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*Balancing Security, Revenue,
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PLUS

Mental Preparation

The First Circle in a Balanced Performance

A close-up, back view of a person's head and neck. The skin is dark and has a visible texture. The hair is shaved. The ears are visible on either side. The lighting is soft, coming from the side, creating a slight shadow on the back of the head.

men•tal prep•a•ra•tion

THE FIRST CIRCLE
IN A BALANCED PERFORMANCE

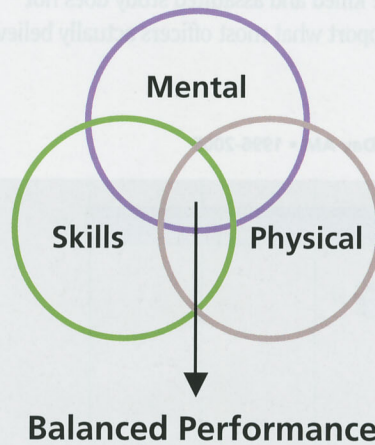
by Damian “Skip” Stites & Philip P. Hayden, Ed.D

I think I can...I think I can! Many of us remember the children's story "The Little Engine That Could" which depicts the struggle to accomplish a task no matter how difficult. That may have been your first exposure to Mental Preparedness Training.

Many parents use this tale to instill in their children the desire to overcome obstacles in their quests to succeed. "You must never give-up...Only you can make your dreams come true" – these and other clichés are designed to reinforce the notion that we must have forethought and be mentally prepared for what may happen. Law enforcement officers who are mentally prepared increase their likelihoods for success in surpassing the many barriers that lie in their paths.

As we pass through the stages of life with varying degrees of success, we forget the stories of our parents and begin to rely on our own personal experiences. We use those results as the foundation for our subsequent actions. Often we forget the road that led us to where we are. More importantly, we disregarded the pitfalls we found along the way. Therefore, we may develop an "*I made it this far*" attitude and ignore the lessons of the past as the warnings for the future.

The article "A Balanced Approach in Training for Balanced Performance"¹ looked at three essential components of a training model: Mental Preparation, Physical Readiness, and Skill Enhancement. Utilizing circles to represent each component, we demonstrated the need to blend the three in a critical moment, thereby allowing us to respond with *Balanced Performance*. In this article, we will define the elements that comprise the Mental Preparation Circle and why it is important to survivability.



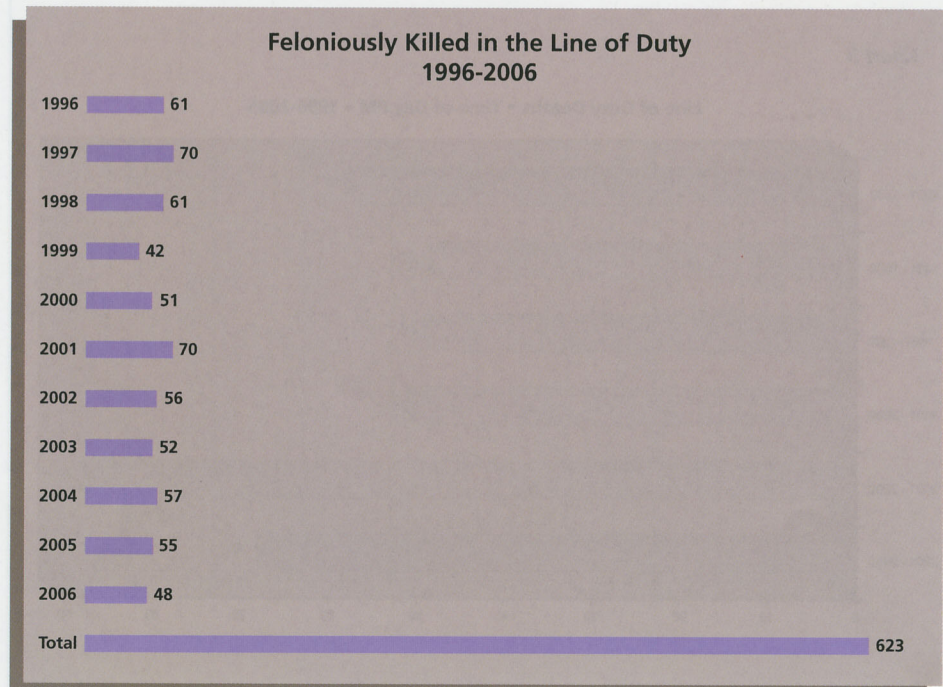
Reviewing the FBI's study, Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted 2005 (figures for 2006 are pre-

liminary), will help to understand the importance of being mentally prepared while on the job. It is vital for us to look at the past if we are to create change in the future. The numbers in Chart 1 represent officers reported killed in the line of duty from 1996-2006.²

While these numbers reflect the total officers killed during that period (officers killed on September 11, 2001, were excluded), it does not show the preparedness of those officers who died. The relationship between the number of officers killed and their mental preparedness to respond may be influenced, but not exclusively, to several definable factors:

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Chart 1



- Time of day
- Officers' attempts to use their weapons
- Distance between the officer and the assailant

Time of Day

When is the most dangerous time of day for police officers? In reviewing Charts 2 and 3, it is apparent that the potential to be killed exists every second of every day. Selecting the most dangerous time of day is a complex process and one that involves many variables. The truth is that we must be ready at all times.

