him into the Effect-State. Once the brain is on it's way to being shut down, the knife becomes meaningless.

But you already knew that--it just comes down to whether or not you can do it. Here it is again: focusing on the knife will get you stabbed. Hell, this whole mess probably started with you getting stabbed and not even knowing it. So what do you want to do now--get stabbed again or crush his throat? This is the real question.

Let's be real about this: if there's a knife involved, whether it's yours or his, you will get cut. There's going to be blood. Get used to it and get over it. You probably won't even be aware you were cut until it's all over and you're walking away, at which point you can go to the hospital to get your stitches. Getting cut once is not the problem; getting stabbed repeatedly as you try to wrestle over the knife is. The thumb in the eye gets you the boot to the groin. The boot to the groin gets you the knock-out shot. This is where you need to take it in order to solve the problem.

Always remember: the first thing that anybody ever gets out of you in a violent situation is injury.

That's you injuring him.

You know what the dangerous part of the equation is--his brain in control of his body--so disrupt that link. A claw to the eyes renders the knife moot; if he can't control his body, he can't use the knife. If he can't use the knife he can't use it on you. Most people try to work from the outermost edge of this chain inward--they start by trying to control the blade and then work their way to the man. You're much better off starting where the chain of events originates--in his brain--and cut it off at the source. Turn him into an injured man who happens to be holding onto a knife as he grabs his ruptured testes and then his ruined eyes and then his broken knee.

Keep your focus on the dangerous part of the equation. It's what you can do to him, buck naked, that matters most. If you're not effective there, a knife isn't going to be much help. But that cuts both ways. Just because he's holding a knife doesn't mean he knows what he's doing, and it sure as hell doesn't make him invulnerable to harm. If anything, it just means he's going to be that much more surprised when you take him out. It's probably the very last thing he would have expected when he pulled it out to use it on you.

Edged Tools Q&A

Q: So when facing someone with a knife I need to disregard it and wreck targets, right?

A: It's not so much that you disregard the knife, but that you simply wreck targets. This may seem like hair-splitting and nuance, but bear with me. If you have a 'disregard step' as the first order of business in violence you're going to slow yourself down. You're going to look for tools to check that box off. And if he turns out to have one (knife, stick or gun) you'll give yourself a hiccup of hesitation while you

note it and then try to disregard it. To keep things clean, simple and universal just destroy targets. This approach works no matter what the circumstances.

The longer you wait to do something, the harder it becomes to do anything.

Q: What is shock?

A: Shock is a generalized decrease in blood flow throughout the body resulting in confusion, unconsciousness, and, if not treated, death. We are specifically speaking of hypovolemic shock, or shock brought on by a reduced blood volume (from bleeding). People in shock are, to say the least, ineffective and incapacitated.

Q: Won't a puncture wound to the heart cause it to stop beating?

A: Sometimes. If a single stab to the heart takes the man out, great. But don't bet your life on it. Serial injury to non-functional is the way to go, every time. In other words, don't stop until you know he's done—not when you think he should be done.

Q: How can I train to face a knife?

A: The most important thing to remember is that the first thing out of you will be what you train.

The best way to work on this is to free fight with the tools so you can get into the habit of striking people who are holding knives (or sticks or guns). You will perform as you practice, and the first thing out of you in a life-or-death situation will be what you practiced most.

This is why we stress floor time with another human body so much. You want to literally get bored with taking out people who are holding tools. It's scary at first, but the more you do it, the more success you experience, the easier it gets until you truly understand that it's all about you. Not about him, or his tool, or whatever. He's not your problem--you're his problem.

Also remember that you probably will never see the knife; if you get stabbed chances are you won't be aware of it. You'll think you got punched. The next thing out of you is what matters, not what's already happened.

On the flip side, when you're the one with the knife, make sure you are still using all the other options at your disposal. Work through your entire weapon system, not just the pointy part sticking out of 20% of what you've got. Lay the other 80% on him as well so you're always working at full potential. Focusing on the knife can get you killed, whether you have it or he does.

Impact Tools

Impact tools can be everything from briefcases to boots to axe handles, though people tend to be more interested in things they're more likely to see like the baton, baseball bat and random 'improvised' bludgeoning tools like the bottle or pool cue.

The question is, why bother?

Impact tools, like any other tool for violence, increase range and amplify trauma. They do things you can't do with your bare hands (or feet).

First off, they're harder than human tissue. You and the other guy are both made of the same stuff; when you use your body as an impact tool and strike him, your body wants to give way to the same degree his does. This is why structure is so important, so you're braced against the equal and opposite force that will act on you as you strike. It's also why, in general, you want to line up the hard, pointy parts of you with the soft, squishy bits of him. Tools on targets, like an elbow to the solar plexus. Or a fist to the groin.

Impact tools let us throw that idea out the window; to a baseball bat, the entire body is game. Swung with full force and follow-through, it'll wreck pretty much everything it hits. (While the baseball bat lets the average criminal throw targeting out the window, you'd be best served by hanging onto that idea. Intelligent use of the tool is you maintaining all your structure, targeting, etc., while using the bat.)

