

## OODA Loop & Combat Mindset

By Tom Perroni

The OODA Loop model was developed by Col. John Boyd, USAF (Ret). When Colonel John Boyd first introduced the OODA (Observe-Orient-Decide-Act) loop concept during the Korean War, he was referring to the ability possessed by fighter pilots that allowed them to succeed in combat. It is now used by the U.S. Marines and other organizations. The premise of the model is that decision making is the result of rational behavior. Problems are viewed as a cycle of Observation, Orientation (situational awareness), Decision, and Action:

I believe that in order to use the OODA Loop it must be used in conjunction with the Combat Mindset in order for it to be effective in a Gunfight.

What is Combat Mindset? For the fighter, mindset is the conscious or subconscious willingness to commit harm (lethal or non-lethal) against another. When engaging in combat, mindset, more often than not, will be the determining factor as to your success or failure, regardless of technical proficiency. Anybody can train in a martial skill, but few have the mind and will to use their skills for killing or serious injury. Mindset's partner is "mental trigger," and this trigger is the defining moment that forces you to engage your opponent with the goal of injury or death.

So how do you train in Mindset? Here is how we begin the Mindset portion of our training. Keeping in mind that Mindset is just one of the 3 main principals taught at Perroni's Tactical Training Academy. Mindset, Skills Training and Tactics. Here is how we teach Mindset:

Since 9/11 everyone is familiar with the "Color Code" used by the government (Dept. of Homeland Security) to indicate the terrorist threat level. However I was taught that the originator of the "Color Code" was Jeff Cooper. Upon it's inception it had absolutely nothing to do with tactical situations or alertness levels. It had everything to do with the state of mind of the sheepdog. As it was taught to me by an instructor who got it straight from Mr. Cooper, it relates to the degree of danger you are willing to do something about and which allows you move from one level of mindset to another to enable you to properly handle any given situation as it progresses. In this 'Color Code' we have 4 colors that represent 4 mental states. The colors are White, Yellow, Orange, and Red. I have listed them with a definition of each:

**White** - Relaxed, unaware, and unprepared. If attacked in this state the only thing that may save you is the inadequacy and ineptitude of your attacker. When confronted by something nasty your reaction will probably be, "Oh my God! This can't be happening to me." (Sheep)

**Yellow** - Relaxed alertness. No specific threat situation. Your mindset is that "today could be the day I may have to defend myself." There is no specific threat but you are aware that the world is an unfriendly place and that you are prepared to do something if necessary. You use your eyes and ears, and your carriage says "I am alert." You don't have to be armed in this state but if you are armed you must be in yellow. When confronted by something nasty your reaction will probably be, "I thought this might happen some day." You can live in this state indefinitely.

**Orange** - Specific alert. Something not quite right has gotten your attention and you shift your primary focus to that thing. Something is "wrong" with a person or object. Something may happen. Your mindset is that "I may have to shoot *that* person." Your pistol is usually holstered in this state. You can maintain this state for several hours with ease, or a day or so with effort.

**Red** - Fight trigger. This is your mental trigger. "If that person does "x" I will shoot them." Your pistol may, but not necessarily, be in your hand.

**Black** – complete mental shutdown.

I teach my students to always be in condition Yellow! And once you move to condition Orange this is when I believe the OODA Loop occurs. Please also note that one of the most frequently asked questions in my training class is: Should I shoot with one eye open or two eyes open?

This is where I tell my students that in a gunfight you will not have the ability to shut off one eye, because your brain is in Observation mode and you need to be able to take in any and all information. Using your dominate eye will be for precision or long range accurate shots only. You will most likely be shooting from the hip or "Zippering" your shots in this situation.

But before any of this happens in a split second you will have gone through the first of literally hundreds of OODA Loops in any given confrontation. The reason they are called loops is because you will continue to take in information and make decisions based on that info through out the confrontation.

OODA Loop defined:

**Observation** - Scan the environment and gather information from it.

**Orientation** - Use the information to form a mental image of the circumstances. That is, synthesize the data into information. As more information is received, you "deconstruct" old images and then "create" new images. Note that different people require different levels of details to perceive an event. Often, we imply that the reason people cannot make good decisions, is that people are bad decisions makers -- sort of like saying that the reason some people cannot drive is that they are bad drivers. However, the real reason most people make bad decisions is that they often fail to place the information that we do have into its proper context. This is where "Orientation" comes in. Orientation emphasizes the context in which events occur, so that we may facilitate our decisions and actions. That is, orientation helps to turn information into knowledge. And knowledge, not information, is the real predictor of making good decisions.

**Decision** - Consider options and select a subsequent course of action.

**Action** - Carry out the conceived decision. Once the result of the action is observed, you start over. Note that in combat (or competing against the competition), you want to cycle through the four steps faster and better than the enemy, hence, it is a loop.

This is the component that enables us to make the 'Fight or Flight' decision. Will I stand and fight or will I tactically re-locate.

Here is a few Tactical Guidelines I teach my students:

You will not rise to the occasion..... you will default to the level of training you have mastered.

Maximize you distance from danger, Observe hands, Shoot until the problem is solved, Scan before re-holstering, Do NOT give up if hit with a handgun round most people survive being hit with a handgun round.

"Conflict is inevitable; Combat is an option".