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Federal Probation

Choosing the Future of American Corrections: Punishment or Reform? *James Byrne*
Mary Brewster

The Impact of Critical Incident Stress: Is Your Office Prepared to Respond? *Mark Maggio*
Elaine Terenzi

Probation Officer Safety and Mental Conditioning *Paul W. Brown*

Federal Detention: The United States Marshals Service's Management of a Challenging Program *Linda S. Caudell-Feagan*

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turing Justice in Russia: A New Era of Challenges *G. Frederick Allen*

t the Future—Carving Out New Territory for American actions *J. Michael Quinlan*

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This Issue in Brief

ACQUISITIONS

Choosing the Future of American Corrections: Punishment or Reform?—What does the future hold for criminal justice and corrections in this country? Authors James Byrne and Mary Brewster examine the four most important predictions of John DiIulio, Princeton University professor and author of *No Escape—The Future of American Corrections*, and offer some suggestions to those state and local corrections policy-makers who believe the United States is moving in the wrong direction.

The Impact of Critical Incident Stress: Is Your Office Prepared to Respond?—Physical assault of an officer while on duty, unexpected death of a co-worker, a natural disaster—all can be considered critical incidents which affect not only the individuals involved but the organization as a whole. Authors Mark Maggio and Elaine Terenzi define critical incidents, explain the importance of providing stress education before such crises occur, and offer suggestions as to what administrator and managers can do to respond effectively and maintain a healthy and productive workforce.

Probation Officer Safety and Mental Conditioning.—Author Paul W. Brown discusses mental conditioning as a component of officer safety that is all too often overlooked or minimized in training programs. He focuses on five areas of mental conditioning: the color code of awareness, crisis rehearsal, the continuum of force, kinesics, and positive self-talk.

Federal Detention: The United States Marshals Service's Management of a Challenging Program.—Focusing on the detention of Federal prisoners, author Linda S. Caudell-Feagan discusses the work of the United States Marshals Service. She explains how detention beds are acquired, how the Marshals Service administers funds to pay the costs of housing Federal detainees, what the ramifications of increased detention costs are, and what actions the Marshals Service has taken to address detention problems.

Total Quality Management: Can It Work in Federal Probation?—Author Richard W. Janes outlines the principles of total quality management and their

application to Federal probation work. The article is based not only on a review of the literature but also on the author's experience in a Federal probation agency where these concepts are being implemented.

College Education in Prisons: The Inmates' Perspectives.—Author Ahmad Tootoonchi reports on a study to determine the impact of college education on the attitudes of inmates toward life and their future. The results reveal that a significant number of the inmates surveyed believe that their behavior can change for the better through college education.

Visitors to Women's Prisons in California: An Exploratory Study.—Author Lisa G. Fuller describes a study which focuses on visitors to California's three state women's prisons. The study, designed to

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Probation Officer Safety and Mental Conditioning

BY PAUL W. BROWN*

PROBATION, PAROLE, and pretrial services officers are increasingly concerned about their safety in the office and the field. More than ever, corrections agencies are asking officers to supervise serious drug offenders and abusers, mentally disturbed individuals, and violent offenders who frequently reside in dangerous, hostile neighborhoods. Because of these concerns, more agencies are allowing officers to arm themselves with impact weapons, personal defense sprays such as pepper gas, and firearms (Brown, 1990; Lindner, 1992).

Imagine the following scenario occurring during an unscheduled home contact. You are a veteran probation officer, you are one of the better shots in the office with your duty weapon, you have been issued pepper gas, and you have an advanced color belt in a martial art. Upon arrival at the offender's house, you find yourself in the middle of a violent domestic dispute. The disputants are armed, and you cannot leave because they are between you and the only exit. They turn their hostility from each other toward you. What do you do? If this is the first time you're giving this kind of situation any real thought, it is probably too late. You may be in serious trouble because you are not mentally conditioned or prepared to respond appropriately. Panic will be your most likely response.

In officer safety training, there is the concept of the officer survival triangle. Each side of the triangle represents a component of officer survival: mental conditioning is the base, and tactics and shooting skills are the sides (Remsberg, 1986). This article on officer safety will concentrate on mental conditioning because it is the component all too often overlooked or minimized in training programs. Just as it is the base of the survival triangle, it should be the foundation of the officer safety triangle.

