

**CONF 795-001 SYLLABUS**  
**S-CAR One-Credit Module: Somatic Skills for Conflict Resolvers**  
**September 13 – 14, 2014**  
**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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 including, *Embodied Peacemaking: Body Awareness, Self-Regulation, and Conflict Resolution* and *Reach Out: Body Awareness Training for Peacemaking* which 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.

This module will conclude with opportunities to practice these newly acquired skills in highly volatile conflict resolution simulations. These simulations allow students to gauge their capacity to perform under pressure and integrate somatic skills into their practice.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW**

1. Attendance and participation	30%
2. Personal Reflections Journal	20%
3. Short Paper	<u>50%</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. 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 or professional lives. Your first entry should focus on how you applied one of the somatic techniques learned in this course during an argument or stressful situation. Use this journal entry to cultivate your self-awareness by providing specific details of how your physiology responded.

Your second entry should discuss how you used a somatic technique prior to an argument or stressful situation to either improve your performance or deal with the situation more effectively. Contrast how you performed in this situation compared to your implementing the technique during the incident in your prior journal submission.

For your final entry, think of a current on-going either personal or professional interpersonal dispute. First, focus on how your body reacts/responds when you think of this situation. Then spend 15 minutes practicing either the basic belly breathing or 6-Directions breathing. Then revisit this scenario from a centered state brought about by these somatic techniques. Discuss how this practice influences your consciousness or perception of your dispute.

Each submission will be no less than 175 words and no more than 250. Your first two entries may be submitted by email, your final entry should be submitted as a Word document and include your prior two entries. The entries are due by 8 pm on 9/19, 9/26 and 9/29. 20%

3. Short Paper: This paper should expand upon your prior Personal Reflections Journal entries to demonstrate your knowledge of somatic skills and how you have applied these skills to your professional life. Using a specific conflict, begin with a detailed explanation of how your physiology responds to this stressful situation. Your explanation should be thorough and precise; avoid emotional terminology and focus on your physiological responses.

Then, describe how you applied the techniques learned in this course to either improve your performance or avoid/manage the Fight-or-Flight response during this conflict. Your description should 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. Also include how your physiology changed after your application of a somatic technique.

Finally, discuss how you will apply these somatic skills to your current or future work as a conflict resolver. What benefit to you see in knowing these skills? How do these skills influence the effectiveness of conducting a conflict resolution process?

Papers should be at least 900 words and should not exceed 1,400 words and are due by October 3, 2014. All submissions should be sent to [skotey@gmu.edu](mailto:skotey@gmu.edu) in Microsoft Word document or a compatible format. 50%

### **REQUIRED READING:**

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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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

Wise, Jeff (2009) *Extreme Fear*, Palgrave Macmillan, 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
- Circular breathing – Variation from 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**