

**SYLLABUS**  
**ICAR One-Credit Module: Somatic Skills for Conflict Resolvers**  
**September 11 – 12, 2010**  
**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, disputants often display aggressive, hostile behavior or profound sadness that 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 the conflict resolver is 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 that help ordinary people

cope with mental and physical stress. He has written multiple texts detailing these physical exercises, one of which, *Reach Out: Body Awareness Training for Peacemaking*, will be required reading for this module.

The module will begin with a basic presentation on origin of somatic skills from the Japanese martial art of Aikido and concepts and principles that this martial art shares with the field of conflict resolution. During the remainder of the module, students will practice the physical exercises created by Dr. Linden and eventually teach them to the larger class.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW**

1. Attendance and participation	50%
2. Short Paper	25%
3. Class Presentations	<u>25%</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. 50%

2. Short Paper: By September 26, 2010 you will submit a short paper that presents an example(s) of how you have applied the somatic skills learned in this course to your personal or professional life. Papers should demonstrate your specific knowledge of the physiology involved and how you applied the techniques learned in this course to either improve your performance or avoid/manage the Fight-or-Flight response. Please provide specific examples of what your physiology was like before and after the application of these techniques and how this change in physiology correlated to a change in performance. Papers should be at least 600 words and should not exceed 1,000 words. All submissions should be sent to [skotev@gmu.edu](mailto:skotev@gmu.edu) in Microsoft Word document or a compatible format. 25%

3. Class presentation: Students will either individually or in small groups present one of the exercises from *Reach Out: Body Awareness Training for Peacemaking* to the larger class. Students will be graded on thoroughness and proper instruction of the exercise. (25%)

4. This is not a pass/fail module. It is graded as all others courses at ICAR are graded.

## **REQUIRED READING AND REQUIRED PREPARATION**

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.

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 <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 about appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor.

ICAR 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. ICAR'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.

Linden, Paul (2006) *Teaching Children Embodied Peacemaking: Body Awareness, Self-Regulation and Conflict Resolution*, CCMS Publications, Columbus.

Remland, Martin (2004) *Nonverbal Communication in Everyday Life*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Saotome, Mitsugi (1993) *Aikido and the Harmony of Nature*, Shambhala Publications, Boston.

## **Somatic Skills for Conflict Resolvers Agenda**

### **Day One**

#### **9:00 to 9:30 – Introductions and Orientation**

##### **Introductory Presentation:**

What are Somatic skills?

Origin in the Japanese martial art of Aikido

Shared concepts and principles of Aikido and Conflict Resolution

##### **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
- Using This Book – Page 4 - Reaching Out
- Safety – Page 5 - Reaching Out

**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

**Break/Questions and Answers****Continuation of Exercises**

- Hatred – Page 16 - Reaching Out
- Smiling Heart – Page 17 - Reaching Out
- Don't Stand So Close To Me/The Power of Words

**Break/Questions and Answers**

- Pelvic Rotation – Page 20 - Reaching Out
- Inguinal Sitting – Page 23 - Reaching Out
- Chest Push – Page 24 - Reaching Out
- Towel Sitting – Page 33 - Reaching Out

**Break/Questions and Answers****4:30 Adjourn and Review of Homework****Day Two****9:00 Review of Previous Material****Culmination of Reaching Out exercises**

- Basic Breathing Exercise – Page 35 - Reaching Out
- Six Directions Reaching/Breathing – Page 37 - Reaching Out
- Pain Control – Page 39 - Reaching Out
- Walking The Gamut – Page 29 - Reaching Out
- Fishing

**Break/Questions and Answers****Student Presentation of the following Exercises:**

- Throwing Tissues Part I and II – Pages 6 and 12 in Reaching Out
- Soft Tongue/Relaxing Your Belly, Belly Breathing/Basic Breathing Exercise – Pages 8, 10 and 35 in Reaching Out
- Autogenic breathing – Variation from Lt. Col. Dave Grossman
- Hatred and Smiling Heart – Pages 16 and 17 in Reaching Out

- Don't Stand So Close To Me/The Power of Words
- Pelvic Rotation, Inguinal Sitting/Chest Push/Towel Sitting – Pages 20, 23, 24 and 33 in Reaching Out
- Six Directions Reaching/Breathing – Page 37 in Reaching Out
- Pain Control – Page 39 in Reaching Out
- Walking The Gamut – Page 29 in Reaching Out

**4:30 Wrap Up/Final Questions and Answers/Evaluations**