

The F _ _ _ _ _ Word

By

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The admission and or use of the F word is not socially acceptable in long range hunting/shooting circles. Pride, egos, testosterone levels are all put on the line each and every time we shoulder a rifle in the presence of another male species. We tend to stand a little taller, our chest measurements increase and we possess a little more bravado than usual when in the presence of firearms.

Looking through a medical dictionary I was at a loss to find a specific disease associated with this anomaly. Then it hit me, it is a compounding of other similar diseases, with this realization I had struck pay dirt.

“Banty-rooster-itis” – is described as a clouding of judgement, an egotistical preservation of ones pride and all that matters in life. It is often used in clinical comparisons with the F Word. This affliction is known throughout the civilized world and affects over 200,000,000 men world wide! Clinical studies show 99% of all men are in a state of denial when the F word is mentioned. Many feel that advancements in technology and lack of range time are to blame.

Asking your doctor for a 30 day supply of Cialis is not the answer. While the problem usually starts below the belt, the cure is found higher up on the skeletal frame.

Flinching is as common as brown eyes and gray hair. We ALL do it at one time or another, and many folks do it ALL the time! Our individual nervous systems vary and the tolerance levels for pain and noise are equally varied. Technology is partly to blame for such epidemic numbers, most shooters are over-gunned and would do well to step down a caliber or two and regain their manhood.

Some afflicted shooters claim the following; I only flinch occasionally when I’m shooting at paper. When it comes to big game hunting I never flinch or miss, why I don’t even feel the recoil... Apparently they have a built in switch that they can somehow turn off when game is viewed thru the scope. Wanna make a million dollars? Isolate that gene/switch combination and shooters will line up for miles to purchase one, not because they need it, but because they believe in the charity you are sharing profits with.... Swamp land anyone????

Flinching is really mind over matter. Convincing the mind that it doesn’t matter is the tough part. We have thousands of miles of nerves in our bodies, oddly enough they are connected to the trigger finger and brain. The sequential thought process goes something like this:

Alright Joe, take it one step at a time, you never flinch. The cross hairs dance on the target and your trigger finger makes its approach toward the trigger. As it gets close, a distraction enters the thought process. Joe, there is going to be a loud noise and vicious kick as soon as you touch that trigger, be careful! I’ve done this before, trust me! But You never flinch, so you ignore the

warning. You control the urge to “get it over with”. Your finger finally touches the trigger, the brain overrides all other thoughts. JOE, it screams!!!! I told you its going to get noisy and a terrible kick is going to follow, DO IT NOW!!!! The brain wins, as soon as the cross hairs waver past the bulls-eye, the intensity of the warning increases and Joe jerks the trigger to the obvious warning/conclusion from the brain. The noise and recoil are followed by; I told you Soooo!

After just a few shots this brainwashing takes root and every time Joe’s finger touches the trigger the same warning/response occurs. The vicious recoil masks the obvious tightening of shoulder and pectoral muscles, the blinking of eyes and the raising of Joe’s head from the stock in anticipation of what’s next! Luckily for Joe, his friends can’t eavesdrop on the conversation he was having with his brain. If they could, Joe just might take up fishing instead?

This process occurs in virtually all shooters, especially younger shooters who’s dad wants to impress his friends that Joe Jr. can handle a 300 Win. Mag at age 12.

How the Brain Works.

Despite the fact that Joe was born two weeks premature, the brain cannot think two conscious thoughts at a time. We have not evolved to the point that we can process multiple thoughts simultaneously. We must be able to control a single thought and remain focused on the task at hand. This is harder than it seems, try focusing intently on something and see how long it takes for another thought to interrupt? Not long was it???

The brain is the enemy when it comes to shooting and a difficult adversary it is. A common solution is to try and time the shot with our wobbly hold. Okay, here it comes by the bulls-eye, NOW, screams the brain and in response (second thought process) the trigger finger yanks the rifle rearward discharging the round. Often the results are less than desirable, when we do hit the bulls-eye we pat ourselves on the back and applaud our superb timing and brain function. Life is good and we’ve conquered our demons.

Madison Avenue hasn’t helped the shooter either. The BIG MAGNUMS are more rifle than 95% of the shooters can handle under field conditions. Keep in mind the animals we shoot for food and display are not bullet proof, contrary to popular belief, they bleed and die just like they did a hundred years ago. Being competent with a given rifle is far more important than impressive ballistics and poor shoot-ability. High velocity misses never put a steak in the freezer.



Tony Cavallo with a nice antelope buck. Range 674 Yards – 6mm XC 107 Grain Sierra Matchking at 2950 fps. The F_____ word did not apply to Tony!

