



ABOVE: junior students at the Hard Target Self-Defence Academy's 'Kidz Kombat' Summer Camp take part in a team building exercise.

ences he'd recently gone through were still very fresh and raw. Because of the emotion the man spoke with, I decided it was best to meet him in person as soon as possible. We arranged to meet the following afternoon", Carroll added.

'COMFORTABLE AND RELAXED'

"We all know the importance of first impressions; it's paramount for me and my team to make everyone feel very comfortable and relaxed when they cross the door of our Academy. We understand how daunting it can be for someone just to pick up the phone and call us, let alone come in to train".

"The environment was set to ease this man's stress from the first point of contact. We ensured there was a designated parking spot available for him when he arrived, that he would be met with a friendly and warm handshake, that the room we'd meet in was comfortable, warm and quiet and, of course, a cup of tea or coffee was offered to ease him into the programme".

Carroll spoke for over an hour with his new visitor. "When trust and confidence was gained, his story unfolded. Initially, this gentleman had contacted me to learn how to defend against the ferocious attack he had been exposed to".

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'NORMALLY THE TRIGGER'

Carroll continued: "The name of the Academy — 'Hard Target Self-Defence' — is normally the trigger to contact us to learn the physical aspects and tactics of self-defence. However, if I was to immediately teach the physical aspects of self-defence, not only would I be doing this gentleman, and others, a disservice, he'd actually be worse off leaving than when he'd arrived".

Carroll explained to the man that the majority of the training was going to focus on the psychological elements; underlining the importance of situational awareness, recognising and understanding pre-incident indicators and ultimately avoiding and escaping to negate the need of a physical response.

"A huge part of our training involves indoor and outdoor scenarios", Carroll explained. "For example, the student has to recognise and act on anomalies in their immediate environment and those who occupy it. This is done with the assistance of my team playing the 'bad guys' with the majority of communication being conveyed only through body language".

'TO VERBALLY DISCLOSE'

"Basically your body language will reflect what's going on in your head", Carroll added. "For example, you're late and in a hurry, your walk will be brisk and fast. Anyone looking at you'll know instantly you're in a hurry without you having to verbally disclose that information to them".

So, how relevant is body language in preventing being selected as a victim for attack? "As part of our research, Hard Target have trained and interviewed hundreds (probably thousands) of people over the years. We've also interviewed dozens of active and (so called) retired criminals to find out why they chose the victims they did".

Carroll went on to say that during these interviews what came across as one of the main deciding factors for victim selection was improper body language. "One of the most frequently quoted statistics on nonverbal communication is that 93% of all daily communication is nonverbal".

'STUDENTS OFTEN QUOTE'

During training, Carroll also stresses the importance of body language "When we deliver a Hard Target seminar, body language is always on the curriculum. Many students often quote they have read (or heard) that individuals communicate 93% by body language". So where does this number come from?

Carroll references Dr. Albert Mehrabian, the author of 'Silent Messages'. "He (Mehrabian) conducted several studies on nonverbal communication and found that 7% of any message is conveyed through words, 38% through certain vocal elements, and 55% through nonverbal elements (facial

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ABOVE: Aidan Carroll, the founder and senior instructor at the Hard Target Self-Defence Academy in Turvey, North County Dublin.