This is why boots are so effective--they're a lot harder (and heavier) than your naked foot.

Second, impact tools, when swung, act as a lever to accelerate the end to velocities faster than you can move your arm. When you hold a baton and swing it overhand your elbow snaps your forearm out, increasing the velocity of your fist, your wrist then snaps the baton out, making the velocity of the end of the baton crazy-fast. Your wrist works, in essence, like a second elbow. Higher velocity means more kinetic energy out at the end of the baton.

Impact tools, therefore, take something harder than human tissue and accelerate it for high energies. The result is human wreckage. Chief among the devastation is the ability to break the bones of the arms and legs, as well as open up the skull and get direct, physical access to the brain.

The Human Body as an Impact Tool

Your body is a near-infinitely configurable impact tool. When used correctly it is a hardy, adaptable sledgehammer that weighs as much as you do. And the best part is it's always at hand--you get to take it everywhere with you. The best impact surfaces include the shoulders, elbows and variable configurations of the hands; the hips, knees, shins and various surfaces of the feet.

The Stick – The Original Bone Breaking Machine

An impact tool is capable of breaking bones, magnifying leverage and causing massive concussions. To put it bluntly, the stick is humanity's original killing machine.

While some of the small, more fragile bones of the body can be broken empty-handed, the immense amount of force generated by sticks and clubs allows anyone to smash even the heaviest bones in the body, including the skull. Compromising the skull in this way allows you to directly affect the brain, leading to unconsciousness and death.

When directed against joints, the stick can wreck the bones on either side, ruining the connection of the ligaments and tendons at their origins. A stick or club is also a lever arm; when you apply weight and muscular force on one end, you achieve a greater amount of work on the other. To make the most of this, and to get the added benefit of using your wrist like an extra elbow, you want to hold the stick as far away from the striking end as possible.

Again, Striking Is Striking, No Matter the Tool

You can use the stick any way you want--just don't expect to have it work well or to retain it. Whipping it around like a sloppy orchestra conductor isn't going to break any bones. You're also going to get it knocked out of your hand. Sure, it 'smarts,' but 'hurt' is not the same as 'injured.' You've got to hold it the same way you'd hold an axe or hatchet for chopping wood--in a nice, firm grip of fists--and you've got to get your entire body behind it and then follow all the way through.

Once again we're on that tired old theme of penetrating with bodyweight to a target and then rotating all the way through it with structure--only now we've snapped an impact tool out at the end of all this. The baseball bat must be driven through a target with your entire mass behind it, and stuck-in with a follow-through that'll knock it out of the park. Remember always how it should look: he should bounce off of the bat, not the other way around. If it's bouncing off of him, there is no follow-through or deep body penetration (necessary for serious injury). There's no knock-back.

You have to ask yourself what you want:

For him to say 'Ow,' and flinch while holding his arm,

or

For him to scream incoherently while his arm folds backwards all wrong with a second elbow, floppy, as he goes down.

The first one is 'smacking with a stick.' The second is striking that happens to have a stick on the end.

Remember: striking with a stick is no different from striking in general; just because you have a stick does not mean you get to ignore the principles that make striking work. You still need to have your bodyweight involved, in motion, through the target. As for follow through, you need to make sure that the target gets 'knocked out of the park', that is, that the target moves away from the stick and not the other way around. The goal is not to bounce the stick off of him, the goal is to bounce him off of the stick.

Grip It and Rip It

For a short impact tool, like a baton, you can wield it by either end in a single fist for overhand and backhand contact with the last inch of the far end, as well as striking with the butt. You can also hold

it by both ends, in fists, to use the ends and center as striking surfaces (you can also choke with the center in this position). And, of course, you can always grab it with both fists at the same end, baseball bat-style, for an especially robust strike.

The longer the tool is, the more likely you're going to need to use both hands--like a baseball bat or axe handle.

The ideal points of contact are the last half inch out at the far end when swung or, when held with a hand at either end, the center of the tool.

Improvised Impact Tools

Improvised tools look great on TV, but in real life they're not all they're cracked up to be. Even something as promising as a pool cue will disintegrate on the first shot. This splintering wastes energy that would have been better spent inside of him. Bottles are a joke for the same reason. Ask around, if you know the 'right' people, and you'll doubtless find more than one story of "I hit him in the head with a bottle and then he punched me." There are also stories of people dying from getting hit in the head with a bottle. The moral of these stories is that using a bottle as an impact tool is a crapshoot-- you can never be sure which outcome you'll get. And that's no good in violence, betting your life on a roll of the dice.

The best improvised tools are going to be a single, solid unit that is built for impact, like a tire iron. Fireplace pokers, though they may have served Colonel Mustard well in the Conservatory, tend to bend and/or come apart. Same with golf clubs. I'd mention hitting people with chairs, but this isn't a movie. Once again, the closer it is to a baseball bat (a straight, solid, singular piece with some mass to it), the better it's going to work for you.

So What If He Has the Stick?

It means that in three to five seconds, you'll have the stick.

