

Threat Pattern Recognition and Early Threat Recognition Skills **“Reading Behavioral Intent”**

No matter the mode of attack (psychological, emotional, verbal, physical), or if the threat is armed or not, what can give us the tactical advantage, especially in the pre-contact phase of a confrontation, is the ability to recognize a threat “pattern”. Because we know that the skilled predator(s) will use the element of surprise to their advantage, there are threat patterns that we should all be aware of that can “alert” us to a potential attack, thus minimizing the threat’s primary advantage, that being the element of surprise.

Before I share some of the Patterns and Threat Recognitions to be aware of, I believe it is important that the reader review my article on the Anatomy of Fear that can be located at:

<http://www.personalprotectionsystems.ca/The%20Anatomy%20Of%20Fear%20and%20How%20It%20Relates%20To%20Survival%20Skills%20Training2.doc>

In this article I shared the following:

1. The brain has been “hard-wired” to deal with the emotion of fear/violence
2. One pathway is known as the “high road” in which action can be based on conscious will and thought. This pathway appears to take effect during “progressive” types of fear stimuli. Here a combatives student will be able to apply stimulus/response type training using the OODA model having regards to gross motor skills and Hick’s Law
3. A second pathway is known as the “low road” which is triggered by a spontaneous/ unexpected attack. Here, the brain will take control of the body with an immediate “protective reflex” (downloaded directly to the brain stem where all of our reflexive responses to danger are stored), which will override any system of combat that bases its ability on “cognitively” applying a physical response. This is especially true if the trained response is not congruent with the “protective reflex” (this is exactly what I observed in the 1992 video study that I conducted and mentioned earlier in this article)

When it comes to Threat Pattern Recognition, it is important to note that there are two different threat patterns to be aware of that are, in my opinion, very closely related to the “high road” and “low road” fear response that I have called:

1. High emotional arousal patterns (low road), and
2. Low emotional arousal patterns (high road)

In my article "Ritualized Combat" located at:

<http://www.personalprotectionsystems.ca/Ritualized%20Combat.doc>

I discussed ritualized combative signs that fell under three specific categories:

1. Assault Not Imminent But Possible
2. Assault is Imminent
3. Signs of submission

It has been my experience, that many of the ritualized combative signs that fall under these three categories (especially the first two), are very much associated with "high emotional" arousal patterns. One only has to review the hours and hours of CCTV videotape of violent encounters on the Internet, to observe these ritualized combative signs in action. Often these signs are visible in the "inexperienced" attacker, or what I like to call the baby predator, or by those who resort to violence, usually based upon ego, and often fueled by alcohol and/or drugs. This form of violence often takes place without cognitive rationale, and can often be seen in the form of a rage attack. These guys, once you understand these "high emotional" arousals, are often very easy to read in the pre-contact phase of a physical encounter.

Having shared the above, it has also been my experience, that many of these ritualized combative signs that can be seen in the "high emotional" arousal patterns, can often be cloaked by the "experienced" covert attacker, who truly understands the tactical advantage of the surprise ambush, thus making their intended target extremely vulnerable to a committed attack. By being aware of the "low emotional" arousal patterns of these experienced attackers, we can again provide ourselves with cognitive "red flags" that can turn a surprise ambush, that works to the advantage of the attacker, into a prepared interdiction via awareness, avoidance/disengagement, non-verbal or verbal communication, or even a committed physical attack using the element of surprise on our part. So what are some of the "low emotional" arousal patterns that I have observed being used by the experienced covert attacker:

A) Stalking behaviour, not unlike what we see in the animal kingdom when a snake approaches its prey

B) Positioning:

The professional will usually use one of four "relative" positioning tactics to set their intended victim up for attack:

1) Closing:

- Most common, walks directly up to target to get as close as they can
- The closer they get the more success he will have in his abilities to overwhelm and control

2) Cornering/ Trapping:

- This is the second most commonly used tactic
- Will want to corner you between himself, you, and any safe exit point

3) Pincer:

- Usually used by two or more criminals
- One circles while the other distracts you
- One attacker follows from behind and while you are focused on them, there is a second attacker just up ahead
- Things to be aware of, two people standing across from one another in a narrow space such as a hallway, staircase, or alley

4) Surround:

- Most common in "packs" or "swarms"
- One in the pack will distract while the others surround
- Instead of a fast swarm, the pack will usually drift towards you so as not to alert you to their intentions

c) The Chameleon Effect:

The professional will often wear clothing and items that help:

- Conceal Weapons (both overt and covert), or make the access to a weapon easier during the acquisition phase
- Conceal the signs of ritualized combat, such as sunglasses (even when it is dark outside or even when inside a building) or hats

d) The Tell:

A fellow police officer that I know in Ontario, was able to identify a subject who was carrying a concealed illegal firearm in a shoulder holster under his jacket, by the way he was periodically (and likely unconsciously) moving the arm in which the firearm was hanging under. My friend was able to notice this because he did the same thing when he carried. This in my opinion is a really good example of low emotional threat pattern recognition. Some other tells could include:

- How is the person carrying a visible weapon such as a knife. Is it a clip-it type knife that blends in color to the garment being worn by the potential threat? Is it a knife (such as a Buck knife) that is kept in a pouch, but the pouch is carried upside down to allow the force of gravity to deploy the knife into the hand quickly, once unsnapped, with very little arm movement; a favorite of some outlaw motor cycle gangs.
- Is the movement of a person's body (especially hands and arms), consistent with the pre-deployment of a weapon, be it concealed or visible?

While working narcotics enforcement (especially from covert observation posts), I would often use pattern recognition tells that were consistent with those who were dealing at the street level; such as head and eye movement, positioning to sell their product, the short walk and talks, which would allow me to concentrate my observations on primary targets to watch more closely.

The two goals of this article were:

- 1) To once again bring to light the high emotional patterns of ritualized combat that are often very visible overt precursors to a physical attack, and
- 2) To become more aware of the low emotional/behavioral patterns of the experienced attacker, who uses the element of the surprise ambush to their tactical advantage for a committed covert attack.

Threat pattern recognition, and early threat recognition skills, during the awareness phase, are the first steps in staying safe, and can play a very important role in reading behavioral intent. This process can then allow one to utilize avoidance/escape/evasion strategies, or to engage a threat either non-verbally, verbally, and/or physically (including

the pre-deployment of a weapon on your part) prior to an actual physical attack by the threat faced.

Darren