

AMERICAN SURVIVOR

Survival Information For The Prepared Citizen

May/June 2011

\$2.50 PER ISSUE

Published by: Live Free, USA , www.americansurvivor.org, e-mail:
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Who Survives?

By Jim Jones, EMT/CHCM

Good news! If you are reading this, you are already more likely to survive a serious disaster than those who prefer not to *think* about unpleasant situations and face unpleasant possibilities. .



When facing an immediate hazard or just a potential threat, we go through three distinct stages of mental adjustment. These stages are often referred to as the "survival arch" of: denial, deliberation and decision. In the case of an immediate hazard, such as a fire, plane crash, or assault, we may have only seconds to go through these stages and act. In anticipation of a slower developing emergency such as a

storm, flood or epidemic we may have hours or days to move from denial through deliberation and on to a decision. Even very slow developing threats such as, developing shortages, rising crime levels, or growing economic problems are first denied, then deliberated and finally a decision must be made to take some form of action.

The fact is that no one likes to think about bad things. We may be fascinated with disasters that happen to other people at other places, and we may even enjoy those spectacular disaster movies, but contemplating the possibility of personally being, burned, shot, injured, trapped, or just destitute or lost is not the kind of thing we like to contemplate. The idea of our home burning, criminal assaulting our families, or being desperate for food and water are quickly put out of mind. You assure yourself that the plain you are in will not crash, the terrorists will not strike in your area, and things will never get that bad here. Of course it is unhealthy to go through life in constant fear of disaster. The fact is that life is a series of risks and living a full life inevitably involves risks. Your ancestors may have had to face wild animals and hostile climates, but you drive to work among giant trucks loaded with

flammable and toxic chemical and trap yourself in high-rises and subway cars. Your ancestors had to hunt and forage to survive, but you are dependent on a fragile and vulnerable system for every need of life. So, everyone is at risk, but not everyone chooses to acknowledge the facts or consider their impact.

Unthinkable Thinking

Most people today have a fairly low bass sense of dread. That is to say that they go through life assuming that bad things will not happen to them and that everything will be okay no matter what they may be told or what the situation is. These folks have generally been raised in a protective family environment, attended safe schools in safe communities and experienced fairly peaceful and secure lives. The idea that things can get hard or that they could be on their own is literally “unthinkable”. Making any sort of emergency plans or survival preparations would be a major psychological trauma to them. They do not want to think about it and they do not want to frighten the kids. When they do think about an emergency, they consider who should help them or what will happen to them. In other words, “things happen to them” If caught in a fast developing hazard such as a fire, plane crash or assault, they have great difficulty accepting the reality and their responsibility to act. They generally spend too much time in denial. In these cases a few seconds may mean the difference between life and death. They wait to see what others will do or wait for instructions or just freeze in place. Responders tell of finding people burned to death still sitting at a table in a banquet hall where everyone else had safely evacuated. Passengers just remain seated in a burning plane while others got out. The average time for people to start towards the stairwells of the World Trade Centers after the plan

hit on 9/11 was 6-minutes! Some turned off computers, some made phone calls, some put away files. They just wanted things to be okay. It takes too long for these “victims” to get from their low sense of dread to the point of action. They so want to be someplace else that their mind goes there. Even if they move from denial to deliberation and decision, they are unlikely to have gathered any knowledge to help make the right decision or carry any item that could be helpfull. For them ignorance is bliss, often deadly bliss. Only luck and the kindness of strangers can save them. In most cases they shall be called “victims”.

Thinkable Thinking

You, dear readers have a relatively high sense of dread. The very fact that you are reading this article in this publication indicates that you are normally more aware of both immediate and future hazards. I would bet that when *you* find yourself next to that tank truck with the hazardous placard on it going 70-miles per hour, you are thinking about what to do if he swerves and how to get away from it as soon as possible. You check the emergency exits at your hotel room and you read that instruction card and note the escape routes on a plane. Your basic attitude is that it can happen and it can happen now to me. When thinking about any pending or immediate disaster you think, “what would I do” and “how could I help”. In other words’ you happen to things. In fact in several plane crashes it was found that all of the survivors had read the instructions and noted the exit locations before takeoff. People with higher basic levels of dread usually have been exposed to danger and disaster earlier in life. Kids who grew up in high poverty and crime environments, combat veterans, survivors of fires, earthquakes and tornados generally are ready to expect the worst. Those who go through realistic disaster/combat training can also

