

# Krav Maga / Kapap

## General Notes

## Self Awareness, Threat Assessment and Battle Field Stress

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# Situational Awareness, Threat Assessment and Battle Field Stress

Situational Awareness is concerned with how we as people observe and interact with our surroundings.

Threat Assessment draws from our Situational Awareness. Our ability to determine what is a threat and what isn't is directly linked.

In order to assess and to react to threats we first need to understand the levels of awareness and alertness that we as people place ourselves into during our daily lives.

What I have tried to do with the below is to combine the various levels of Situational Awareness with how we assess threats and how those threats are then either escalated or de-escalated. Later there is also some explanation of "battle field" stress and what our bodies are likely to experience as the threats escalate into action.

## Condition White

Condition White is defined by an absolute disconnect from what is happening around us and how we are interacting with our surroundings. This stage is mostly seen and explained when we see those people walking around staring at their smart phones texting or tweeting etc as their total and absolute focus is absorbed by one single item. A good example of this state of alertness is 'Distracted Walking' when a pedestrian suddenly and without warning stops, forcing those behind to either bump into them or to quickly avoid them or in the worst extreme they cross the road with no thought for the traffic.

In this stage you are the perfect victim, totally oblivious to those around you. You are not only failing to recognise any possibility of a threat but you are also advertising yourself as a perfect target for an attack.

## Condition Green

Condition Green is defined as the most common state of mind for the majority of people, for the majority of time. Whilst actively completing common every day tasks people are completely unaware and un-alert to their surroundings. Abilities to react to threats are much slower as their perception and other cognitive responses are switched off and as such if threats were to appear, they are caught off-guard and would not be able to respond in a timely or adequate fashion.

In this stage we are working and moving without thought. While we may be reading the latest tweet as we walk along we are now managing to avoid lamp posts and not step into the road. In this stage we are an easy victim. Contained within our own world but managing to interact with the world around us we give no thought for pick pockets when crowds form at pedestrian crossings, or the person following us as we walk home on a cold, dark winters evening.

## Condition Amber

Condition Amber is generally known as warrior mode and can be described as relaxed alert. People have their heads up and eyes open, and are taking in their surroundings in a relaxed but alert manner. In this condition people are much less likely to be caught off-guard from sudden threats and are better able to respond should a threat arise. Heart rate is normal, no anxiety or stress is felt and as such there is no degradation of fine motor skills or cognitive abilities.

In this stage we are alert to the possibility of threats and attacks and as such our own demeanour and body language portrays us as a harder victim for criminals with intent.

Because of our state of alertness we are better able to threat asses what is happening around us and ascertain what is normal and what is not normal for our surroundings. We create Baselines of what is to be expected and what is not. A crowd of rowdy, drunken men before kick off on FA cup final day is to be expected and can be considered non-threatening so while we except it maybe a vocal get-together we place it below our baseline. But lets imagine their team now loses or we take away the FA cup final day and this leaves us with a bunch of rowdy, vocal drunken men without reason and as such we now place this above our baseline and consider it something to be weary off. Where we place things on our Baselines will often be a reflection of our own lives and experiences. What may seem not-normal in one town may be perfectly normal and acceptable in another. Observation is the key to this stage while at the same time listening to your natural instincts.

## Condition Red

Condition Red generally occurs when a person identifies a possible or specific threat. Something that isn't quite right causing them to draw their attention and to become extra vigilant. At this level a decision needs to be made and possible responses identified so that if the threat is verified action can be taken. An example of this may be a person walking towards you in a suspicious manner or someone who is stood in the shadows at night acting suspicious. In these instances the decision to cross over the road may be made or if this isn't possible then a mental action to prepare the mind for a possible confrontation.

When in this condition stress levels and heart rate will increase however not to a level where people experience any cognitive or motor skills deterioration. That said this state can be both mental and physically taxing and as such it is difficult to stay in this state for a prolonged period of time. Certainly if the threat diminishes then the person should drop back down into Condition Amber or if the threat materialises they should instantly move to Condition Black.

In Condition Red we have decided that the Threat Assessment baseline has been crossed and what is now happening can be no longer be thought of as normal behaviour. We **switch on** the brain and start to formulate decisions and action plans. We start to prepare both the body and mind for a possible confrontation. We weigh up our options, we move people to where we are better able to protect them, we look for common objects we could potentially use for defence, we consider our escape routes, we make ourself ready!

Maintaining Condition Red where a threat has diminished can have an adverse effect on our body language and our demeanour and give a false impression to others. In this stage our senses are peaked, we will autocratically start to look around and appear very suspecting. This could be misconstrued as looking a bit “cagey”. In this instance we have to ensure we blend in with our environment and those around us. Continually looking left, right and behind ourselves will make others feel uneasy and have the effect of heightening their threat assessment levels based on their own situational awareness. I guess you could say the key to Condition Red is being concerned....but not showing your concerned!

## Condition Black

Condition Black is the action phase. At this level people implement the action or plan developed while in Condition Red. When you're in Condition Black your mind and body are primed for action. Adrenaline is pumping through your veins and your heart rate is raised to between 65% and 85%. Accordingly this is the optimal level for tactical and survival scenarios. Complex motor skills, visual reaction times, and cognitive reaction times are at their peak although fine motor skills, like writing deteriorate.

At this level the threat has materialised and action is being taken! Heart rate will increase and the body will undergo stress related changes such as tunnel vision, depth perception, auditory exclusion, and deterioration of complex motor skills making weapon handling and hand to hand combative's more difficult. Even time may seem to slow down as a mental phenomenon known as “bullet time” comes into play.

At heart rates generally above 90% the body can and does often undergo further changes. In high-stress, life-or-death situations, most people will experience bladder and bowel voiding. The body quite simply wants to get rid of as much waste as it can so you're in a better position to fight or run. You will not have control over this so don't worry about it!

Extreme vasoconstriction is also typically present in Condition Black. Vasoconstriction is when the blood vessels narrow to constrict blood flow. In life-or-death situations, your body wants most of your blood to stay near vital organs and large muscles that can be used to fight or run. One benefit of this is that if you were to sustain a wound, vasoconstriction helps limit the amount of bleeding you experience. Extreme vasoconstriction causes people to look “white with fear” as all the blood has been shunted away from the skin's surface to more vital parts of the body. While this is a survival mechanism, it unfortunately leads to deterioration of complex motor skills.

Another physical reaction is that the executive part of your brain shuts down and your more primitive middle brain takes over. Without executive functioning, you're susceptible to irrational fighting or fleeing. Basically in this stage you will either fight like an animal or run for your life hence the saying 'fight or flee' response.

At this point we should also mention our third response, namely the freeze response. The freeze response is generally caused when our primitive brain decides that we are in a **no hope** situation. This could be because quite simply the brain has deduced that the threat is just too much and the chance of fighting or fleeing for our own survival is non-existent at this time. An example would be while walking the savanna's a lion steps out from the bushes a few feet away forcing our brain to go into the freeze response and as such our body enters an almost self paralysing state hoping the lion just continues on its happy way not noticing us. In this instance we can except the "usefulness" of such a third instinct although at the time it may feel like we are more a rabbit caught in the headlights!