

The Theory of Presumed Compliance

By: Tony Blauer

- **OFFICER KILLED** during a routine stop of a man riding a bicycle. The officer was killed with his own handgun.
- **ENRAGED STATE TROOPER** drags unarmed woman from her car, violently throwing her to the ground.
- **OFFICER** answering call for help from a battered woman gets stabbed by the same woman while attempting to control her estranged boyfriend.

Stories like these occur daily throughout North America invoking outrage and indignation. How many tragedies must occur before the administrators, trainers and officers realize that there is something wrong with how police officers train for survival?

Over a decade ago I realized that the only way I'd ever be able to defend myself is if I understood four things: What did I fear? How do I conquer those fears? How do 'real' attacks occur? And, how do I defend against those real attacks? The "truth" I discovered, was never in bigger muscles or accumulating techniques. The truth, yours and mine, was in understanding behavior, psychology, biomechanics and violence. Sounds so simple, right? So tell me, why has this obvious process eluded most DT instructors as well as virtually every self-defense and martial art system?

Defensive Tactics trainers must realize that it is *only* during their class that an officer is supposed to learn how to protect himself *and* control a hostile subject. If that process fails, someone may die. If half the techniques taught don't really work - half the training time is wasted. And sadly, most of what is taught does not address the realities of serious, aggressive resistance (which is the only time an officer is in real danger). Many street tragedies could be avoided. Presumptuous training strategies and tactics are partly to blame. Suffice it to say there are problems with the training process. However, there is a far bigger problem than the DT curriculum. The real problem is you - the officer.

Yes, the officer is responsible for many of these tragedies. Why? Because at the end of the day, it is you and you alone responsible to make the call, to choose the level of force, to trust your instincts and your intuition. It is your responsibility alone. **During confrontations, responsibility must be read *response/ability*: one's ability to respond.**

As a professional police officer, you knowingly and deliberately place yourself in harms way to 'serve and protect'. You must ask yourself some moral, ethical and legal questions regarding your preparation and response/ability. Do you feel confident to contain and control violence? What areas do you feel weak in *and why aren't you developing those areas*? Indifference is not a valid defense, nor is ignorance.

The system, the research, the analysis and legal aid is only at your disposal AFTER the event. Until then you are in control (or supposed to be). Being an effective police officer goes beyond the oath and attitude. On judgment day you are either a warrior or a *worrier*. Preparation will decide.

And what is preparation? It is the truth filter you view your responsibilities through. And if that *ability to respond* is inadequate, deficient, delinquent, or insufficient, you fail. If you lose a confrontation, you may lose a court case, but perhaps you'll lose your life. Preparation is about conscience and accountability. If you can't motivate yourself to practice drawing and dry firing or cuffing tactics or to work on verbal skills or do 10 finger tip pushups every morning and go for a run (you get the picture), then you aren't responsible. Police work is dangerous. Period.

Coach Bear Bryant said, "*The will to win compares little with the will to prepare to win.*" In my 17 years of professional teaching I have observed lot's of 'will to win', but rarely do I see the requisite preparation to match the attitude.

How many in-service officers do you know who continue to train for survival, close quarter skills, weapon retention, hands-on knife controls, contact simulations, verbal de-escalation strategies, etc.? If you think the academy DT program is all you ever need, plus the occasional seminar, forget it. It's not enough - it's never enough. It takes a microsecond of doubt or hesitation to change your life forever in combat.

How can you ensure your survival? You can't. But you sure can enhance it. And it starts with a major paradigm shift, a real attitude adjustment. It starts when you can recognize 'presumed compliance'.

Presumed Compliance is a key component to the "**Behavioral Defensive Tactics**TM" program. It is the pervasive mind-set that pre-disposes an officer to fail (or at a minimum, succeed under duress and with friction).

During every confrontation, there is a sequential relationship between predator and prey that transcends technique. Training must address this behavioral truth. Also, there are three distinct arsenals required for *real* survival training. The powerful synergistic qualities of the emotional, psychological and biomechanical arsenals have not been sufficiently explored nor effectively addressed by most of the defensive tactics community.

To understand the totality of the concept one must first appreciate the *Three-Dimensional* integrity of the *behavioral system*. Simply put: How you think (psychological) determines how you feel (emotional). How you think and feel affects what you do (behavioral). Naturally, how you think, feel and behave will affect your choices (strategy) and your performance (tactical skill). The truth is that your thoughts and behavior will either enhance or encumber your tactical options. *The mind navigates the body*.

Let me explain: At first glance, *Presumed Compliance* appears to be a simple concept; literally meaning, you assume a 'suspect' will comply. But don't be fooled, 'Presumed Compliance' is quite complex and must not be summed up as simply a 'false sense of security'. Its origins are deeply rooted in attitude, psyche, archetype and more. 'Presumed Compliance' dulls your edge; it

diminishes the danger - in your mind. It affects how you think, feel and behave. Therefore, it will affect your tactics and, you may not even know you suffer from it!

Here's a simple breakdown of the noxious effect *Presumed Compliance* (PC) has on the modern warrior's mental condition and physical readiness.

