Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network, Inc.

Prosilience: Muscle Building for Mindset

An Interview with Linda Hoopes, PhD

by Gila Hayes

The Network's educational efforts focus on proactive preparation to better cope with the aftermath of using force in self defense. This month, I had an opportunity to learn how to build and practice resilience not only for life and death emergencies, but to move more easily through life's little storms. Because that's an attribute from which we could all benefit, I asked Linda Hoopes to share some of her knowledge and experience with our members. Linda is a psychologist, author of several books about proactive resilience and the head of the Resilience Alliance. Some years ago, she combined the concepts of proactivity and resilience into a single word, "prosilience," that I think also describes the mindset we'd like to build in Network members.

Our conversation follows, and for members who prefer streaming video, please browse to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjuCbk0PeyI to learn from Linda in that format.

eJournal: I've got a lot of questions, Linda, but we should start by learning about your professional work, as well as how you came to walk our parallel path of self-defense preparation.

Hoopes: My background is in the field of industrial and organizational psychology, which is the application of psychology to workplaces and practical things. It got its start way back in the first World War as we were trying to figure out how to match people's different skills and abilities to different roles. It is a very research based, quantitative field.

I got my doctorate and was a professor in organizational behavior, statistics, and research methods for a few years. I then went into the consulting world and worked as research director for a company focused on organizational change. I got started looking at resilience by trying to understand why some people seem to move through change more easily than others. I started learning what differentiates people who seem to move smoothly through upheaval. Over time, the model I built added what we know about the different kinds of challenges people face, including all different kinds of challenges, not just organizational change.

My work has intersected with this world of armed citizens because of my husband, who is a retired psychology professor as well, but also has become very active in the world of armed citizens. He was involved in the National Tactical Invitational (NTI) years ago. I got to know a number of people and participated in some of the events there and did some training. Armed citizens are a set of people for which I have great respect. I've gotten a chance to look at the kinds of challenges that we armed citizens face that call on our resilience.

eJournal: That's a big topic. In 2017 I read and reviewed your book, *Prosilience*. It covers a lot of ground and more than anything, it taught me so much about how, faced by an emergency or a challenge, we may get caught in a reactive, emotional loop and make trouble worse. I was intrigued by the positive, structured responses you wrote about. I hope we can talk more about those today.

The big question, I think, is how to prepare our minds for adversity. Our members practice physical skills a lot, draw and fire, move off the line of force, and other life-saving skills. While mindset is a very complex issue, we have fewer opportunities to build our mental skills. One thing I value about you is how, when the challenge is so big that we don't know how to resolve it, here's Linda with Challenge Maps!

Challenge Maps teach us about issues that seem too big to get around. Could you tell us a little bit about Challenge Maps, how they work to get us "unstuck" and moving toward solutions.

Hoopes: They do that, but they do something else, as well. I have found that when the topic of resilience comes up these days, a lot of people roll their eyes and they say, "I don't want to hear about resilience. I don't want to be any more resilient so just stop throwing so much stuff at me."

There's a lot of evidence that says that resilience is not an attribute or a characteristic we have. Resilience is a set of things that we DO as we encounter the different kinds of challenges that we face. Resilience is actually a verb.

I'm really glad you brought up the Challenge Map because many times we think of resilience just in terms of the bad things that happen to us, but the idea behind the map is that we face a whole landscape of challenges: some we choose, some are short in duration, and some are long. If resilience is a verb describing how we navigate all these challenges, it cannot just be one thing.

The Challenge Map basically has two parts. On one side, we look at how long a challenge lasts. Some are very short, right? You're driving in traffic, and someone cuts you off and you get your brain back online and everything's fine. You moved through that quickly.

Other challenges last longer. Imagine being in a shoot house at NTI. You face a challenge that lasts for some period of time and

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then you get through it and on the other side you get feedback and learn. There are other challenges that last months, years, decades, or the rest of our lives. Those include things like having an aging parent or a child with special needs or a physical challenge and last longer periods of time.

This is important because we use different tools at different stages. When a challenge is short, it's really much more about bringing ourselves back to a state of center and breathing through it. As challenges get longer, oftentimes they involve more thinking, problem solving, and figuring out. Even longer challenges often become questions of energy sustainability. How do we keep our energy going over the long haul? That's one dimension of challenges. We need all different kinds of tools, the short-term tools, the medium tools, the long tools.

Challenges come from all different kinds of places. Some challenges come to us because there are bad people in the world who are out to harm us, but there are others, too. There are challenges that come to us because we get older. There are challenges that come to us because hurricanes come and blow down our houses. There are challenges that come to us because we choose them. I have a cousin who ran a mini-Ironman the morning of his wedding. Well, that's not a challenge that somebody made him do. He did it because it was fun. There are people who do other extreme sports.

There are challenges that come along with the things that we choose. Imagine someone who's chosen to go into the Special Forces. Maybe they didn't do it because it was challenging, although I think some do. They've chosen this path, and it brings physical and emotional challenges. There are many challenges that are part of what we've chosen to do.

I think becoming an armed citizen is a challenge that we take up because we believe it's the right thing to do. It brings certain challenges with it, including some of the things you talked about – training and mental preparation.

To me, resilience is a verb. It encompasses all different kinds of challenges that we might face. The challenges that we choose are a great place to practice.

eJournal: The alternative to practice, I think, is having a challenge thrust upon us and not knowing what to do. We could have had all these great practice sessions. What if all it took was a little bit of daring to say, "I'll take on this task that seems like too much and I'll see how I do with it?"

Hoopes: The small challenges are a great place to practice for the big ones. It's like going to the range, right? Those little things we practice make habits automatic, train our minds and our hearts and our bodies to be in the right place, so we do better when things come to us. Prosilience work is advanced preparation that builds the mindsets and the muscles that we use when we encounter challenges.

eJournal: We need to stop thinking, "It'll never happen to me," and think instead, "Well, maybe it will, so what will I do?" That stops the thought, "I was victimized. I couldn't do anything about it." If we can say, "I prepared for this danger. I did as I was trained and I made the best result I could," don't we come out on the other side a little less damaged than if we were just swept along out of control?

Hoopes: Absolutely, and I think being able to anticipate the challenges that we might face lets us have a realistic picture of what those might look like. I was reading some of the interviews you did with William Aprill about getting into the mind of some of the people that we might encounter. Somebody else might have completely different motives for what they're doing.

