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## [The Power Of Semantics](#)

The power of words (semantics) has been the catalyst, in many cases, that has caused countries to go to war. The same holds true for individual self-protection encounters, which are really just a war in microcosm. Time and time again, I have seen physical confrontations initiated by those who fail to understand the power of words, and how what one says can either escalate or de-escalate a physical encounter.

Prior to an actual physical assault taking place, there will usually, not always, be an exchange of words between the attacker and the intended victim. It is during this Pre-physical contact "interview", that the attacker's "intent" to fight can often be de-railed through "choice speech". In many cases, the interview is being used as the "lure" to both entice and goad you into a physical confrontation. The attacker is hoping that no matter what you say, the words you speak will give him the excuse he was looking for to physically engage with rage.

Knowing this, how can we use the power of semantics to our advantage? A fellow Canadian Self Protection instructor, Richard Dimitri (founder of Senshido, <http://www.senshido.com>) stated and I'm paraphrasing; " I'm not really interested in the final result or the technique used in a street fight, rather I'm more interested in how it escalated to the point of the physical". This statement is true brilliance, and something that I have been preaching for years. To many in our field are more concerned about the physical (which, don't get me wrong, is important) rather than pre-contact psychology. Dimitri's work in the area of semantics, as it relates to personal combat, is some of the best around and what has spawned this posting on the topic.

So, lets look at some common baited statements that are used to elicit a response from us , and discuss how we can remold them, or as Neuro Linguistic Psychology calls it "pattern interrupt (brain fart) the user to our advantage. Remember, these statements are the bait that the potential attacker wants you to bite at, thus giving them the excuse to physically engage. What we want to do is "DE-RAIL" this mental process to our advantage.

### EXAMPLE #1:

" Do you have a F\*\*\*\*\*G problem ? "

Here the usual reply is "no", or no reply at all. Both of these responses, if given, are too finite, and tend to elicit a negative response from the attacker. The key word here is "PROBLEM", so use this to your advantage by giving a response such as:

" Yes, I do have a problem. I just got fired at work, and I have no financial way to feed my family, our look after their needs at home."

IMO, this reply is very powerful in that it answers your attacker's question in a way that is psychologically very disarming. Identifying the fact that you have a problem that is going to directly affect your family, is something that can be related to by most would be attackers, thus causing the pattern interruption which can lead to diffusion

### EXAMPLE #2:

“ What the F\*\*K are you looking at ?”.

Here the usual reply is “nothing” or no reply at all. Again, both of these responses are too finite and tend to elicit a negative response from the attacker. The key word here is “LOOKING’, so use this to your advantage by giving a response such as:

“ I’m sorry if you thought I was looking at you the wrong way, my wife just left me, and my mind is scrambled right now and as a result, I have a habit of staring out in space which people mistake as staring, sorry man,. I didn’t mean anything by it”

IMO, this reply is again very powerful in that it answers your attacker’s question in a way that is psychologically very disarming.

#### EAMPLE #3:

“ Give me all your fucking money”

If you don’t have any money, never state this fact, by itself, to the attacker. Remember, they have picked you for a reason and have placed themselves in a dangerous situation where they could be arrested and sent to jail if caught. The last thing the attacker wants to hear from you, is that you do not have anything of value for them to take. Instead a response might be:

“ Man, I don’t have any cash with me right now, but I have my bank card that has a \$1000.00 limit on it. You can have it, and I will give you the pin number” . OR;

“ Man I don’t have any cash right now, but see this gold ring, it’s worth \$700.00, here take it.”

I hope that you, the reader, can see how tactically and psychologically disarming the above examples are. It is because of this “cause and effect” strategy that we can psychologically reverse the intended “lure”, and use it to our advantage to either verbally de-escalate the situation, or use it as a set up for first strike. Due to the fact that only about 10% of communication is verbal, body language used with this tactic must be congruent with what you are attempting to communicate verbally!!!! If not, the potential attacker will not believe a word you say.

As with any other strategy or tactic, one must practice these skills in realistic scenario based replication training. Proper Pre Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance. The power of words, and their application, is a “MUST” for those who seek realistic self-protection training. Remember, winning a fighting isn’t always about the physical !!!!!

Strength and Honor

Darren Laur

For related information please go to: <http://members.shaw.ca/tmanifold/laur.htm> and click on SAVING FACE, and COMMUNICATION.

#### CAVEAT:

I would highly recommend Richard DIMITRI’s work in this area as a blueprint for others to follow. From a NLP perspective, specific to this topic, what he is doing is brilliant. Richard’s work in the area of the physical is also most desirable.

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