react better and faster under stress. It is doubtful that the survivors of the Great Depression of the 1930s would have not foreseen and prepared for the recent and future severe recessions. Most survivors of the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 did much better on 9/11 although some had slipped back into denial. Those who survive quickly adjust to the situation as it is. They are here now no matter how bad here and now is. They either have a plan or make one quickly. The chances are good that they have at least some basic knowledge to assist them in implementing their decision and may even carry a few survival items such as a small flashlight, whistle, or pocketknife. The more dedicated may have survival kits or even carry a firearm in dangerous areas. For you, awareness and preparedness provides a sense of security, true and effective security. Nothing can assure survival, but if there is a chance to survive they will take it and know how to use it. They are more likely to be called "survivor" and in some cases "savers of lives". Note that a "high level of dread" does not equal a high level of stress. Dread leads to awareness and conscious acceptance. This in turn generates mental and practical preparedness that reduces stress.

Fear and its Effects

Every normal person has fear, real gut turning, mind numbing fear. Navy fighter pilots have said that they lose half their IQ in the way to the flight deck. Over and over again you hear police, fire fighter, soldiers' and medics say "I don't know what happened, the training just took over". Once you are out of the denial phase, it's not enough just to do something, it has to be the right something. In rare cases the something can even be to do nothing, but you need training or at least knowledge to guide you. While slow developing situations may allow time to gather information,

immediate threats require immediate and correct responses. Unfortunately the same brain chemical paralysis that can cause a longer delay can also blank out good judgment and needed skills. Basically, "if you have to think about it your dead". You cannot depend on your mind to be logical, analytical and knowledgeable under extreme stress. You cannot depend on so called "survival instincts" that are long dulled by our relatively safe environment. Those instincts that we do have were established to cope with primitive threats rather than more recently created hazards such as flying bullets, toxic fumes or falling buildings. The mind is slow to go where it has not been. A situation never thought of *will* cause delay and denial, an action never practiced will *not* happen under stress. So even the person with a high sense of dread, who anticipates dangers and moves from denial to deliberation and decision more quickly needs knowledge and training to make the *right* decisions and do the *right* things. In most cases, this type of person tends to seek out just such education. They often are lead to compatible lines of employment such as: safety professionals, EMTs', Police, fire, military or other emergency related services.

Havers and Doers

Within the low and high dread groups are two subcategories. There are people who define themselves by what they have (stuff) and those who define themselves by what they do.

High dread (survivors) people who are also "stuff oriented" tend to depend on stuff to cope with every possible situation. They will spend a fortune on dehydrated food, guns, ammunition and other equipment, but tend to spend little on training. They often have overly heavy survival packs and may be tied

down to their stuff when they should become mobile.

High dread (survivors) people who are “do orient” tend to have less equipment, but more books. They are much more likely to pay for survival, first aid, and self-defense training. Do oriented survivors are also more likely to be involved in survival and emergency response related organizations.

Of course the low dread folks can be defined as stuff oriented and do oriented as well, but for them: stuff is a fancy car or a big screen TV and do is playing golf or partying. None of which will be of much help to themselves, their neighbors or their community in times of emergency and challenge.

Both having stuff and doing things are important, but one must strike a good balance. Remember our slogan “survival is 50% what you can do and 50% what you can do without”.

Training and Leadership

If you are already predisposed to anticipate disasters (large and small) and prepare for them, you have a responsibility to be the best at survival and self-reliance that you can be. You also have the responsibility to teach and lead in your community. It has been found that even the most paralyzed potential victims of a disaster responded to strong and decisive instruction. Loud orders to “move” or “get down” often jarred them into action that saved their lives. Often that leader was not an authority figure. It was often a waiter, clerk or truck driver that got everyone to safety. Most survival folks carry a whistle to use to summon help, but it also would designate them as someone to follow. Most of your neighbors are probably in denial about the need to prepare for a variety of potential (some inevitable) threats to their lives, property and liberties. Their state of dependency and

complacency will cause them great suffering at some time and their problems may seriously effect your survival as well. Again, leadership can overcome complacency and vastly improve everyone’s chances in future emergencies.