We often think of resilience as being tough, as fighting our way back. Actually, resilience shows up in three ways. Sometimes we are resilient when we stay alive and keep harm from getting worse. We may not bounce back immediately from some situations where, if we are resilient, we get through and protect our loved ones and take care of ourselves. Then, sometimes resilience is about getting back to the way things were or feeling like we recovered. Sometimes challenging experiences allow us to grow as an outcome of resilience. We go through a tough time, we become a better, stronger person because of it, and then we can turn around and help other people and bring that strength into the world in a new way.

eJournal: Massad Ayoob uses the analogy of scar tissue when he says that people who have suffered bad things come out stronger. I'd rather not get stronger that way, so your idea of using minor challenges as training makes me interested in specific work to exercise armed citizens' resilience. Didn't you draw us an armed citizens' Challenge Map when you and I started talking about an interview?

Hoopes: Yes, and I continued to evolve it since sending you a draft. What are challenges that people in our part of the universe face? Let's just take a simple challenge: de-escalating a conflict.

If we walk into a situation and something starts to spin up, we need to be in a position where we don't see shooting somebody as the first option, right? We need to have the skill to think, "How do I de-escalate this? How do I calm myself down?" That's one example of how we anticipate and practice and prepare for a challenge. There are a number of other challenges; we could make a whole list.

Here's another one: I've had some great dialogue with Claude Werner about how spouses and partners work together to plan. If there are multiple people in a household, they need to have agreements about how they're going to respond if there's a home invasion or if something happens when they go out to dinner.

There's a whole list of challenges that we could come up with. It would be fun to brainstorm with the community about what

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folks see as the main challenges that armed citizens are likely to run into.

One challenge, of course, would be the aftermath of a violent encounter. I know that this organization is really designed to put some resources in place to help people who might find themselves in that situation, so they're not going it alone.

I think that training for real life situations is a really important challenge that we need to put in front of ourselves. For me, I race sailboats and that's my resilience gym. You can't control everything: things come up, you get surprised, the weather's not what you thought it was going to be or some other boat comes along. For me, sailing is a great place to practice resilience, because I get to practice resetting myself. I get to practice using a bunch of different muscles.

I use sailing to notice how I respond in stressful but not life-threatening moments and then use that to build my sense of how I respond in those situations. If you want, I can talk a little bit about what I see as the resilience muscles that we use to deal with challenges.

eJournal: Yes, and first, let's highlight something important you mentioned when you said, "calming yourself." You used a de-escalation scenario as an example, and I've worked with people who did not have the gift of lowering the temperature in the room, who amp it up, who talk back, who pick at people until there is a real fight. I've always sought to bring the temperature down. I'm always looking to learn from people who have that skill. How do we deal with our internal dialogue? How do we model de-escalation so others feel calm, too?

Hoopes: There's actually a word for that. It's called co-regulation. That's the skill set we use to bring ourselves to a state of calm. As humans, we are built to co-regulate. Have you ever seen a squalling baby that calms down when its mother picks it up and it sees her face? We are built to co-regulate. It almost doesn't matter who it is, if we are in the presence of another person who is calm, that has a calming effect on our own central nervous system. You always have the opportunity to be that calm person.

Are you familiar with the term self-regulation? If you can be the person who knows how to breathe, take a deep breath, and get your shoulders down out of your ears, you actually have a very positive ripple effect on the people around you.

eJournal: Does self-regulation depend on knowing yourself?

Hoopes: Absolutely. Sometimes you get feedback from other people about how you responded to stressful situations, too, and you get a chance to learn.

eJournal: Dithering is a failing that John Farnam has done a good job of defining. When we dither, we flit from one thing to another, and we resolve nothing. Can resilience prevent dithering?

Hoopes: When we encounter a challenge, we can choose from three different strategies. One strategy is adjusting to what's happening. We can recognize that maybe we're not in control and we just need to figure out what to do, how to adapt ourselves to that situation.

There's another strategy that's about changing things. In it, I'm going to act and I'm going to influence this situation. There's a third strategy that I'll get to in a minute, but I think sometimes we go back and forth between "should I adjust myself to this situation?" or "should I decide to step in and change it?" That could be one of the dithering zones, right? Moving more quickly to that place of decision is the solution. None of us likes to be in a situation where we're not in control. We need to be responsive to the situation rather than trying to influence it.

Sometimes, it's important to recognize that just rolling with it, at least for right now, is going to be more effective than trying to fight. Who was it that said, "When they get out the duct tape, it's time to make your move?" You need to have those mental triggers about when it's time to move, even though you're not sure that you know exactly what you're going to do. Some of dithering is just knowing what your trigger points are for deciding to move or deciding not to move, to just wait and let things play out.

eJournal: I'm reminded of Jeff Cooper's writings about triggers: you pre-decide, "if they do X, I will do Y."

Hoopes: Reframing is the third strategy. Here we tell ourselves a different story about what's going on. Let me give you an example that doesn't come from the armed citizen world. I play Irish music with a band sometimes. When I get ready to go on stage, I get the butterflies and I feel really nervous. Sometimes I feel that way before a sailboat race, too.

One day I talked to a professional performer who said, "Look, what you're feeling in your body is just adrenaline. You are labeling it as fear, but it's actually just the same as excitement. The same process is going on."

How you interpret a situation changes if you tell yourself a different story. You can say, "Okay, this is just adrenaline in my body, and I can interpret it as excitement, or I can interpret it as fear." That changes the available responses. Sometimes reframing changes a problem into an opportunity and you see a door that opens. In really tough and difficult situations, the door opens in ways that we can break through, then we can get on the other side of the challenge and come up with better and stronger responses.

Practice seeing a situation from multiple sides and in multiple ways helps, because it's very easy for our minds to get stuck about what's wrong. Being able to take different perspectives, to see different points of view, also enables us to reframe more quickly and take advantage of hidden opportunities.

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eJournal: Reframing works when taking tests. I've heard Mas Ayoob tell shooters getting ready to qualify, "When you're nervous and have the tremors, think of it as getting your supercharge. You've got your supercharge." That adrenaline is just giving you power. To some degree, surviving a critical incident is similar. You need that supercharge to be superwoman for a few minutes.

Reframing for longer term problems reminds me about your structure of Six Challenges. For example, maybe we get transferred to a different job where we have to use public transit and there's lots of crime on the commuter train. Still, everybody in that community uses the train to get to work. Can we reframe that?

How do I plug into others who are facing the same challenge? Am I going to end up the richer, not in terms of money, although hopefully the job is worth it, but is my life going to improve if I embrace this challenge? Unlike response to an attack, this challenge might be very long-term, so the timing matters when I choose solutions.

Hoopes: In the example you just gave, there is a longer-term challenge. Is there a way to turn this into an opportunity? It may feel difficult, but is the possible outcome being more on the ground in my community? Is it a chance to learn some things that will be helpful in my work and in my situation?

I also like your idea about reaching out to other people who are in similar situations. Resilience is a team sport, and we don't have to do it alone. As we are resiliencing our way through situations, we have different strengths. One of my husband's strengths is that he's a self-described defensive pessimist. He can look at a situation and figure out all the things that could potentially go wrong.

