

Podcast #222 Transcription – Training “Freeze” Into “Fight”!

Jeff Anderson: Human existence really isn't that hard to figure out at the bottom line, most basic level. As humans, we have one solitary purpose, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. It's to survive. In fact, your body has certain biological responses to dangerous threats, often referred to in the tactical world as fight, flight or freeze, that are literally hard wired into you for the sole purpose of giving you the absolute best chance to avoid becoming prey to the predators in our environment. Whether that's a saber tooth tiger creeping around for his next meal or a criminal attack or creeping around the shopping mall parking lot looking for his next victim.

Jeff Anderson: Unfortunately, fight, flight or freeze isn't just something that you read about and decide that you're a fighter. We're talking about biological processes in your body that just can't be switched off because you decide you're a bad ass. That's why military units, police and special operation seems like SWAT train in specific ways to wire the brain to react quickly and decisively to any threat that presents itself. To achieve this level of tactical proficiency, though, you've got to do the work now.

Jeff Anderson: And that's exactly what we're here to do today in this week's episode. Hello everyone. this is Jeff Anderson, editor for Modern Combat and Survival magazine, executive director of the New World Patriot alliance with another podcast to help you better prepare for any threat in your role as a protector and a patriot. And with us today to talk about how to be the master of your body's fast action tactical response is actually a new member of our network but he's been a friend of mine for a few years now and somebody I've been actually trying to get on the show for quite a while, Todd Lamp. Todd, welcome to the program.

Todd Lamb: Hey Jeff. Thank you very much. Thanks for having me. I'm [crosstalk 00:01:42] to be here.

Jeff Anderson: Finally, have you on. It's been a long road, but I'm glad to finally get your training out to our audience. Listen everybody. Some of you may have seen me write some articles about Todd's training in the past and I've been a big fan. He's a guy that really walks the talk, a that was a former military paratrooper and a 17 year veteran of the police force, including a role as SWAT team leader with over 350 completed missions under his belt. In addition, Todd has also been a two time champion canine dog handler and a member of his police dive unit. He holds a laundry list of certifications involving tactical leadership, weapons expertise, warfare and hostage rescue tactics, shooting and dog training, tactical strength and conditioning, and frankly, his resume is pretty damn exhausting to read. But it's all well captured in some of his best selling publications and

training programs out there that he's now released to the tactical community for law enforcement, military and civilians.

Jeff Anderson: And learn more about Todd and his training. Makes sure that you go visit them online www.alphanationtactical.com.

So Todd, you and I were having a conversation, tactical chit chat and we were talking about like, I'm always curious what people see as the deciding factors. What are the real keys, the critical keys to surviving a real attack? And I loved your response and it was really about how to overcome that freeze response because those are natural responses that we have. And I know this is something that you do a lot in your training both in your own personal training as well as what you get out to other people. So I wanted to start by asking you when it comes to overcoming the body's freeze response, and we're talking about natural, something that's natural, like it's built in. It's not like you can just press a button and it's gone, but why is this such a critical factor for surviving? And is there really anything that can be done to overcome something that's been a part of our DNA since we were all walking around in loin cloths?

Todd Lamb: Yeah, I mean it is what you're talking about there is tonic immobility, which is that is hardwired into our DNA. And what we found through history, through training, through analysis of critical incidents over and over and over again, the people that were successful in those encounters were those that have gone through processes that are mental and physical rehearsal, not just so much in terms of a single task, but an entire operation and not so much just in a skillset, but from a physical standpoint, they stand ready to do battle on any given day through good physical preparation.

Todd Lamb: From there, a process of visualization. And there's certain things that we can talk about moving forward here around visualization that I've had people do slightly differently than what a lot of just straight a rehearsal looks like. And then just ongoing stress inoculation training. That, to me, preparing your mind to, to take the steps necessary to win that encounter are critical to your success.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah, I absolutely agree. And, and this has been something that has been, it's been a long journey for me to come to the realization. I think even in some cases even more so than the skills that you train in like the actual techniques, to me it's understanding when you're actually in a fight. Because we've seen this in fights that are caught on tape. We've seen this in attacks. It's when the criminal predator, they're already past the point of they know you're going to attack you. But it's that, when people freeze, when you don't realize that you're in a fight, you're automatically on the defense, which is not a good place to be. So overcoming that is a huge thing but it's not really taught in a lot of training programs. We were taught techniques.