Chart 2

Line of Duty Deaths • Time of Day AM • 1996-2005

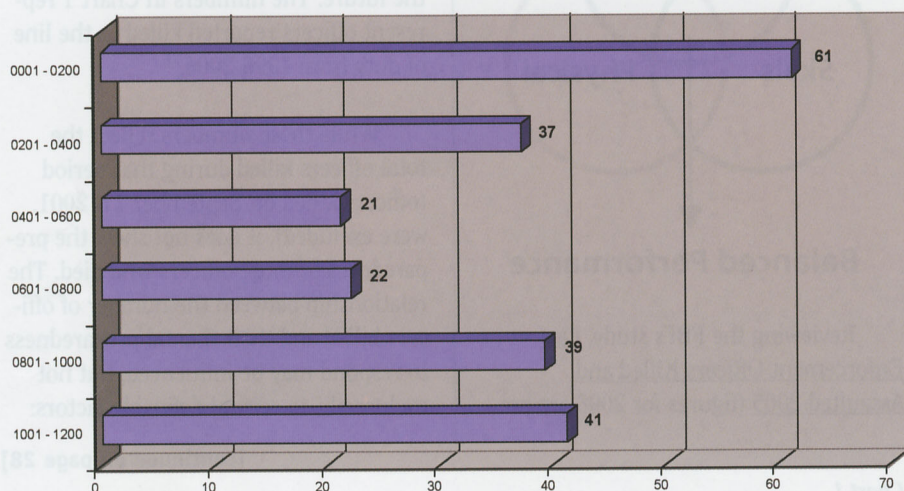
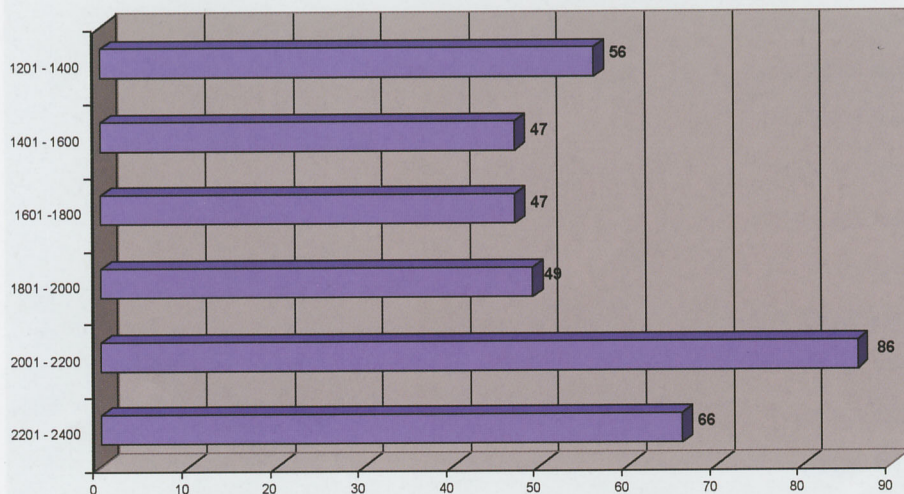


Chart 3

Line of Duty Deaths • Time of Day PM • 1996-2005



Officers' Attempts To Use Their Weapons

When confronted with a deadly-force situation, 48.3% of officers who lost their lives at the hands of an assailant did not attempt to use their weapons.³ However, when asked to respond to their willingness to use their weapons, a majority of officers stated they are prepared to do what is necessary to resolve a situation. Further, many officers believe they would not hesitate to use their weapons in deadly-force situations. The reported data compiled in the killed and assaulted study does not support what most officers actually believe.

Distance between Officer and Assailant

During the FBI's 10-year study, 532 officers lost their lives to an assailant with a firearm. The reported distance between the officer and assailant at the time of the shooting was documented as follows:

- 270 killed at less than 5 feet
- 100 killed at less than 10 feet
- 62 killed at less than 20 feet
- 44 killed at less than 50 feet
- 38 killed at more than 50 feet
- 18 not reported

A majority of the victim officers (69.5 %) were in a situation where the assailant produced a firearm and the officer was shot at distances of less than 10 feet. Research conducted in threat recognition and action verses reaction has repeatedly shown that officers must respond decisively and quickly when confronted in a deadly-force encounter. Any doubt or hesitation by the officer would slow down the response time and could, in all likelihood, result in the death or injury of that officer.

