

SYLLABUS
S-CAR One-Credit Module: Somatic Skills for Conflict Resolvers
September 7 – 8, 2013
9:00 am to 5:00 pm
Presented by Stephen Kotev
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INTRODUCTION

This module will focus on developing physical skills that will enable conflict resolvers to manage more effectively the physiological stresses of conflict experienced during conflict interventions.

During conflict interventions, the aggressive, hostile behavior or profound sadness that disputants often display can evoke strong emotional and physiological responses not only in each other, but also in the conflict resolver. While conflict resolvers are taught verbal de-escalation skills designed to manage the emotional responses of the disputants, they are not taught how to effectively manage their own physiological responses to the stress and emotions they experience during these interventions.

Increased heart rate, excessive or shallow breathing, constriction of blood vessels and major muscle groups, and an inability to focus are common physiological responses to stress. These responses drastically affect the performance of the conflict resolver. If conflict resolvers are unable to manage their own emotions and stress, they will be unable to effectively perform their duties. Furthermore, conflict resolvers must be able to project and model the proper non-verbal body language necessary to instill confidence in their abilities.

Conflict resolution training is focused primarily on the development of verbal skills while neglecting the effects of stress upon the conflict resolver. Conflict resolvers are told that they must be the 'calm in the midst of the storm' during these stressful encounters but are not taught how to effectively manage their own stress and emotions when conflict occurs. I believe this is a fundamental gap in conflict resolution training.

This module fills this fundamental gap in conflict resolution training by teaching conflict resolvers somatic/physical skills that will drastically improve their performance when faced with the stressful situations common during conflict interventions.

The majority of the module is based upon somatic exercises that originate in the Japanese martial art of Aikido and were created by Dr. Paul Linden. Dr. Linden received his Ph.D from Ohio State University in Physical Education and currently holds a 6th degree black belt in Aikido. After completing his formal education, Dr. Linden studied basic human physiological reactions to stress and the fight-or-flight response using scientific methods. Applying his experience in the martial arts to his scientific observations, he developed a series of safe, effective and easily understood physical exercises/experiments that help ordinary people cope with mental and physical stress. He has written multiple texts

detailing these physical exercises, one of which, *Reach Out: Body Awareness Training for Peacemaking*, will be required reading for this module.

The module will begin with a basic overview of somatic skills and how those skills can be applied to the field of conflict resolution and to improve personal performance. During the remainder of the module, students will first focus on building awareness of how their physiology responds to stress. Secondly, students will learn basic somatic techniques focused on breath, posture and vision that will be used to counteract the fight-or-flight response and maintain performance under pressure. The physical exercises/experiments created by myself and Dr. Linden will be used as a laboratory to safely experience physical and mental stress and learn how to build mastery of these basic somatic techniques.

Eventually, students will teach one exercise/experiment to the larger class to demonstrate their mastery of the course material.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW

1. Attendance and participation	30%
2. Short Paper	50%
3. Personal Reflections Journal	<u>20%</u>
	100%

1. Attendance and participation: You are expected to attend each class and fully participate in class discussion, exercises and presentations. Due to the somatic nature of the material, lack of participation greatly diminishes the effectiveness and retention of the exercises. Please notify me before the start of class if you have any recent injuries or safety concerns or if you are unable to attend class. If you are required to miss portions of the course, your grade will be adjusted for those absences. Please arrive promptly for each day of the course. 30%

2. Short Paper: By September 27, 2013 you will submit a short paper that presents an example(s) of how you have applied the somatic skills learned in this course to your professional life. Papers should detail specific awareness of how your physiology initially responds to stressful situations and how you applied the techniques learned in this course to either improve your performance or avoid/manage the Fight-or-Flight response. Please provide specific examples of what your physiology was like before and after the application of these techniques and how this change in physiology correlated to a change in performance. Your paper should also demonstrate a basic understanding of what triggered your Fight-or-Flight response in these situations and why the somatic techniques you implemented were effective in avoiding/managing this response.

Your paper should also include how you will apply these somatic skills to your current or future work as a conflict resolver. Please emphasize how your knowledge and mastery of somatic skills complements your practice of conflict analysis and resolution and the benefits of utilizing these skills in conflict resolution work.