Mental Conditioning

Mental conditioning "can prepare you for a crisis encounter before it happens and help you cope with stress hazards during and after its occurrence" (Remsberg, 1986). Officer safety training should have a heavy component of mental conditioning because, without it, luck becomes the strongest factor in determining survival. In an analysis of shooting incidents, it was determined the factors needed for survival are

mental skill (75 percent), shooting skill (15 percent), physical skill (5 percent), and luck (5 percent) (Remsberg, 1986). Of these factors, mental preparedness is not only the most significant but also the skill over which the officer has the most control and influence. The officer's most potent weapon is not carried on the hip, as many may think. Instead, as Remsberg (1986) points out,

Your mind is the most dangerous weapon you carry on patrol. The extent to which it is prepared for a high-risk, high-stress encounter determines for whom it is dangerous. Properly prepared, it can be a paralyzing threat to your adversary. Unprepared, it can prove devastating to you or your fellow officers because of its capacity, under stress, to mercilessly sabotage your performance.

Firearms practice and qualifications, self-defense practice, and drills with personal defense sprays are usually funded, scheduled, and controlled by the officer's agency. Commitment to mental preparation is done almost exclusively by the individual officer. The agency should provide some assistance and guidelines, but it is the individual officer who must make the commitment to learn and practice mental conditioning. Any training program that provides weapon and defensive tactics training without a mental preparation component shortchanges the officer and the agency. In this article, five major areas of mental conditioning are discussed: the color code of awareness, crisis rehearsal, the continuum of force, kinesics, and positive self-talk.

Color Code of Awareness

According to one source, the concept of the color code of awareness was developed by the U.S. Marine Corps and refined by Jeff Cooper, a retired Marine Corps officer and a firearms writer and trainer. Many law enforcement officers use some form of the concept; it is a universal language among officers that constantly serves to remind them of the potential threat level (Scott, 1992). In a book on self-defense (Albert, 1993), the color code has also been recommended for civilian use. Basically, the code is an indication of one's mental awareness of one's surroundings and the people in it. The model presented here uses conditions White, Yellow, Orange, Red, and Black to represent the five levels of "awareness, anticipation, concentration and self-control that constitute your mind set" (Remsberg, 1986).

The officer is operating in condition White when in a nonthreatening to a very low-level threat environment, such as the officer's residence. The level of

*Mr. Brown, a probation programs specialist, Probation and Pretrial Services Division, Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, is a firearms training coordinator.

awareness rises to condition Yellow at work, either in the office or the field, because of the increased opportunity for hazardous incidents. In condition Yellow, the officer is conscious of the surroundings by being alert and continuously scanning the environment for potential dangers. A hostile gang member in the community who moves toward the officer after verbal taunts or the supervisee whose body language indicates danger signs jump the officer from Yellow into condition Orange. A serious incident may result; all the signs are present, and the officer shifts from Orange to condition Red. In condition Red, the crisis is about to occur or is under way. At this time, the officer responds the way he or she was trained. Thinking should be largely reactive or automatic because there is usually no time for conscious thinking—just for reacting the way one was trained (Brown, forthcoming). Officers can operate indefinitely in condition Yellow but only briefly in conditions Orange and Red because the stress level is so high (Remsberg, 1986).

If there has been no training, no mental preparation, then there is the deadly jump into condition Black where there is total panic, paralysis. Why the jump into condition Black? According to some experts, the mind is simply not capable of making quantum leaps from noncrisis condition White to crisis condition Red without proper preparation. Remsberg (1986) explains:

If the officers attacked in White ever realize the crisis that is upon them before they are injured or killed, they realize it too late. After eonic lag time from the startle response, they try in one giant leap to escalate from White to Red to defend themselves. But the mental and physical adjustments required are too enormous. Massive, unexpected stress is deluging their systems, and under this emergency ultra-mobilization they fail to land in Red. Instead, they shoot off the color spectrum into [Black].