I'm an optimist. I think about all the things that could go right. As we face different kinds of challenges, we can leverage each other's strengths. When I'm feeling down, he can bring in his positive energy. There are muscles that we can team up on as we work our way through challenges.

These are some of the tools that are in the *Prosilience* book. Let's walk through some that we use. The first muscle that we use is positivity, but not stupid positivity. This is not pretending there are unicorns! The Army resilience program talks about spotting the good or even embracing the suck. In the midst of challenging situations, are you able to see where there's an opening? Where there's some hope? Not pretending that things aren't what they are but choosing deliberately to not waste energy in worry and rumination. See if there's something that's worth stepping forward into.

Then there's a confidence muscle we use to know that we have what it takes to survive, to master challenges and move through situations. Be careful because it's easy to overuse some of these muscles.

Then there's a muscle that's about priorities. Maybe this is a partial answer to your question about dithering. We need to know what's most important to us. We need to know whether the money in our purse is more important than our life, right? Do we care if somebody steals our car versus the risk of being dead? People versus things is one of our priorities. Another priority is making sure we take the time to practice, making time for the things that are most important. We use the priority muscle to align our time and energy with our greatest, highest values and to make sure that we're doing what we believe is most important.

There's a creativity muscle. This is the muscle of being able to open up your mind and think of different options, of not getting stuck in one way of thinking about things. Moving off the X is an example of exercising creativity. We need to continually be okay in the ambiguity of not having a right answer, of being able to keep the brain moving. Creativity also is the muscle that comedians use. If you've ever watched improvisational comedy, the comedians don't use the word "but." They use the word "and."

"And" is the muscle of "many things might be possible at once." "But" shuts things off. When we have a place in our mind that we can go to that says, "This might be true, and that might be true," we open up options that we might not have seen if we believed that there was only one way to see it.

Then there's the muscle of connection. Connection is the muscle about reaching out to other people. When we are "sheepdogs," we see ourselves as protectors. The people who feel this responsibility sometimes don't do a very good job of knowing when to ask for help. Other people often have resources, information, a hug, whatever we might need. If we see asking for help as a vulnerability, we miss out on a lot of resources.

There are two more muscles, and then we can play with these a little bit. There's a structure muscle that we use to plan, to anticipate, to put processes and systems in place. Do we have our go bag ready? Do we know what the steps are if the fire alarm goes off? That is an efficiency muscle to use our energy more efficiently on predictable things, so we have more energy available to deal with the unpredictable. All of our planning work and all the scenario-based training build that muscle.

The last muscle is about experimenting. That's trying stuff. That's getting out there and doing the force-on-force training and seeing what happens, seeing what we can learn. Exercising experimentation is really just putting ourselves in situations where we may look like a fool so that we can get the experience and learn and cycle that knowledge back in.

I see these as a set of muscles that we can practice and build, that help us move through challenges with more ease and grace.

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eJournal: I'm intrigued by the experimenting muscle's willingness to be wrong or play the fool. We sacrifice so much when we have to be right, or in charge, or won't seek help. There is a wealth of tools available – creativity, experimentation, or community, as examples – to us that I fear our pride keeps us from using. That's a great pity.

Hoopes: It is. It absolutely is. Something that comes to mind as we're talking is Vicki Farnam's work about women learning to shoot and talking with her about the work she does. Sometimes we get into a spiral where one thing leads to another. We feel awkward and then we shoot badly and then we feel hopeless and then we tell ourselves a story that we're no good. These cycles of energy can get into a really negative spiral. This happens to guys, too, not just women, but I was thinking of how many women go to class with the gun that their guy gave them because he thought it was the best gun for her, but it's too big. I remember being in a class and I had my M&P 9 with the small backstrap on it, so it fits my hand. Somebody else picked it up and shot it. She said, "Wow, this is so much easier!"

Little things can cause us to start to doubt ourselves and get into a negative spiral, so to me – and there's research that supports this – resilience is about anything that allows us to stop and keep that spiral from happening. Resilience can cause us to say, "All right, I'm going to stop and take a minute. Here's how I'm feeling. Is what I'm feeling true? Is there another way to look at this?" Take a deep breath and try again, rather than getting into the spin that can lead into anxiety and depression, that just keeps on spiraling down.

eJournal: I wonder how that applies to giving away our choices to someone else. The lady who liked your M&P had someone else say, "Here, this is the gun you need," so off she goes to class, and her growth is stifled. Compare that to having an attitude of experimentation, creativity, and lust to find truth for myself, not just saying, "The 'authority' said this is how it should be," which probably is true for the "authority," but is it true for me?

I don't know how we wake up to those possibilities. I don't know how we realize that we've got these muscles, all we've got to do is hit the resilience gym and build them up. How do we get that vision?

Hoopes: The kind of conversation that we're having helps people recognize their muscles. A lot of times people think either they are resilient or they're not; they're an optimist or a pessimist; an introvert or an extrovert. We start putting ourselves in boxes, and yet every single one of these are muscles that we have inside us to practice, strengthen and build.

Coming right out of the gate, my structure muscle is not super strong, but now I know how to team up with people who bring that strength, and I also have learned how to use my own structure muscle better. Some of the solution is intention and some of it is small exercises. The "bicep curl" for priorities might be taking five minutes in the morning to think about the most important thing I've got to get done today.

Bicep curls for your connection muscle might be sending an email to someone you haven't talked to in a while. Any little thing that you do that starts to rewire your brain, that starts to change your thinking, makes that muscle more available to you when you need it.

eJournal: We may be called upon to do things that we never thought we could do. Many years ago, my niece was an au pair in France. She was on public transit trying to get back to her family's home, but some sketchy people were also on the train. She asked another woman on the train, "Can we ride together?" Reaching out can be really difficult for introverts, but she saw the necessity and did it. Those two young ladies did each other some real good that night. Neither would probably have spoken to a stranger under other circumstances. Wouldn't it be nice, before you're scared you are not safe, to know it's okay to ask a stranger to team up?

Hoopes: Absolutely, and I also think we need to trust those feelings when something doesn't feel right. Oftentimes we try to talk ourselves out of what we feel because there's no logical reason to feel weird or awkward. Every time I've paid attention to that little voice that said, "You don't want to be here right now," it's been right, even if it didn't make any sense. We need to practice recognizing that and not being afraid to speak up.

eJournal: In rereading *Prosilience* in preparation to talk with you, I was forcefully reminded how much capability we have that we don't realize we have. We need to prevent self-talk that says, "I could never do that." Well, you know what? We might surprise ourselves.

Hoopes: I was talking about the negative spirals. Conversely, we can actually get into upward spirals where we try something and have a successful experience. It emboldens us to try the next thing and we get stronger as we go. My husband's granddaughter just ran her first half marathon. She built herself up and of course, she had setbacks, but she went, and she ran it successfully.