Jeff Anderson: And so I think it's really important that you have techniques that you've developed specifically for overcoming that response and being able to know when you're in this fight and then how to take fast action so that you survive.

And so do want to dig into these a little bit deeper. So you brought up mental rehearsal and visualization. I remember I was speaking or not speaking, I was speaking with Chuck Norris. No, I was actually reading one of Chuck Norris's biographies, I wish I was talking to Chuck. But it was something that he did and you see a lot of people do this, whether they're public speakers or somebody that's going to be, that's going into a stressful event using mental rehearsal and visualization as a tool to be able to prepare themselves for that event.

Jeff Anderson: So let's talk about that first. What are some ways that people can employ mental rehearsal and visualization into their tactical training to be better prepared to overcome that freeze response?

Todd Lamb: Yeah. So this is such a critical component to success. And when we talk about mental rehearsal, often people will discuss walking through whether you're planning a mission or you are planning a how your speech is going to go. But that's kind of just one small component. When you are actually in that situation and visualizing it and truly visualizing it, where we shift gears extensively in terms of how our minds are going to react or how that event is going to play out is instead of just mentally rehearsing the road steps, ram strikes door number one enters. Number two reads off number one. What we do is ask people to attach the emotion to that. So on a good operation, what it actually smells like, what it feels like, what are the sounds when you hear the ram strike the door or what is the sound or the feeling when you've got somebody in a lock or an a lateral neck restraint, restraint. What is the sound they're making? Every aspect of the operation.

Todd Lamb: It's not good enough just to go through the steps until you attach the emotion to it. And you can do that by sitting on your couch thinking about that operation from start to finish, or thinking about that encounter from start to finish, and then start to feel what that encounter feels like. You will actually get a physical response.

Todd Lamb: And the interesting thing about attaching the emotion is that there's been so many studies done on the brain when you couple the two processes of visualization and attaching the emotion, your frontal lobe fires and it actually changes the way that your brain rewires. And so you're seeing that event as it actually happened. I can tell you story after story about physics or about critical incidents and lethal force encounters where had I not gone through that process or visualized how that might unfold in terms of this steps I was going to take and react to when that bad guy came my way with a gun, I may not be sitting here having this conversation with you, but that's how critical it is to make a nexus between those two components of a violent encounter.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. It's interesting when you, when you think about it, right? Like, let's say that you've got attacked in the parking lot, right? Like somebody came in and robbed you as you're getting into your car. That's a stressful event. Your heart's racing, like all that stuff happens. The guy runs off. Wouldn't it be great if you could do a do over, right? It's like, damn, I did not respond the way I wanted, so

I wasn't as aware as I should have been. I wasn't this, I didn't, I didn't position myself or correctly or whatever it is. Wouldn't it be great to have a do over and just be like superman, fly really fast around the planet, make it all go backwards and all of a sudden, okay, do over. Now you know you're going to get it well.

Jeff Anderson: But what you're saying is if you can, if you can really kind of get yourself to feel that fight, flight or freeze response, get the adrenaline going, get the heart racing, things like that, feel that emotion, that that is kind of like your do ahead in a way, right? Rather than a do over. Nobody wants a do over, but it's a really good do ahead. Now, do you attach, what emotion are we trying to instill with this? Most people want to feel confidence, right? But when you're surprised [crosstalk 00:11:03].

Todd Lamb: Yeah, you want to feel.

Jeff Anderson: Go ahead.

Todd Lamb: Sure. Yeah. You want to feel things like what it feels like to be powerful, what it feels like ... The emotion afterwards is a very good, that sense of relief that you've survived that day, that a sense of accomplishment, that overwhelming sense of being effective, knowing your skills, deploying them the way that you want and just having ... We've all succeeded in our lives and we all have that emotion, that memory of that emotion and our brain.

Todd Lamb: So you just draw on what that felt like every time you've had a success or every time even the emotion of delivering a good strike where you've had that internal dialogue and you're like, yeah, that was good. And you think about that. You feel good about it. And so that's what I mean by just attaching the emotional component to the visualization and to the mental rehearsal. You just draw on all of those things. We've been around long enough, we know what happiness feels like. We know all of those emotions that run through our bodies in a physical encounter. And so we highlight the ones that we want and stay focused on seeing that outcome and feeling that outcome.

