



## THE BLUE FAMILY TREE

### Newsletter article August, 2018

We all have officer presence. At least, we'd better. I'd venture that it's the first step in every agency's use of force wheel, continuum, tool box, what have you.

We all have a very clear picture of soft hand control, hard control, intermediate weapons, and deadly force. Maybe your agency uses different names, but the descriptions of each are the same. But what is officer presence? Shouldn't we be well versed in this level to best avoid the need to move to the next levels?

If you ask most rookies what officer presence is, you're likely to hear stories about cops who were shot because their boots weren't polished, and that bad guys look us up and down and decide whether to try their luck based on our gig lines. But I've noticed an interesting trend in my 18 years of gig lines and boot polishing. It seems the young officers who fill the uniform so so nicely, find themselves in many more fights and foot pursuits than the old dogs do. Ok, I know you young guys are screaming right now that you're just digging more, turning over more rocks. Finding the real bad guys and the old cops should just retire because they're not out there fighting crime. Well I'll concede that you're right to a degree. But that is not the entire answer.

So why are bad guys taking their chances with the most well groomed among us, and complying with the out of shape, saggy belt, cop whose magazines are angled forward because his gut has taken over their previous position? It's certainly not officer presence. It has everything to do with command presence.

If officer presence is looking awesome, we need to add another level to the use of force continuum. Command presence is how one controls a scene. It's reading the behavior of the subjects you're in contact with and controlling the actions you predict they are about to take. When you ask a subject his name, and he replies with a deep breathe and says, "What's my name?" you should know there is an impending problem... This person sees he has two options presented to him and he is working hard to determine which one he will take. He is either going to fight, or he is going to run. It's just a matter of time, unless you exercise your command presence, and a straight gig line won't change his mind. Rookies tend to be a little surprised that this guy ran, when the salty cover officer standing nearby saw it coming two minutes ago.

Command presence comes with experience. We can certainly teach the basics, but unless you see it in action, you will not refine the skill. Unfortunately, what we are teaching is the importance of applying Kiwi when we should be teaching the importance of recognizing behaviors and effectively controlling actions. With our focus on officer presence, new officers are missing the indicators they should be looking for, and even missing to recognize them in hindsight. If you got in a fight tonight, and in the aftermath, when assessing your game, you decided you need to take your sleeves in a little bit more, then you missed the real lesson you should have taken away to save your ass next week.

It is important to look sharp and professional for many reasons, but there is no substitute for understanding behavior and knowing how and when to intervene in one's decision making process. Put some hands on the guy who is repeating the most basic questions back to you. When your suspect is starching their neck, they're not stiff from the rec league football game they just played. They're fixing to do bad things to you, and you should throw some bracelets on them before they develop the courage. Secure those hands, and set them on the curb. Is it time for Miranda? Maybe. Maybe not. You need to be well versed on the ins and outs of that too, but you should never sacrifice your safety to avoid Miranda. "Hey man. I can see what's going through your head. and I don't feel like running tonight. I don't want you to get hurt, because even if you think you could take me with my polished boots, and

custom fit shirt, you can't take my partners and their canines, and tasers, etc. Eventually you'll lose and I don't want that for you. So you're going to sit there in my bracelets until we get this thing sorted out."

Next month: Bracelets do not equal complete safety?