I want to take a minute to talk about energy. Energy is what fuels our resilience muscles. Our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual energy are all part of what we bring to the challenges that we face. Some take more physical energy, like running the 5K. Some take more mental energy, like learning and practicing things. Some take emotional energy, so when we're working with our own emotions or other people's emotions that are tough, we draw down our battery. Spiritual energy is used to deal with questions of ethics and values, to stay connected to something that's larger than us. We call on our spiritual energy when we're having to make tough decisions about who lives and who dies and choosing the right thing to do.

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All of those energies are interconnected, so if we start to feel emotionally drained, sometimes we feel physically tired, too. If we're feeling physically exhausted, sometimes our brains don't work as well, or we start to feel a sense of hopelessness. We need a place to start. Starting with emotional and physical well-being is good to replenish our energy. We can't fire those resilience muscles very well when we're really depleted of energy.

eJournal: An interesting facet of replenishment that seems counterintuitive, and yet I've seen it work too many times to discount, is reaching out instead of withdrawing and resting. Some years ago, I interviewed a police officer about a really awful post-shooting experience and lawsuit. Shortly before the interview, his counselor had advised him to start telling others what he'd endured. I learned when your spirit is as low as you think it can be, just making things better for somebody else is an amazing boost up.

Hoopes: I think it goes to the side of resilience that is about growth. It's about putting ourselves out of our comfort zone in the service of growth. I also think it's about spiritual energy. I think that desire to give back to the world, that sense that we're part of a larger community and that if we can turn around and use what we've learned to strengthen other people, that's part of our spiritual quest to bring our best selves to the world.

eJournal: Resilience is a big subject. It's just huge. What would you like us to take away from our time together today?

Hoopes: The idea that we can intentionally build our challenge readiness. That we can be aware of and practice and strengthen a set of mindsets and muscles and strategies that will be useful no matter what kind of challenge we face, and that it's actually the small challenges and the challenges that we intentionally put ourselves in that are the best training ground. Take the time to learn from them.

eJournal: Your expertise is so far outside of the world that I live in that I don't know if I failed to ask you the things that you wish I'd asked. What should we have talked about that I didn't think of?

Hoopes: What a great question. Okay, I'll give you two. One is, "What are you working on next, Linda?" And what I'm working on next is taking sets of challenges that particular groups of people might face and adding the Prosilience framework on top of it to help them.

I co-authored a book that's called, *Embracing Another Normal*, that's written with a woman who is the mother of a profoundly disabled adult child, who also does a lot of work for parents who are raising kids with disabilities. In the book, we laid out some common challenges that parents in that situation might face and told some stories and overlaid some of the resilience framework that I talked about here. It's very helpful for people facing that particular challenge. I've got a series of those books going. I'm working with a woman who's a 25-plus year stage four pancreatic cancer survivor. We talk about challenges facing people with significant medical illnesses. That's one thing that I'm working on.

The other thing that I'm working on concerns things in our environments that affect our resilience. Think about the culture of an organization. Think about the experimenting muscle. Imagine you're in an organization and you want to experiment with something, and you might fail. In some organizations, failure is punished; others see failure as an opportunity for learning. Guess which one's easier to practice strengthening the experimenting muscle in.

There are some environments where it's not okay to ask for help. In other environments, teaming up with people is considered a great strength. Leaders can create environments that let people stretch and flex and strengthen their muscles. That's another important thing I'm working on, because at the end of the day, I want to help people spend as little energy as possible on little challenges so that we can spend more energy on the big challenges that we're in this world to take on. The world needs people who are ready to take on big challenges.

We only have one supply of energy, so the more energy we waste on challenges that are not meaningful, the less energy we have for bringing the world what it really needs, which is people who are ready to step up to challenges.

eJournal: I should have asked, "What are you going to do next, Linda?" and you would have told me, "I'm going to change the world," and you know what? You've given us the tools to come right up beside you and see what we can do, too.

Hoopes: I look forward to hearing stories from people, because this is a dialogue that we could carry on with input from the community, as well.

eJournal: Now you've got us thinking, I'm sure that members are asking, "Wow, what can I do with my resilience muscles?" Thank you for sharing a little bit about yourself. Thank you for sharing your work. Going in, I had no idea the depth and breadth of it.

Hoopes: Thank you for inviting me. This has been really fun.

Linda Hoopes is an organizational psychologist who writes and teaches about resilience, organizational change, and team effectiveness. She's also a sailor, musician, photographer, and family historian. You can learn more about her and her work here: https://www.linkedin.com/in/lindahoopes/

President's Message

by Marty Hayes, J.D.

Did you see the article about "Murder Insurance" the Wall Street Journal put out last month? In order to write this article, the reporter(s) contacted the self-defense insurance companies and ended up doing a somewhat in-depth look into only two of them, US Law Shield and USCCA. Their reporters also contacted us, despite the fact that the Network is not a self-defense insurance company, but we refused to discuss either our members or our business with them.

The link to the WSJ article is behind a paywall (for WSJ subscribers, see https://www.wsj.com/us-news/law/self-defense-insurance-policy-379336cb), but there is another article which takes much of its content from the WSJ feature in Insurance Business (see https://www.insurancebusinessmag.com/us/news/breaking-news/when-does-selfdefense-turn-to-murder--and-how-can-insurance-differentiate-535519.aspx).

If you read either article, realize that anything they wrote about the Network was gleaned from our website – based on what was reported, likely our most recent Annual Year in Review article at https://armedcitizensnetwork.org/2024-review. Mention of the Network in their article, without making any attempt to explain that our assistance to members isn't insurance, shows how poorly the WSJ and other media outlets which have excerpted or reprinted the piece understand the issues. We would have preferred not to have been mentioned in their article because it is so incomplete as to confuse honest people who genuinely want to understand their interaction with the criminal justice system after self defense.

I found several comments in the article interesting, and I frankly believe it was reasonably well-written and factual – at least, I have no reason to believe otherwise. A few things about USCCA interested me, namely that the owner of USCCA and his ex own three jets. Last time I heard it was only one. The article also reported that he has majority interest in the insurance company which underwrites the USCCA insurance policies. I wonder if that is legal. I am not sure how I feel about that, but I suspect it makes sense financially.

The article also discussed the Kayla Giles case, intimating that she did indeed purchase a USCCA policy with the intention of killing her ex-husband. The idea that purchasing legal insurance that paid for legal representation if you then committed a crime and called it self defense is not a well thought out strategy, though. After all, if you are found guilty despite getting your legal fees paid for, you will still go to jail, as did Giles.

