

What Is the Ultimate Motivation in a Life-or-Death Fight?



Is it fear? Is it love? Is it an all-consuming and overarching desire to live?

Those all sound like good answers, don't they. Perhaps it's a potent mix of All of the Above?

In order to find the real answer, the answer that will get you back home alive, we need to look at this question from the killer's perspective. If a man comes after you, to murder you, he's probably not doing it out of fear for his life. He's not worried about his loved ones, or making it back home alive. The killer wants one thing, and one thing only:

He wants to kill you.

The way he moves, the way he goes about using the tools at his disposal (knife, stick or gun) is going to be focused on the singular idea of injuring you, dropping you, and finishing you on the ground. The thing that drives the knife forward, or pulls the trigger is his intent--his desire to get the job done. His goal is to cause as much damage, in the shortest time, as he can. His motivation will be nothing more than his desire to do so.

In order to level the field, you have to work the same way.

The things that people like to identify as motivators--reducing fear, seeing loved ones again, preserving your own life--are side-effect results of success in violent action. If a man comes after you and you break him and drop him and beat him to nonfunctional on the ground, you handled the threat and are no longer in danger. You get to be the one to go home. And you just earned the rest of your life.

None of those side-effects, as important and desirable as we may think they are, will get you to put your thumb in a man's eye and gouge it out. The only motivation that will keep you focused enough to get it done is your desire to blind him.

THE ULTIMATE MOTIVATION IS TO INFLICT AS MUCH HARM AS POSSIBLE Period.

Home, hearth, family and friends, long life--these things you earn as a side-effect of doing the above. Let's take a look at a concrete example of what I'm talking about:

A mugger brandishes a knife, threatening a person who has, as their primary motivation to act, their fear of being stabbed, or killed, their desire to make it back home alive to their children, their will to survive. They first and foremost hesitate as they consider the implications of what's before them, and all the possible outcomes: "Oh my god, he's got a knife--I could get stabbed to death!"

This focus on unrealized outcomes makes them more likely to occur--we now have two people in this situation who are leaning toward the same outcome! (The mugger wants to stab, the victim is worried

about getting stabbed.) This puts the focus on the knife, and off the mugger; the person, desperate to live, goes for the knife arm and enters into a wrestling match with the mugger... Should they lose control of the knife, they risk getting stabbed to death. Just as they worried they would. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Now let's look at it from the other side:

A mugger brandishes a knife, threatening a person trained with no more motivation than 'to always do their worst' to the other guy--and that's exactly what happens. The first thing that occurs to them is to step in and punch the mugger in the throat as hard as they can, crushing it.

As a byproduct, the mugger is no longer a threat; loved ones are no longer in danger; you make it back home alive that night; you just took back the rest of your life. But only because you had as your driving, core motivation the same one as a killer: you did it for no other reason than to hurt the man.

I realize this sounds extreme; I've spent my entire career listening to people complain that I should 'tone it down.' But you know what? It's the truth. The truth isn't always pretty, or comfortable, or 'nice.' But this one small truth can mean the difference between life or death for you. And if it means helping just one person succeed in violent conflict when by all rights they should have lost... well, then I'm going to keep telling it like it is:

Your motivation is to hurt the man. Anything more complicated than that just gets in the way and puts you a half-step behind. And in violence second place isn't just first loser--it's dead.

