

# SURVIVAL PAPER

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## Why Survive?

*Will Building for Survival Emergencies*

By: Jim Jones

We spend a lot of time on “how” to survive, but seldom ask “why” we want to survive. The will to survive is taken for granted. In animals, survival is an instinct and at a visceral level there is a human/animal survival instinct, but the difference between humans and animals is that we always ask “why”. The will to survive is more important than access to air, water, food, warmth or any other survival need. The will to survive is not an inherited instinct. The will to survive is a product of reason and individual attitude. Human survival is not just an instinct. On the one hand, people deliberately blow themselves up for a cause or shoot themselves when faced with a stressful situation. On the other hand, people survive horrible conditions and overcome deadly threats that should have killed them. Then there are those who value life, but clearly put their survival at risk for others or for a higher good. There are those who would kill or destroy anything in order to survive. They value nothing more than themselves. Then there are those who place little value on themselves and would give up at the slightest threat. The former would kill his friends to get their supplies. The latter would simply wait to die rather than initiate any survival action. Most of us lie somewhere in between these extremes. We have *reasons* for survival and our will to survive is dependent on the strength of those reasons. It comes down to “what are you willing to do to survive?” and “why is it important that you survive?”

**Is existence alone a worthy goal?** Survival as an animal instinct drives the search for water, food and shelter. The same things humans do everyday. The instinct kicks into high gear when we (animal or man) are threatened by the environment (e.g. fire, cold) or predators. Survival can be as peaceful as drinking from a waterhole, munching on plants or trotting to a better location. Survival can be as violent as tooth and claw or gun and knife combat. Animals survive in order to survive, but humans survive for higher reasons. **We all die, so survival and all that goes into it is pointless unless there is something more. Survival is about buying time. Time for what?**

Most people who have survived a serious catastrophe say that they learned a lot about themselves. Wilderness emergencies, combat and other survival situations quickly

answer questions about who we are, what is important to us and how much we will struggle and endure to stay alive. Unfortunately most people never think about these things until their lives are at risk. They may suddenly realize that their life is important to others, important to things and ideas they support, important to what they are or can be. But because they never thought about these things, they have not acquired the skills or equipment to survive. **They have only will and luck, not will and skill.** Even those who have acquired some skills and equipment may not have seriously examined their own motivations. Well-equipped and trained people have often failed under survival conditions because of a failure of will. As we study our survival texts and gather our gear and supplies, should we not reinforce our will? Surely knowing more about *why* we are preparing to survive will drive our efforts and harden our determination when the need arises.

Maybe you survive to be there for others. Maybe you survive to defend an idea or belief. Maybe you survive because who you are important. You may seek to survive as a free and self-reliant person. Is your survival important as a free and self-reliant person, a contributing member of your community, a helper, a friend, a parent, a builder, a teacher or a protector? Why? Knowing the answer to this question will be the foundation of your quest for preparedness and self-reliance.

**Survival is 50% what you can do and 50% what you can do without. Self-reliance is doing 50% more with 50% less. The will to survive is 50% caring about yourself and 50% what and who you care about.** What do you live for and what would you die for? If your *will* to survive is truly prepared you should be able to answer the following questions:

- Name three people that are important to you.
- Name three ideas, groups, or values that are important to you.
- Describe who you are in relation to your family, community, environment, etc.
- Write your personal life mission (why you are here) statement.
- Why is your survival important?

Thinking about and answering the above questions is a will building exercise. Your survival preparedness and self-reliance program should be justified by and guided by how you answered these questions. The survival priorities are: will, air, water, shelter, food and (depending on the situation) defense. In a survival or self-defense situation the first resource you will need to call upon is your will and determination. Knowing the answers to the above questions in your mind and heart are the first survival tools you will use to act, to keep going, to endure pain and deprivation without giving up. **Are you ready?!**