

# **PSYCHOLOGY**

## **MODULE ONE – UNIT TWO**

### **Combat Academy Instructor Training Programme**

# PSYCHOLOGY

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### Learning Outcomes

The aims of this unit are to enable you to:

- Have a broad based knowledge of the subject of psychology.
- To understand current academic models and processes.
- To understand the mental processes and stages that occur in a violent attack.
- To define and understand the impacts the brain has on physiology during times of intense stress and emotion.

Psychology influences both the attacker and the victim and can therefore be manipulated and influenced from both perspectives.

There are many schools of thought and theories around the subject of psychology which are outlined below.

### Behaviourism

John Watson (1878 – 1958) was one of the founders of this school of thought which studied stimuli, or the events in the world which are detected by our senses and the responses we make to these stimuli. An example would be a loud noise making us put our hands over our ears. In the context of self defence, understanding natural human reactions to stimuli is important. Loud noises, sudden movements, trigger words and

### TUTOR TALK



Psychology is one of the main factors affecting both the victim & perpetrator during an attack. Consider the possibilities of understanding what makes the attacker tick, why they attack, and how they feel during the attack. Could this be useful as a tool to actually control and influence the attacker? Controlling your own fear is also crucial in any attack situation. All fear including the resulting physiological responses occur within the mind.

other stimuli may have an effect on you in the most natural sense. Working with these natural instinctive reactions rather than against them can be useful when deciding which self defence techniques work under pressure. In terms of your attacker, you can also use stimuli on them to create reactions and therefore start to influence the situation.

## Psychoanalysis

Was a well-known school of thought developed by the infamous Sigmund Freud which proposed that a large influence in human behaviour and development was the unconscious and sub-conscious Freud suggests that most atypical behaviour stemmed from very basic human instincts such as sex and aggression and that they were driven largely by unconscious processes.

## Cognitive Psychology

This school of thought emerged in the 1950's and started to study the mental processes such as thought, perception, memory, forgetting and language. This school of thought was also concerned with the way that humans process the information from the world around us. This led to the development of artificial intelligence and facial recognition programmes which work in a similar way to the human mind. One of these processes is the way that we filter through huge amounts of information. An example would be where we see another person and we instantly know that it is a person without analysing every single detail. In fact, we may actually filter out the majority of the detail as the brain simply has a model or schema already programmed where we instantly match what we see with the model in our mind and know that it is a person. Because of the mind's tendency to work in this way, it is susceptible to illusion and being tricked. We see patterns in most things, like clouds for example because our brain is always searching for pre-recognised schema.

## Humanistic Psychology

Another school of thought that emerged in the 1940's following the work of Abraham Maslow (1908 – 1970) and Carl Rogers (1902) suggested that Human beings were very different from animals because of their free will and ability / need to direct their own lives with a feeling of "self". Maslow developed the Hierarchy of Needs model which suggests that the most basic needs of security, shelter, warmth,

