

Delivery Systems:

“Because we experience fear is no reason for discouragement. Because we experience fear, we are entitled to experience true fearlessness.”

Chogyam Trungpa

In the previous sections, we've discussed the role of style and the differences between approaches between form, flinch and flow training. Finally, we addressed the role of contact in training to help us define the infrastructure for our training. At this point, I would like to take a step back even further to take a macrocosmic view of training as a whole and share with you an essential framework that has supercharged the way that I both teach and train.

In my experience, most martial artists work on the acquisition and improvement of **tools**: by this I mean they may work on a particular block or punch, a certain type of kick, etc. Grapplers may work on a particular mount escape, a sweep or an arm bar. In fact, most people have a very short list of favourite techniques that they resort to when pressed. This is normal, natural and healthy. We need to have a variety of tools in our tool box, both the reliable, trusted favourites and those newer tools that we're still experimenting with. The danger lies in stopping your training there and having only a disjointed collection of tools..

Exercise #15-Inventorizing Your Tool Box:

When we get down to it, we all have a small arsenal of reliable techniques that we go back to when things get rough. Make a short list of your favourite moves, strikes, locks, or throws that you regularly use. As one of my younger students so aptly put it, if you were a video game, what would your special finishing moves be?

Next, make a short list of tools that you're working on or seeking to work on in the short term. These can be strikes that you're refining, new locks that you're trying to integrate into your arsenal or something more advanced that you've seen but not yet worked on.

Closely connected to tools, are our **attributes**. These are the characteristics of our ability. They can include our strength, speed, endurance, confidence, resolve, timing, rhythm and the like. In my classification, tools and attributes are closely related primarily because most people work on their attributes in relation to a particular tool. For example, it's difficult to simply work on your overall speed. How will you measure your

success? What relationship will this speed have to your combative ability? Why are you trying to improve this speed in the first place? To measure our success and to see what progress is being made, it's natural to work on our speed within a particular context. We'll work on our punching speed, our kicking speed, the speed of a particular counter, etc. A novice will simply work on techniques, collecting as many as they can without deeply understanding them. The moment they have a rudimentary understanding of something, they check it off on their imaginary list and move on to the next concept. They're always looking for more and more knowledge, wrongly thinking that the mere collection of this information will somehow make them better able to defend themselves. A more experienced warrior by comparison will go beyond the brute mechanics of the kick or punch itself and constantly develop its attributes, refining its efficiency, improving their breathing, timing, power, etc.

Exercise #16-Inventorizing Your Attributes:

Make a very short list of the most essential attributes in their relative order of importance. Do you prioritize speed over power, finesse over speed, accuracy over endurance, resolve over rhythm, etc?

This simple balance between tools and attributes is a great way to help you set goals and measure the improvement of your skills, one component at a time, but this is just the foundation of correct training. **Your tools and attributes are only as effective as your ability to deliver them when they're needed.** You could have the most powerful, state-of-the-art, satellite-guided missile in the world, but if you can't launch it before your attacker bombs you with old school explosives, what good will it do you? In exactly the same way, you can have a fast, powerful and technically proficient punch, but if you can't fire it off at your attacker before they stab you in the throat, how helpful will it be? The natural response here is to think: well that's why I'd be training my speed. That's the whole point--to be faster than my attacker--but speed is really only the smallest part of the equation.

In the Dragon Mind Method©, we believe that our **Physical Delivery Systems** are ultimately as important (if not more) than any tool or attribute. Our physical delivery systems includes all of the strategies and techniques that improve our ability to land our punches, catch our locks and otherwise effect our skills. The fact is, in a crisis, everyone is at risk of losing control of their cognitive control and reverting to a reptilian brain state. In our approach, we believe that this is the least desirable situation to be in. Whenever possible, we seek to maximize our High Road brain states and to stay in control of our brains and our bodies--remember **our highly-evolved brains are our most powerful weapons.** They're what gave us our evolutionary advantage and allowed us to overcome our sad lacking of claws, fangs and muscular strength compared to other dominant predators. What sense is there in volunteering to abandon the strongest weapon we've got? Our goal is to do everything that we can to stay meta-cognitive for as

long as we can and to do everything in our power to return to that state when we slip out of it. This is why Physical Delivery Systems are so important.