Mental Rehearsal

Another technique of mental conditioning is mental crisis rehearsal. The officer mentally rehearses "what if" or "if . . . then" worse-case situations and how the officer might appropriately and safely respond to them. This rehearsal can be done in the office, in the field, off work while jogging—in fact, at any time alone or with someone. Certainly, it should be practiced with a partner so each party knows how the other thinks and would react in a crisis. The officer might think "what if the supervisee is drunk when I arrive at his residence, has contraband drugs on the living room table, is in a shouting and shoving match with the spouse, makes an aggressive move towards me, or grabs for my weapon?" Mental rehearsal techniques have long been practiced by athletes, and numerous scientific studies have confirmed their value in performance enhancement (Remsberg, 1986).

Officers can improve their performance with mental rehearsal just as athletes do. When a crisis occurs, the officer's mind will not jump into condition Black because the officer has given thought to the possible conditions facing him or her. The benefits of mental rehearsal are important:

1. mental rehearsal helps you "*overlearn*" tactics and techniques so they become second nature to you;
2. by familiarizing you with the look and feel of crisis situations, it *defuses* the impact of the stress-shock phenomena; and
3. it *imprints* learned response patterns on your system so that under pressure they guide your physical actions instantly and successfully without conscious thought.

In short, this powerful psychophysiological tool will allow you to turn what you would most *like* to do when your life is in jeopardy into what you will most *likely* do (Remsberg, 1986).

Most officers have been frightened by an unexpected event or momentarily panicked by someone screaming or suddenly appearing in their paths when least expected. This is known as the startle response. If you expect that a person will scream or jump out in front of you, then your reaction will be substantially different than when such action is totally unexpected. A calm, measured response to a job-related critical incident can be the benefit of proper mental preparation.

It is important to program the subconscious mind by repetitive drills and thinking so that the conscious mind might be bypassed in a crisis. This phenomenon frequently occurs with drivers who react automatically to avoid accidents; if the drivers had to think about a response, it would be too late. In a crisis, officers often are unable to act or react because they have given no thought to potential responses. This deficiency can be overcome with physical skills by practicing thousands of repetitions to help develop muscle memory. Obviously, it is often impractical to practice thousands of repetitive physical drills because of both time and financial restraints. Mental rehearsal can help overcome this apparent dilemma. Self-defense tactics and shooting skills are a good example of physical skills that can be enhanced by mentally rehearsing them. Bunting (1993) notes:

Police officers experience impaired cognitive function or the ability to think. . . . Thus officers must practice survival skills both physically and mentally, to be adequately prepared. They must mentally rehearse responses to life-threatening situations and have backup plans as well.

There is usually no time for thinking in the traditional sense; the body must react, in effect, bypassing

the conscious mind. Mental rehearsal is one way to make responses automatic:

The subconscious mind can perform a complex psychomotor skill more efficiently and with greater speed than the conscious mind. The subconscious can perform a sequence of tasks quickly and efficiently without our conscious attention after sufficient repetition, conditioning. Long-term memory, muscle memory, is conditioned to react to a stimulus, a threat. The unconscious continually processes stimuli in abbreviated time frames without conscious effort (Schwartz, 1993).

The officer needs a use of force frame of reference in order to know what level of force is acceptable under which conditions. An agency sanctioned use of force continuum meets this need.

Continuum of Force

A third concept in mental preparedness is the continuum of force or, as some experts prefer to call it, the "use of force continuum." The continuum of force represents the various levels of appropriate force to use in responding to an aggressor from mere presence to lethal force. One definition of a continuum of force is "a spectrum of control tactics from body language and oral communication to weaponless physical control to nonlethal and lethal measures" (Geller & Scott, 1992). The color code of awareness can be connected to the use of force continuum. At the low levels of force, the officer is in condition Yellow. As the threat escalates, so does the color level from Orange to Red. The continuum of force also gives the officer a reference in which to mentally rehearse various "what if" scenarios. Remsberg (1986) further defines the continuum of force:

One useful approach is to think of force as a flexible *continuum*, on which the various means of exerting control are positioned. . . . Building up from bottom to top, each mode represents force of greater intensity. That is, the continuum moves from those options that are *most reversible* to those that are *least reversible* . . . from those offering the *least certainty of control* to the *greatest certainty* . . . and from those with the *least expectancy for tissue damage* to the *greatest*. Thus as you go up the scale, you need greater justification.

