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True Warriorship: *The States of Situational Alertness, and PTS*

White

In Col. Jeff Cooper's Condition White¹, you are relaxed and unaware of what is going on around you. Ideally, a trained warrior such as a military veteran, police officer, or advanced martial artist is only in white when asleep, but realistically we often drop our guard when we are at home or in some other environment we assume to be safe, like a police squad room. However, since even police stations have been attacked, it is better to be alert even when you are in your "lair." As the Lakewood coffee shop ambush proves, you simply cannot be in white, unless you are asleep. If you are attacked while you are in condition white, you may very well die — unless you are lucky. Trained warriors never depend on luck.

We must be alert, but once safe, we must be able to relax. It is essential for good health to rest the mind deeply when sleeping. In Asian Medicine, *yang* is active, and *yin* is passive. A healthy person can embody each state at the appropriate time, yang during the day, yin at night. For those with PTS, the mind can feel "stuck" in yang all of the time, exhausting us.

Yellow

(Mellow) Yellow - In Condition Yellow, you remain relaxed, but are aware of who and what is around you. This merely means that you are paying attention to the sights and sounds that surround you whether you are at home or moving in society. Condition yellow **does not** equate with paranoia or any other irrational fear of persons, places, noises or other stimuli. Instead, you simply have moved your alertness to a level of attention that will prevent you from being totally surprised by the actions of another person.

While walking through an area you will loosely keep track of anyone behind you. When choosing a seat in a restaurant, you will position yourself to see the entrance or to minimize the number of people who might be behind you. You don't need to insist on securing the "gunfighter seat" which will put your back to a dead corner and your face to the entrance, because you are not anticipating a threat, you are merely conducting an inventory of your surroundings and the other people around you. You may also be running a relaxed, cursory "what if" mental visualization of potential threat responses.

If you are attacked in condition yellow, it should not come as a total surprise. A well-trained warrior must be in condition yellow whenever in any place where there could be a possible threat to themselves or others they would like to protect. In mindful health, *Propriety* is the key. Meditation and mindfulness can settle and clarify the mind revealing what is an actual threat to concern ourselves with, and what can be safely ignored. The samurai were very committed to cultivating *Yama Shin*, a "Heart Like A Mountain", imperturbability in the face of potential threats, whether they manifest as actual threats or not. Mellow Yellow is where we want to live most of the time. As a civilian, unless we live in a dangerous neighborhood in an inner city riddled with crime, there will generally be few threats each day that should cause the level of arousal of yang appropriate in Condition Orange. So, rediscovering Mellow Yellow is the goal of the warrior's meditation practice.

Orange

In Condition Orange, you have identified something of interest that may or may not prove to be a threat. Until you determine the true nature of whatever has piqued your interest, your "radar" is narrowed to concentrate on the possible threat and will remain so focused until you are satisfied no threat exists. Situations throughout your day — especially if they are likely to be dangerous, such as a dispatch call to a police officer — are obvious examples of a condition orange focus. People in these daily situations are not currently a threat, or you would move swiftly and smoothly to the next higher color. Instead, these individuals simply *could* be a threat, so you shift from condition yellow (relaxed but alert) to condition orange (specific alert). Warriors may make this harmless shift many times a day as you go about your normal routine. If someone or something looks out of place, you change from a 360 degree general awareness to a more focused concentration in a specific direction. At the same time, you can't drop your general awareness, because a bad guy in front of you may be a distraction for another behind. If you are attacked in condition orange, you should be expecting the attack. Further, you will hopefully be facing or at least "centered on" your attacker since you have already shifted your focus in his direction. If you are well trained, your subconscious mind will have been searching for similar events or training you have experienced, or any pre-visualized "what if" situations you've run through mentally as possible effective solutions should an attack take place.

For the acupuncture patient and the warrior-meditator, *how* we go about shifting through conditions yellow, orange, red, and blue is an indicator of both our degree of *Yama Shin* centeredness, and our Heart-Kidney health, as you will see.

Red

If the focus of your attention in condition orange does something you find threatening, you will shift to Condition Red. Condition red **is not** the firing stroke. Instead, condition red simply changes the focus of your attention from a *potential threat* to a **potential target**. If armed, you will draw your weapon, or move still further to sight acquisition, only if the potential target's actions dictate such a response. Armed or unarmed, the civilian warrior-meditator will assume the state the samurai call "**Ashes in the Eyes, Fire in the Belly**": fully *prepared* to go into combative action to protect life (yours or others), but with **Mushin**: a completely calm, focused, undistracted mind.