Pondering that inference in the article started me wondering if our members take extra risks in possible self-defense situations, because they are part of the Network? I certainly hope not. Membership in the Network should do one primary, positive thing for our members above and beyond actually helping after an incident. That is to help them sleep better at night. I hope they chose to be an armed citizen because of the perceived dangers they face, and only purchased membership in the Network just in case a threat presents itself, and not because they would have a free legal defense, so they could take additional risks by engaging in behavior they would not normally do. If you change your lifestyle after becoming a Network member, maybe you should re-assess your choices.

The facts saw Kayla Giles purchasing a USCCA policy, and then 12 days later, killing her ex. Could it not have been just as likely she felt a compelling need to purchase a gun and the USCCA policy because of the threat he posed to her? You could be accused of doing the same thing, that being that you bought a membership in the Network so you could kill someone and get away with it. The only way I can see to defeat that accusation in court is if you testify that your purchase of the membership did not change your lifestyle habits one bit, except to make you more cautious about potentially dangerous situations due to the educational package which is included in with membership. Speaking of our member education package, I still hear comments about some members not watching the videos we provide at https://armedcitizensnetwork.org/videos (login required–contact us if you need help logging in). Folks, if you have been putting this off, you are really doing yourself a disservice.

Attorney Question of the Month

It is very common for gun owners to also carry knives they may use as defensive weapons where gun possession is prohibited, or as a back up against gun malfunction during a self-defense emergency. As a result, members often ask questions about knives for self defense. For this month's column, we asked our affiliated attorneys these questions –

1. ***In your area, what laws apply to carrying a knife?***
2. ***If one inadvertently violated a municipal regulation prohibiting blade length, automatic opening mechanisms, or other knife features, how damaging would the violation be to an overall claim of self defense?***
3. ***If one is found in possession of an illegal knife, what is the punishment and does it affect one's carry permit or right to possess firearms?***

Our affiliated attorneys' responses follow.

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In Indiana, knife laws vary by municipality, since we still don't have state preemption for all weapons.

Currently, the only knife type restriction that remains in the state code as applicable state-wide is possession of a ballistic knife as a mid-level misdemeanor. The only other knife-specific offense is possession of a knife on school property, a school bus, or a special purpose bus, which can be charged as a misdemeanor or low-level felony depending on the nature of the offense. The prohibition on carry in most government buildings applies to all weapons, and is not knife specific.

Under Indiana's self-defense statute, a person may not use force in self defense if he is committing a crime that is directly and immediately connected to the act of violence he is defending against. So if the knife is used because someone tries to wrest it away in a school, a self-defense claim would probably fail.

But beyond that, the municipal knife restrictions are all, as far as I know, at the infraction level, which in Indiana is a civil matter subject to a fine, not a criminal offense. So nominally if you're twirling a switchblade in a Marion County park and someone tries to stab you and take your cool knife, you retain the ability to legally act in self defense.

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In every context but K-12 schools, Georgia regulates only the carrying of "weapons and long guns." Weapons are defined to be "handguns" and "knives," and "knives" are defined to be a bladed weapon longer than 12 inches. That is, Georgia does not regulate the carry of things like pocket and hunting knives.

Longer blades (i.e., longer than 12 inches, things like sabers, machetes, and swords) are treated the same as handguns. They may not be carried in the same places where handguns may not be carried (jails, prisons, courthouses, nuclear power plants, polling places, churches, government buildings with law-enforcement-run security screen, and state owned mental health facilities). They only may be carried everywhere else by people who have weapons carry licenses, people who are eligible for weapons carry licenses, and people with a carry license issued by another state.

There are no restrictions on blade mechanisms (like switchblades). Carrying a "knife" in an unauthorized location (i.e., in one of the places listed herein) is a misdemeanor for the first offense and a felony for the second offense in five years. The first offense results in revocation of a weapons carry license or eligibility for one for three years.

Cities and counties are prohibited from regulating the carry of blades of any length, except for their own employees at work. No prosecutions for any such regulations are allowed.

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In your area, what laws apply to carrying a knife?

Not many anymore. Back in 2017 (with a law effective as of 01 SEP 2017) the legislature made "illegal" knives no longer a thing. There is now such thing as a "location-restricted knife" which is simply any knife with a blade over 5½ inches. There're two separate times when carrying a location-restricted knife might be illegal:

The first is if the person is less than 18 years old and carrying a location-restricted knife, unless:

Texas Penal Code 46.02(a-4)

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A person commits an offense if the person:

(1) intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly carries on or about his or her person a location-restricted knife;

(2) is younger than 18 years of age at the time of the offense; and

(3) is not:

(A) on the person's own premises or premises under the person's control;

(B) inside of or directly en route to a motor vehicle or watercraft that is owned by the person or under the person's control; or

(C) under the direct supervision of a parent or legal guardian of the person.

The second illegal act related to carrying a location-restricted knife is if someone is carrying one at the same as places where carrying firearms are prohibited:

Texas Penal Code Sec. 46.03(a)

(1) on the premises of a school or postsecondary educational institution, on any grounds or building owned by and under the control of a school or postsecondary educational institution and on which an activity sponsored by the school or institution is being conducted, or in a passenger transportation vehicle of a school or postsecondary educational institution, whether the school or postsecondary educational institution is public or private, unless:

(A) pursuant to written regulations or written authorization of the school or institution; or

(B) the person possesses or goes with a concealed handgun that the person is licensed to carry under Sub-chapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code, and no other weapon to which this section applies, on the premises of a postsecondary educational institution, on any grounds or building owned by and under the control of the institution and on which an activity sponsored by the institution is being conducted, or in a passenger transportation vehicle of the institution;

(2) on the premises of a polling place on the day of an election or while early voting is in progress;

(3) on the premises of any government court or offices utilized by the court, unless pursuant to written regulations or written authorization of the court;

(4) on the premises of a racetrack;

(5) in or into a secured area of an airport;

(6) within 1,000 feet of premises the location of which is designated by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice as a place of execution under Article 43.19, Code of Criminal Procedure, on a day that a sentence of death is set to be imposed on the designated premises and the person received notice that:

(A) going within 1,000 feet of the premises with a weapon listed under this subsection was prohibited; or

(B) possessing a weapon listed under this subsection within 1,000 feet of the premises was prohibited;

(7) on the premises of a business that has a permit or license issued under Chapter 25, 28, 32, 69, or 74, Alcoholic Beverage Code, if the business derives 51 percent or more of its income from the sale or service of alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption, as determined by the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission under Section 104.06, Alcoholic Beverage Code;

(8) on the premises where a high school, collegiate, or professional sporting event or interscholastic event is taking place, unless the person is a participant in the event and a firearm, location-restricted knife, club, or prohibited weapon listed in Section 46.05(a) is used in the event;

(9) on the premises of a correctional facility;

(10) on the premises of a civil commitment facility;

(11) on the premises of a hospital licensed under Chapter 241, Health and Safety Code, or on the premises of a nursing facility licensed under Chapter 242, Health and Safety Code, unless the person has written authorization of the hospital or nursing facility administration, as appropriate;

(12) on the premises of a mental hospital, as defined by Section 571.003, Health and Safety Code, unless the person has written authorization of the mental hospital administration;

(13) in an amusement park; or

(14) in the room or rooms where a meeting of a governmental entity is held, if the meeting is an open meeting subject to Chapter 551, Government Code, and if the entity provided notice as required by that chapter.