Let's back up a bit:

Chances are you're going to get smacked with it--expect it, get used to the idea, and then get over it. Getting hit with the stick isn't the problem; getting injured is. The trick is to not eat the far end. This is handled by serious penetration. Remember that tools increase range; now it's on you to cover that extra distance with your initial penetration. Drive into him, lunge through him. You'll probably catch the middle to lower third of the stick--the part that's not moving all that fast--rather than the deadly far end. The longer you wait around, the faster you're going to get beat to death. Nothing about this situation changes until you injure him--so get in there and injure him NOW. If he has the stick, it's all about Big Penetration.

The stick is going to move far too fast for you to do anything about it, much less see it. The rest of him, however, is going to move at the same rate as everybody else--including you. This means that if you watch the tool and try to counter it you're just going to get beat to death. If you watch the man (who will be moving much more slowly relative to the stick), pick a target and penetrate in to wreck it, the whole problem of the stick is solved as a side-effect to his injury.

As with any tool, focusing on the stick will ensure he gets to use it on you. Focusing on the real problem--a conscious brain driving a fully-functional body all willy-nilly--reduces the stick to what it is: an inanimate, inert object. Outside of fairy tales, sticks aren't known to magically fly up and whack people. In our world it takes a brain and a body to get it there. Wreck either one of those and it's problem solved.

Firearms

The stick and the knife have been around since time immemorial; the gun is comparatively new to the scene of human violence. In terms of personal tools, it is the most powerful yet devised. Not only does it allow the destruction of human tissue from a distance, it also acts as the ultimate equalizer. It has no regard for strength, toughness, or depth of intent—the gun treats everyone the same. Shooter and victim alike.

But for all its obvious power, the gun is still constrained by the rules that govern violence. It's useless unless the bullet hits the target and causes debilitating injury. But most importantly, it requires a human operator, a functioning human brain, to make it work.

While firearms can cause severe trauma when used correctly, they are just another tool for anyone who knows how to use violence effectively, and can provide a false sense of security to those who don't. If you're scrabbling for a gun, you're not causing injury.

Similarly, although a gunshot wound is unlikely to do you any good, it's also not guaranteed to kill, despite what the smoke and noise would have you believe. A crushed throat or a stabbed heart, on the other hand, is always going to be fatal. Because there can be such a dramatic difference in the effects of being shot—depending on the location of the injury—it is always important to target your weapon carefully. The police always shoot to kill. You should do the same, and fire repeatedly.

Using Firearms

Always assume a firearm is loaded. The only weapon more dangerous than a loaded gun is a gun you believe to be unloaded. We cannot stress this enough. When you pick up a firearm, check to make sure it's 'clear' before you do anything else.

If it's important to hold a club or a knife correctly, the way you hold a firearm is even more crucial. A loose or improper grip will result in either a missed shot or the weapon flying out of your hand when the trigger is pulled. A gun needs a firm structure to fire from. Otherwise, it will knock you backwards and lead to inaccurate fire.

To create a proper grip, hold the empty weapon in your hand with your arm pointing straight down by your side. Squeeze the butt and the trigger as tightly as you can as though you were in a high-stress shooting environment. Now raise your arm up until the gun is pointing forward towards an imaginary target. If the butt of the gun is not pressed hard into the heel of the hand, the barrel will point slightly off-target.

In general, don't ever pick up or pull out a gun unless you intend to use it. If you're trying to intimidate, the other man will have reason to believe he's fighting for his life and try to kill you, whatever his original intention. As soon as a gun enters the situation, it's a fight to the death.

Likewise, don't presume to think you can use his firearm. If it isn't yours, and you didn't bring it, you don't know anything about it. It could be fake, or unloaded, or have an unfamiliar safety. Any of these situations could mean your life if you bet it on the unfamiliar firearm.

What If He Has A Gun?

If someone pulls out a gun and says he's going to kill you, he's missed his chance. Now that you know his intentions, you can strike and kill. Threats are the most ineffective attempts to bring about a Cause-State. Only violent action creates predictable and controllable reactions.

As with the different tools above, the problem is not the gun—it's the conscious brain operating it. Take out that brain, and there's no one left to use the gun. Remember that true injury kicks off a spinal reflex, movement that is involuntary and predictable. The gun does nothing to protect him or prevent this chain of events from occurring. A man holding a gun will still reach for his face when you take his eye out of his skull. He'll put his hands over his groin when you rupture his testicles. Regardless of whether he's got a gun in one of those hands or not.

The only consideration that must be taken into account for the gun that doesn't apply to the other tools of violence is that unlike the stick or knife, the gun is not a simple, solid object. It is a mechanical device. As such, it can still discharge without an operator, such as when it strikes the ground or is pulled out of someone's hand.

If there's a gun involved, it always goes off. Get used to it and get over it. If you do get shot, chances are you won't even be aware of it. If you can still think and move, you can kill him. Stopping because the gun went off just gives him the opportunity to fire again. Statistically, getting shot once is not the problem. Getting shot multiple times is. Your job is to get in there and shut the man off, period. Anything else guarantees your murder. Look at it this way: if you take him out, you just bought yourself the rest of your life.

