

# Psychology and Physiology of Weapons Handling

That will work the best for YOU.

# The Aging Defender

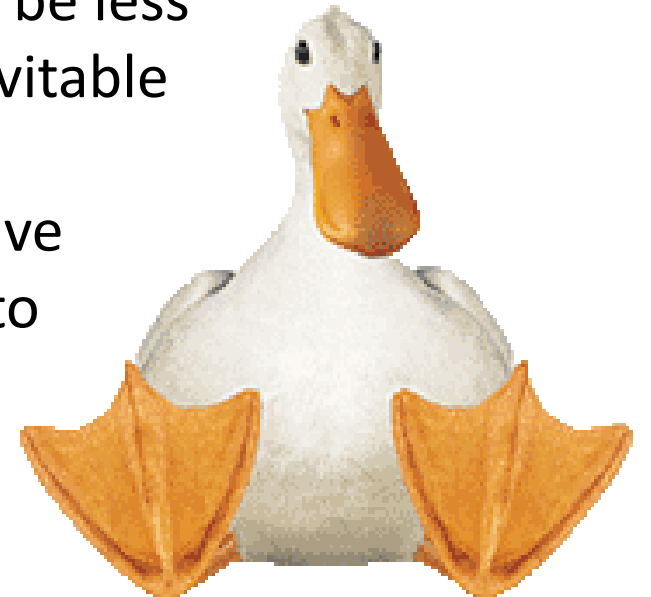
Getting old ain't for sissies.

Seniors who have never handled firearms, but suddenly realize, due to local crime rates and civil unrest, that just maybe this “gun thing” is a good idea. They may have a more difficult time learning about handguns and shotguns and choosing a firearm with a good fit.

Many seniors may have handled rifles in the military, but never carried through with it in their civilian life, and have forgotten the many aspects of gun ownership.

All of us have been diminished in ability in some ways, whether it be less visual acuity, a loss of muscle mass, or some other part of the inevitable decline.

As we age, the mental elements are also affected, and our cognitive functions suffer: concentration, memory, estimations, attention to detail, and even self-confidence take a nosedive. Add the medications we take, which contribute to slowdowns and a decline in observational sharpness. This makes us sitting ducks.



# **“Old Age and Treachery shall overcome youth and skill.”**

Vision: Blindness goes up after age 70, from 7% to 17%.

Grip Strength goes way down after 65.

Arthritis: For 22.7% of adults is the leading cause of disability.

But two things can't be taken away from us: Experience and Motivation.

You wouldn't let anything happen to your kids, your grandkids, spouse, or your pet dog or cat or canary. Your home is your castle, you worked hard for it all your life.

So this is where we start: learning one lesson at a time.



How bad is the arthritis in your hands? Can you lift the gun weight, grip it tightly, and squeeze the trigger firmly? Do you have an issue with your vision that would make focusing and aligning the sights difficult? Are you needing a cane or walker to get around or stand steady? Do your hands tremor alot? (If your hands are too weak to load ammo in a magazine, for example, a revolver might be better for you.)



Dementia and Alzeimers Disease are both limiting factors for which gun ownership is NOT recommended. Both can lead to aggressive behavior and failure to recognize loved ones.

While overall there are serious physical considerations in your decision making, they don't necessarily prevent you from owning a gun, just Picking out which one is best for you.



Choosing the right gun for you is like Goldilocks and the three bears. You know, too hot, too cold, just right. Here are a few factors you must consider in your selection:

Mentally, you must self-assess yourself:

Do you have the clarity of mind to take off the safety? Cock the hammer on a revolver? Pump the shotgun? Rack the slide? Check the gun for one loaded in the chamber? Do you panic easily? Can you call 911 first, get to a safe place, and make sure the gun is loaded and ready? Would you freeze up in terror or indecision when confronted? Would you bluff with an empty gun? Or would you **STAND YOUR GROUND?**



# Here's 2 questions you need to answer right now.

## Q(1) Are you prepared to kill someone?

- **If not**, do not aim a gun at anyone. **Don't even own one.**
- Never aim a gun at anyone you don't intend to kill *that minute*.
- If you don't aim the gun at them, will they kill you first?
- Are you prepared to let them kill you, if you have a gun to stop them?



## Q(2) If you had a camera recording your motions and voice during the entire incident, what would it show?

- Decisive action or hesitation? Silence or firm warnings? Running away or hiding? Freezing up? Careful defense, or offensive bullying? Are you working your escape and defense plan, or crying in fear and panic?



