

Winning Mind, Warrior Spirit ***The Science and Art of Combatives Training***

First and foremost, I would like to thank Brian Willis who is both a warrior and a combatives scholar who directly influenced the spawning of this article. Brian is a true innovator in the training of the mind and spirit of warriors. I am proud and honored to call Brian a friend and teacher.

As many of you know, much of what I write and teach surrounds the very important issue of combat psychology. I truly believe that physical training, although important, is not good enough for "winning" a street encounter. An instructor I heard once stated, "there are far more people who have survived a violent physical encounter who had no combatives training, than there are those who do train in combatives or self protection." In my opinion, the keystones for self-protection are a Winning Mind and Warrior Spirit.

Winning Mind:

So what does it mean to "WIN"???? The best combatives definition for WIN comes from Lou Holtz who stated that "win" is an acronym for, WHAT is IMPORTANT NOW. In combat, no truer words have been spoken. This is why having the ability to adapt, overcome, and improvise is so important in battle. Winning isn't always pretty, but who said fighting for your life or body would be. It is an unfortunate reality that many who do not train in a true reality based system of self-protection, form their ideals of combat based upon dojo etiquette and Hollywood fantasy. If you do not find yourself in harms way as a result of job employment or lifestyle, then viewing violence that has been caught on video is but one way to bring the ugly, vicious, and brutal reality of street violence into the emotion of training. More on emotion in training a little later in this post.

Hunter Armstrong coined the phrase, "One Mind, Any Weapon". In John Steinbeck's book; *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights*, he wrote, "This is the law. The only purpose of fighting is to win. There is no possible victory in defence. The sword is more important than the shield, and skill is more important than either. The next weapon is the brain. All else is supplemental." Strong words that need to be heeded by all that study combatives.

Warrior Spirit:

As instructors and students of combatives, we need to understand that we all have within us the warrior spirit. Our mission is to develop, foster, and nurture that warrior spirit through realistic physical and psychological training. Defining Warrior Spirit is not always easy, but two authors have encapsulated the essence of this often-misunderstood attribute:

"A warrior is on permanent guard against the roughness of human behaviour. A warrior is magical and ruthless, a maverick with the most refined taste and manners, whose worldly task is to sharpen, yet disguise, his cutting edge so that no one would be able to suspect his ruthlessness"

The Power of Silence, Carlos Castaneda

"The Warrior fights because he believes that he is fighting for something good, something positive, something that will improve the quality of the world around him. The warrior never forgets that he is an example and so will always act accordingly. He is

a leader, and when there is no one else to lead, the warrior must lead himself forward to a different, higher standard.ö

Unleashing the Warrior Within, Richard J Machowicz

The true warrior is really a predator with asymmetrical rules of engagement. Warrior Spirit allows us to operate in the gray, but prevents us from stepping into the black. Warrior Spirit is the sheepdog and not the wolf. We protect the flock, those we love, and ourselves from the wolf. Warrior Spirit is often ridiculed by those who never need our services, but yet honored by those who need us when the wolf appears. Warrior Spirit allows us to run towards gunfire to save others, while everyone else is running away. Warrior Spirit allows us to keep fighting even when death is knocking at our door. Warrior Spirit is about being genuine.

Emotion in Training:

To foster Winning Mind and Warrior Spirit, we need to combine emotion and imagination in our training. A popular training ethos echoed by many is, ö train the way you want to fight, and you will fight the way you train.ö Without emotion and imagination, such training will be nothing more than playing patty cake with one another. Our goal is to make the trained response the dominant response through repetition combined with emotion and imagination. We NEED to make our training real so that all of our learning modalities are engaged so that in combat what we do is habit or stimulus response based.

There is a reason why the military and some police departments no longer shoot at silhouette targets, but rather human targets.

There is a reason why progressive police departments, military organizations, and even some self protection schools have moved to stress inoculation training

The reason such training reinforces positive emotions during training. Why is it that those from the traditional arts and even some modern combatives students, when placed into "open mode" dynamic scenario based simulations, have great difficulty translating their skills in time of need??? The answer is simple in my opinion; in their training world they never incorporated realistic emotion and imagination. By training with imagination and emotion, based upon the reality of the street, it allows us to create habits that will carry over to the real world in time of need.

Based upon the above noted, I would suggest a paradigm shift in training ethos from, "train the way you want to fight, and you will fight the way you train", to "Train with imagination and emotion, then you will fight the way you train". When training against a knife at your school, don't picture your training partner, but rather imagine a street thug wanting to gut you just because. Include all modalities: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Such emotional training, combined with scenario based stress inoculation training, allows us to create an emotional attachment that will have huge tactical advantages in the real world.

The Power of Words:

Because emotion and imagination are powerful training tools, we need to ensure as teachers, instructors, and facilitators to learning that we do not circumvent this learning process by using words or language that programs failure. I cannot tell you how many times in scenario-based training I have heard instructors say to their student:

- You're dead

- You screwed up and just got you and your friends killed
- On the street you would have died

Instead, if the student does something less desirable why not explore solutions, then have them imagine themselves implementing those solutions with emotion and winning. Stress inoculation training can be either a powerful tool for programming win mindset and warrior spirit, or a very strong negative self-destruction process for learning physical and mental defeat. At the conclusion of a scenario based training simulation, where the student does something less desirable, would it not be more productive to leave them with positive options, rather than loosing or dying as their last image. Create expectations for success

Darren