Words Of Warning

If you don't know how to use a gun—don't.

A gun is a complex tool, and the middle of a violent situation is not the time to learn how to use it. If you don't know where the safety catch is, whether it's loaded, how many cartridges it holds etc., forget it. You, personally, are a much more reliable weapon. And one that you are intimately familiar with.

Handguns are a quick fix for inadequate skill. That's why criminals favor them. But don't give up one for the other.

Guns Are Magic

[Author's note:

Some of the terminology and statements I make in the following piece could be construed as political by the bumper-sticker philosophy crowd. I'm sure there is enough ammunition (pun intended) for both sides of the debate to call me pro or anti as they will. So let me state for the record that my point of view is not political, but pragmatic. Training people to do violence is my career. I am more 'pro-truth' than anything else. When it comes to getting violence done, the firearm is hands-down the most powerful tool available. Period. This fact is not political or emotional for me. It just is.

The potential of the firearm is best realized when it is understood as just another tool for violence--

there are things it does better than any other tool, but it has its limitations as well. When included in a seamless continuum from brain to body to the range of add-ons (knife and stick) it fills in the outer edge nicely, making the Universal Weapons System (that's you) deadly from 0 to 1500+ meters.

While I am a gun owner and a decent shot I am not a member of the 'cult of the gun,' meaning I do not accord them any power they are not due. Handguns are for killing people, period. If the current problem can't be solved by converting someone into a corpse, it can't be solved by a gun. But then it's the same for everything in violence, isn't it?]

Everyone knows what guns--especially handguns--are for: killing people. A gun is what you use when you're serious, when you really, really want to kill someone dead: You bring a gun.

Knives are messy, a baseball bat is hard work; a gun is the thing when you're serious about killing.

A gun is also a magic talisman that can be waved to change behavior, it silently transmits your intent and gets people to play along. With nothing more strenuous than showing it to them.

Want a roomful of people to behave irrationally, strip down to their underwear and lay down prone? Wave a gun. Want a husband to betray his wife by tying her up and putting her in the trunk of his car? Wave a gun.

Guns are magic.

Everyone groks hand-to-hand with punching and kicking, grappling, and even knife and stick 'fighting'--but when a gun comes out, well, now we're off the map and into wholly different territory, right?

It's all good, clean fun until a gun comes out. Then it's serious.

Right?

What A Gun Does - The Physical Reality

Bullets are wonderful at causing injury; they take all the best things of knives and sticks and deliver them at a distance. They can tear open the circulatory system and get the victim to bleed out, they can smash bones and sever or disrupt the brain's connection with the body (by tearing through the spinal cord) or even burrow through the organ of the brain itself.

If we remember that the ultimate goal in violence is the shutdown of the brain, then bullets are the bee's knees: they can deprive it of oxygen, cut control of the body, or directly wreck it.

What A Gun Does - The Magic Part

So if this is all a gun can really do--open up the circulatory system and/or disrupt the CNS, where's the magic?

The easy answer is that guns kill. But that's not quite it. People get beat to death, too, but no one seems to recognize that as an imminent threat. Try walking into a bank and declaring that you'll beat the snot out of everyone if your demands aren't met. Chances are you'll get ignored, or the bum's rush followed by a severe 'footie hooligan' mob-style beating. Or get shot by someone packing heat.

Guns do more than just kill--they make killing effortless.

This is where the magic lies. This is what everyone recognizes, but probably can't articulate.

Effortless killing is instantly recognized as powerful, and the more distance we can tack on to that the more power it accrues.

Think back to the Cold War; the most utterly awful part of it was the idea that someone could pass out and hit their head on The Button on the way down and thereby end the world, from 3,000 miles away. Ending human civilization, ordinarily a madman's wet dream requiring far too much time, materiel and effort to be feasible, was now achievable with nothing more than orders to turn a key. Words and a wave of the hand. To end everything.

This is the magic power engineered into the gun.

The gun allows you to subvert the normal chain of:

intent —> effort—> injury

All the normal requirements are present--intent, penetration, rotation, injury--the gun just compresses and handles the bulk of the work for you. In the realm of violence, it is THE labor-saving tool.

Let's take a look at what's required when you're naked, when the only weapon you have is your mind and the only tool at your disposal is your body.

Intent is paramount. Without it, you will hesitate, go in half-assed and get half-assed results. With intent knobbed up to 11, you will throw your body into the work with 110% effort.

The effort (penetration and rotation) is all supplied by you, your will driving your muscles to ram your bones into him as hard as you can. This is real physical work--it isn't easy, it isn't soft--you're going to feel every strike ring through your skeleton, feel every broken joint, feel his breath on your face.

If you couple the intent and effort with good, solid targeting, the result of all that work is injury.

The gun, as a clip-on tool for violence, is subject to all the same rules; but to the uninitiated those requirements seem to vanish when they have actually been subsumed into and handled by a mechanical device.

Intent is not as fundamental now. You no longer need full-focus and bodily commitment in order to cause injury; you only need enough intent to point and squeeze.