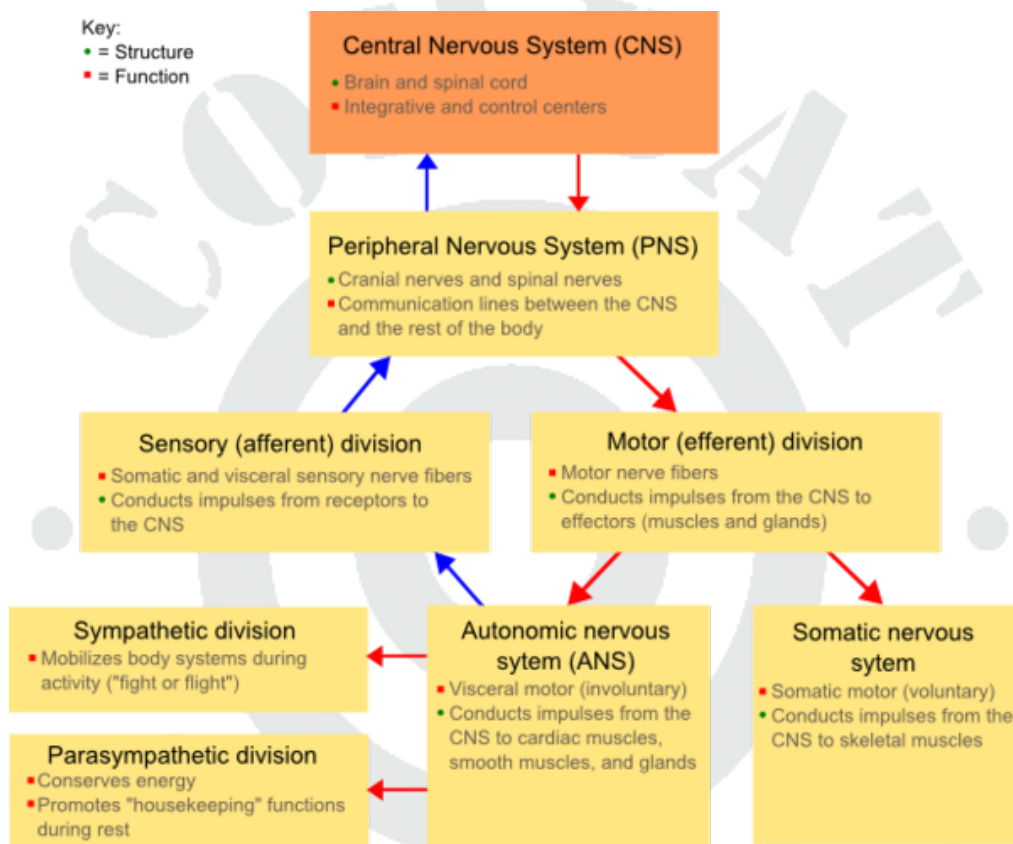
water, food must all be fulfilled before we progress onto other needs which are less basic, such as relationships, personal growth and self-actualisation. Because of the way most modern human beings live, very few people now experience or appreciate the most basic needs at the bottom of the pyramid. The human brain in the civilised world rarely has to revert to the base primal state and when security is threatened, people tend to freeze. Many people live at the top of the pyramid, fretting about how many friends and connections they have on Facebook, rather than in fear of their lives and struggling daily for food and warmth. That said, inside every person dwells a more primal being. Human's fought their way to the very top of the food chain as apex predator's way before modern technology and weaponry, yet if the average person was attacked by a dog, what would they do? The fact is that a dog, even with sharp teeth, is no match for a trained Human Being in a primal state defending his or her family! Finding this primal state by training in combat, even simulated combat can take us back to and keep us in touch with this primal state – ready to push the button should the need arise.

## The Biological Approach

The biological approach considers that the mind is largely influenced by genetic factors and physiological factors such as chemical changes or structural changes, including damage. The Nervous System is essentially made up of two parts:

- 1) The Central Nervous System (CNS) which consists of the brain and the spinal cord. It receives sensory information from the eyes, ears, feeling etc. and sends out responses and instructions to the muscles and glands so that they act accordingly. The Brain controls many unconscious processes such as breathing, sleeping and heart rate in addition to the complex tasks like the thought processes. The brain also links up with the endocrine system which releases hormones into the system in response to fear and anger. This is particularly important within a self defence context.
- 2) The Peripheral Nervous System (PNS) which is divided into two sections – the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) and the Somatic Nervous System (SNS) The SNS is made up of nerve fibres and is the carrier of information from the sense organs to the brain and nerve filters which carry information from the brain to the muscles. All of the muscles that we can consciously control are done so by the SNS. The ANS consists of nerve fibres which run from the lower parts of the brain and the upper parts of the spinal cord to the internal organs and glands. The ANS is particularly involved in emotions such as fear,

love and anger, and is divided further into two parts – A) the Sympathetic Nervous System which arouses the body and increases energy and B) the Parasympathetic Nervous System which decreases arousal and levels the body’s energy system.