The continuum begins with the officer's presence and escalates to body language and verbal commands in the case of low-level resistance from the supervisee and minimal danger to the officer. The next level is usually represented by personal defense weapons such as personal defense sprays or by control and defensive tactics as the threat to the officer becomes more serious. Without regular training in control and defense tactics, personal defense sprays such as Oleoresin Capsicum (pepper spray) might be both more appropriate and effective than physical techniques. Personal defense sprays lessen the chance for injury to either the officer or the assailant with a better chance of assailant control. Because most community corrections agencies do not authorize impact weapons such

as batons and blackjacks, the next and ultimate level on the continuum is deadly or lethal force. Although the use of lethal force usually consists of responding to the threat of great bodily injury or death with a handgun, the response could involve the use of any available weapon such as a heavy stick or bookend.

Some agencies expect the officer to withdraw from a hostile situation, when the officer can do so safely, rather than to use any physical or lethal force. The amount of force used by the officer is determined by the assailant. The officer should respond to the assailant's aggression only with the appropriate amount of force to control the threat. When the threat to the officer lessens or stops, the level of force used by the officer should deescalate correspondingly. There is a misconception that it is somehow necessary to proceed through each step of the continuum to reach the justified level. If faced with great bodily injury or death, the officer could and should jump from depending on officer presence and verbal commands to the possible use of deadly force (Brown, forthcoming).

The officer must have flexibility in applying the continuum of force. A higher level of force used by a 120-pound officer with no martial arts training might be acceptable when the same level of force would not be acceptable if used by a 220-pound officer with a black belt in karate. Also, the officer may determine the acceptable level of force, in part, based on the officer's knowledge of the threatening offender's martial arts training or history of violence. The usefulness of such knowledge is one good reason for being familiar with the backgrounds of the persons you supervise. A history of violence is usually considered to be the most reliable predictor of future use of violence.

In a crisis, an officer can mentally review the continuum of force for the justified response in less than a second (Remsberg, 1986). If the use of force is necessary and results in legal action against the officer and the agency, the continuum of force provides validation of the acceptable level of force to be used in various scenarios (Stewart & Hart, 1993). As Remsberg (1986) points out:

In court, you then have a framework to hang your hat on. You can cite the Force Continuum . . . point out where the procedure you used ranks relative to others in intensity . . . describe your relative strengths in the encounter versus those of the suspect . . . and then explain why, based on your training and experience, you considered the option you chose to be the *minimum* force you could use to control the confrontation. In other words, you explain why less forceful options would not have worked—or actually did not work—in that situation.

However, the use of force continuum can also be used against the officer and agency if the officer departs from the guidelines set by an agency approved continuum of force.

Kinesics or body language, the next area of mental conditioning to be covered, provides a tool to assist the

officer in reading an aggressor's intent and in responding with the appropriate level of force needed to protect the officer.

Kinesics

Kinesics is the study of nonverbal behavior. Some experts believe that part of officer survival is based on being able to understand nonverbal communication because approximately 90 percent of an aggressor's communication can be nonverbal (Ouellette, 1993). The officer who can read body language, both his or her own as well as that of others, is a safer officer. Body language may be more accurate than speech as an indicator of what an individual might do or is actually thinking:

[S]cientists have learned that facial expressions, gestures, posture, and other body movements transmit messages that either reinforce or contradict the spoken message. Understanding the possible meanings of expressions and gestures provides important insight into a person's feelings (Pritchett, 1993).

When an aggressor goes from "ritualized combat" of threatening and posturing to an attack-is-imminent mode, there are numerous external signs the trained officer should be able to readily read in order to identify this transition (Ouellette, 1993). The aggressor's shift from being less dangerous to more dangerous provides the officer with visual cues as to the possible need for an increased level of force because an attack may be imminent. The officer should be shifting mentally from condition Orange to condition Red in awareness level and mentally scanning possible actions to take. Some of the danger signs exhibited by the dangerous aggressor are:

- Face turns from red to white (with light skinned individuals).
- Lips push forward to tighten over the teeth.
- Eyebrows go from frowning to drooping over the eyes.
- Heads go from tilted back to a down position to protect the neck.
- Eye contact goes from direct stare to breaking eye contact and then to looking at the target of attack.
- Breathing goes from quick to rapid and then deepens.
- Shoulders go from squared toward the officer to bladed.
- Hands go from opening and closing to closed fists.
- Verbalization goes from being belligerent, yelling, and cursing to no verbalization at all.
- If the aggressor is beyond the reach of the officer, the final gesture is to lower the body in order to push off for a dynamic attack (Ouellette, 1993).