- **OVERCONFIDENCE:** PC is overconfidence. PC assumes a suspect will comply. Traditionally, people comply with authority. Police officers (the badge, uniform, gun, etc.) represent authority. Authority is intimidating. It's a logical conclusion, but a dangerous one.
- **TACTICAL OVERCONFIDENCE:** PC fosters a false sense of security. The majority of DT classes use cooperative and static drills to teach the strategies and tactics you take to the streets.
- **APATHY:** PC fosters apathy, the "*It won't happen to me*" mind-set. And if it won't happen to me, why even prepare for it?
- **DIMINISHES MOTIVATION TO TRAIN:** PC says its O.K. to skip a workout, to not wear a vest or to miss training sessions. It is unlikely you'll motivate yourself to train for something that you believe won't ever happen.
- **DENIAL:** Apathy ensures you'll go right into denial, the "*I can't believe this is happening to me*" mind-set. Those who do manage to shift psychological gears to exit this *inertia* stage will have consumed valuable time. Denial delays decisiveness.
- **INCREASES REACTION TIME:** PC delays access to your strategic response system. During PC confrontations, your mind experiences sensory overload, you must 're-boot' your mental computer. During PC, you are reactive not proactive.
- **DULLS INTUITION & INSTINCTS:** Because PC dulls your mental edge, it also breeds complacency. In a profession where every call could be your last, complacency is a disaster magnet.
- **FORCE OPTION CONTINUUM TUNNELVISION:** PC creates hesitation. The 'psychological inertia', brought on by denial and lack of preparation will create stagnation in the theoretical force option continuum. Result: loss of self-control.
- **PEJORATIVE EGO DEVELOPMENT:** PC tells the ego that '*it's*' in charge, the center, the authority. It seduces the negative traits of the ego. This negative trait leads to more attitudinal problems.
- **EROSION OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** PC does not permit true emphatic listening. In fact, it engenders the dogmatic, myopic sort of 'bureaucratic' mind-set we all loathe. PC simply does not provide room for flow, spontaneity, or flexibility: three necessary components to both verbal and tactical skills.

The Psychodynamics' of PC in Law Enforcement are both fascinating and revealing. PC does not allow for personal development, it therefore, stifles training, research, learning and evolution. If it has no *intrapersonal* potential, it surely has no *interpersonal* potential. It therefore opposes real communication.

Communication is not simply about listening or asking questions. *Three-dimensional* communication starts within you. If you cannot coach yourself - you will not perform well. If you cannot defuse yourself - you cannot hope to defuse the opponent without a struggle.

Unchecked, PC can devolve into cockiness, arrogance and an elitist persona. Non-compliant subjects are a threat - emotionally. They are an affront to the PC mind-set. And situations that should have been handled easily turn into embarrassing events with charges of excessive force, police brutality and more. *Presumed Compliance* and the omission of a psychological arsenal costs police departments and their cities millions of dollars a year in litigation, and worse, it has taken many good officers lives.

Society has helped to create the *Presumed Compliance* frame of mind. Stereotyped images of authority figures possessing knowledge and power are pounded into our minds from birth. So why would it be different when you finally earn the right to wear the badge? All of the manuals and SOP doctrines imply your successful control of every situation. You have the theoretical force option continuum, you have back-up and other tools at your disposal. But nowhere does the training address palpable fear management strategies, or behavioral tactics to influence systematic de-escalation or even a street-smart approach to defensive tactics (everything works when it's choreographed).

Arrest statistics also help create *presumed compliance*, that is the biggest problem. The majority of subjects *do* comply; some resist a little, but then give up. But ask those officers that were killed in the line of duty if the training supported their combat conditions. *Ask yourself this: Did you survive your last physical confrontation because you were better trained than your opponent or did you control it because your opponent lacked training?* Reflect on that; there's a huge difference.

In closing, remember, *Presumed Compliance* leads to overconfidence and a false sense of security. This permits us to take stupid risks in the form of a 'superman' persona or by not training seriously. The debilitating combination of apathy and denial now present, ensures you will not seriously prepare, which means that should something happen, you will go into denial before you even get the opportunity to react. That is how the brain is wired. The combination of the aforementioned by-products of *Presumed Compliance* actually does more (as if that weren't enough) - it actually dulls intuition and instincts. Put all that together and you have an accident waiting to happen.

Survival training is not complicated. The 'truth' is rather simple, but will require a paradigm shift, which may be difficult for a community that notoriously waits for a tragedy to change SOP's and tactics. Real fighting - *street survival* - has little to do with a technique, martial arts or finesse. Street survival training is about attitude, preparation and integrity during training. Learn to discern fact from fantasy. Commit to the truth and pursue excellence.

Please ponder deeply, the theory of '*presumed compliance*'. In fact, take it very seriously. It is not a superficial concept to be glanced at or glossed over. It is perhaps the single most important theory for progressive officer protection, as it places the burden - the response/ability - on you, the officer. You must live with what you do and don't do. The truth is in the training. Do you need skills that work against a compliant cooperative subject or an aggressive resister? At the end of the day, it is your response/ability that determines the choices you make.

Imagine this: You're facing that motivated resister. The guy with nothing to lose. Your verbal commands bring a sneer to his face. He lunges, a clash, a clinch and you ram him into a wall. He growls, the wall slam reminds him how much he loves violence. You thrust a quick knee allowing you to separate while you reach for your OC. He charges at you, taking a full blast in the face. But, he's still coming at you, screaming - this animal has fought through OC before...he's still moving, too close for a full swing with your impact tool....

The confrontation is only over once the perpetrator has genuinely lost the will to resist. Presence, firepower and justification mean nothing to the sociopath with nothing to lose. And it is that sociopath who is responsible for most officer fatalities. Training should be geared toward the motivated sociopath. Period. Those who choose to comply - will. Those who don't...will test your mettle. The truth is the training. You can't fake endurance. You can't buy confidence. You can't buy experience. When preparation meets reality, you'll get your experience. Stay safe. Train with integrity...it's your duty; it's your call.



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