Jeff Anderson: That's interesting. So I would have thought actually the opposite, like of course we want to feel that like after our training that instilled some new skills or new tactics or I'm better prepared now than I was. But my thought process was if you want to kind of inoculate yourself to this stress that you're trying to instill the fear ahead of time or you're trying to instill, bring out that emotion of fear so that you understand what that is and then train to overcome it. But that's different than what you're saying.

Jeff Anderson: So is it better to sit before our training and visualize confidence and I'm going to go through the motions, I'm going to do it the right way and like seeing all of that? Or is it better to bring up the fear, bring up the heart rate, bring up the adrenaline and then trained because that becomes familiar?

Todd Lamb: Yeah, sure. So you're starting to touch on sort of that reality based training, those elements that will exist. I can assure you that when it comes, the ice is going to go in your veins no matter whether you think about it or not. So that's the autonomic response that we have. And fear, as you alluded to it early on in the discussion, it kind of takes on two components. It's either acute where you're responding to an immediate threat or something that's more disastrous where it's the chronic or pathological fear that is debilitating to you as a human being. Not quite what we're talking about here, but in terms of seeing an operation successfully, feeling the emotion of how that went high fiving in the guys after you take the bad guys into custody or you've, you've won that day.

Todd Lamb: Those are the things that I'm talking about. I can tell you I'm one of the things that I concentrated on, focused on religiously, and to your point around situational awareness and being prepared, I often would visualize as to what my reaction would be if a traffic stop, somebody popped out and they started running at me with a gun. Hard to reverse gun comes out, radio comes on, gun backwards, all of those steps and I can tell you that without a doubt that happened and my body responded the exact same way I rehearsed it. And even to the extent that I felt like I was gaining the distance, the time and the distance to take that shot if I needed to make better decisions, all of those important factors in a lethal force encounter.

Todd Lamb: But what I did was, the fear is coming anyways. I know that what I want to focus on is that emotional around executing perfectly every aspect of that encounter.

Jeff Anderson: Awesome. So Todd, one of the things we always talk about with our tactical training is make it as realistic as possible. We oftentimes, even when it comes to like, especially for like firearms training, yes, go to the range, get your target practice in in your little lane in the stationary target and it's two dimensional paper. That's a whole lot different than when you are, all of a sudden you're in the middle of a home invasion and some guys busting through your front door and your wife is screaming in the back, right? Like the more realistic you can make your training, the more to your point, when it comes to stress inoculation that's not unfamiliar anymore. It's not like you're freezing because this is all new senses that I have to go through.

Jeff Anderson: So realistic training and it is so much easier for [inaudible 00:16:11] and stuff like that. But what can the average person do to make their training as realistic as possible? What are some tricks [crosstalk 00:16:20]?

Todd Lamb: Yeah, I mean RBT stuff is critical to setting that stage so you know what it sounds and feels like as you highlight. So things like the speed of which you train, if you're training combative skills, get suited up in something that is going to allow you to train in that 80-95% threshold. We still have to take care of our training partners. We don't want to send guys to work Monday with broken fingers, broken wrists, anything like that.

Todd Lamb: If you are using, well, you can use paint FX for firearms encounters, again, making sure that you're properly kitted but paint, soon as you introduce that pain of a paint round coming down downrange at you, that changes guy's decision making, suddenly they're flinching. I'll tell ya, it's gonna look a lot different when that's coming down from 2305 feet per second out of a 223 or something like that. You need to be able to know what pain feels like. If you've got a access to even for knife defense stuff, electric knives, that kind of thing. That really amps things up.

Todd Lamb: The second part of reality based training is like you discussed earlier, adding that physical element. So getting that heart rate elevated, going for a loop beforehand. It doesn't quite get there, but what it does do is really exercises that parasympathetic nervous system as you start to work through making those decisions and recover, you are able to make better decisions, recover quicker so you can make that next bound. You can make that next leap. Those kinds of things in terms of creating a high degree of reality are just some of the very simple and low cost things that you can do.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. Airsoft is another thing for those people don't have like simunitions and things like that or access to that. Even just grabbing a, I mean look, it hurts. Well, it stings. I know a bunch of guys [crosstalk 00:18:46] you babies. It's a freaking Airsoft pistol. I get it. But it's enough to let you know, oh hell, I should have been a little bit quicker there, or that's things or I would have gotten shot there. It's just a little bit of a wake up call, right?