The effort is supplied by the powder charge, and is completely decoupled from intent. Unlike with bare hands, a knife, or a stick, effort is not a function of intent. It's already been engineered into the device. Now the work done will be a function of the mass of the bullet and the charge used to accelerate it.

Penetration (getting from here to him) and rotation (complete follow-through to maximize the transfer of kinetic energy into tissue) is all neatly handled by the bullet as it zips off along its vector.

Outside of the intent required to point and squeeze, targeting is the only other thing that the gun won't do for you. As in everything in violence, you have to hit a target, wreck something important, in order to get an effective 'shutdown-style' injury. If we look at what a bullet does best--opening up the circulatory system and disrupting the CNS--we can see why shooting for center of mass is important.

The bullet is much more likely to go through the liver, heart/aorta and spine than not, resulting in major hemorrhaging and/or paralysis.

But the promise of the bullet is only realized if it hits something important. If it hasn't done anything to effect his ability to think and move, he's still dangerous.

(And, yes, while different kinds of firearms can have greater effects, like a shotgun gouging out ice-cream scoopfuls of flesh or getting 'winged' by a .50 caliber anti-materiel round can remove a limb, we're speaking more specifically here of what most people are going to encounter in criminal violence--the handgun.)

In looking at violence as a single, seamless endeavor, and the gun as a logical extension of all the principles required for injury, we can see that the gun is, in simplest terms, a long-range knife. With a couple of labor-saving differences:

KNIFE

causal chain of

- 100% intent (which impels maximum physical effort) manifested through
- penetration, rotation through a target
- resulting in injury

BULLET

- enough intent to point and squeeze
- bullet gets all the physical thresholds necessary for injury from the powder charge and so takes care of all the rest for you

The final, and most powerful, difference is that the efficacy of the bullet is never a function of the level of intent of the user. With a knife (or any other tool) reduced intent will cause reduced effort and thereby reduce the chances of injury.

In short, guns are powerful because they reduce the intent required to cause injury and handle all the physical effort for you. This is why a man with a gun is 'scarier' than a man with a machete. In reality you know the only advantage the man with the gun has is distance. Otherwise, it's all the same in the realm of violence.

Bullets, Bare Fists and Vice Versa

Everyone recognizes that they aren't bulletproof, that no matter your physical prowess, your training, your chutzpah, a bullet couldn't care less. It treats us all the same.

Many of those same people think they can 'take a punch.' I don't know about you, but I sure as hell can't take a body weighted strike to the throat. Or a thumb to the eye. Both of those things disregard everything other than the fact that I'm made of meat.

So a bullet and a stomp to the throat are fundamentally the same.

If you wreck something important in someone, a target as we define it, the method or tool used is immaterial; what's important is the injury.

If everyone the world over instantly recognizes and respects the power of the gun, but simultaneously fails to see the same power in a fully-functional naked human, then we are obviously building this argument in the wrong direction. Instead of trying to get you to see the gun as a logical extension of everything we've been doing from Day One we'd be better off reverse engineering the whole shebang and simply state:

Your goal in violence is to replicate the effect of a bullet with whatever tool you're working with, bare hands, knife or stick. Take whatever you've got and wreck something important. Beating, stabbing, smashing, shooting—it's only ever about the injury.

“But I Don't Want to Get Shot!”

Nobody does. Nobody wants to get punched, or kicked, or stabbed, or whacked with a bat, either.

But that's not really up to you.

If he fires the gun, whether or not you get shot has already been determined. If the vector described by the barrel intersects your body, the bullet's going to hit you. If you and the vector don't intersect, the bullet's going to miss. It's as stupid-simple as that.

If you get shot, nothing you do is going to alter that fact. You also have no say in whether or not he fires. And once fired, that bullet is going to follow (for our purposes) a straight line that you can do nothing to change.

So you need to jock up, get over it and concentrate on the things you can affect:

- His ability to function (through injury)
- Your involvement/position (by moving/getting the hell out of there)

So there are only two options in violence--don't be there, or take out the man who's trying to do it to you. This has been our message from Day One, and firearms are no exception. You only think it's different because it's a labor-saving device (making killing effortless) that can do it's work at range.

Thinking it's different can get you killed; thinking it's different means you'll be partly to blame if it does happen. If you invest yourself into the 'magical' aspects of the firearm, from either end, you're setting yourself up for a hard lesson you just might not survive.

If you think all you have to do is shoot someone with a gun and they magically die, you better hope you're really lucky. Getting shot doesn't necessarily take away his ability to think and move. And if he can think and move, he can kill you. Even with bullets in him.

We can flip that whole argument, and it's still the same: if you think the gun is the problem, that if you get shot you will magically die, you've invested voodoo power into the talisman and decided to quit before you're even there. The gun comes out and you hesitate. The gun comes out and you get caught trying to shift gears. Stick with what you can affect and get on it NOW. Getting shot doesn't necessarily take away your ability to think and move. And if you can think and move, you can kill him. Even with bullets in you.

Can you get killed? Yes you can. But we're all already experts in getting killed. Just do nothing. Help tie everyone up. Let them take you to the secondary crime scene. It's that easy.