## Physiological Impacts

The physiological impacts such as sweating, shaking, freezing and fight or flight all have their roots in psychology as the threat has to be perceived to have the profound physiological effects. Adrenaline is manufactured and released by the adrenal glands located near each kidney. It is essential to recognise the mental stresses that both the attacker and victim will go through during all of the stages of an attack. The 4C Model (Combat Academy 2014) highlights the stages of an attack as a continual process of planning, assessment and reassessment. The biological cost

and risk to any predator is considered at a conscious and subconscious level and any incongruence on the part of the Victim will be perceived on both levels by the predator/attacker. In plain English, this means that what you do, what you say, how you stand and react to the threat that makes you appear NOT to be an ideal victim may cause the attacker to reassess and abort the attack. The potential cost of being hurt or being caught will be weighed up by the attacker through a constant and continual mental process!

## The Fight or Flight Response

Most people have heard of the fight or flight response which is a primal response to intense threat or fear. It is an instinctive response that actually fights with the logical human brain. This internal “fight” often results in a far more common third response known as FREEZE. When the “fight or flight” response kicks in, adrenaline floods the system and the cognitive functions of the brain are impaired so that the capacity can be concentrated on essential processes. Speed, reaction time and special awareness can be enhanced. Blood is sent to the legs and arms in readiness to fight or flee and to assist with this, blood is drained from the face and head and skin in general. This is often apparent in a pale face in someone who is either about to attack or be attacked! It is often noted that someone who has a red angry face is quite a long way from violence and that one should look for the draining of blood rather than the flushing as a pre-emptor of a physical attack. The digestive system is quite a biologically intensive system and as such, a lot of blood is required to digest food. Because of this, when we push our bodies hard during training and create an oxygen debt, we will often feel and actually be physically sick. This process can also happen during intense fear when the body will rid itself of “non-essential processes”. This can also manifest itself in losing the contents of the bladder and bowels during intense stress, trauma or fear.

The “fight or flight” response has its uses rooted in a more primal existence. It does however have limitations as logic and cognition is impaired. This can be seen when after an attack, people have reported having little memory of the attack or failed to recall important details when reporting the crime. It also means that fine motor skills are seriously impaired. What this means is that we lose our ability to perform complex tasks that require mental processes whilst our ability to run, jump and use the large muscle groups is increased! We also tend to feel less pain during this state and the same can be said for our attacker. This is important as we may take damage that we fail to realise, and, our attacker may withstand more damage and be



resistant to pain. This means that any techniques based solely on pain-compliance may be less effective!

Other common effects of this primal state are the slowing or speeding up of the perception of time and movement and sense of unreality.

## The Freeze Response

To understand why so many people freeze you need to consider what actually happens when your mind encounters a threat:

The first thing the mind does is search the archives for a learned response. If you have never been in an attack situation before then your brain will not find a learned response and will respond by freezing. You may also start to experience thoughts like “If I do nothing the attack may end” or “is this really happening – it can’t be really happening”. At the combat academy we call this the (Dorothy Syndrome) which is named after Dorothy from the Wizard of OZ clicking her heels together chanting “there’s no place like home). All of these feelings are common.

## Re-programming the Mind

One of the very useful things about the human brain is that it functions like a computer and as such can be reprogrammed. If you train within realistic situations, it is possible to trick the brain into creating a learned response so that when you are in a real situation, the mind will revert to what has been working within training. This means meeting a potential threat with supreme confidence, aggression and force – in a fashion most unbecoming of a “Victim”. This in turn will have a profound impact on the psychology of your attacker.

The process of reprogramming the mind through constant exposure is known as Conditioning within psychology. There are two types of conditioning, Classical Conditioning and Operand Conditioning.

