

Outdoor survival

This is one of those skills that will prove invaluable. There are tons of TV shows that deal with surviving in the wilderness. You can watch a few episodes and learn many great resources to surviving on our planet without modern day devices. The key to surviving in the wilderness is preparation. You can stockpile food and prepare for disasters at home (which are both good ideas—at least 72 hours worth of supplies) but the best way is to know what to do when you don't have the convenience of things or those things run out.

I would recommend taking a night and choosing to camp outdoors. If you can't go away anywhere, do it in your backyard. I know I have read about teenage boys who used their survival skills and camped out during the winter time. Take it to whatever extreme you can handle. One of the worst things in life is being unprepared. Unable to handle any situation that you are faced with. What if suddenly you had to find food off the land? How would you drink water safely? What would you do for heat? How would you be able to tell where you were at? All these are real questions that you should learn how to answer. There are tons of survival shows on television that you can glean from. The internet is full of different ideas as well. If you don't have access to either of those, the library has great books on survival skills for boys.

Some things to help you if disaster strikes:

1. Immediate security: If the building is on fire, get out. If someone is shooting at you, move to cover. Whatever the immediate danger, get away from it.
2. First aid: Attend to any medical problems that may have happened in the original event. Check yourself for injuries and treat them.
3. Self protection: If you are at risk from predators, two legged or four legged, you must arm yourself. This might be a sharpened stick, a knife, machete, or shotgun.
4. Physical needs: Shelter, fire, water, food, and hygiene.
5. Staying emotionally positive. When dangerous and depressing situations come up, be positive in them. Any doctor or psychiatrist is going to agree with this one. Know who your ultimate care taker is and trust that with his leading, you will be safe.
6. If you are lost, the key is to stay put as much as possible. If you are with another person or group, always stay together. Do not separate, do not split up, and never move out of sight or hearing of each other. When you are noticed missing, others will start to search for you. All you have to do is stay put and rescue will find you.

First aid

We have already talked about first aid basics in week 3. Some other important things to know if you can't get to a doctor or hospital are the following: **Remember to seek the help of a professional first. This is for if there is NO OTHER possible solution available.**

- Dislocated shoulder—roll on the ground or hit it against a hard surface to reset the bone.
- Dislocated kneecaps—stretch your leg out and force it back into the socket.
- Fractures—create a splint out of materials. A couple of sticks stabilized around the fractured bone and tied with shoelaces to hold the brace in place will help.

Burns

Remove any clothing and find lukewarm water to run over the burn or coat in honey if it is available. Wrap the burn loosely in wet clothing. Keep the wound elevated whenever possible and do not open any blisters that may have formed.

Dangerous prey

A simple approach when approached by wolves, coyotes, and cougars: face the animal and slowly back way from it. Don't play dead, run, or approach the animal. If you are cornered, make yourself as big as possible. Spread your arms and make a lot of noise. If this still doesn't work, throw anything you can find at the animal.

Building a shelter and start a fire

In order to survive you need to maintain your body temperature. This means keeping warm, but you also need to know how to keep cool if you are caught in the desert. A shelter only needs to meet two requirements: it has to block the elements and insulate for warmth. You can look online at an example of an A-frame shelter. It is simplest to build and will get you out of snow, rain, or sun.

Your shelter can be as simple as sitting under the overhanging branches of a large tree or rock outcrop. Beneath the branches of a large evergreen there is often a clear dry area, even in heavy snow. Avoid sitting on the bare ground or snow. Sit or lay on gathered small branches or shrubbery or on a downed tree for insulation.

A large garbage bag is very effective, inexpensive and compact personal emergency shelter or poncho that will fit in your pocket. Always carry one or two when you go off into the wilderness. Use the garbage bag to cover yourself and to keep heat in and the weather out.

To use, hold the bag upside down and go to one of the corners (a bottom corner, but now on top as you hold it), drop down about eight inches along the crease, and cut or tear a slit or hole only big enough for your face. Pull the bag over your body so that the corner rests on top of your head and your face sticks through the hole. Be sure to keep your head out where you can breathe, you can suffocate inside the plastic if it covers your mouth and nose. If you have another bag and you're tall enough so one bag won't cover you completely, pull the other bag up from your feet. If you can, stuff the bags

and your clothing with dry leaves for added insulation, but be careful not to introduce any unwelcome pests into your improvised shelter.

You can also use the bag as a small shade tarp, if the sun is a problem. A cap or hat is always useful to keep you head dryer, and warm or shaded, as appropriate.

Use a tree, downed tree or piled up snow to break any wind. Curl into a tight ball to conserve heat. If there is more than one person, huddle together for warmth. In hot sunny weather, seek shade. If the ground is soft and you can do so without overexerting yourself and wasting precious water, scoop out a hollow in the shade, it can be 30 degrees cooler 12 inches below the surface. Once you have shelter, stay there. If you've taken shelter where it might be hard for anyone to see you, try to leave some sign or marker, sticks or some rocks, out in the open pointing to your shelter.