The hard part is tackling the work that must be done. Doing the heavy lifting. What to do is simple: kill him, or get the hell out. But just because it's simple doesn't mean it's easy--it's hard work. It's going to take will and physical effort.

Everybody wants a shortcut. Everybody wants a secret technique, or a pill. Look at weight loss--it's really, really simple: eat less and run around more. But it's hard work. That's why people are reluctant to get it done.

Having a gun in your face or being shot falls into the same category.

Firearms Q&A

Q: How do I close distance?

A: Welcome to Hard Answers Nobody Wants To Hear Day.

You're asking the question, but you already know the answer. You just don't like it. That's why you ask. You're hoping, in your heart of hearts, that we will say something different this time, something secret, something simple and easy instead of simple and hard. Sorry to disappoint.

You close distance by going from HERE to HIM as hard and as fast as you can.

Does it suck? You bet. Do I wish it weren't so? You bet.

We've spent the bulk of our careers looking at options on this. An edge, a small difference, anything but running down an armed man. But when it comes to this I'm not going to lie or say nice things to make it soft. It is what it is and you can either deal or live in fear. I recommend you deal by making sure you've got that neck break down cold. Take what little comfort you can in the fact that when you get there you will shut him off. Period. No ifs, ands, or buts--he dies on his feet.

Q: How will I perform under threat?

A: There is a certain purity, a certain clarity to firearms. They have a way of clarifying a situation when they come out. You instantly know what's up. In my situation, I intuited that the man with the gun just wanted some money, and was more anxious to leave than anything else. He was more anxious than I was. I made the call that it was social, and it was over in minutes. Everyone survived, and at the end of the day that's the only arbiter of success.

Another instructor I know made a similar judgment call with a (thankfully) similar outcome.

What makes this different from someone who does nothing? Someone who is frozen with fear? Because we both experienced the same clarity. We realized everything had changed, the universe rotated on its axis 180 degrees. We both saw opportunities and options--eyes & neck-break in my case, trash can to the head (for starters) in his; we also instantly recognized the high probability that this was an antisocial interaction rather than an imminently asocial one. And then we made a choice.

This all happened in a single, electric moment--I swear to you, I have never thought more clearly, quickly and coldly as I did then. It was amazing. If I could put it in a pill I'd be a bajillionaire.

Neither of us felt afraid, or scattered, or humiliated. We both made a conscious choice to hold, for the moment, all the while ready to act if the situation should turn.

Out of those two separate incidents we were also the only people present who didn't require counseling. One of the people in my situation--the manager--literally went to pieces. Hysterical. And I was the one who interacted with the robber.

I also know of people who have made the other choice (or didn't think they had one) and beat the would-be gunman into non-functionality. While that sounds exciting the stories are actually rather dull--they all start with 'He showed me the gun, so I...' and then there follows the litany of savaged body parts, and it all winds up with disappointment that it was over before one could get warmed up and do something 'really cool.' (Violence is, in the final analysis, terribly mundane.)

It comes down to this: your training will give you a choice. And if you don't really have a choice, well, then you're in your element with an equal chance of making it out alive.

Q: How can I train most effectively?

A: We have a number of factors in play here:

As you practice, so shall you perform. If you want to be able to injure a man holding a gun, then practice injuring people holding guns. Pull out the training guns, hit the mats, and keep it up until it's downright boring. Ask any instructor--we all hit a point in our training where we worked with firearms exclusively, again and again and again until the utterly mundane sameness of every free fight made our eyes bleed tears of ennui. Being bored means you've seen it all, it means you've burned all the morbid curiosity and doubt out of it. You've reduced the process to its simplest components--you, injuring a man holding a gun.

- The person with the smallest achievable goal gets it done first.
Whatever you focus on is the most likely thing to happen. If you focus on getting shot, you'll get shot. If you focus on injuring him, you'll injure him.
- Your expectations affect your ability to function.
If you expect the man-with-gun scenario to be more difficult, then it will be. For you, anyway. If you expect him to behave like a piece of meat beholdng to the physical laws of the universe, then you'll make it so. No matter the tool or the scenario, people are still people, and shutting off people is what you know best. You are literally trained for every possible permutation in human violence.

Whether you know it or not.

(This causes much consternation among the instructor cadre--time and again we watch as clients perfectly model the mechanical wrecking of another human being, then they walk up and ask questions that are at absolute odds with what we just saw...)

So, long story short: do it like you want to do it. If you want it to go a certain way for you, practice what you want out of it, focus on that goal, and expect to succeed. Draw a beeline to injury. Anything less is self-defeating, and you've already got one guy who wants you dead. No need to give him a hand in it. He wants you dead? Make him die on his feet.

Q: Will the gun going off affect my ability to act?

A: Only if you expect it to.

If you think that the report will make you hesitate, then it will. If you think that getting shot stops you, then it will. Your expectations set you up for success or failure.