Time of day, officer's use of weapon, and distance between officer and assailant are some of the facts documented when studying incidents wherein an officer is killed in the line of duty. These and other definable facts that help to create the report are retrieved through a careful evaluation of the crime scene, witness/assailant statements, and what precipitated the assailant to use deadly force (personal history, etc.). However, the one fact that is lost forever is...was the officer mentally prepared to respond at that moment? A review of training procedures, firearms scores, and other related information will only provide a numerical reference to an officer's readiness. Law enforcement training must provide officers with realistic evaluations of their abilities to perform in high-risk situations.

Mental Preparation

Law enforcement officers have been

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the protectors of society for centuries. They are called upon to respond to dire situations where many people do not have the ability to protect themselves. The spirit of these officers is much like the warriors of days past. They differ, though, in that often they are called upon to respond to situations at a moment's notice with little, if any, time to rehearse or prepare for the impending battles. They simply must be in ready-mode every moment of their day. An officer must be prepared mentally for the long hours of boredom and "routine" activity, which may be abruptly interrupted with extreme violence.

In "Survival Training for Law Enforcement Officers,"⁴ Phil Hayden states, "Only through realistic simulations and interactive exercises can trainees develop the assurance and the readiness to act decisively, which is so critical to survival. The research we have conducted, along with other empirical data, reveal that an officer who is philosophically in tune with a strategic approach and can execute a proper tactical plan will generally solve most situations without resorting to the use of unnecessary force." How do we develop this immediate response? Once again, we may need to look to our past in order to predict our future.

In his book entitled *Toughness Training for Life*,⁵ James E. Loehr, Ed.D, identified a condition wherein individual performance is based upon the following four factors associated with toughness response:

- **Emotional Flexibility** is described as *"the capacity to remain open and non-defensive."* Officers need to become students of survival techniques and skills throughout their careers. There are no simple solutions. *"Flexibility brings perspective and emotional balance [allowing for] creativity and problem-solving."*
- **Emotional Responsiveness** is a state where one keeps alert and fully engaged. An *"I have always done it*

this way" philosophy can interfere in training that is new or different to the officer. Often they mentally lock themselves out of an objective analysis of the training's value.

- **Emotional Strength** is a passionate state-of-mind designed to summon the positive reinforcements of the mind to succeed. Officers need to believe in their ability to succeed in high-stress situations. They must have the mental and physical confidence in their skill sets in order to survive.
- **Emotional Resiliency**, simply put, is the ability to recover from failures in training exercises and to look for better techniques to overcome a problem or situation.

Dr. Loehr further states that developing a winning mind-set requires a continual effort at a task much like the Little Engine That Could. We must work at achieving a goal despite setbacks, failures, or less-than-acceptable performances. This repeated effort is essential to developing an instinctive mental response to a perceived threat. Many officers, however, are not willing to put themselves in positions of failure in front of their peers even in a training exercise.

Emotional toughness is but one of the factors that affect our mental preparedness to deal with high-risk situations. Lt. Col. Dave Grossman (US Army retired) states in his book *On Killing*⁶ that when individuals become frightened or angry, they stop thinking with their forebrains (the area of the brain exclusive to humans) and start thinking with their mid-brains (the area of the brain indistinguishable from that of an animal). He described this condition as being "scared out of their wits." He further concluded the only way to influence the mid-brain response is to put the individual in operant conditioning through training and exercises.

In his study on soldiers' responses while in combat, Lt. Col. Grossman con-

cluded that in earlier wars (pre-Vietnam), the training received prior to deployment did not prepare the individual for the mental and emotional weight of killing another human being. Prior to the Vietnam War, the percentage of times a soldier was willing to fire at the enemy on the field of battle averaged below 30%. He and other researchers found that by the end of the Vietnam War, the willingness to shoot at the enemy averaged 90% – 95%. What created this sharp increase in the soldier's willingness to shoot?

After World War II in a study on combat soldiers' willingness to fire at the enemy, General Orlando Ward noted, "One of the biggest reasons for failure in the field of battle is not what to do next," but rather it was a "result of not having been trained thoroughly in what to expect on the battlefield."⁷ Lt. Col. Grossman further explains that in the pre-Vietnam era, the military concluded that proper mental preparation prior to being deployed is essential in elevating the soldier's willingness to shoot at the enemy in combat. Utilizing targets depicting a human form and developing a quick reaction shot when exposed to the stimuli became critical to the training methodology. Placing soldiers in full battle gear in an environment similar to what they may encounter added to the realism of the training.