Todd Lamb: Yeah, so I mean, it's interesting, we always, you're coming out, especially in our profession, you're coming out center of mass. Well that just happens to be where my draw is too. I'm always getting hit the knuckles and that's really interesting to me. I mean maybe not so much in a bad guy in calendar because who knows what their skillset is, but certainly, a skilled shooter who's coming center mass, chances are you're either going to take it in the gun or a hand. So you do those scenarios. You build those scenarios where you're doing offhanded shooting, you're doing strong handed only shooting, even reloads if you can get somewhere to be able to do that stuff when your heart rate's at a high level and those gross motor skills are the only things you have left.

Jeff Anderson: You know, you bring up a really good, you just got my brain thinking there. In order to make this realistic is a couple of things that I notice in training, right? So there's the people that it's like, okay, we're going to use Airsoft guns. I'll just use that as an example. And it's like, oh, you got me, you know, like, okay, I get stung. All right, let's. All right, let's do the next drill or let's start over. Let's try it again or whatever. There are no like timeout, timeout, timeout, bad guy. I let me do that again because you just shot me in the shoulder or you shot me in the hand because you shot center mass. When instead you really, you've got to be able to fight through these things anyway.

Jeff Anderson: So if you are with somebody and you are using Airsoft and you're doing force on force training and you feel yourself get stung and your in your main shooting

hand, don't just say oh, you got me, let's do it again. No. Your hand is shot. Take that hand out of the fight and now recover from that. Are you going to get to cover? Are you going to be able to shoot offhand? Those are the realities that you're getting an opportunity to train in now before they're actual bullets shooting off your, you know, your trigger finger.

Jeff Anderson: But those are important things, right? If your a gun gets shot, maybe it's out of commission, maybe you've got to now go to hand to hand or a backup knife or something. But it does take a little bit of like a, you've got to kind of come out the box in a way of thinking your training isn't fluid, it's not dynamic. It's one static thing. And it shouldn't be because fights and attacks aren't static. They're dynamic.

Todd Lamb: Yeah. We always say the battle space is 360 degrees and given an opportunity to train like you play or you play like you train. The necessity for you to finish that drill, a lot of people don't, again, it's not just this one linear thing, boom, like you said, you've got me. It is if I'm that kind of guy and I'm not kitted up and I've got a primary shoulder, fire a weapon, and then I've got my nine mil in a leg holster and I take one in the hands. Maybe I'm not, now that that gun's out of commission, you've still got to live. Can you actually draw a level three holster from your off hand? I'd like to see that on a guy do that from either on a waist holder, a concealed holster or have they ever drilled that?

Todd Lamb: That is the reality based stuff that is so critical because we all read about these guys are like, yeah, I carry. That's one thing. Let's see how you are in a gun battle and how quick your draws are. Quicks are quick as you come up on the bad guy. Are you ready to react if he mows you over before you get that weapon out with a knife? All of these kinds of things. You've got to be creative in training and amp it as much as you can.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. I know there's people out there Todd that are saying that's great. You have an entire SWAT team that you can train with. That's awesome. You have simulation training and shocks knives, you know, which I've always wanted a shock knife but I think that's about four Christmases worth of gifts for me. That's not cheap, right?

Jeff Anderson: But obviously it's great to have training partners like this. But a lot of people don't have training partners for, especially when you're talking about realistic type stuff. Because you're looking for a dedicated training partner. But are there things that somebody can do if they don't have a training partner? Are there things that they can do solo that will help them to inoculate themselves, specifically for stress inoculation and overcoming that freeze? Are there things that somebody can do if they're just training solo?

Todd Lamb: The very first thing I would say is increase your level of situational awareness. At a very basic level. Be aware, plug I. Man, we are walking around with in a world that is unplugged and it's no surprise that some of the things that do happen can probably be prevented by one person being alert. So at a very basic level, I

really encourage people to plug back in and improve their level of situational awareness.