Think of it this way: it's natural to get intimidated if a situation is scary enough, right? And no matter how much you train, they're will always be a situation out there that will scare the hell out of you, take you off guard and have you flinching like a 5-year old in a horror movie. Physical Delivery Systems are the first step in avoiding these scenarios. There is a direct correlation between distance and reaction time. If you're driving in the worst snow storm of the year, with zero visibility and your strategy is to stay nose-to-tail with the bumper of the guy in front of you, you are stacking the deck against you. You simply are not giving yourself the distance you need to react in case of a sudden change in the situation. In exactly the same way, if you allow a would-be aggressor to slither into your personal space and come chest to chest with you during an argument, you are not giving yourself the space you need to respond cognitively--**you are volunteering to flinch and to subjugate your control to your reptilian brain center.**

This simple realization is often over-looked in martial training. Students too often practice techniques in a vacuum: They practice a punch or kick in the context of 3-step sparring. They practice a wrist lock in static drills. They practice an escape from a ground position like a robot. There's nothing inherently wrong with any of these methods if they're a starting point for your training, but if that's all that you're doing, **you're lying to yourself.** These techniques are occurring without any sense of context. 3-point sparring may be fine for developing basic timing, but at a certain point, you need to move on and begin training evasion. Why are you engaged in that melee to begin with? What can you do to stay out of range and avoid it in the first place? How did you end up on the ground? The moment someone begins to enter into your space, casually walk away, staying calm and aware. Similarly, rather than only training static wrist locks, practice catching your partner's wrist as they walk, then have them build up resistance. Try throwing on that same lock as you wrestle or within the context of a full out scrap. The key is to constantly increase the dynamism of your training environment, giving it richer and richer context.

Exercise #17-Identifying Your Physical Delivery System:

If you're currently training, how much time do you dedicate to cultivating the physical components of your delivery system? Do you routinely "escalate" your training, working up from static drills to increasingly dynamic and resistant work? Do you spend any time on physical evasion and avoidance drills? If so list what you do?

If you have never trained and are looking to begin, how can you improve your physical delivery system in your everyday life? Just by being mindful as you walk through a crowd, get in and out of your car, open and close doors or stand and wait for the bus, you can improve the way that you move and at grace and efficiency to your life. Make a short list of things you

are prepared to experiment with in your immediate life to help improve the way you move.

Address the importance of Physical Delivery Systems in your current training in when analyzing a prospective art. I will quote my Jujitsu sensei here. Once, I asked him about the role of weight lifting in martial training, he responded: "There is only one weight you need to worry about moving right now and that's the weight of your butt out of harm's way"--then he swung at me. He was making the point that until I can move my body with efficiency and control, adding external weight and stress to it is only going to exaggerate any problems or imbalances that I have. He was also a huge believer in Delivery Systems. In a fight, he would say, if you found yourself in a tactically weak position, your goal should not be to fight from a weak position, but rather to a strong position. This is more than just a question of semantics--it's a fundamental difference in psychology. A fighter who fights from a weak position, accepts that they are stuck and tries to employ their tools without any regard for their context. For example, if they end up pinned on their back, they try to fire punches upwards at their attacker just like they would if they were standing, although they lack the reach, mobility and angle to be effective. They volunteer to waste energy working against gravity and psychological advantage. A more skilled fighter would set themselves the goal of escaping and would make every strike and goal work towards that end. If you're going to die, sensei would say, die trying. Set yourself the survival goal and fight towards it, improving your tactical position one inch at a time.

Similarly, many law enforcement officers who focus on tactical shooting prioritize accuracy above all else. While this is fine in the shooting range, during the context of a live fire scenario, the first priority should be to avoid being shot first and to hit the attacker second. For this reason, many law enforcement and military school advocate stepping laterally as you draw and then counter shooting or shooting while rushing forward, often on a diagonal to complicate your opponent's ability to aim.

The roots of our mobility problems lie indisuse, usually stemming from fear. As Lao Tzu wrote:

"At birth, a baby is supple and never is a human more full of life. At death a body is rigid and could not live one moment longer. Therefore it can be said that flexibility and yielding are the qualities of health and that rigidity and stiffness are the qualities of death."

This lack of mobility, means a deterioration of our physical delivery systems. As the old boxing adage warns: to rest is to rust. In the language of author Thomas Hanna, this deterioration occurs because most people "gradually surrender" to the idea that they must lose function as they age, but just because this phenomena does happen in people all around it, does not mean that it must. Hanna notes that we all know examples of people who have "aged successfully", who have maintained their intelligence and their

memory and their bodily functions well into their twilight years. If it's possible for some to achieve it, why can't we?

