

RITUALIZED COMBAT

by DARREN LAUR

Ritualized Combat was termed by a police trainer by the name of Roland Ouellette. Basically, these "body language signs" are rituals that the human body will, in most cases, go through just prior, during, and after a physical confrontation (not so different from the animal kingdom). These signs are important, why?, because they are really good warning signals to let you know what your potential attacker may be contemplating, even though he may not be "verbally" communicating this fact to you. Ritualized Combative signs have been both scientifically and empirically researched in such fields as "Human Performance" and "Neuro Linguistic Psychology." Here in Canada, I have used "Ritualized Combative Signs" successfully in the Courts during expert testimony in Self-Defense cases. I also possess hundreds of hours of videotape of actual street fights, and when reviewed both in real time and in slow motion, every one of the Ritualized Combative signs that I share in my articles and training, are seen prior, during, and after these fights. This is why I believe that all in the self-protection field should know about "Ritualized Combat". So what are these signs?

Assault Not Imminent But Possible:

- Head, neck, shoulders go back (person making themselves look bigger)
- Face is red, twitching, jerking
- Lips pushed forward bearing teeth (you see the same things in dogs before attack)
- Breathing is fast and shallow (oxygenating the body preparing for fight, flight, hyper vigilance)
- Beads of sweat appear about the face/neck
- Thousand mile glare
- Exaggerated movements
- Finger pointing/ head pecking
- Totally ignores you
- Gives you excessive attention during normal conversation such as direct uninterrupted eye contact
- Goes from totally un-cooperative to totally cooperative (people do not go from hot to cold they de-escalate over time)
- Acts stoned or drunk
- Directs anger towards other inanimate items such as tables, chairs, walls

If you find yourself confronted by a subject presenting these signs, awareness/self protection strategies should go up, and distance should be created. Your body language should be assertive but not threatening and don't be afraid to allow the person to vent verbally.

Assault Is Imminent:

- face goes from red to white (during a physical confrontation the blood will leave the surface of the body and pool to the big muscles and internal organs of the body needed for survival). In my job as a police officer I see this all the time and when I do one of two things are going to happen, the suspect is either going to fight or run
- Lips tighten over teeth
- Breathing is fast and deep
- Change of stance, their body blades and shoulder drops
- Hands closed into a fist (not uncommon to see the whites of knuckles due to hands being so tight)
- Bobbing up and down or rocking back and forth on feet (this is the bodies way to hide/ mask the initial movement of a first strike)
- Target glance (here you will see your opponent look to where he is going to hit, or where he is going to run/escape)
- Putting head and chin down (body wants to protect the airway, this action does so to a degree)
- Eye brows brought forward into a frown(again the body wants to naturally protect the visual system, this action does so to a degree)
- Stops all movements/ freezes in place
- Dropping center or lowering of body (no different that a cat or dog getting ready to pounce)
- Shedding cloths (very common, you will see your attacker take his hat, coat, shirt, or bag off just prior to the assault)
- One syllable replies (go from full sentences to one syllable replies..... reptilian brain is clicking in)

In this group of signs, you have about 1-1.5 seconds to act before your attacker either attacks or runs. If walking and talking your way out is inappropriate or unreasonable, then I teach "First Strike" philosophy, and continue on with a compound attack until your attacker is no longer a risk.

In both the Assault Not Imminent and Assault Imminent phases, I do teach my students (in some situations) to bring to the attention of the attacker what you are seeing because:

- 1) The attacker may not know what they are doing. A lot of these signs are autonomic in nature, meaning they happen without conscious thought.
- 2) The bigger reason, I believe, is for this purpose; most attackers will only attack you when they believe that they have the element of surprise. By sharing with them what you see, you take this primary tactic away from them.

It's also important to remember that there are times when you should NOT let the

person know what you are seeing, thus using the element of surprise to your advantage!

If you have been able to deescalate the situation you have found yourself in, non-verbally, verbally or physically, also look for these Ritualized Combat signs that are good indicators to let you know that your opponent is no longer thinking about fighting:

Signs Of Submission:

- Putting hands up in front of body with palms facing out... (universal sign for stop, stay back - also Kissaki Kai Karate ready posture)
- Face returns to normal skin tone and color
- Shaking hand. (almost as if the person has Alzheimer's disease.... This shaking can be slight to extreme bodies natural way to burn out the adrenalin, nor-adrenalin, epinephrine that it dumped into the body for fight, flight, hyper vigilance but was not used)
- Turning of back with their hands covering their head (ensure you can see their hands if not create distance NOW)
- Backing off
- Bowing of head and lowering of eyes
- Verbal tone, volume, rate, slows back to normal / full sentences once again
- Falling to the ground almost in a fetal position
- Grooming gestures (this one is weird but you will see it time and time again... person will adjust their clothing, play with their hair/mustache/beard, pick lint of their body..... you see this in cat and dogs after they fight and then groom themselves)

In all of the above noted signs, don't just look for one, but rather clusters of two or more. If you see one and know what to look for, you will see others guaranteed. As a police officer who has been involved in many physical encounters, I can share with you that "Ritualized Combat" is a tool that you can use to your advantage. Many of my students, who are not police officers, who have found themselves in 'situations' have also echoed the tactical benefit of such knowledge. One should also remember that a skilled attacker "may" be able to mask some of these signs, so never drop your guard and fall into a false sense of confidence!! Also remember that if the voice and body don't match, always believe the body because the voice can LIE!! If your attacker is verbalizing the fact that he doesn't want to fight, but yet he is showing Ritualized Combative signs that show otherwise, he's a LLPOF (liar, liar pants on fire).

Some people who don't know about Ritualized Combat, call it "gut instinct/intuition". They are right!! The reason it is a "gut instinct/intuition" rather than a known empirical thing, is because no one has explained to them what "Ritualized Combat" is. What is happening in the "gut/ instinct" group, is that their

“sub-conscious/reptilian brain” is picking up on these signs (rather than the conscious critical mind), thus turning on the warning bells. Some listen (the more experience), but most do not. Why can I say this, I am also a certified hypnotherapist and working towards my masters in Neuro Linguistic Psychology.