Todd Lamb: Now as far as skills go, absolutely running through the physical motions of whatever it is that you're learning. If you want to be a quicker draw, then get on the draw as frequently as you can in different positions. If you want to be completely dialed in in some combative, then you want to punch through those combatives as frequently as you can on your own.

Todd Lamb: Then you want to visualize that process, visualize that gun coming out, you're clearing leather, whatever level you've got holster, if it's a one, two or three, you're clearing that. It's coming up smooth. You've got good presentation time, good set time. And then they're on the bad guy. Visualize that happening, seeing center mass, delivering as many rounds as necessary to stop that threat.

Todd Lamb: From there, you can use training aids. If you're doing combatives and you only have the skills to do, try and get ahold of a weighted, not so much a way to dummy, but at least a weight so that you know what it feels like to move 200 pounds. That's not easy, especially if it's resisting, that's a feat. So even the fact that it's dead weight, get to understand what it feels like to move that.

Todd Lamb: And then there's another beautiful tool that's so accessible to all of us and that's video. Video yourself doing those things. When I see my draw sometimes and I see that the barrel come up and it's canted just ever so slightly, that's a quarter of a second to an eighth of a second that's going to give me the edge in, let's say if it's a force encounter. And I need to understand the mechanics of that. If you're talking about weapons handling skills, same thing. Really look at your footwork, look at what you're doing. Video so critical and it's easily accessible to everybody.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. Yeah, that's a good point. One of the other things we've talked about in the past too is in your firearms, like join a competitive league or just get into actual competitive shooting. Because you have to perform right? People are watching you and people don't like to be watched on stuff. That always ups the adrenaline there. But it's not an exact replication of being on the battlefield or being in a gunfight, but it certainly does increase the pucker factor there and really gets you, it's just good training. And it doesn't even matter if you come in last. If you're looking at it as training, it can be very valuable training there. But it does take somebody with some cojones to get out there and be able to be willing to make mistakes in front of critical people.

Jeff Anderson: But I've always found people to be pretty supportive anyway. But anyway, I digress.

Jeff Anderson: When we talk about these, these skills, they're not, I think you even said it before. It's not one and done. These are things that you really, it's not like oh, I mastered it, done deal. I don't have to do anything anymore. But those

experiences do kind of pile up and they make you, you can learn from past experiences. One of the things I've talked about, I think a few times maybe in previous podcasts was early in my tactical training career, I got out of the military though, but I was walking with my son who was only, I don't remember how old he was, maybe like three years old or so at the time next to the playground.

Jeff Anderson: And this panel van pulls up, like screeches to a halt and the door slides open. And this guy comes running out at me and I froze. I absolutely froze right in my tracks because it didn't make sense. All he did was hand out a card for lawn mowing, but he left and I was still kind of in shock that I was so frozen. If he was coming out with a taser, he would just, he could have just stuck it right in my forehead and it's almost like I wouldn't have done a damn thing except watch my son go off in a panel van somewhere as I'm twitching on the ground, right? I beat myself up to death after that encounter. But I learned from that also. I would much rather have that guy in his tracks, shove him, whatever I need to do and then listen to him cry wait, I just want to mow your lawn rather than actually freeze like that again, right?

Jeff Anderson: So how can we make this part of our lifestyle? How can we make this a tactical skill that we have to depend on on a daily basis? What are some ways that we can make, because we're not always going to be out there training on Airsofts with somebody. Or going 90% with somebody who's all padded up. But how can we make this really part of our regular practice, our regular training to keep it at peak levels as much as possible?

Todd Lamb: Yeah, I mean, that's the beauty of these things you highlight. They are perishable skills. There's no two ways about it. What you described there with your son, man, there's not too many people that can survive an ambush. I know I've done hundreds of pedestrian assaults and we have scared the shit out of every one of those guys. I don't care how well they think they were prepared. Speed, aggression, surprise carried the day.