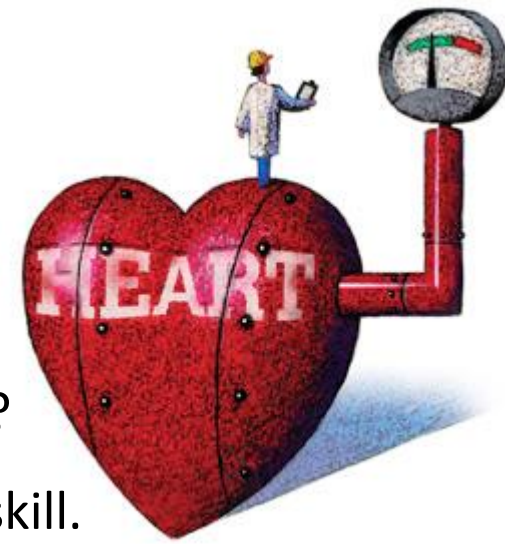
# STRESS CAN AFFECT YOUR ABILITY TO SHOOT ACCURATELY.

When the heart rate goes up, the breathing quickens, the chest tightens, your vision doubles, and you lose fine motor skills, how do you expect to hit your target?

Trigger manipulation, like hitting the side release button, is definitely a fine motor skill. Confusing the slide release button with the magazine release button could get you killed. Shaking so hard you drop the box of ammo, and have to stop and pick them up off the floor to load the revolver or shotgun is a serious problem. Practice can overcome this but it must be a LOT of practice to achieve muscle memory with your weapon.

You must remain CALM under attack. Easier said than done! Think carefully, act deliberately, and maintain the upper-hand advantage. You know your house better than they do. Hopefully you have developed a plan ahead of time, and you've practiced your "evade and escape" sequence recently. Consider your safety and that of your family as your first priority. Then prove it, and take charge of the situation.

**DOING NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION!**



## INVOLUNTARY TREMORS

Essential Tremors, Dyskinesia, is an affliction with many causes. It's not all Parkinson's. Prescription drugs can be a cause, and neurological conditions, movement disorders, Multiple Sclerosis (MS), stroke, or traumatic brain injury. In addition, Dystonic Tremor, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder, inherited degenerative disorders, alcohol abuse or withdrawal, mercury poisoning, liver or kidney failure, hyperthyroidism, good ol' caffeine, anxiety and panic can cause "the shakes."

Obviously, it's difficult to achieve a good aim and squeeze the trigger in a controlled way if your hands tremor. There are a few therapeutic therapies that work, but you don't necessarily have to give up on owning a gun for defense.



Shaking Man by Terry Allen





Researchers say that ***Mindfulness*** can reset the negative thought pattern so that you stop viewing tremors as a problem. This only leads to distress that worsens the condition. Mindfulness is more than just relaxation, it is often done in conjunction with deep-breathing exercises. This can be done in addition to whatever treatment your doctor prescribes.

In the meantime, you may need to rest the gun on another surface every time you shoot. Using a tight trigger can prevent inadvertent firing. Support the handgun with both hands. Shotguns require that you practice on soft sandbags first; you may find a way to manage the trigger with only one hand.

Work with a firearms instructor trained in PTSD issues for your best results. One thing is for sure, if you don't have PTSD *before* you shoot someone, you may have it *afterward*. It's serious business.



KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
TAKE A DEEP  
BREATH



## Let's talk about Hands:

Start first with your hands: how large are they? Then, how's your grip? The grip on a semi-auto handgun, or a pistol, is dependent on the size of the magazine holding the bullets. Two rows of staggered bullets create a wide magazine, best for large hands, and can hold double the rounds of a single-stack magazine. Can you hold the thicker grip (double stack), or do you need a thinner grip (single stack)? Revolvers have no magazine, and therefore have a "thin" handle, or grip.

Some guns have a grip safety, which is a marvelous invention from back in 1910. But if you can't squeeze it hard enough with a weak grip, it prevents the gun from firing. Strength can be an issue with these.

How strong is your thumb? Is it long enough to reach up with the tip of your thumb and pull down a revolver hammer in a controlled manner while maintaining the sight picture? Can you use your thumb to flip the manual safety lever on or off?





# We Can Do It!



## [How-To] Rack a Pistol Slide With Weak Hands

From Pew Pew Tactical, June 22, 2020

The secret to racking the slide on your pistol is to focus on pushing the weapon with your dominant hand rather than pulling the slide with your weaker side. Grasp the handgun firmly by the grip using your firing hand. Keep your finger off the trigger and the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.