Ivan Pavlov (1927) was famous for his experiment with dogs where he conditioned them to associate the sound of a bell ringing with food. Initially, he noted that the dogs salivated when food was brought to them. The food acted as an unconditioned stimulus because it was a lower brain function involving no thought process. The salivation was known as an unconditioned response. He also noted that eventually,

when the dogs saw the lab assistants bringing the food that the sight of the assistants would cause salivation. The dogs had clearly created an association. Later Pavlov made them ring a bell before bringing the food then eventually just rang the bell, noting that the dogs still salivated. The bell was known as a conditioned stimulus and the salivation a conditioned response.

The majority of phobias are created by an association with something and this is always a negative association. It may be for example that a smell triggers a bad feeling or we hear a loud noise which startles us at the same time that a spider crawls over us which starts to embed a fear of spiders. Menzies (1937) noted that classical conditioning works with many other automatic reflexes. A process called vasoconstriction occurs if we are very cold. Subjects were asked to immerse their arms in cold water and this process was observed. At the same moment a buzzer sounded. After a while repeating the process with a buzzer was sounding, it was noted that when the water was taken away that the buzzer was enough to make the sound.

Using the process above, it is possible to condition a response of FIGHT rather than flight or freeze by conditioning during attack scenarios. Operant conditioning is similar but based around following a behaviour with something positive or removing something unpleasant as an “enforcement”. This could be having a realistic attack drill followed by something like extreme praise.

## **NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming)**

By using NLP skills, we can further cement the learning into the brain. In addition, Combat Academy uses the technique of creating a positive anchor that the mind relates to when it is in an attack situation. NLP is the way we act and feel when certain words are used or when certain body positions are adopted. These may be words directed at us or words that we use ourselves. This also includes shouting loudly as a way to release fear and empower yourself.

## **The Attacker Psychology**

When an attacker embarks upon the final stages of an attack, they become highly excited and primal. Distracting the attacker by constantly talking to them, shouting at them and trying to get them to re-engage the logical part of the mind can help to bring them out of their “kill” stage. You can also get them to evaluate what they are



doing and plant doubt and fear in their mind by re-iterating phrases like “You don’t want to do this” and “What would your family and friends think”. Remember, most attackers actually live a normal life and are subject to normal emotions, feelings and influences and these can be used.

## Psychological Strategies

The main concepts we use are:

### Deflecting

Changing the topic and or focus of the attack. An example of this would be to engage with the attacker, give them your name and ask for their name. Most attackers will have “normal” relationships, jobs and social interactions. In the case of someone who is a genuine “Psychopath” or “Sociopath”, these interactions are usually acted out rather than genuinely social. When you force them to realise that you are human and force them to consider their own humanity, sometimes this shakes them out of the predatorial state. (Reece Coker 2014). You can also force them to consider danger, risk of being caught or to reassess their surroundings. Phrases such as “it’s a busy area, someone will come and you will get caught” or “what is going to happen if you get caught”? “do you really want to do this”? may all have the desired effect.

### Compromising

Offering a way out of the predicament with no consequences. Phrases such as “just go and I won’t say anything, no crime has been committed”! “I don’t want to fight you, I am a trained unarmed combat specialist – just leave now and nobody will get hurt”!

### Incongruence

Not acting like a victim in any way. Make yourself appear confident and massively aggressive. Any attacker will be expecting a victim to act in a certain way and certainly the presence of fear will be the most expected result. The expectation can come from experience of past attacks or through the cognitive process of “playing out” the attack. Some attackers will be attacking because they enjoy the feeling of power and rush that they feel by terrifying someone. When you act in the completely

opposite way, you take away their power and at times shock them into reconsidering you as a victim!

## **Avoidance**

Simply walking away and dismissing them flippantly showing no reaction. If the attacker has built their own mental scenario around your “compliance” the walking away approach can take away their power and potentially remove you geographically from the ideal attack or kill-zone very quickly and effectively. Being on the move also physically creates distance and demonstrates non-compliance which again can force an assessment as per the 4C method (Combat Academy 2014).