

WEARING OF BODY ARMOUR:

The wearing of body armor provides no guarantee to an officer in deadly force encounters, however, it can help control stress levels and provide valuable elements to survivability.

The first issue is obvious, if you are wearing a vest and are shot; you stand a better chance of surviving and finishing the fight. The wearing of body armor also provides a sense of security and confidence. Knowing that you are somewhat protected going into a situation, your anxiety (stress) level may be lower, creating an ideal environment for decision making process.

TRAINING:

Training is crucial for survival stress inoculation. Training must provide stress and tension, must reflect real life situations and must occur often to be effective.

Scenario-based training provides this realism while enabling officers the time necessary to understand and learn the tactics that they will use in the field.

Critical Stress Amnesia

Critical Stress Amnesia can be defined as the physiological basis and the implications of memory loss during extreme survival stress situations.

Officers who encounter an extremely stressful situation will consistently exhibit difficulty in transferring information into long term memory. Particular memory related phenomenon in traumatic situations include:

1. During the actual incident there is usually a "sensory overload" combined with a "fixation" on some particular aspect of the critical incident, often to the exclusion of all else.
2. Immediately after the incident, "post-incident amnesia" will often result in a failure to remember the majority of the information observed in the incident.
3. After a healthy night's sleep there is usually a "memory recovery" which will result in the remembering the majority of what occurred, and this memory is probably the most "pure."

4. Within 72 hours the final and most complete form of memory will occur, but it will be at least partially "reconstructed" (and therefore somewhat "contaminated") after the inevitable process of integrating available information from all other sources (media).

Legal Articulation (After Major Incident)

- An officer will fixate on major threat cues but cues on the periphery of the visual system may not be processed into memory. This explains why individuals sometimes fail to remember "seeing" individuals or cues immediately adjacent to the threat.
- Make copious notes
- Be aware that your memory will be altered by stress and your inability to remember is a direct result of Survival Stress.