There are various exceptions for employees of these places, cops, etc. But the big thing to be aware of is that 46.02(a-4) and 46.03(a) generally are only a Class C misdemeanor (no jail, max of $500 fine) UNLESS it's a violation of 46.03(a)(1), then it's a 3rd Degree Felony (2-10 years prison and max $10,000 fine). That's in Texas Penal Code Sec. 46.03(g-1), so don't take your Bowie knife or sword to school.

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If one inadvertently violated a municipal regulation prohibiting blade length, automatic opening mechanisms, or other knife features, how damaging would the violation be to an overall claim of self defense?

This is really two questions in Texas:

As to the first, no such thing in Texas. There's only the state penal code that preempts any such local regulation.

The second question is "How damaging would a violation of 46.02(a-4) or 46.03(a) be?" And it could be very damaging. It depends first on whether the prosecutor even notices and charges the violation separately, or objects to a standard self-defense jury charge under Tex. Pen. Code Chap. 9. If yes to either or both then there's some burden of proof shifting that happens. The general rule is that once self defense is raised by evidence the state has the burden, just like on the charged offense, of convincing the jury that self defense is not applicable. But in Tex. Pen. Code Sec. 9.31(a)(3), a person can't be otherwise engaged in criminal activity, other than a Class C misdemeanor that is a traffic violation, at the time force is used. So if you're carrying a location-restricted knife in violation of Sections 46.02 or 46.03 you might lose your ability to raise self defense regardless of other circumstances.

If one is found in possession of an illegal knife, what is the punishment and does it affect one's carry permit or right to possess firearms?

In general, a violation of the above is only a ticket, so not at all. But of course a 46.03(a)(1) violation could leave someone with a felony conviction and all the attendant collateral consequences.

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In New York, what laws apply to carrying a knife?

New York as a State prohibits the possession of almost anything dangerous, including a "dangerous knife," for which there is no firm definition. The law presumes, as a necessary element of the crime, that the possessor has the "intent to use the same unlawfully against another." Thus, if the defendant can demonstrate that their possession was not intended for unlawful use, they should be found not guilty. However, since few defendants can afford a trial, usually they plead to the misdemeanor crime, or to a lesser offense.

In New York City, the Administrative Code also makes it illegal "to carry...or... possess...in any public place...any knife which has a blade length of 4 inches or more," or, "to wear outside of...clothing or carry in open view any knife with an exposed or unexposed blade unless...actually using such knife for a lawful purpose as set forth in...this section." Lawful purposes are limited mostly to government workers performing their duties, though there are some additional non-governmental exceptions, the most useful of which is that the knife is "being used for or transported immediately to or from a place where it is used for hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, picnicking or any employment, trade or occupation customarily requiring the use of such knife."

Under State law possession of automatic knives of any kind, except for use by certain government personnel, or in some limited instances use by disabled persons, is prohibited.

If one inadvertently violates a municipal regulation prohibiting blade length, automatic opening mechanisms, or other knife features, how damaging would the violation be to an overall claim of self defense?

This is a purely fact-specific question, and there is no general answer. Example 1: Teenager is a gang member who defends himself from attack by another gang, and uses his switchblade knife in self defense. Example 2: Little old lady is attacked in her home, and grabs her grandson's switchblade from his dresser drawer to use in her defense. Different facts, different impression upon the District Attorney, different impression upon the jury.

If one possesses an illegal knife, what is the punishment and does it affect one's carry permit or right to possess firearms?

Violation of the State law is a misdemeanor, but can rise to a felony if there are other criminal circumstances present (e.g., use in another crime). Violation of the New York City Administrative Code is a misdemeanor.

Violations of the law absolutely can affect the status of a pistol license in New York, whether a license to posses at a premises, or a carry license. The license will be suspended or revoked upon the local Licensing Officer being notified of the arrest through the State notification system (the licensee also has an independent obligation to inform the Licensing Officer of the arrest). Administrative procedures then will follow to determine whether the pistol license will be continued, suspended or revoked. Failure of the licensee to independently notify the Licensing Officer of the arrest almost always will become an additional factor considered against the licensee.

Thank you, affiliated attorneys, for sharing your experience and knowledge. Members, please return next month when we have a new question for discussion by our affiliated attorneys.

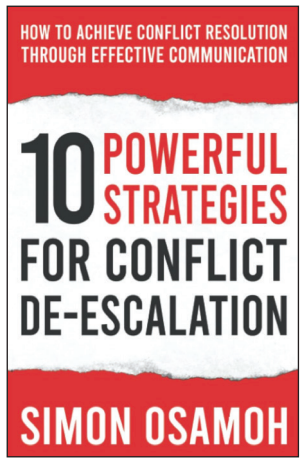
Book Review

10 Powerful Strategies for Conflict De-Escalation

How To Achieve Conflict Resolution Through Effective Communication

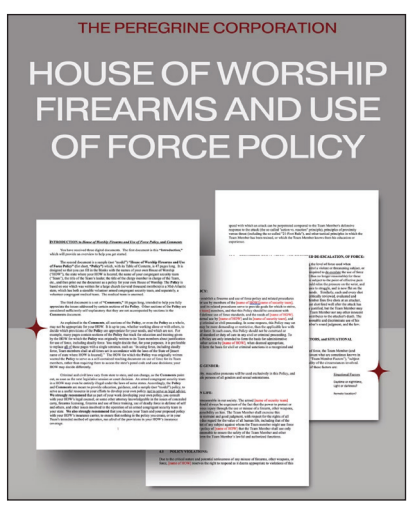
By Simon Osamoh
160 pages, Kindle edition $9.99, paperback $14.99
ISBN-13: 979-8359479073

Reviewed by Gila Hayes



Shooting skills are fun to learn and practice so it's easy to forget the "soft skills" like breaking contact from a budding conflict and de-escalation before contact turns hostile. Ironically, we interact with other humans far more often than we fight, for which we should all be profoundly grateful, so a few times a year, I dig into books, lectures, and other instructional resources about verbal de-escalation. In April, confined to an airplane for hours, I read about strategies for de-escalation through communication, as spelled out in Simon Osamoh's book, *10 Powerful Strategies For Conflict De-Escalation.*

Osamoh is big on structure. He outlines four stages of anger, which he identifies as event triggers, escalation of emotions, breaking point, and recovery. Recognizing the stages, he writes later is, "pivotal to your success in conflict de-escalation," so what you say is pertinent to progression through the cycle. He compares defusing tensions to releasing air from an over-full balloon before it pops. The color of the balloon or even how it came to be overinflated is inconsequential. "You just need to get air out of the balloon, just enough so that it doesn't burst," he writes. This echoed training I've taken previously in which instructors advised resolving the threat without undue worry over why an attack happened.