Place the heel of your support hand on the slide serrations and wrap your fingers over the slide. Grasp the serrations on the opposite side with the four fingers of your support hand. Do not cover the ejection port. While holding the slide firmly, punch the firing hand forward. This isn't the time to be dainty. The movement should be fast, strong, and forceful...like a good old-fashioned bar room punch.





**Although** you may pull the slide back slightly as you punch, the focus should be on punching the gun forward (or slightly angled to the side), not pulling the slide back. Once the slide reaches its rearmost position, let it go. Don't ride the slide forward or with your support hand. Just let the spring do its job. I promise it doesn't need your help. Riding or following the slide forward can cause a frustrating jam.



**Humans** are naturally stronger at their midline, so pull your pistol in toward your belly button to harness more essential muscle strength. Also, make sure not to flare your elbows out to the side. Keep them tucked close to your body.

**Lean** forward slightly and point your shoulder as you throw that punch with your dominant hand. You can also think about punching downward at an angle rather than straight out in front of you. Resist the temptation to wrench the muzzle in unsafe ways. It's easier to punch the pistol at an angle to the side than it is to punch it straight out in front of your body.



**This** keeps the pistol close to your body, so you can harness some extra core body strength. Keep your trigger finger indexed along the pistol's frame, well away from the trigger. You want it high and out of the way.

**Keep** your thumb under the “beavertail.” it’s the area above the back of the grip that extends out like a pouting lip. otherwise the underside of the slide has sharp edges and could slice your thumb.

**Never** cover the ejection port with your hand. Covering the port can trap a spent casing and prevent the chamber from being emptied when you rack the slide. This causes malfunctions.

**Not** only will practice help you master the technique, it also helps loosen up the pistol's recoil spring. Newer pistols have stiffer, stronger springs. With use, these springs tend to loosen up, making it easier to rack the slide. Follow our tips and you'll be racking the slide like a rockstar in no time.



# Shockwave, Meet Inner Ear:

Everyone always talks about the middle ear. That's mainly the eardrum and those three little bones with cool names: the hammer, anvil, and stirrup. But what really causes hearing damage though, is what happens in the inner ear.

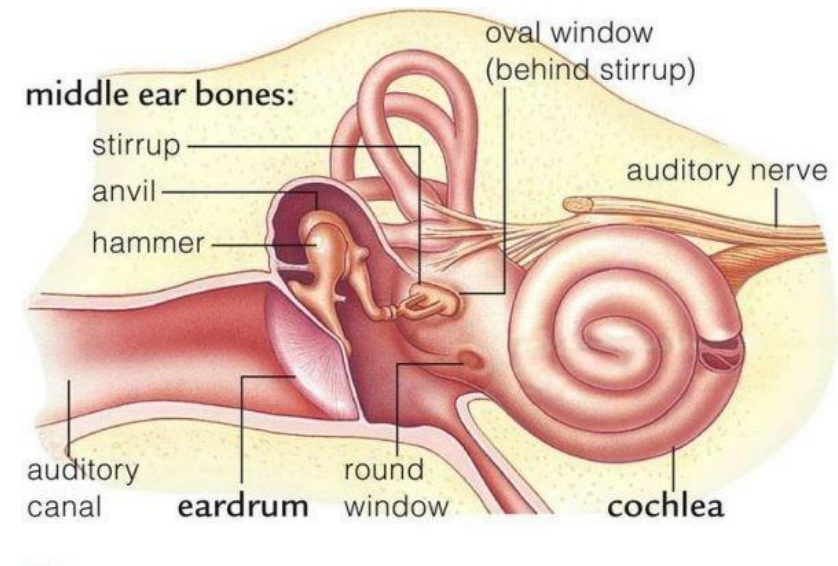
Inside, picture a snail shell (cochlea). All along this little coil are tiny little hairs. They register sound and transmit it through the auditory nerve to your brain.

Exposure to an intense sound—that's 140 dB or more—can make segments of the organ: portions of it actually tear away and float around. Sounds you hear all the time can have a huge effect your hearing.

So you end up with an inflamed lesion that causes an accompanying chemical reaction. Hairs die. Scar tissue forms, and even with rest, the tiny hairs typically continue to degenerate. A cascade effect takes over, and the entire auditory central nervous system goes deaf.

Noise exposure is cumulative. Each loud sound is killing cochlea hairs, so you need to be thinking about total exposure over the course of days, weeks and years.