Admittedly, it’s easier to buy stuff than find and attend training classes, but at least you should read the directions and practice using any survival related items you buy. Run the generator, cook on the stove, try some of the food, shoot the gun, and sleep in the tent. Buy books, buy DVDs and search the Internet for how-to information, then try to do the techniques shown. If firearms are part of your preparation, find a local range that offers basic shooting classes. Taking up hobbies that enhance survival skills is another self-training option. Camping. Martial arts, gardening, food preservation, hunting, fishing, hiking and other life enhancing activities may be of great value in challenging situations. Everyone should take first aid and CPR courses available in most communities. Participation in or organizing an active survival preparedness group is the best way to build your survival capacity. You can share books and skills. Often you can all share the cost of sending one or two members for training so they can return and train the group. Groups can also buy supplies in quantity and make plans for mutual support in emergencies.

In addition to general skill training there should be personal scenario based training. There are many normal reactions that are dead wrong in an emergency. You smell smoke and you sit up in bed. You hear shots and you look out the window. You hear an explosion and you go to see what it was. An adult tells a child to come with them and she does. These are normal actions and all of them can be fatal. Telling you that here will probably not override your

instinctive actions when it happens. Only practicing a different action. Such as rolling out of bed and crawling, blindfolded to the door, or getting on the floor and turning out the lights. Running and screaming from strangers will ingrain the correct responses. You should practice these responses regularly until they become normal. Skills like first aid, self-defense and combat shooting also require realistic, scenario-based drills where stress and unexpected changes are created. Real smoke, noise, darkness, flashes and shouting will firmly establish that the right action will be taken under pressure. In fast developing disasters, you do not want to have to think. The training has to "take over". The old military eight-Ps" concept holds true. "Proper. Prior, planning and preparation prevents piss poor performance".

Conclusion

People who have higher levels of basic dread tend to react faster to emergency situations and also tend to anticipate potential emergencies and disaster possibilities that may occur in the future. Such individuals often enhance their readiness through the acquisition of critical survival and self-reliance equipment and skills. Such individuals move from denial, through deliberation and on to effective decisions and actions faster than most others. They usually have a mental plan of action before the emergency and think "what should I do" rather than waiting for others to act. When these kinds of people enhance their attitudes with survival knowledge, skills and training, they can make a significant difference in the outcome of immediate emergencies and future widespread disasters. Individually they save lives. Collectively they may save the future.

**Some scientists believe that the reason the human brain is shrinking over time is*

because we no longer have to think about survival. We no longer have to be smart just to survive and find food. unwise, complacent and passive people survive and reproduce just as well as smart, aware and proactive people in a society of plenty and protection.

Recommended Reading

For further reading on the subject of survival psychology, who survives and why, I highly recommend the following two books from which several of the concepts in this article were derived. These books tell you how to think rather than what to think.

Thinking the Unthinkable by Amanda Ripley, 247 pgs., hardcover, Crown Publishing.

Deep Survival, by Laurence Gonzales, 301 pgs., hardcover, w. w. North Co. publishers.

The Long Emergency

By: James Howard Kunstler

This book confirms the fact that we are all firmly attached to an inclined plain wrapped helically around a central core. In other words "we are screwed". Humanity in general and Americans in particular are becoming increasingly aware that things are not right. The combination of economic decline, ineffective government, world unrest, unrecoverable catastrophes and that nagging fear that things will get worse not better is finally motivating interest in survival and self-reliance. The Long Emergency has the audacity to point out that our whole economy; lifestyles and population levels have been made possible through the use of energy provided by petroleum. The author provides engineering and geological data that proves that (1) we have already

used up more than half of all the oil and natural gas available (2) most of the remaining oil and gas will be too expensive to retrieve and (3) we should go dry by about 2030 or 2040. He then proceeds to prove why hydrogen, solar, coal, nuclear and wind cannot possibly replace the amount of energy currently provided by petroleum and natural gas. In many cases these "alternative sources" actually require petroleum products to work and all are less efficient and more costly to produce and distribute. Up until the mid 1800s the progress of civilization and the growth of populations was pretty much slow and steady. With the advent of the "coal age" followed by the "oil age" invention, world commerce, increased food production, and a massive improvement in living standards and life expectancy were experienced. But every factor in this age of technology, invention and luxury depended on the availability of cheap energy. Oil and energy gave us "miracles" of technology and lead us to believe that other miracles would save us. Now we are near the end of life as we know it. Already trying to do more with less, pinning hopes on electric cars, windmills and sunlight. America is the most vulnerable because we have built our entire economy and infrastructure on long transportation. Both inner cities and suburbia are doomed because we spread everything out so that no one and no goods can get where it need to go without long transportation lines. Up until the mid 20th Century most people could walk or take public transportation to work. Most foods came in from local farms or at worst by rail. Very few essential products or supplies were imported. What the books says is that we will be moving back to a very localized and much leaner life. Empty highways, abandon cities, very little air travel, colder homes, no A/C, fewer

