

*Streetsense: Communication, Safety, and Control* by Kate Boyd Dernocoeur

Book Review by Mike Taigman

I used to teach part time for the Motorcycle Safety Foundation. We taught the fundamentals of riding motorcycles and included all the basic skills necessary to be safe. We also taught strategies for handling dozens of unusual situations. One summer I talked a friend of mine who had been riding for over twenty years into taking the class. He was amazed at how much he learned and said, "If I'd taken this class twenty years ago, I'd have avoided both my accidents. I'm sure you've saved me from one I'd be likely to have in the next twenty."

Veteran street paramedics and EMTs have had a similar reaction to *Streetsense* ever since it was first published over ten years ago. This landmark EMS book was the first to talk about the things you didn't learn in class. Kate wrote about scene choreography, violence, stress, and taking care of yourself. She was able to translate the lessons of the street into a fun, easy to read, learning adventure. Many people have said, "Studying *Streetsense* will take 5 years off the learning curve necessary to be a street-savvy-medic."

The third edition of *Streetsense* was released in August of this year. It's been expanded and updated to deal with the issues facing street providers today. Many of the techniques she describes are applicable to front line leaders as well. In the section on reading others she advises you to study their body, face, and eyes. "Observe whether the person's facial expression contradicts the physical message. Someone trying to make it look like a broken leg is nothing might unintentionally show pain, anxiety, or some other emotion on his face. Seeing this gives you an interactive toe-hold that, when used well, will provide an entry to that person's mind."

This book is full to the brim with practical information you can use right away. Here are just a few of the highlights:

- A chapter on "effective interpersonal communications" including interviewing techniques and gender-based differences in communication.
- A chapter on special populations with special challenges including cultural differences, gangs, elderly, and the disabled.
- A wonderful chapter on "the nature of routine." This discusses the reality of our business including manners, conflict management, service orientation, customer service, and teamwork.

- She gives specific techniques to protect yourself while working in the back of a moving ambulance. Bracing techniques, hanging on, CPR, hearing protection, and restraint of violent patients are covered. (The workman's compensation savings should more than cover the cost of the book.)

Streetsense is one of those books that has something for everyone. For the new provider it can keep them from making a lot of dangerous mistakes. Veterans find ways they can improve their craft, especially their interpersonal communications skills. Managers new to our industry can get a feel for what kinds of responsibilities and skills their people deal with.

This is one of the few books for which I can testify to the expertise of the author. We worked together as partners on the streets of Denver in the early eighties. Even after 22 years in this business and over 23,000 9-1-1 calls I still learn something every time I pick up this book.

To order copies of Streetsense call the JEMS Bookstore at 800-266-5367.