Once you've shifted to condition red, you cannot be surprised by your primary adversary and you are fully prepared to "repel boarders" should he push the situation that far. But, your intense concentration on a forward threat will lessen your ability to maintain some degree of 360-degree awareness for unknown threats that may come from other directions. Effective training under high-stress conditions will help you avoid the tunnel vision that some describe as "akin to looking through a toilet paper tube." Koshi Shorei Ryu's *Ha Po* drills have been teaching warriors to overcome this tunnel vision for 800 years.

If possible, in both conditions orange and red, you move calmly to a position that will give you a tactical advantage.

If you are attacked in red, you should be fully prepared to defend yourself. Whether or not you have a gun or other weapon in hand or on target will depend on the circumstances, but mentally, you are prepared.

Blue

Condition Blue is not part of Cooper's paradigm, nor is the next condition, Deep Purple.

I use Condition Blue to represent the act of coolly responding to a threat in a holistically balanced, optimal state of skillful performance. *It is the firing stroke*, but it's done with a centered skillful mind. This is a state of body and mind the legendary samurai achieved after years of practice: one perfectly balanced between pure, unwavering force of will and the *Mushin* state of a completely unfettered mind. Together, this optimal state of what we call the *Heart-Kidney Axis* in Asian Medicine provides for perfectly optimal performance in combat, personal protection, and in all other aspects of life as well.

In the modern civilian context, the lives of military veterans have been greatly enhanced and their minds calmed and focused substantially via regular treatment with either individualized comprehensive Koshi Shorei acupuncture or CAV (Community Acupuncture for Veterans), and training in Koshi Shorei Ryu meditation and martial arts which the veteran then practices diligently and consistently. For over 25 years, I have helped many veterans change their lives with these methods.

Deep Purple: Post Traumatic Stress

In Asian Medicine, Deep Purple is associated with imbalances diagnosed as "Stagnation of Heart Blood", or "Empty Heart Fire", which can come from traumatic stress and/or chronic overwork of the mind and body, and result in PTS. Symptoms can include varying degrees of nervousness, anxiety, depression, chronic insomnia, hyper-vigilance, hypertension (high blood pressure), heart palpitations, and chronic pain, among many others. Asian medicine has been treating these conditions effectively for **thousands** of years, using acupuncture, herbal therapy, meditation and counseling. We understand the Kidneys to have two key functions related to PTS: the storage of the *Jing* reserves of vital energy, and our innate self-calming (yin) function. Every veteran knows that the military is mission-first, and runs on coffee. Selfless mission-oriented thinking, aided by caffeine pushes servicemen and -women beyond their normal limits, often for years. Asian medicine clearly shows that this excessive overwork depletes the kidney jing. Then, if the mind experiences traumatic shock while the kidneys are already so depleted, the event(s) "scatter" much of the remaining the kidney energy, such that it is no longer able to calm and regulate the Heart-Mind. This leaves one with PTS: varying degrees of a state of chronic racing, anxious thoughts and emotions, and behavioral over-reaction to what typical people, who have not experienced such trauma(s), are not triggered by.

PTS is a **normal reaction to abnormal, traumatic experiences**. It is very treatable with Asian medicine, but requires a comprehensive approach, and willing participation by veterans to learn the True Warriorship methods to help themselves. PTS often remains chronic and uncontrolled if only the symptoms are treated, which is often the case with the drug-therapy of western medicine. Since *Koshi Shorei Ryu* Medicine treats the underlying patterns of imbalance not just the symptoms, the results are much better for warriors experiencing PTS. Koshi Shorei Ryu treatment methods include acupuncture, herbal therapy, and counseling, fully integrated with education consisting of meditation, mindfulness, *kiwaza* energy-balancing exercises, martial arts and other training. Frequently, veterans with PTS that I treat and train also reduce or completely stop medications they have been on for years to treat anxiety, depression, insomnia, ADD/HD, substance addiction, chronic pain and more. This process helps them rediscover vitality and healthy functional health they have not experienced in a very long time.

¹ Basic information about Col. Cooper's States of Awareness and color coding in this document is extracted largely from an article on policeone.com by Richard Fairburn, although it has been highly annotated by me. I learned of Col. Cooper's paradigm from Lt. Dan Nutt, my friend and Koshi Shorei Ryu Black Belt, who is an expert in all aspects of law enforcement training. Dan, our friend Thor Torgersen, an expert in Japanese martial arts and instructor of Navy SEALs, and I co-founded the original C.H.E.A.T. D.E.A.T.H. Program in 1999.



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