It is also important for the trained officer to be mentally aware of how high stress situations affect his or her own physical behavior. Fine motor skills, such as reloading a gun, that would ordinarily be easy to perform may become difficult or impossible. It may be difficult to speak or the voice may become high. Vision may be blurred from watering eyes, and breathing may be difficult. There may be a loss of body flexibility. Most of these reaction occur from the psychophysiological changes brought about by the ancient flight or fight survival syndrome. Tunnel vision and sensory distortions are common reactions (Remsberg, 1986).

By being aware that these reactions may occur in both the officer and the aggressor, the officer should be better able to respond when they do occur. Because sensory distortions are common in a crisis, it is important for the officer to give loud, brief commands in order to be heard and understood. The officer's tunnel vision focuses on the aggressor during a crisis and may prevent the officer from seeing a threat from an accomplice unless the officer is aware of this effect and tries to compensate for it. According to Albert (1993), "[c]ontrolled, careful breathing will help lower your adrenaline level and prevent 'tunnel vision' from hitting you."

It is important to listen to your body's messages which might be providing a subconscious message of danger. As Qulia (1990) explains,

Intuition is often correct. If a situation makes you nervous, back-off and reconsider. Do not take foolish risks. "Bail out" if necessary. Do not let ego or machismo interfere with common sense.

Positive Self-Talk

The final concept to be covered in mental conditioning is positive self-talk. The officer repeats to himself or herself positive statements that he or she will survive any situation, he or she has the skills needed to survive any crisis, he or she will defeat any threat, and he or she will return home safe at the end of each day. However, positive self-talk is more than empty rhetoric; it must be based on solid training and a commitment by the officer to survive, to retain a survival state of mind:

All suggestions should be direct and positive. Avoid any negative wording like "I won't give up" because it suggests the possibility of negative behavior. Permissive suggestions ("I can feel relaxed") tend to meet less resistance from your subconscious mind than orders ("I will feel relaxed"). Change the suggestions occasionally as they seem to lose their power. NEVER USE THE WORD "TRY" IN ANY SUGGESTION. That implies doubt and the possibility of failure (Remsberg, 1986).

Rossi (1993) suggests that every officer begin the tour of duty by affirming, "No matter what happens today, I will survive." The importance of making a commitment to survive cannot be overemphasized.

Albert (1993) reminds us of the importance of the mind in officer safety by referring to one cop's street motto:

God gave you hands to protect your face, a chin to protect your throat, shoulders to protect your jaw, arms to protect your body, hips to protect your groin, and finally a brain to protect your life.

The importance of the mind is not limited to the preparation for critical incidents, but it comes into play in surviving a worst case scenario when you are seriously wounded despite your best efforts. In war-time with more potent weapons than are commonly found on the streets, only 10 percent of those shot die. If you are aware you have been shot, the odds of surviving are great and will increase if you have a survival state of mind. Because the will to survive and not simply the seriousness of the wound may make the difference between dying and living, it is important not to give up or give in, to program yourself for survival. Tell yourself that you will survive no matter what happens (Remsberg, 1986). There are cases of law enforcement officers who died from their wounds when they should have survived and aggressors who lived when they should have died from their wounds. The difference between dying and living frequently comes down to having the will to survive.

Conclusion

Officers who are both mentally and physically prepared will greatly improve their possibility of surviving a critical incident. By using the tools of mental conditioning such as the color code of awareness, crisis rehearsal, the continuum of force, kinesics, and positive self-talk, officers can significantly enhance the chance of survival when facing a crisis, armed or unarmed. Remember, the mind is the most powerful weapon the officer possesses. Once the critical incident is under way, it is too late to think about what should have been done or training you wished you had taken or taken seriously. The mind will be overwhelmed and incapable of reacting properly, going into condition

Black or total panic. The mind must be programmed before the crisis occurs. Now is the time to make the commitment to survive. Practice mental conditioning and preparation along with physical survival skills in order to help assure safe return home each day. Make a commitment to be a survivor.

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