



# Tension & Dry Fire

## **TENSION**

In tension, adrenaline bleeds into the bloodstream; the liver steps up its sugar release to the muscular system; and all the senses go into 'A1' readiness. Digestion slows down, breathing becomes shallow, and blood pressure increases.

We all experience tension, and when the problem that has caused it is solved, everything returns to normal - although slowly in some cases.

## **TENSION REDUCTION**

The shooter should literally take a breather - breathing deeply, slowly and easily. With each breath, feel the stomach expand and contract being sure that the shoulders relax as well. Three or four repetitions should be sufficient and when finished, they should feel much more relaxed.

By breathing deeply the tension of the voluntary breathing tract is broken, causing the lungs and heart to relax as well.

They should sit down and focus their attention on relaxing the muscular system. Staying like this for quite a few minutes helps to separate the mind from his body, and from any tension hazards.

Another way for the shooter to relax is for them to stop, sit down and think. They can think of anything, but the reason for the tension. This is harder to do than you realise, but once it has been mastered you will find that tension will drop away quite easily. When tensing to a situation, the mind almost automatically exaggerates its importance. Thought and reason can quickly change this mental state.

Or: Take a break! This change of 'state' may be the answer to ease the shooter out of tension easily and quickly. The change of state could be a general conversation or a look at the scenery around the ranges. Any little 'trick' to help your mind get off the track of tension and then you can channel your thoughts into positive actions geared towards the application of the fundamentals of firing a shot.

## **Dry Fire – A boring exercise or an essential part of learning?**

Ah yes.....the old dry firing is boring routine.....

Back in the old days during the Cold War, they made shooters dry fire for 2 years before they fired a shot. If you were really good you could make the sound of a gun going off! Those that weren't so good were sent off to work in a coal mine.

Seriously now.....Dry fire "should" simulate live fire.

To the extent of calling dry fire shots, as you would (should) in live fire. Dry fire if done correctly, can give you feedback about stance, grip, breathing and follow through without the "fear" of an end result masking all these necessary skills. Sometimes we get too involved

in the end result (score) and forget how the application is more important and how is it done. In setting up a "dry fire" range it should be similar to a live range to get the most benefit from this exercise. Ideally, you would have a target on the wall, spot or blank wall, perhaps all three?

Start with doing holding exercises on a blank wall. Just holding.....what does the sights do when just holding? Does the front sight sit perfectly "square" in the rear sight? Does the front sight dip slightly after a while holding? Don't just look at the sights, but see what the sights are doing. Then holding and trigger finger movement to see if the front sight moves when pressing trigger into overload. No clicking the pistol yet, just press the trigger. Then every 4th or 5th trigger finger 'flex' cock the gun and dry fire a shot.

Does the sight move when the gun goes click? If it does, why? Is it grip pressure, lack of smoothness on trigger press, lack of follow through? Maybe all of the above? Anyone can just hold a gun up and go click.....but can they really "see" what is happening and learn from the experience.

The major benefit from dry fire (I believe) is the subconscious feedback one gets from the simulation of live fire. As the pistol does not (or should not) move during dry fire, this should be feeding the conscious mind through "what you see" and then mentally rehearse that same shot in your mind.

A good start to the next subject, mental rehearsal.....