Anger comes in several types, Osamoh continues. He dubs these avoidance, forceful, collaborative, indirect control, and radical reaching out, concepts he applies throughout the book. The book also differentiates responses of the two main personality types to various de-escalation approaches. Logic-dominant personalities are distressed when details are glossed over, but value-dominant people need more urgently to share their feelings about injustices they believe they suffer. He gives a real-life example of building rapport with an angry subject and diverting an instable, emotional response by asking "logical questions" to elicit a reasoned response to overrule the man's feelings and anger.

Give angry, upset people positive choices to make it easier for them to accept and move on to better options. Osamoh describes a security officer convincing a loiterer to move on. Approached wrong, a fight may ensue. Give alternatives that include positive options to defuse a simmering conflict. He quotes George Thompson's Five Universal Truths, which apply to nearly every situation where people come into conflict.

1. All people want to be treated with dignity and respect.
2. All people want to be asked rather than told to do something.
3. All people want to be informed as to why they are being asked or ordered to do something.
4. All people want to be given options rather than threats.
5. All people want a second chance when they make a mistake.

Successful de-escalation puts the focus on the other person. It relies on intervention appropriate to the individual's stage of anger, ascertaining his or her personality type and kind of anger, because calming and resolving conflict cannot be about the de-escalator: it has to be about the other person. It requires active listening, realizing it is not personal, using empathy, not sympathy which denotes pity, initiating "we" conversations, not "you" or "I" sentences. It asks us to know and work outside of our own confirmation biases, support the commitment to listen and then listen some more.

So much self-defense training focuses on reacting decisively, and not letting a predator get an opportunity to harm us, that we tend to forget that the great, vast majority of our human interactions involve communication. Much can be avoided by skills to defuse angry or disturbed people before they resort to violence. *10 Powerful Strategies* gave me more tools on the communication side of the problem.

A Solution for Church Volunteer Safety Teams

Several years ago, attorney and Network advisory board member Emanuel Kapelsohn gave the Network journal a detailed, two-part interview about the legal concerns for armed security teams volunteering in houses of worship. The knowledge he shared reflected over four decades of the practice of law, expert witness work on use of force and firearms, teaching firearms use and working in law enforcement and executive protection. Now, several years later, he has compiled his work in the law and church security into a Use of Force Policy bundle for churches, houses of worship and synagogues served by volunteer safety teams. Sold for $424.50, it guides churches to establish a solid legal foundation for their safety team. Kapelsohn offers a $25 off discount for Network members. Because this journal is publicly available, members should log in to https://armed-citizensnetwork.org/coupons where we can limit access to Network members only.

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The sample policy and educational commentary bundle fills a need because many smaller congregations don't have a formal relationship with a law firm, and if they do, the church attorney is likely more concerned with property disputes, church employee matters, tax status, and even freedom of speech. Kapelsohn's sample policies address a specialized, yet very important area of legal concern and can be customized to fill the needs specific to an individual congregation. It offers a framework of standards for volunteer security teams, drawn from his practice dealing with liability for injuries or loss of life, with an addendum of comments that focuses on preventing problems in the first place. Laypersons working in fields not related to the law or law enforcement often don't recognize legal pitfalls.

In addition to a brief "How to Start" guide, the bundle includes a user-editable Use of Force Policy to customize the document details for the individual church, where it is located and the names its leaders. In addition, Kapelsohn explains, the size and finances of a church affect the work it is practical for a volunteer safety team to undertake. Some team leaders will prefer an all-inclusive policy document that teaches volunteers how to perform their services in compliance with local law; others will want a shorter document that only cites titles of more verbose statutory law, for example, which govern use of force in their state. An evolving document is important if for no other reason than changes needed due to newly enacted laws, he observes. Churches and volunteers must know the laws, and while the sample Use of Force Policy and Comments can guide questions and spotlight risks, it is not intended to replace legal advice from an attorney in your state.

Longtime students of self defense will recognize references to and outlines of self-defense doctrine ranging from use of deadly force to de-escalation to limits on warning shots and much more. Less familiar to many will be administrative concerns like documented training, qualifications and testing, and concerns affecting ammunition and firearms carried. Kapelsohn spotlights these and more in an intensive 22-page, single spaced compendium of explanatory comments for the various policy paragraphs. These expand elements from the policy into plain language drawn from his experience as an attorney, law enforcement officer, classes taken and classes taught, and wide-ranging court-recognized expertise that spans liability issues attached to guns, holsters, police use of force and more.

I find the Comments document of particular value. For example, one section highlights the volunteer nature of church safety teams, observing that the Use of Force Policy places no obligation on a volunteer to risk life and limb in defense of the congregation. Instead, a decision to do so is entirely left to the team member, drawing on his or her own values and acting accordingly. A later comment adds that policies aren't all-inclusive, acknowledging that unexpected or unique situations may come up. The sample policy is worded to allow for policy deviations and exceptions so safety team members can decide and act in line with the demands of an unfolding situation.

If worded incorrectly, policies could be used to claim safety volunteers were obligated to perform or act in one way. The comments for several elements of the policy that addresses providing first aid to an attacker, or retreating, give good examples of identifying those issues and how to give the volunteer freedom to follow his or her conscience. Another comment clarifies the oft-misinterpreted term "force continuum," a teaching tool which imposes no requirement to step progressively through various low-level force options before resorting to levels likely to stop an attack.

Kapelsohn's long discussion of verbal challenges illustrates the value of the educational commentary he documented separately from the policy. While the formal house of worship use of force policy suggests that a safety team member "should" use a verbal challenge, "Security officer– don't move or I'll shoot," his in depth comment explains why we drill verbal challenges concurrent with range practice. Provided with appropriate verbiage, team members are less likely to parrot phrases they've picked up from movies or television. He notes, "For example, the author has served as an expert witness in cases in which obscenities and racial slurs have been used in challenges, with considerable negative impact on pre-trial publicity, and on the trials that followed. Repetitive drills that train team members to call out, 'Security! Don't move or I'll shoot!' not only reduce the chance that an inappropriate, unprofessional, or obscene challenge will be used, but increase the chance that the challenge may also be heard by witnesses, who can later testify that the team member warned the suspect not to move, and only fired when the suspect disobeyed the challenge in a life-threatening manner." A perceptive firearms instructor, tasked with bringing security volunteers up to higher standards, can present that rationale during training. Knowing the vigor with which many hobbyists defend their opinions, I think team members who are taught authoritative information from the Comments should readily recognize the expertise and experience Kapelsohn brings to the subject.

