COMBAT BREATHING

Quite frankly, during pursuits back then I was a threat to others and myself. I knew I had to get control of the adrenaline demon before I ended up in a tragedy. I also knew I was on my own and would have to find a solution myself. I had been a life-long martial artist and was quite adept at using controlled-breathing techniques for stress control while fighting. The breathing technique known as chi breathing, san shin breathing, autogenic breathing and probably a dozen more also-known-as names has been recently touted in police training circles as combat breathing.

CONDITIONED RESPONSE

Many progressive police training classes now teach this breathing exercise, but most don’t take it far enough to make it functional. In most cases, instructors teach this technique in the completely tranquil, sterile environment of a quiet classroom, which fails to give officers proper mental cues to trigger the breathing pattern subconsciously. Officers will need this technique most when their adrenaline and the moment overload their short-term memory with information vital to their survival.

We now know what technique our officers must learn, but how do we teach it so they remember to do it when they need it the most? Well, you probably can’t. Teach them to remember to do it, that is. To expect officers to consciously remember to use the breathing technique is neither realistic nor dependable. You can, however, make it a conditioned response to a specific stimulus.

Bruce Lee was once quoted, “Learn it until you forget it.” I believe he meant we should learn techniques so we can perform them without conscious thought. As he said in the movie “Enter the Dragon” while teaching a young apprentice, “Don’t think, feel.”