Papers should be at least 900 words and should not exceed 1,400 words. All submissions should be sent to skotev@gmu.edu in Microsoft Word document or a compatible format. 50%

3. **Personal Reflections Journal:** This self-reflection exercise asks students to compose three journal entries that highlight how they have applied the skills learned in this course to their personal lives. One entry should focus on how you applied one of the somatic techniques learned in this course during an argument or stressful situation. A second entry should discuss how you used a somatic technique prior to a situation to either improve your performance or deal with the situation more effectively. The third entry asks you to spend 15 minutes practicing either the basic belly breathing or 6-Directions breathing before writing. Discuss how this practice influences your consciousness or perception of any ongoing personal dispute. Submissions can be written or in audio or video format. Written submission will be no less than 175 words and no more than 250. Audio or video submission will be no less than 3 minutes and no longer than 5 minutes. Video can be posted to a private YouTube channel. The entries are due by 8 pm on 9/9, 9/11 and 9/13. (20%)

REQUIRED READING AND REQUIRED PREPARATION

Linden, Paul (2003) *Reach Out: Body Awareness Training for Peacemaking*, CCMS Publications, Columbus. This text is available in PDF format as a free download from <http://being-in-movement.com/reach-out>. Please print off a copy and bring it with you to class.

Linden, Paul (2007) *Embodied Peacemaking: Body Awareness, Self-Regulation, and Conflict Resolution*, CCMS Publications, Columbus. (Available for download at <http://www.being-in-movement.com/embodiedpeace>) You are not required to print a copy of this text but I do recommend that you have a digital copy nearby.

This course is experiential in nature. Please come to class in comfortable clothing since you will be moving around and participating in multiple exercises. In addition to the course reading, please bring a towel to class.

GEORGE MASON HONOR CODE AND WRITING CENTER INFORMATION

Honor Code and Plagiarism:

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at academicintegrity.gmu.edu. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for

clarification. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor.

S-CAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. S-CAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.

English Language Institute:

The English Language Institute offers free English language tutoring to non-native English speaking students who are referred by a member of the GMU faculty or staff. For more information contact 703-993-3642 or malle2@gmu.edu.

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center is a free writing resource that offers individual, group, and online tutoring. For general questions and comments please contact us at wcenter@gmu.edu or call: 703-993-4491.

RECOMMENDED READING

Crum, Thomas (1987) *The Magic of Conflict: Turning a Life of Work into a Work of Art*, Touchstone, New York.

Dobson, Terry (1978) *Aikido in Everyday Life: Giving In to Get Your Way*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley.

Grossman, Dave and Christensen, Loren W. (2004) *On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Conflict in War and Peace*, PPCT Research Publications.

Grossman, Dave (1996) *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, Back Bay Books.

Remland, Martin (2004) *Nonverbal Communication in Everyday Life*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Saotome, Mitsugi (1993) *Aikido and the Harmony of Nature*, Shambhala Publications, Boston.

Sheridan, Sam (2010) *The Fighter's Mind: Inside the Mental Game*, Grove Press, New York.

Waitzkin, Josh (2007) *The Art of Learning*, Free Press, New York

Somatic Skills for Conflict Resolvers Agenda

Day One

9:00 Introductions and Orientation

Introductory Presentation:

What are Somatic skills?

Why do we need these skills?

How does the incorporation of these skills affect our performance in high-conflict situations?

Break/Questions and Answers

Somatic Skills Techniques

Introduction to Being In Movement – Page 1 - Reaching Out

- Why the Body – Page 1 - Reaching Out
- In a Nutshell – Page 2 - Reaching Out
- Body & Morality – Page 3 - Reaching Out
- Safety – Page 5 - Reaching Out

Somatic Exercises:

- Throwing Tissues – Page 6 - Reaching Out
- Soft Tongue/Relaxing Your Belly – Page 8 - Reaching Out
- Belly Breathing – Page 10 - Reaching Out
- Throwing Tissues II – Page 12 - Reaching Out
- Autogenic breathing – Variation from Lt. Col. Dave Grossman
- Ellis Amdur?

Break/Questions and Answers

Continuation of Somatic Exercises:

- Don't Stand So Close To Me
- The Power of Words
- Eyebrow Power – Page 15 - Reaching Out
- Pain Control – Page 39 - Reaching Out

Break/Questions and Answers

- Hatred/Love Postural Structure Test
- Hatred/Smiling Heart – Page 16 &17 - Reaching Out
- Towel Chopping – Page 57 – Embodied Peacemaking
- Paraphrasing Practice from Hatred/Love

Break/Questions and Answers

4:30 Adjourn and Review of Homework

Day Two

9:00 Review of Previous Material

Somatic Exercises Continued:

- Inguinal Sitting – Page 23 - Reaching Out
 - Pelvic Rotation - Page 20 - Reaching Out
 - Chest Push – Page 24 - Reaching Out
 - Towel Sitting – Page 33 - Reaching Out

Break/Questions and Answers

- Basic Breathing Exercise – Page 35 - Reaching Out
- Six Directions Reaching/Breathing – Page 37 - Reaching Out
- Role Play

Break/Questions and Answers

- Role Play 2
- Fishing
- Walking The Gamut (everyone will complete this exercise twice) – Page 29 - Reaching Out

4:30 Wrap Up/Final Questions and Answers/Evaluations