Attract attention

The more you can do to attract attention to yourself, the quicker someone will find you. The way to do this is by making lots of noise and by making yourself easy to see. You can be hard to see when wearing dark clothing, so it's always a good idea to wear bright colors when you go out. If you hear a helicopter, lie down in a clear dry space to make the biggest possible target for them to see.

If you are rested, feel up to it and there is a clearing, make a big "X" or "SOS" in the dirt or snow using your feet or a stick to scrape the dirt or stomp the snow down, broken branches and shrubs or rocks. Contrast and size are the keys to effective ground signals. If there is enough room, the letters should be 12 feet tall with lines at least two feet wide.

If you have something to use as a flag (an excellent reason to carry a brightly colored bandanna with you, it also has many other uses), that will be far more effective than your arms and hands alone. If you must use your hands alone, always wave wildly with both hands in an emergency situation. You don't want to be mistaken for somebody just giving a friendly wave.

Most survivors are found by ground search teams and a whistle is the most effective signaling device. A whistle is far superior to shouting because your voice just doesn't carry very far, especially in the woods. The whistle will be heard for 1/2 to 2 miles or even more in the wilderness where your voice may only carry for a few hundred feet, at best. You will also be able to signal for much longer periods of time, whereas your vocal cords will give out very quickly. You should never leave home without a whistle hung around your neck.

The shrill and unmistakable blast of a whistle repeated three times is a universal signal for help and will definitely attract the attention of anyone within earshot. Blow three clear blasts, pausing for a few seconds between each, then wait for five minutes and repeat until you are rescued. If you hear a whistle, respond immediately with three blasts every time. If you don't have a whistle, you can make a loud signal by banging two rocks together or beating on a dead tree with a stick or rock (but, be careful you don't hurt yourself or that the tree or branches don't fall on you if it is still standing).

At night, your greatest fear is likely the result of an overactive imagination fed by the TV and movies you have seen. While the sounds of the wilderness at night may be unfamiliar, there's nothing out there that has any interest in harming you. If you think you hear an animal nearby, yell, make lots of noise or blow your whistle. If it's an animal, it will run off. If the noise is searchers, you have been found.

How to start a fire

When you are starting a fire keep in mind the wind direction and the surrounding area. A fire is important but you don't want to catch the entire forest on fire to attract the attention of rescuers. Build away from overhanging branches, rotten stumps, logs, dry grass, and leaves.

Look online how to start a fire with a pair of glasses or a bottle of water. You focus the sun's rays through the lens or water bottle so that it creates a single point of heat. Eventually it will catch fire.

Or is it always a good idea to carry a magnesium stick with you to start a fire. These are inexpensive and you can carry one with you always.

How to find water

In many parts of the country, you can find water by following the sound of a flowing river, but this is not always possible. Here are some tips to help you find water:

- Grazing animals usually head to water near dawn and dusk. Following them can often lead you to water.
- Flies and mosquitoes tend to stay around water.
- Stagnant water is not usually suitable to drink even if you boil it.
- Once you find water, bring it to a boil if possible. Even the cleanest of mountain streams have microbes and parasites in them. If boiling isn't an option, search out water from a flowing stream.

No matter how hungry you are, water is more important to your survival.

Sources of food to eat

- Acorn from oak: The entire nut is edible and they are easy to stockpile.
- Pine: The nuts and inner bark of the tree are edible. You can also make pine needle tea.
- Cattail: This is one of the best options out there. The base stalk is like celery, the root and tuber can make flour, and the pollen is very healthy.
- Grass: The corm, also known as the base, is starchy, but edible and filled with water and carbohydrates.

Remember some basic directions. Remember that the sun sets in the west and rises in the east.

A good recommendation is to check out some survival books from your local library and put them to use. Invite a friend over and camp out in the backyard. Learn how to survive with the basic items.

Things to carry every time you head out into the wilderness:

- Identification and/ or medical alert tag or bracelet
- A loud whistle—place it on a lanyard around your neck so it can't be lost.
- 1-2 garbage bags, will fit in your pocket.
- 1-2 canteens of water
- a pocket flashlight
- a brightly colored bandanna
- a pocket knife
- fire starter (matches, lighter or flint and steel)

A good thing to gather and have on hand is a survival kit. This should be small enough for you to be able to carry easily. It should be water repellent or waterproof. Easy to carry or attach to your body and durable.

Inside you should have:

- first aid items-butterfly sutures, chapstick, needle and thread, knife
- water purification tablets or drops—you can also get a drinking straw which filters out the water as you drink—a good gift idea.
- fire starting equipment—lighter, metal match, waterproof matches
- signaling items-signaling mirror, wrist compass
- food procurement items-fish and snare line, fishhooks
- shelter items-snare wire, solar blanket

If you find that you really enjoy the outdoors you can ask for many of these items as gifts for birthday and Christmas 😊