**When you practice shooting, you simply MUST use hearing protection. Foam ear plugs and ear muffs, which used together should lower the noise in decibels (of power ratio) about 20 points.**





# Eye Protection:



You should always wear **safety glasses** while shooting. The rounds you put in the gun are not always consistent in the amount of powder used or the thickness of the brass, especially if using re-loads. Once in a while you'll get a "dud." When the dud bullet gets stuck in the barrel and you squeeze the trigger again, the barrel is blocked and you blow the gun up. The dud bullet in the barrel is called a "squib."

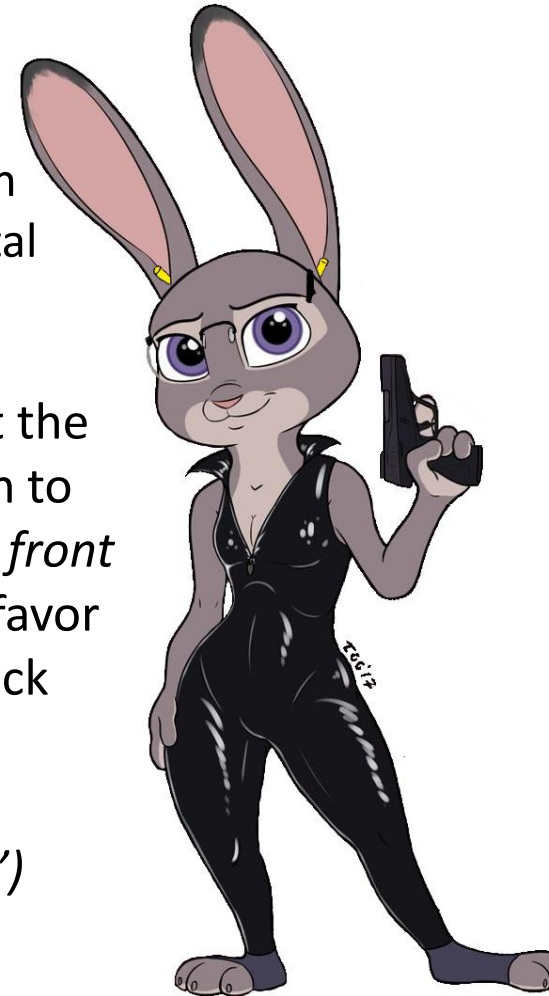
Now blowing up a barrel is a rare occurrence, but longtime shooters, especially using reloads, have seen it happen once in a while. IF you are not wearing **safety glasses**, which you should be at all times while in practice, you end up with an emergency trip to a hospital to get the pieces out.

OUCH!



Normally the empty shells ejecting the gun fly out the right side and barely touch you. But if you happen to shoot left handed and get a *hot shell fly down the front of your shirt, you will remember it.* Do yourself a favor before you go practicing: wear a closed-at-the-neck shirt or turtleneck.

*Take that advice from someone who knows!*  
*(Especially if you have this thing called "cleavage.")*



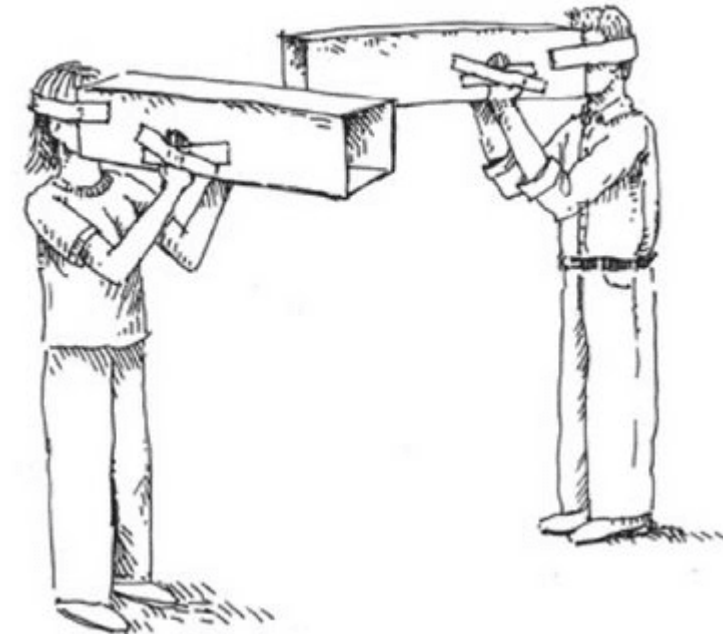
# TUNNEL VISION

This is the dreaded symptom of glaucoma, but is also what develops when the you, the victim, are concentrating on focusing on an assailant, without any realization of whatever else is going on around you. It is a result of the stress you're under at the moment.