Realistic training with a purpose, as noted previously by Phil Hayden and Lt. Col. Grossman, became the key element in mental preparation for an adversarial contact and created the behavior modification that was observed in increasing firing rate during combat. In the early 1970s, law enforcement developed realistic training programs utilizing the military model for behavior modification. This form of training has evolved from films projected onto a screen or a wall, to interactive videos depicting high-risk situations, to force-on-force training utilizing simunition exercises and actual recreations of deadly-force encounters.

Mental conditioning through realistic training by itself is not the final answer to creating a winning mind-set. Confidence in the ability to succeed is an essential element. It is here we begin to see the overlapping of Skill Enhancement and Physical Readiness with Mental Preparedness in the Balanced Performance Model. Officers who have worked at developing their skills and are in good physical condition will have confidence in their ability to resolve situations safely.

Confidence is critical to overcoming fear, indecisiveness, and inappropriate actions. Officers who have tested their abilities in realistic training scenarios are more likely to know how and when to respond. Confident officers will be more decisive in their actions and respond more quickly to a threat, both of which will increase their safety. Building confidence in your Skill Enhancement and Physical Readiness Circles will be the topic of future articles aimed at building a training program that seeks Balanced Performance in high-risk situations.

In conclusion, Mental Preparation is an important element in the Balanced Performance approach to training, but it cannot stand-alone. Officers who believe they are *good enough* and refuse to evaluate new and different techniques fail to

expand in areas that may be critical to survive in a life-threatening situation.

"It is our performance that grants us the respect of courage, not the lack of fear." Paul Whitesell, Ph.D., 1989

References:

- 1 FBI National Academy Associates, May/June 2007, Volume 9, Number 3. pgs 14-17
- 2 Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted 2005, Overview, Table 1
- 3 Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted 2005, Weapons, Table 13, Chart 5
- 4 FBI National Academy Associates, September/October 2006, Volume 8, Number 5, pgs 26-29
- 5 Toughness Training for Life, James E Loehr, Ed.D
- 6 On Killing, The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society, Lt. Col. Dave Grossman
- 7 General Orlando Ward, 1954

About the Authors: Damian "Skip" Stites served the law enforcement community for over 30 years. Prior to joining the FBI in 1982, he served as a police officer working patrol, narcotics and major crimes. He was a SWAT team leader as a police officer and later a sniper/assaulter for the FBI. He has conducted Officer Survival Training domestically and in numerous international locations. He is the recipient of the FBI Medal of Merit for his actions in saving the life of a young child.

Survival Program (LETSS), initially developed by Phil Hayden (retired 1999) and furthered by his successor Damian "Skip" Stites (retired 2006), are now available for law enforcement agencies worldwide. The CATS training program embraces the mental, physical, and skill development philosophies necessary to provide an officer with the tools needed to survive in the high-risk world of law enforcement.

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Use of Weapon by Officer

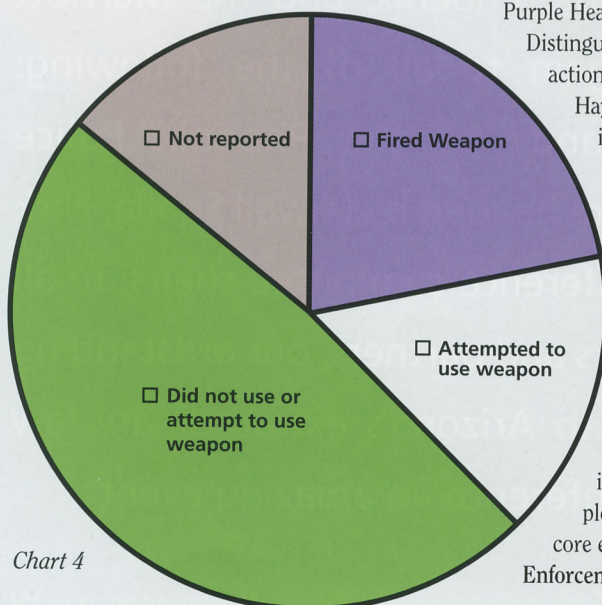


Chart 4

Dr. Philip Hayden served his country as a Captain in the U. S. Army prior to joining the FBI as a Special Agent. He received a Purple Heart, Bronze Star for Valor and the Distinguished Service Cross for his heroic actions in Vietnam. For 25 years, Dr. Hayden worked as a Special Agent investigating criminal cases, organized crime and foreign counter intelligence. As a Supervisory Agent, he was the program manager the FBI's Tactical Training program taught at the FBI Academy, Quantico, VA.

Concepts And Tactics for Survival (CATS), Inc. is a company that has developed and implemented the training principles contained in this article. The core elements of the FBI's Law Enforcement Training for Safety and