

The Combative Mindset

By Chris Fry

Defensive Software

I live a defensive lifestyle. Software or mental skills such as awareness, avoidance, escape, physical boundary setting and verbal diffusion are my primary lines of defense. This defensive mindset is the foundation of my training and preparation. Sadly, I often find myself not utilizing these soft skills due to the minutia of daily life which occupy my thoughts: family obligations, job obligations, sickness, schedules, finances... the list goes on. These common daily distractions occur far more often than being attacked and because of this fact I sometimes allow my soft skills and defenses to drop unintentionally.



Similar to paying for car insurance, I train in personal protection so that if my soft skills fail and I am involved in a critical life threatening incident, I have coverage. Unfortunately, like car accidents, we don't always get to choose when that incident may happen. Because of the proximity or distances associated with robbery, rape, kidnapping, assault and the tactics criminals utilize to enact such offenses we will most often be reacting to a criminal's action against us. If this happens my defensive skills have failed or have been circumvented and I need to regain control of the situation immediately or risk losing more than my possessions.

Combative Software

Regaining control or re-taking initiative while being assaulted is extremely difficult. A different mindset is required, I need to have in place a mindset that addresses this situation; a combative, winning mindset. If awareness has broken down and I am under attack, the time for being or acting defensive has passed. If the situation dictates that I go for a handgun (a weapon of convenience), edged tool, impact tool or utilize empty hand skills then I need to do so without hesitation or fear and my goal must be singularly focused upon winning the fight as rapidly as possible.

combative [ˈkɒmbətɪv ˈkʌm-]

adj

eager or ready to fight, argue, etc.; aggressive

combatively *adv*

combativeness *n*

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Unfortunately, most of us are not born and raised with a combative mindset. We are raised to be good people wanting the best for ourselves, family and others. An admirable mindset and life goal however somewhat unrealistic for the world we now live in. A combative mindset must be cultivated, developed and trained. It requires an understanding of interpersonal conflict and an understanding of ourselves, what we are capable of and how far we are willing to go.

To develop an effective combative mindset you first need to realize and admit to these facts:

- 1) Extreme violence CAN happen to me and my family anywhere, anytime
- 2) The police and/or help won't ALWAYS be there for me
- 3) My home, neighborhood, city is not immune to crime & violence

Considering the above:

- 1) Am I willing and able to take another human beings life if necessary to protect myself or family with whatever means available to me i.e.: gun, knife, rock, pen, fingers and teeth?
- 2) Does my faith or belief system allow me to harm another and possibly take a life?
- 3) Do I have the willpower to persevere and continue fighting when extremely fatigued or injured, perhaps mortally?
- 4) Am I capable of facing extreme mental stress such as seeing a loved one, child, partner or friend wounded or killed and continue fighting?
- 5) Do I have the willpower to do the things my mind tells me I can't?

Consider these facts and questions, think about them carefully. Most won't be able to answer all of the questions above; some may still deny the (3) stated facts. If you think you know the answers you probably don't unless you have already experienced conflict and had to fight, persevere and win.

Develop a Combative Mindset

Developing a combative mindset takes work. As stated above, it runs contrary to how good, honest people are raised. Similar to how it is impossible to acquire new hard skills (the ability to shoot, cut, punch or kick effectively) in the middle of a fight, it will be very difficult to develop a combative mindset during a life threatening incident. Like hard skills (which the vast majority of personal protection training focuses on), combative software needs to be developed and trained effectively and consistently.

Tips for developing a combative mindset:

- Admit to and accept the (3) facts stated above
- Explore your faith and/or belief system
- Study, understand and accept the mental and physiological effects that extreme stress will have on you
- When injured, get angry; develop vehemence as an emotional reaction to pain
- Test your will power every day, do something you don't want to do. You won't want to fight another person but you may have to, acclimate yourself to this reality
- Get into better physical condition. A healthy body supports a healthy, strong mind, handles fatigue better and recovers from injury faster
- Visualize and rehearse conflict. Realistic visualization and rehearsal simulates experience within the subconscious mind. Experience builds confidence and confidence supports success
- Train, train and train some more. The better trained you are the more confident you will be in your ability to protect yourself and/or others

These are just a few methods with which you can begin to develop your combative mindset. Don't neglect your defensive software, always attempt to maintain environmental awareness and avoid trouble. Understand and acknowledge that possessing a combative mindset will better prepare you for all eventualities while living a defensive lifestyle.