On the report issue, most people don't hear the gun go off, but they do remember seeing the muzzle flash. (And before we get into that whole 'ear-blinking' thing, the ear will, on a mechanical level, register the physical fact of the sound--the eardrum will vibrate, all the little bones will do their job transferring the vibration to the cochlea, and the auditory nerve will fire a signal into the brain. The reason people don't 'hear' the report has nothing to do with the ear 'blinking'--people don't hear it because the signal streaming up the auditory nerve is not registered by the higher consciousness. It probably gets filtered out and disregarded as unnecessary for survival at that moment. Discuss as you will, but the only thing you need to know is that most people say they never heard the gun go off.)

On the topic of expectations, there's a story about a police officer involved in a shooting where the perpetrator pulled a gun and fired at the officer, hitting him in the abdomen. The officer dropped, wracked with excruciating pain, but through it all he somehow managed to pull his gun and return fire, killing the perp. At that point he checked himself for wounds and found that he hadn't been shot, anywhere, after all. His expectations set him up: he believed that if a firearm discharged in his direction (especially at close range) it would hit him; if it hit him he believed it would be extremely painful. And so it was all of the above.

Q: Where do close-quarters shooting and hand-to-hand cross over?

A: The firearm is just another tool for violence, beholden (for the most part) to all the principles that make violence work. As a clip-on to the Universal Weapons System (that's you) it extends your ability to injure from six feet (2m) out to the effective range of the gun (or however far you can still hit targets). So, for everything outside of those six feet, put bullets into 'em. For everything inside that six-foot radius, use your body. The two cross over in using the firearm to cause final (fatal) injury in conjunction with everything else: kick to the groin, elbow to the side of the neck, break his ankle to drop him and then shoot him in the brain as he hits the ground.

Q: How do I handle the expert shooter?

A: The short answer is this--the survivor is the one who puts the tool to the other man first and correctly.

If you can effect a change, run him down. If you can't, get the hell out of there. Note that everyone

else in the crowd will set human land speed records to clear out--they know they can't effect a change and are moving accordingly.

We're going to assume we're talking about you, without a gun, vs. him, with a gun. If you had a gun, too, the answer is really the same--who puts the tool on whom first and correctly. You either put bullets in him until he's non-functional or get the hell out of there.

If you don't have a gun, then you're both still wielding the tool of violence--you have your body as a human wrecking machine, he has a gun. If he puts bullets into you and hits important things such that you can't think and move, you're done. If he puts bullets into you and doesn't hit anything immediately important such that you can think and move and get to him to put your tool on him, he dies.

It's important to note that we're talking about a beeline here. Anything between you and injuring him is going to slow you down, make you hesitate, and just give him more (precious) time to get his work done right on you. What am I talking about? I'm talking about if/then statements, 'special' techniques, funky movement protocols, etc. Look at it this way:

What you really want is:

- recognize threat → penetrate to injury

Anything else will jam you up and slow you down, like:

- recognize threat → do special threat-specific move → penetrate to injury

That middle part's a killer. That's the space in which you die.

The beeline is a set amount of time--it's all the time he'll have to use the gun on you. You want that time to be as short as possible. The time from your recognition of the threat and the first injury is all he'll ever get; we all know what happens at the first injury. Now you're just stomping a man to death who happens to be holding a gun while he dies.

Let's not pussyfoot around--the beeline sucks. If you're lucky, the bullets are just missing you, or not hitting anything important. If not, you get shot to death. It's as simple as that.

I'd love to sell you some magic pills that make it not so, but they don't exist. It's just going to be you and your skill vs. him and his skill. Whoever gets it done right first lives. The other guy dies.

So, to recap: you're making a beeline, either for cover or for him. Make your choice and get it done.

It's not nice or happy, but it's the truth. You're much better off going into this stuff armed with the truth rather than a warm-fuzzy fairytale with an unexpectedly tragic ending.

Q: Are there any clever and subtle options to minimize tipping him off until he's within reach?

A: Yes, and you already know how to do that. If you're in a situation where that's possible, i.e., he didn't just draw down and open up (asocial), then by all means, use your social skills to manipulate the antisocial interaction to get closer.

The main reason I laid it out straight and blunt is to minimize the amount of what-if-butting--something that always happens when we start to build specific scenarios. I'd much rather give you the basics, what will always work, and then let you problem-solve on your own.

Likewise, I don't have to tell anyone that getting behind cover is a Good Thing, whether you're closing distance or escaping. The specifics, however, open up a can of worms whose infinite coils we'll never be free from--cars vs. walls, should you wear body armor AT ALL TIMES, etc. We'll give you the principles, you can hash out the details on your own time. My job is to make you better at hurting people. Outside of that, you probably know a lot more than you give yourself credit for.

Q: Should I be concerned about which injury I cause in relation to the resulting spinal reflex?

A: In general, it's always push, push, push. Anything that resembles a pull, i.e., the two of you moving apart, will get you killed.

Penetrate through your target, through him, and maintain a static relationship between the two of you. Get torso-to-torso and keep it there.

Striking him to the throat such that he staggers or falls away from you is Bad. Striking him to the throat and following through with additional penetration such that you never leave torso-to-torso contact is Good. Once you're past the gun and eating him alive, keep it that way.

Another way to think of it: you only want to solve the vector problem once.