The Cure, Give Me The Cure

The cure is much easier said than done. First of all, you need to raise your hand and admit that you do indeed flinch. You can do this in a dark room or closet if it helps. The admission much like being an “excessive social drinker” (alcoholic) is your first step. Hi, I’m Joe and I flinch...

Second, break-out a small caliber rifle from the gun cabinet and practice dry firing 50-100 rounds a day over the next two weeks. Some of you may even want to use an accurate 22 rimfire, don’t laugh, I’ve seen shooters flinch when using a rimfire! The destination is all that matters, not how we got there. Note* be sure the cross hairs remain on the target after the trigger breaks. Practice a smooth and almost subconscious trigger squeeze while FOCUSING intently on the target.

Take the rifle to the range and from the bench shoot four, 5shot groups, focusing intently on the target, just like your dry fire practice. The thought process should go something like this; aim, touch the trigger and say; I’m in control of when the rifle fires. Maintain pressure on the trigger and repeat the same “Mantra”. Do this several times while in your “natural respiratory pause” prior to shooting.

YOU are indeed who will decide when the rifle will fire. When the brain tries to intervene, stop and start the process over. If the 8 pound rifle is calling your Bluff, get up from the bench take a few deep breaths, puff up your chest and have another try. We are looking for “Control over the Rifle” you are the “ALPHA Male” you can do this!

We must lock-out the thought process that the noise and recoil are going to hurt us. We’ve been conditioned (brainwashed) for years that its going to hurt and be very loud when we pull/yank the trigger. This has become a programmed response in our shooting. DO IT QUICK and get it over with is no longer in our vocabulary.

Our aiming focus should be so intense as to burn a hole in the target, nothing else should intervene. If it does, start over again! We are now subconsciously compressing the trigger while intensely focusing on the target and before we realize it the gun has fired! Whew!!! We did it, the gun fired as if on its own and the bullet hit the 10 ring. That wasn’t bad was it? Now, do it over again for the remaining 19 shots, being honest with yourself as to when and who decided when the gun fired? Was it you, or did the brain sneak in and take control? Don’t cheat, there is nothing to be gained by cheating.

When you can shoot 20 rounds without a hitch from the bench, its time to shoot prone from your pack or bi-pod. Past experience has told us how well the rifle shoots from the bench, now it is up to us to do the same from the prone position. Use the same focus and aiming intensity as you did from the bench, nothing changes. Do a few dry runs for practice, did the cross hairs jump off target when the trigger broke? Hmm?? Was the brain involved, were you in control of the rifle? Be honest, progress cannot be made if we are cheating. When we can shoot to the same degree of accuracy prone, as from the bench, we have made some serious progress in overcoming our affliction.

We can now move up in caliber, (if we drew the coveted dinosaur tag in South Dakota) but do so gradually, the brain is going to be harder to fool, it remembers the noise and recoil from the Remington Ultra Mag. We may not be able to do two things at once, but the brain does have a memory as to what happened the last time we shot the RUM. That Weatherby eye tattoo will be hard to forget. Dry fire and practice holding the trigger squeeze with a loaded round in the chamber, building control over WHO is going to decide WHEN the gun fires. Fire two to three rounds and go back to shooting your lighter recoiling rifle. DO NOT burn 20 rounds thru the big cannon and ruin the progress we’ve made over the past few weeks. A gradual build-up is required to overcome the increased recoil and cranial intervention.

It will take weeks to overcome a bad flinch enabling you to shoot to your rifle’s potential. Be patient, be honest and don’t get in a hurry. Don’t blow your progress by shooting your friends new wonder magnum, watch him and remind him that the recoil appears to be mild. (tisk tisk) You’ve spent a lot of money and time training yourself to overcome the flinch, do not let peer pressure set you back. Cowboy up and maintain your discipline!

Precision shooting is a perishable skill, continue your dry fire practice sessions and range shooting of 20 rounds per outing. Perfect practice is far more important than vast numbers of rounds expended down range. Continued shooting beyond your control count will only result in the BRAIN getting in the way and destroying your progress. Its like being “B slapped” in the face, you may take the first one without blinking, but guaranteed after the 10th you be anticipating the pain and noise and both eyes are going to slam shut before being hit. Any takers?

Shooting is a personal sport and we judge our success based on our peers. Its nice to be on top and have the best score of the day, staying there takes lots of practice and acknowledging your short comings. You may not want to admit to your friends that you flinch, and that’s fine. But when you look in the mirror or go to sleep at night you know you have a problem, seek the solutions listed above. Your only other option is a frontal lobotomy and we can discuss that in a future article.

Until then, be safe and **In Control**.

Respectfully,

Darrell Holland