There may be more thugs to your right or left, but you don't see them. There may be a neighbor or family member coming to your rescue, or a police officer, but you're not looking *at* them, or *for* them. You may not even hear them yelling! You just focus on the gun sight picture without any awareness of your surroundings. Yes, it also degrades listening skills.

It happens to everyone the first few times they practice at a shooting range. Or while wearing hearing protection, you won't hear them telling you to put the gun down. Oblivion!

Only practice can stop this potential disaster. Be mindful with your head on a swivel, when you take a shot. Always scan around and behind you.



**NORMAL VISION**



**EARLY GLAUCOMA**



**ADVANCED GLAUCOMA**

# TRAINING “SCARS”

A Training “Scar” is an inappropriate habit acquired by normal training which applied only to practice, but not to actual real-life situations. This is like a hockey player falling to the ice to block a shot and staying down long after the shot was diverted. Which he would do if he was fouled... but if the referee was not calling a foul, staying down a few seconds would rob his team of an active defenseman that short time. It’s a practice tool with good intentions, but could end up costing a league game.



Real time, game time, defense time with live targets, must be executed with the skills acquired by practice minus the bad habits learned by repetition in practice. For example:

Dry firing practice with modern striker-fire guns (like Glocks) requires that every time you press the trigger you must reset it by racking the slide... which will obviously create a horrible training scar, since actual live fire resets the trigger automatically. But you would get really good at racking the slide, except no one will say at your funeral eulogy that *“he/she was really good at racking the slide.”*

All training, no matter how realistic, is artificial. It isn’t actual combat. Like firing your shotgun so fast that you actually eject a live round. Or practicing with low recoil .380 ACP ammo, then being caught completely off guard of the recoil using a .45 ACP cartridge, and therefore unable to quickly re-establish sight picture. These habits can get you killed in an actual fire-fight.

**As Vince Lombardi once said, *“Only perfect practice makes perfect.”***



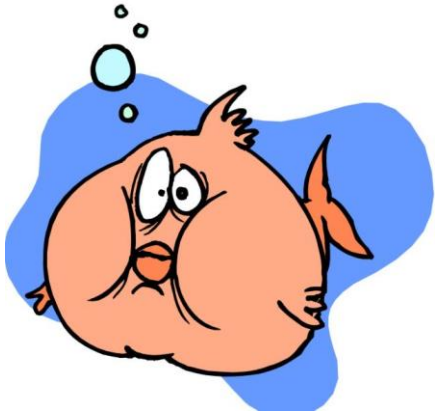
# BREATHING – IN – OUT – IN – OUT AND HOLD.....

No more than 3 seconds: don't hold your breath until you turn blue! The gun will rise and fall with your breathing while you focus your aim. The hold point should be brief as you pause and fire on target. After you pull the trigger, stay on target to follow through the shot to prevent jerking.



Practice by dry-firing the gun with something (jelly bean?) balanced on top of the gun. When you hold your breath and squeeze the trigger, smoothly without jerking, the barrel and balance-bean should stay level. By the way, it's perfectly OK to “dry fire” a gun (no ammo loaded). You will likely never fire it enough times to break the firing pin spring, contrary to popular myth. You couldn't get better practice at home.

Obviously, this will not work in a stress induced asthma attack, or illness triggered coughing fit. But give it your best “yoga” try. Keep Calm.....



**(Q) When pursued by someone with a gun, should you run in a straight line or with a zig-zag?**

**(A)** Always run fast as you can in a straight line, your chances of getting hit are much less than with a zig-zag motion. Many tests have shown this to be true. Trying to zig zag can make you lose your footing, trip, or fall off-balance. If you are unable to run, hide for cover and concealment.



**(Q) In any self defense situation, what exactly is the clear goal?**

**(A)** The clear goal is to survive by the best means possible, which is typically to run away. It is not the goal to kill or maim the assailant. If escape is possible, do so by any means, even if fired upon. Sometimes we are our own worst enemy in getting ourselves into (asking for) trouble, and then (doing something dumb) aggravating that trouble. Firing a gun is always, ALWAYS, the LAST resort. There is no shame in retreat.

**(Q) Isn't survival instinctive?**

**(A)** Yes, it is! It's hardwired into us from primitive days, seen any time the "startle-flinch" response is initiated. However, it bypasses the cognitive brain in it's speed and movement, delivering a self-defeating stimulus known as retaliation. Harnessing that energy into a more tactical response: a focused counter-measure to defend is the more intelligent behavior in any "fight or flight" situation.