You are correct in being concerned with where the gun is pointing as you beat reactions out of him--as a device it can accidentally discharge. HOWEVER--this is secondary to injury, injury, INJURY. The moment you elevate the tool above the required result is the moment you fuck up and get shot.

You can get lots of things done simultaneously; just look at how neatly efficient penetration, rotation, injury is in the basic problem--it solves the vector problem and shuts the man off all at once. When you get this idea soaked into your bones such that it comes out of you naturally, then we can look at other issues. But for right now, if you take your eyes off of injury and put them on the gun you're rolling dice and hoping you're lucky.

Always keep this in mind: the thing you worry about the most is what will happen.

If you worry about getting shot, you'll get shot. If you worry about injuring him, you'll injure him.

Q: How can I train to make the decision to close distance with as little hesitation possible?

A: The answer is very simple: mat time.

You must free fight with guns until it's no big deal. Until your heart rate drops, your blood pressure comes back down and it's just another tool, it's just something he happened to be holding while you beat him down.

Right now when you guys free fight with guns you look for it, waitfor it, try to get ready and set before you go. Then you go like gangbusters, frenzied, and everything that would make you effective suffers.

Targeting is sloppy. Body weight is replaced with wild limb swings. The lack of desired results serve only to make you more and more apprehensive about GUNS.

You need to pull it back, relax and remember this: you can't get shot to death during mat time. The guns are fake. Your partner wants to help you learn, not kill you.

If you screw it up, there are no consequences. The only things that can suffer are your ego and your general apprehension level IF YOU CHOOSE TO LET THOSE BE ISSUES.

Let that crap go and choose to learn from your mistakes. Make many, many consequence-free mistakes and learn from each one.

The way to peel hesitation out of the gun equation is to free fight with the gun, slow, controlled, smooth, nonstop--with no preconceived notion of how it's going to go. Penetrate, rotate, injure. Push, push, push. Then do it again. And again. With constant flow.

Free fighting with the gun should not be a 'special occasion.' Work it until you're tired of it, bored with it--until it is truly just another tool.

Q: What about disarms?

A: Let's say you have a gun and he has a gun. You realize he's a threat (let's say he's shooting at you)--so you shoot his gun, right? That's what's dangerous about him, isn't it?

Of course that's ridiculous. You shoot center of mass to kill the man. Everyone who knows how to shoot knows this. You shoot him, he goes down and bleeds out and his firearm is no longer an issue.

Let's back it off a little--you have a knife and he has a gun. He's trying to kill you, so you stab the gun, right?

Again, patently silly. You stab him to kill him. Same idea as above.

Now you have a baseball bat and he has a gun. An argument could be made for swinging the bat at his arm--but wouldn't the head resolve matters more quickly and efficiently? One swing and he's down and out. By going for the head we stay within what works in violence--injuring him to shut off the brain--instead of having to alter what we're doing because of his firearm. (You may not have the luxury of time to wait and see if he is, indeed, pulling a gun.)

So we've established that shooting, stabbing and whacking the gun are all ridiculous ideas--everyone knows, obviously, that you shoot, stab and whack the man.

Why should it be any different if the tool at your disposal is your body? Why is it okay now to wrestle over the gun instead of knocking him unconscious, crushing his throat or breaking his neck?

Armed or not, the same problem stands before you--a functional human brain driving a body around with a gun in its hands. You need to turn him off.

With a gun you shoot him dead. With a knife you stab him to death. With a stick you beat him to death. And so you must do, as well, with your bare hands.

Having to change what you do for specific tools--knife, stick or gun disarms--having to switch over to specific techniques based upon what he has, is the same as 'shooting the gun.'

Instead of waiting to see which school of fighting you're going to use and then trying to counter whatever it is he's doing, keep it simple, direct and universal by doing the only thing that means anything in violence:

Get in there and injure him NOW.

Take-Away

The number one thing to pay attention to in violent conflict is causing injury. Do not allow yourself to be mesmerized and sucked into believing that it is the extraneous tool that holds all the power; it's the brain driving it that is the problem.

The only weapons in violence are brains in unshattered skulls.

Everything else—knife, stick or firearm—is just an add-on, an inert, inanimate tool.

Use injury to shut off the brain and everything else follows. Go after the tool and you are distracting yourself from the real threat—a thinking, mobile person.

Think of the 9/11 hijackings. The box cutters did not make the terrorists powerful. Their willingness to use the box cutters to kill, and every passenger's personal fear of those box cutters, are what made them powerful.

Let's look at that another way:

What made them powerful was the intent they held in their heads, and the fear in everyone else's.

A box cutter is just a box cutter. It can't do any of those things.

Knowing 'box cutter disarms' would not have helped; such a thing is ignoring the font from which the power truly flowed--the human brain.

The terrorists knew this. Now you know this. And now you will not be distracted or fooled.

You know that there is nothing about a box cutter that makes one immune to losing an eye, getting a throat crushed or being knocked unconscious. The only thing it can do is cut. And it needs a working human brain and body to do even that.

A brain that can be concussed and bruised; a body that can be broken and torn.

By you, with nothing more than the will to get it done and your bare hands.