Anyone who has watched a toddler learning to walk knows that when children fall, it's often a surprise to them. They're so completely unaware that they're about to lose their balance that they don't even have the instinct to stop themselves at first. Over time, their more painful experiences accumulate and they store this fear in their muscles. They literally imprint a memory of fear and pain in the fibre of their being. This ultimately "teaches" them to panic when falling, clenching their muscles and reaching out for the ground in stiff anticipation of what they assume will be painful. They try to "block" their fall.

The answer must therefore lie in rediscovering that sense of play that we spoke of early in our discussion of slow training. Every training experience has the potential to either add fear to your body or else to take it away. The maximization of our body as an efficient biomechanical machine and the optimization of it as a delivery mechanism, means that we must continually explore our capacities and recover our lost ranges of motion. Physically speaking, our ability to move and control our body far outweighs our ultimate strength, speed or the depth of our technical repertoire.

As we begin to grasp the sheer importance of our Physical Delivery Systems, we come to the fourth and final component of our training framework. This is by the far both the most overlooked and the most essential component of all. It is our **Psychological Delivery Systems**. Throughout this book, I have repeatedly stressed the role of our hyper-developed brains as our great weapon of all and here is yet another example of how important they really are. Earlier, in my discussion of Physical Delivery Mechanisms, I noted that most martialists train their tools and their attributes in isolation--in a vacuum. The key, as I've stressed, is to make training increasingly dynamic and to place it within a richer and more relevant context. Following this exact same line of logic, we need to remember why we're training--to survive. In a real life-or-death situation, whether a street fight or a home invasion, the violence that we are likely to encounter will bring with it a variety of unique variables. These can include unfamiliar settings, less than ideal "fighting attire" or difficult environments (like stairwells, icy parking lots, lowlight conditions and cluttered rooms). They will likely include intimidation factors like screaming, swearing and harassment. Unless you gradually include these elements into your training, how can you ever expect yourself to be ready for them? The short answer is that you can't.

Think of it this way: A beginner might train the basic mechanics of a finger jab until they feel that they "get" the idea of the movement. They explore it as a tool.

A more intuitive practitioner might understand just how powerful that simple little tool could be. To explore that potential further and make that a natural part of their arsenal, they might go further and train the attributes

surrounding it, making it faster and looser and less telegraphic--they cultivate their attributes.

Once the finger jab becomes truly second nature, they would now be poised to integrate it with their Physical Delivery System, practicing evasion, perhaps against grabs, strikes or stabs, continuously moving and deflecting and evading and firing the jab at will from all positions.

Finally, once the physical elements of the basic tool were in place, they would now be ready to integrate a Psychological Delivery System. Adding small contextual details or even a full role-playing dynamic, they could begin practicing basic detection and avoidance skills, trying to de-escalate the imaginary conflict from a secure submissive stance that was defining their limits and maintaining maximum distance, then without warning they might explode from a passive stance into a blitz of finger jabs and counter attacks. They might similarly feign submission as they cowered on their knees at gun point, feebly bringing their hands up next to the weapon's barrel, engaging the attacker verbally, asking them what they wanted, reiterating their desire to cooperate and then during the first moment of distraction they might deflect and anchor the weapon and fire that same jab into the aggressor's eyes.

This is a good example of the progression that should occur from tool to delivery mechanism.

Exercise #18-Ensuring a Balanced Approach:

Any tool will ultimately be limited by the effectiveness of the delivery system that you use to bring it to bear. A warhead depends on a missile to carry it to its target. In your own training or in your consideration of a future training method, consider these four elements to ensure a balanced progression:

How much time does the style in question dedicate to cultivating tools? Try to find a happy medium between improving the technical merits of each tool without obsessing on it and training exclusively in a vacuum.

How much time does the style dedicate to cultivating attributes? All flow without technical correction and improvement will only lead to confident sloppiness. Remember: Practice doesn't make perfect; perfect practice makes perfect. Attributes are a great way to set and measure goal progression in your training.

How much time does the style dedicate to cultivating a Physical Delivery System? If you can avoid harm and get into position, all the tools in the world won't matter. Remember the supreme power of yielding.

How much time does the style dedicate to cultivating a Psychological Delivery Mechanism? Your mind is the greatest weapon you have. Make the most of it.