



Spartan Firearms Training Group, LLC

Tip of the Week: December 22, 2025

The Gun Doesn't Decide, You Do!

Carrying a handgun is not about equipment, marksmanship, or tactics. It's about making good decisions when adrenaline and other stress hormones raise your heart rate, increase your blood pressure, create tunnel vision, shut down your near vision, and possibly trigger your body to soil your pants.

Here's what making good decisions means for you:

- **You already make fast decisions every day.**
Dodging a bad driver. Walking away from a disrespectful person. Your brain notices cues and reacts before you consciously think about it.
- **Under stress, you won't "rise to the occasion."**
You'll fall back on whatever habits you've built. If you haven't practiced decision-making under stress, you will make bad choices. Look for opportunities to practice stress inoculation.
- **Good outcomes come from paying attention.**
The best responses are usually boring: create distance, change direction, leave early, call for help. Read "Left of Bang" by Patrick Van Horne and Jason Riley.
- **The gun doesn't decide. You do.**
Equipment can't explain itself after a deadly force incident. Your mindset and habits will be the focus of investigators' and courts' scrutiny.
- **Train your thinking, not just your shooting.**
Practice noticing behavior, identifying exits, setting verbal boundaries, and choosing when to disengage (which is required by law in Maryland, as long as it is safe to do so).
- **Make your personal rules now.**
Decide in advance:
 - Under what circumstances will you disengage?
 - Under what circumstances will you strive to avoid possible dangerous situations?
 - Under what circumstances will you know force is truly justified?
 - Under what circumstances will you increase or decrease your use of force?

The worst time to invent these rules is when you are facing a deadly force situation. We recommend practicing visualization, where you imagine various threat scenarios and possible responses to your personal rules.

Bottom line:

Carrying a firearm responsibly entails developing a self-defense mindset grounded in a principle advocated by Colonel Jeff Cooper. He said (paraphrased), that when facing a deadly force threat, you think, “I knew this could happen one day, and I know what to do about it. Your goal isn’t to be aggressive or heroic—it’s to be calm, lawful, and trained to make good decisions under stress.