lights, a lot more time spent just getting or raising food and taking care of necessities. And all that is for the lucky ones. On a world scale there is no way that the current population can be supported and fed without oil energy. Has anyone even seen an electric harvester or tractor? By the end of the 21st Century the population will be (at best) about what it was at the start of the 20th Century. Some of that population reduction will be from lower birth rates and attrition, but most must be from wars, epidemics and famines all the result of the unavailability of oil and the food, heat, medicine, transportation and other necessities that oil has provided. The author refers to the "Jiminy Cricket syndrome" to define how or society and our politicians "wish upon a star" that somehow humanity will find a way out of this trap. Everyone goes about their lives talking about recovery and turnaround unable to cope with the notion that such drastic, and probably violent changes are just down the road. The book also covers the impact of oil depletion on Europe, Asia and the third world. You can tune in your news to see that starting to happen. He predicts that with the collapse of the world economy and return of localized economics nations will again be more isolated. No more fleets of ships and planes projecting power over the world. Regional governments will reassert their authorities over national governments and some countries may even fracture into confederations like the Soviet Union did.

I highly recommend this book to those in doubt about the need to do what we are doing and to those of you who must convince others of the dangers and lead them to preparedness and self-reliance. Another book I read (to be reviewed soon) explains how people faced with immediate disaster (e.g. fire, plane crash) go from denial to deliberation and

finally to decision to act. That seems to apply to long disasters as well. Americas are still in denial and that will be fatal for many.

The Long Emergency, By: James Howard Kunstler, 307 pages, hardcover, from Atlantic Monthly Press. \$23.00. available for less as overstocked books because few want to know the truth.

What Kind Of Knife Do You Carry?

By Jim Jones, CHCM/EMT

One rarely conducts any kind of survival class without talking about knives. Usually the discussion is limited to “survival knives” in survival situations. I am often asked “what kind of knife do you carry?” In the Nov./Dec. 2007 issue of American Survivor, my article “Always Carry A Knife” detailed just how important it is to have a knife of some kind on your person 24/7. I will not go over that material again here. However I will restate one of my old survival slogans. In survival it’s not what you have, it’s what you have *with* you that counts. In most survival situations having any kind of knife gives you a big advantage. Of course, there are many places where even small knives are prohibited. Schools, courts, government buildings and of course, airports prohibit the carrying of a knife. Some employers may have issues with them as well. Small “pocket knives” are generally acceptable in offices and industrial environments. In most cases a small multi-bladed pocketknife is all you need to have. Your knife should fit the environment and your lifestyle. If you generally wear a suit or business casual then a small pocketknife is fine. If you work in construction, industry or the outdoors a large folder or even a small

sheath knife may be acceptable. You should not buy a cheap knife, but I don’t advocate blowing your survival budget on a high-priced knife just because of the brand or knife maker. I have never seen a knife break, but I have seen them get lost. I still have my original and well-worn Boy Scout knife from the 1950s. It is a pretty cheap knife, but it still cuts. There are plenty of good medium priced knives to choose from, and most genuine military surplus blades are strong and reliable. If you are going to “always carry a knife” you will need a selection of knives for various environments and activities. Here are the knives I normally carry.



Above: The rather low priced folder on the left is may handy blade for yard work. If it gets lost’ its easy to replace. In the center is my SOG Trident™ folder. It’s light strong and fast to deploy. The large composite grip and safety latch make it safe and well balanced. The notch in the handle makes it easy to cut cordage or a seat belt without opening the blade. I can carry it around town and in limited outdoor activities where a sheath knife is not necessary. On the right is my small, frame lock, Smith & Wesson SWAT™ . I really nice little “every day” pocket knife that has seen a lit of use. I can carry it even to suit and tie occasions.