This professionally-prepared policy bundle is sold at https://www.peregrinecorporation.com/product-page/house-of-worship-firearms-use-of-force-policy-bundle. Additionally, Kapelsohn generously donated a wealth of information to earlier Network online journals on this subject at https://armedcitizensnetwork.org/house-of-worship-armed-security-1 and https://armedcitizensnetwork.org/house-of-worship-armed-security-2 and that two-part interview, in both written and video format, is freely available to church leaders, security teams and volunteers to increase understanding of the legal issues they may face.

Editor's Notebook

by Gila Hayes

Members express alarm over acts of aggression they encounter on the road. Even if you've not experienced it yourself, there is quite a lot of video showing drivers involved in yelling angrily, gesturing aggressively, and punching, kicking or shooting. After a protracted exchange of angry words, it is nearly inevitable that one is going to claim self defense, asserting that the other person was the first to do wrong.

Few will argue that road rage is one of the more likely risks armed citizens think about when they practice tactics to avoid being killed or crippled. Classes teach shooting from cars, even some martial arts have online video about fighting inside a car. Have self-defense minded people concluded that they'd rather fight than escape?

Research has long told us that when frightened, threatened or angry, the reasoning part of the brain is greatly handicapped when the amygdala grabs control and from its primitive survival programming, directs the fight, flee or freeze response. Only with recognition of and practice in applying reason to override the reaction – perhaps something as simple as habitually starting tactical breathing when annoyed or alarmed – can the prefrontal cortex contribute strategies, remember solutions and make a reasoned decision to resolve, not react.

Understand the problem – including what you bring to the equation. Being threatened feels personal, but rarely is road-rage about the person you are. It is about a mistake, real or perceived, made while driving or simply wandering into the cross-hairs of another driver's frustration. So first, decide not to take it personally. If you're highly effective at problem solving, you need not respond at all. Watch for opportunities to break contact in the fluid, evolving situation that transpires when one driver gets angry at another. Make distance and break contact.

If brake checked, back off or create distance and find a way to drive away. If blocked entirely, stay in your car behind closed windows and locked doors. Communicate "I'm sorry," even if you can't believe you were in the wrong. Being right or wrong isn't the point; defusing and breaking contact is the point. Keep the car moving, even if pulling into another lane means you have to go out of your way to get where you were going.

If you can't drive out of it, don't open your car window or door, even to keep an aggressor from tearing up your car. Emotions tells us to stop someone from damaging our belongings; taking a breath and thinking clearly lets us focus on the higher priority to avoid injury. Think long and hard about your priorities before resorting to deadly force to preserve property. Ask yourself if you would behave as aggressively if you didn't carry a gun; adjust your behavior accordingly.

In choosing not to fight, you lower the odds of underestimating your attacker, misunderstanding their intentions, or failing to realize they are armed, too, or have skills their appearance doesn't reveal. Let's say you choose to stay and fight. Maybe you think your grappling or punching or shooting prowess is superior. Maybe the other driver is small-statured or female. Think you'll just "show your gun" in hopes he'll be scared to see you have the means to kill him? You risk escalating the violence and may be viewed as willingly joined a violent contest of one-upmanship. You now appear to be the aggressor.

His hand in his pocket may be holding on to his wallet, his phone, or keys. You think "he has a gun he's going to shoot me with," while he thinks, "I'll grab cell phone video of this jerk who tailgated me," or he is just gripping something he doesn't want to drop while stomping back toward you. If you are afraid road ragers may file a false report with police, invest in dash cameras for both front and back views.

Cars are for driving – so use yours to drive out of danger. Break contact, leave, drive away! If you really are scared the road rager intends to shoot you, realize that as a moving target, you are tremendously more difficult to hit than you will be if you get out of the car or if you stay seated and stationary with the car in park. Why go to guns when you could quickly accelerate out of the danger zone from zero to 60 or even at a modest speed of zero to 30? Besides, if you can get your brain working, you'll realize you control a one to two ton battering ram. Do you really want to downsize to 9mm or .45 caliber?

Equations like "do I get my gun out or use my car to escape" are math problems that a scared, angry, threatened brain has trouble calculating. We talk a lot about de-escalating people who are angry; we need to start by de-escalating ourselves. As Linda Hoopes taught in the lead interview, "Calm yourself." Any time you begin to feel someone has invaded your space or threatened your choices, practice tactical breathing, sometimes called combat breathing or square breathing. Have the habit on tap and at the top of your menu of reactions. Seek out safe stress challenges where you can practice calming your fear and make combat breathing a habituated response.

The Internet is full of dash-cam and bystander videos of road rage incidents. Watch and imagine how you might resolve the conflict; in your mind's eye, see yourself making an "I'm sorry" gesture or voicing a sincere apology – even when you don't think you were in the wrong. Practice calming breathing exercises, envision the many alternatives to gun use and surprise yourself at how many off-ramps the road to violence has, to borrow a word picture from Marc MacYoung.

In May, we had a very fun video interview about the value of competitive shooting. Several members shared their thoughts with me, and now that the summer is well and truly underway, I hope more of our members are getting out to shooting events. Although this month's driving concern took precedence, next month, I'd like to circle back around to members' experiences with competitive shooting, so share your thoughts with me – and our readers – by emailing me at ghayes@armedcitizens-network.org about why you shoot matches. Other members are asking: Are shooting matches only for the youthful and fleet of foot? What strategies work well for older competitors?

About the Network's Online Journal

The ***eJournal*** of the Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network, Inc. is published monthly on the Network's website at https:// armedcitizensnetwork.org/our-journal. Content is copyrighted by the Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network, Inc.

Do not mistake information presented in this online publication for legal advice; it is not. The Network strives to assure that information published in this journal is both accurate and useful. Reader, it is your responsibility to consult your own attorney to receive professional assurance that this information and your interpretation or understanding of it is accurate, complete and appropriate with respect to your particular situation.

In addition, material presented in our opinion columns is entirely the opinion of the bylined author and is intended to provoke thought and discussion among readers.

To submit letters and comments about content in the eJournal, please contact editor Gila Hayes by e-mail sent to editor@armedcitizensnetwork.org.

The Armed Citizens' Legal Defense Network, Inc. receives its direction from these corporate officers:

Marty Hayes, President

Gila Hayes, Chief Operating Officer

We welcome your questions and comments about the Network.

Please write to us at info@armedcitizensnetwork.org or PO Box 400, Onalaska, WA 98570 or call us at 888-508-3404.