



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 7, 2016

## Defensive Gun Training Classes Increasingly Popular

During her [training class](#) given by Sage Dynamics, Alexandra Wilson experienced a moment of clarity that has altered her life and may just extend it. She is now on “yellow” alert from the moment she gets up in the morning until she retires at night. She used to be “white” — oblivious to everything and everyone around her, a perfect target for someone seeking a victim.



When she goes to the theater, she picks her seat carefully, close to an exit. She plays out in her mind how she would react if a shooter entered. When she drives, she leaves a car length between her vehicle and the one in front at a stop light, giving her room to maneuver out of harm’s way if necessary. When she shops, she is aware of the other shoppers and knows where the exits are, not just the front door. When she attends class, she is aware of her vulnerability because it is a “gun free” zone and quickly plays out in her mind what she would do if she was faced with a shooter. When she goes to church, she prays with her eyes open, keeping them focused on doors in the back of the sanctuary, just in case. When she plans on attending a concert she downloads the floorplan beforehand, to learn where the exits are, allowing her to play out in her mind how she would react in a shooting situation.

Is she paranoid? Said Wilson:

I carry all the time, everywhere that it’s legal for me to carry. [In a confrontation I] would probably fight back, but I’m also pregnant with our first child so I might bail [instead] for the sake of the child.

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Training classes such as the one Wilson attended are growing in popularity, partially thanks to the highly publicized mass shootings the nation experienced last year. Those incidents revealed that “when seconds count, the police are minutes away,” and if something is going to be done in such a situation, it is going to be done by those present. It’s called personal responsibility.

With 13 million Americans now holding a concealed carry permit, they are increasingly aware that just



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having a permit doesn't qualify them as skilled at arms. Nor does punching holes in a paper target at a local shooting range prepare one for a real-world incident. Just having a permit doesn't begin to address the legal and emotional aftermath of a shooting incident. Niceties such as what to say to the 911 operator — or not to say — are skills best learned in advance. As Clint Smith, owner of Thunder Ranch, puts it: The middle of a gun fight is no time to be learning new skills.

Many of those classes teach the strategy of “run,” “hide,” and, as a last resort, “fight.” Some trainers change the word “fight” to “counter,” and others teach without handguns, relying on whatever lies at hand to distract and overcome the shooter: wastebaskets, backpacks, water bottles, and the like.

Even before this protocol is engaged, many trainers start with “avoidance,” which comes from a heightened sense of awareness of their surroundings. Is anything out of place? Why is that man loitering over there near the gas pumps? Is someone walking too closely behind? Does he make longer than usual eye contact?

Many trainers consider as gospel this from nationally known trainer, author, and expert witness Massad Ayoob:

Deadly force is justified only when undertaken to prevent imminent and otherwise unavoidable danger of death or grave bodily harm to the innocent.

But, according to Ayoob, author of the classic *In the Gravest Extreme*, once a criminal has picked you as a target, and there is no other way out:

What you have to do [then] is hit him with a deep, existential question, something that will make him reexamine and reevaluate his own personal values and life style, his own hopes and dreams, as related to the moment at hand.

It can even be phrased without words.

The decision to engage with deadly force is fraught with all manner of risks and challenges. Lt. Brian Marshall of the Marietta, Georgia, police department, where Wilson took her class, cautions people to use a firearm only with great care: “What we don't want you to do is take out the pistol and roam the building to look for the bad guy, because when we [the police] get there, we're looking for someone like that.”

The chances of being involved in a mass shooting continue to decline, according to the FBI, and getting slimmer all the time. A study released in 2014 showed that about 11 mass shootings occur each year. As the *New York Times* noted, “While mass shootings dominate cable newscasts, they make up a minuscule proportion of the nation's 32,000 gun deaths annually.” According to the Brennan Institute, the overall crime rate is now half what it was in 1990, and almost a quarter less than what it was in 2000.

Sage Dynamics is just one of dozens, perhaps hundreds, of training schools now providing real-world experiences for those who now have their concealed carry permits and are wondering what to do next. On its website, Sage says:

From basic safety to advanced weapons manipulation skills, Sage Dynamics instructs in practical and effective methods for confronting threats in and out of the home ... [our programs] are designed to address the reality of self-defense in three dimensions.

Such training, also offered by Ayoob at his Lethal Force Institute and others, has expanded in recent years to provide legal counsel following a shooting incident. One of them, U.S. Law Shield, holds seminars around the country featuring local attorneys experienced in the field. Another provides a form



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of insurance to help pay for that advice, when needed: the Armed Citizens Legal Defense Network. With nearly a million dollars in reserve, members can access up to \$10,000 immediately in the event of a self-defense shooting. There's Tim Schmidt's U.S. Concealed Carry Association, which provides somewhat similar benefits. And on and on.

The fact that the national media, predictably anti-gun, are finally reporting on this "growth" industry reflects the fact that responsible gun owners want to know more about how to defend themselves and their loved ones. This bodes well for continued declines in violent crime, especially as criminals intending harm are increasingly being faced with Ayoub's "existential" question.

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