Above: My only three survival knives. The top one is the Air Force survival knife. This is an extremely strong blade with a good grip. It has had many, many years of hard service. It holds an edge well, but it also has a sharpening stone on the sheath. In the center is the ubiquitous US Marine “K-Bar”. A bit longer than you usually need, but a very reliable knife. At the bottom is my Smith & Wesson [™] Search & Rescue. A modern, lighter weight version of the “K-Bar”, it comes with a good nylon sheath that includes a sharpening stone. A pretty nice blade for \$25.00. I have not used it much yet.



Above: My old Swiss Army [™] knife. I carried this in a belt pouch throughout my technician and supervisor days. It drew some MacGyver jocks, but everyone came to me if they need anything cut. The little scissors did get a lot of use. As

a manager, I had to change to a pocketknife.

I also have have a variety of multi-tool knives. I usually carry one of them in combination with a folder or sheath knife. The tools are handy, but they are marginally usable as knives.



Above: My original Boy Scout knife, circa 1956 with the original sheath. There was a matching, small, multi bladed pocket knife that fit in the outer sheath. It was lost years (decades) ago, but it douse illustrate the one big and one small concept. I have only four items from my youth. They are an army blanket, a small canvas bag, a Boy Scout knife and my original Boy Scout handbook. The fact that I still have these items after a rather challenging and turbulent life says a lot about their psychological value.

Rain Barrels'

Water is the most important of all survival needs under most circumstances. In some situations shelter, medical aid or defense may be more immediate, but water is the number one need for survival over a few days. Hopefully all of our readers have stored at least ten gallons of water per person in the household and have a stock of water filtration devices and bleach to make more water available. If the interruption

of water supplies last more than a few days you are not going to want to use your precious drinking water for washing and cooking. You certainly will not want to use it to make the toilet flush or water your vegetable garden. Those living in "traditional" suburbs and semi-rural communities where houses are fairly large, well spaced and on larger lots have the potential for attaining water self reliance through the use of rain barrels. They also can raise a significant part of their own food by converting that lawn to vegetables. One would be well advised to start gardening now and acquire the necessary hand tools (there may not be any gas) to expand the garden as needed. Learning to can and dry foods would also be well advised. Back to water! One of our members who lives in a suburb of a large metropolis actually cut off his "city water supply" The town was baffled when they noted that his water meter readings were zero month-after-month. The town harassed him, dug up his lawn looking for the illegal bypass pipe they were convinced that he had. They tried to force him to use water based on the municipal code requiring running water for occupancy. They also had a problem because they could not charge for sewer services. As with most towns, the sewer charge is based on the water (in = out) usage. They lost the suit and made sure that the whole issue got no publicity. He simply gathers all the rainwater from all the roof areas runs it to a basement tank, filters it and runs a pump to his pipe system.

When I bought my house the detached garage had no gutters and the rain falling from the eaves could flood the floor in heavy rains. I installed gutter that solved this problem, but put both downspouts at the rear of the garage. I then bought ready made 55-gallon rain barrel tanks that came fitted with a screened inlet, overflow hose and bottom hose that links

to any garden hose. I ran the two downspouts into the two 55-gallon tanks that are elevated about 3-feet off the ground. My wife suggested "it will take a while to fill those big tanks". The first night we had less than 1/2 inch of rain and they were both half full. A few days later we had a modest storm and they both overflowed. The garage is about 20-feet square. That will catch about 100-gallons of water from a 1/2-inch rain. So for my small investment (less than \$100.) I now have a renewable 100-gallons of emergency water. Of course it would have to be filtered and treated for drinking, but can be used as is for other purposes. I can use it to keep my two 200-gallon ponds full and water my vegetable garden. Based on the average rainfall for this area I can get about 1,750 gallons of water per year just off of the garage roof. That's about 5-gallons a day for use. The house is at least four-times the size and would provide an additional 20 gallons per day in a long-term emergency. While I may not place rain barrels at all of the house downspouts now, I do intend to stock the necessary gutter fittings to cut and install spouts to catch rainwater there if necessary in the future. If this is a practical option for you, you should do it.

Highly urbanized and densely populated environments such as townhouse developments, apartment buildings and inner-city neighborhoods' will not be configured to gather rainwater and the ratio of people to square feet of rain gathering surface would not provide enough water for those living under it. When primary services like water, sanitation and power fail for more than a few days these populations will experience a meltdown followed by civil unrest (riot) and then a massive exodus of survivors seeking water, food and shelter.

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