Todd Lamb: So I would say as just a very basic level of ethical preparedness, you want to kind of pick one thing and you want that one or two things tops because you're not going to remember more than that in a violent encounter that are gross motor skill related. Again, if it's a draw, then it's a draw. If it's a knee strike then it's a knee strike. If you're just absolutely good at getting inside somebody's window and taking them by the throat, then do that. But have that in your head that as soon as that door pops open this is your first, you're going to adopt the stance that we all do, that that's your first motion and you cannot complicate. I would keep it as simple as something like a knee strike or a strike to the lateral, something of that nature that is gross motor skill and doesn't occupy a ton of the cells in our brain.

Todd Lamb: Because I'll tell you, in that moment you're spending so much time trying to make sense of what it is that you're seeing that all you can do is really rely on one or two key moves, responses, whatever you want to call them to protect that individual that you're with or protect yourself.

Jeff Anderson: Yeah. The other thing, I just had a conversation with one of members of our New World Patriot Alliance. We do, we have one on one coaching opportunities as well. I was just talking with one of our members about this, about how to actually stay in that level of awareness. We know we're all supposed to be in yellow zone all the time but that's oftentimes difficult to do. There's not ninjas jumping out of trees all the time to keep us on our toes.

Jeff Anderson: But I always tell people that when back when I used to do bodyguard work, when I was on the job, I was on the job and it was just a constant state of paranoia. It's like you can't go in there like oh, [inaudible 00:32:03]. I guess I'm watching the guy. Okay I'm opening the door. Okay, I'm waiting outside the hotel room. It's gotta to be a mental state of look, the monkey ninja assassins are plotting right now. There's an ambush coming on my watch. It's just a matter of when it's going to be and how it's going to be. So you're constantly in that state of where's it going to be, where's it going to be, what am I going to do? Am I driving in the right lane? All of that stuff is happening all the time which is mentally exhausting and nobody can do that all the time.

Jeff Anderson: So one thing I was just talking with one of our members was to basically put yourself on the job just for an errand. I'm going to the shopping mall. But think of yourself in the standpoint of I'm going with my spouse and I am her bodyguard. Somebody is going to attack her at the mall. Somebody is plotting right now but my client needs new shoes. For my wife that's 365 days a year, right? So we go to the mall and it's like, that's my job right there. From the time that we leave the house, we get in the car, we drive there, we're in the parking lot, but just to stay those couple of hours in that mode of I'm on a protection detail right now is just a good little exercise for just giving yourself some of that exposure rather than just being all talk. You know what I mean?

Todd Lamb: Man, I love that. I am always, I just try to touch a little bit. I don't want to live a life of being paranoid, but I'll tell you when I'm in a crowd, I am checking hands. I'm looking at how people are dressed and how they're behaving. If, I have the luxury, my wife's still on the job as well. I'm done, but she's still, she's got a couple of years left. But we can have, we can just have that look, you know that somebody is either in a psychotic episode, which in my opinion are the most dangerous people that you will deal with in the street. Or somebody just is out of place. And what is it about the environment that they're in that they don't look like they belong there?

Todd Lamb: So I always like to have that spinning just at a low level. I like to know where my exits are. We're facing threats of active shooters every day. It is a responsibility to be able to at least know where there's an avenue of escape, where there's maybe even some concealment if you need to hide while you find cover, something of that nature. But it's everybody's responsibility and if you want to be a part of this community and be a part of this training, then it's your responsibility to plug in and own those environments to the degree that you can be effective. You're not just some pylon in the room that's not doing anything to

mitigate the situation. So I love rolling through places and just seeing what I see it, I find it more entertaining than be in somebody's wallet.

Jeff Anderson: Right. Awesome, yeah. Great stuff Todd, really. I mean, this is a topic I'm really passionate about. I know it's not as cool and sexy as doing the triple double summersault kick while you're, you have guns a blazing. But I really do see this as a critical survival factor when it comes to any kind of attack, whether it's armed or unarmed. And I really appreciate you taking some time for us today.

Jeff Anderson: Listen everybody, Todd's training really is top notch. And they're really good about getting the training out there was well. He's doing a lot more video work. There's a lot of video courses are coming out now. I know he's been working a ton on this stuff so you definitely want to make sure that you stay up to date on what he's got coming out because this level of tactical training is hard to come by and there's a lot of great stuff for you to train in there.

Jeff Anderson: So make sure that you go check out his website at www.alphanationtactical.com. And until our next broadcast, this is Jeff Anderson saying prepare, train and survive.