

Survival: Common Sense or Instinct.

Author: Paul E. Marsters, AS,

The 21st century has seen many changes even though we are only six years into this wide and wondrous century. One thing that is ever changing is technology. Slowly we all delve into technology and become increasingly dependant on the latest techno gadgets. Steadily we drift farther and farther from our roots. Our forefathers had a great natural survival sense, as technology increases our primitive natural instincts are buried deeper and deeper within us.

The Horrendous terrorist attack on 9/11, the Tsunami of 2004 and Hurricanes Katrina and Wilma has shown us all, that human induced disasters and Mother Nature posses a power that requires Respect and Preparation. Preparing for these requires us to look at the future, who we are, where we live and what potential problem areas exist around us. **Our personal and families survival is all of our individual responsibility.**

The First step in this process is accepting that yes it will and can happen to me. The most important thing we can do as citizens, individuals and families is to strive to prepare our most important survival tool- OUR BRAIN. Re-kindling and nurturing our basic survival instincts should begin with feeding our brains, this can take many forms that all come together to ensure that the correct decisions are made at the correct time. Each individual should seek out courses that instruct, demonstrate, and Re-enforce the basics of survival that are adaptable to any situation.

On 9/11/01, a tragic day when far too many unknowing innocent people lost their lives along with some of the greatest Emergency Responders this country has, were lost in the blink of an eye. Those of us that were left behind, especially those local to the Terrorist attacks had the technology we have all taken for granted stripped away from us, leaving us in the dark, unable to communicate, even between neighbors. We as Americans were cut off for hours, Days, Weeks and in some cases longer. Clean potable water, food and in some cases shelter was non-existent. Obtaining these for most was an impossible task, most didn't know where to begin.

The Tsunami of 2004 was a terrifying example of how Mother Nature's power is Absolute and Unyielding. Hundreds of thousands of people were affected; Most had everything and everyone taken away from them in a matter of minutes. Within a matter of minutes just satisfying the basic survival needs we each take for granted was stripped away as we understood them. Next to clean abundant Air to breathe, Clean, potable water is our next absolute survival need, the old sailor's phrase "Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink" this was originally coined by a lone sailor looking out over the ocean at billions and billions of gallons of water that would make you sick or kill you if you were to drink it.

The same goes for a disaster area where the water in its current state or condition is abundant or not. But would make you sick to drink. The basic skill of improvised water purification and storage was widely unknown or under-utilized. The Victims of this Tsunami in that area of the world generally live a simpler and less westernized, technologically advanced existence than we Americans can understand. Even they were widely separated from the primal instincts of improvised survival. Within the US, believe it or not, our homeless people have a better understanding and ability to endure a disaster. They satisfy their basic needs everyday without the majority of modern conveniences that we all have come to rely on and take for granted.

More recently, Hurricane Katrina, Wilma and the subsequent flooding that ensued demonstrated that even in the modern 21st century US a person can be faced with satisfying their primal needs without modern technology. In the humid sun baked south, the most crucial survival need was clean, potable water and lots of it in the southern humidity and heat. Again, Improvised collection, purification and storage techniques, having preplanned means to purify water into a safe to consume condition were vastly non existent. Improvised shelter from the elements was also under-utilized as well. A survival need that reared its ugly head during this disaster was basic personal protection for you and your family from opportunistic thugs looking to prey upon the weak, unprepared. They were trying to find easy ways to satisfy their basic needs any way they could, bottom line at your expense.

If everyone took responsibility and ownership of their own survival needs, planned and included their family into the disaster survival plan. They could survive anything short of the un-survivable initial incident. We all could get along very well with almost nothing quite comfortably if we had the Brain fed with the right amount of correct information. Survival skills are not just for the Backpacker, outdoors enthusiasts or sportsman any longer. Any incident on a personal, neighborhood, local town, state or national level, could produce the devastation to require use of basic survival skills.

There are several partners that go hand in hand as part of a total survival skill package: Map and Compass and Land Navigational skills. Mastery of these skills through attendance of a quality training program, and continuing practice on an individual level can be critical to ones survival. Knowing how to read a map and use a compass could be the difference between taking the shortest, fastest and safest route home and winding up where you don't want to be or can get out of. By virtue of this eliminating the need to employ other skills or knowledge based survival techniques. Quality, comprehensive and in-depth courses are usually in most areas difficult if not impossible to find. A Map and Compass course that is less than about 16 hrs of instruction and hands on, short changes the student in depth or comprehensiveness, hands on skill practice. Both in the classroom or in the field, after all this is where the rubber meets the road- putting it all together when you need it.

Learning survival fundamentals will prepare the individual to apply the basic 5 priorities of survival. These skills can be applied to every situation where your survival is a matter of knowledge and skills.

Examination in depth of the 5 basic priorities of survival is a critical component of a quality course. Through academic preparation and hands on re-enforcement the individual will achieve the confidence to survive the survivable. The five basic priorities: Water Procurement, purification, and storage; Shelter types and construction; Survival Fire Craft; Emergency Signaling; Food procurement, preparation and storage. Preparing for and prioritizing your current survival needs will be discussed in detail as these will change with every situation, as no two situations will ever be the same. An overnight stay in your improvised, constructed shelter, putting your new skills to the challenge will go a long way and will send you home confident and ready to “Survive the Survivable”.

The final component that will ensure your ability to successfully complete your survival situation is Personal Protection for you and your loved ones. This is best accomplished through legal and properly applied mastery of firearms safety and employment as necessary in a survival situation. Survival use of firearms starts with a look at who you are, where you are and what situation or environmental conditions exist coupled with ones personal experience with handling firearms. A Quality Firearms safety and handling course and a firearm that has “To Hell and Back Reliability” is crucial to surviving the incident with the greatest margin of safety and effectiveness to protect yourself and Family.

Survival is a broad term that can be applied and summed up in the following powerful statement that I have lived by the past 25 years. “Never Stop Training” its not just an idea, it’s a way of life. Future topics will be discussed and dealt with comprehensively in this column. Specific survival topics either suggested by you readers out there or as part of a series of informative essays will be presented. Readers, Students please feel free to send in your comments, suggestions for topics or items for further exploration. If any of you out there have myths or stories to share or want help proving or disproving please contact me. Till next time, Be Safe in all you do. “Never Stop Training”

Paul E. Marsters, AS
Survival and Rescue Specialist
contact@sartac.us