

# **SURVIVAL MINDSET GUIDE**

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## **Psychological Emergency Preparedness**



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## Why do I need to prepare?

Because you don't want to be one of those people who end up saying: "We didn't know what to do...we were not prepared" No! You want to be in control during ANY emergency situation. It might be a job loss, a natural disaster, a death in the family, a military conflict or an economic downturn. It could be anything, and that's the point. In a time where everything is a risk to the American people, we should be preparing for anything.



In every life, there are times when your normal luck runs out and you find yourself in real danger. Some survival situations will come in your hometown, others will come while you are traveling, but they *will* come. Get ready now, while you can.

Do you really think that all the dead people you see on the news thought it would be them next?

Like it or not, we live in a violent world, and even if we try to put that thought out of our minds, we still know that it is true. If we persist in ignoring it, we end up feeling vaguely vulnerable all our lives. As always, I'm here to help.

For me, the idea of emergency and disaster preparedness is a no-brainer—something we should already be doing and always looking to improve. I've developed this mentality many years ago and this gives me the self confidence that I need in order to look at the future with no fear.

Psychological preparedness will help you think clearly and rationally, which in turn will reduce or eliminate the risk of serious injury or even loss of life. I've studied this aspect thoroughly: how thoughts provoke action, how those actions



provoke other thoughts and actions and the tendency for repeat actions to be taken based on the experience of a specific situation. It's quite fascinating and the satisfaction I get from seeing people benefit from my preparedness plans is priceless.

Unlike other types of action and system-based disaster preparedness, psychological preparedness involves processes and capacities such as knowledge, concern, anticipation, recognition, arousal, thinking, feeling, intentions and decision making, and management of one's thoughts, feelings and actions. A better understanding of one's own and other's psychological response in natural disaster warning situations helps people to feel more

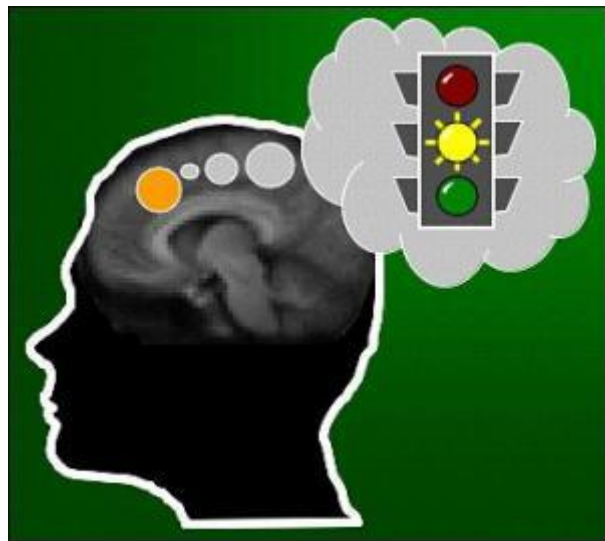
confident, more in control and better prepared, both psychologically and in terms of effective emergency planning.

### Specific knowledge and strategy

There are three essential elements in psychologically preparing for an impending disaster:

**Anticipate** that you will be feeling worried or anxious and remember these are normal, although not always helpful, responses to a possibly life-threatening situation.

**Identify** what the specific physical feelings associated with anxiety and other emotions are and whether you are having any frightening thoughts that are adding to the fear.



Anterior Cingulate Cortex

**Manage** your responses using controlled breathing and self-talk so that you stay as calm as possible and can focus on the practical tasks that need attending to.

### Step 1: Anticipate

In the lead up to most natural disasters like bushfires, cyclones, floods or severe storms there is usually a series of warnings on radio, television and in newspapers. For example, there may be repeated reminders about buying batteries for torches and radios,

having gas bottles filled, ensuring an adequate supply of emergency water and food, removing flammable material from around homes, or securing doors and windows.

Warnings and uncertainty in an emergency situation affect people psychologically. There are often repeated risk messages and frightening images and sounds to ensure people know about the risk. This can leave people feeling anxious, helpless or confused.

### How to anticipate your reactions

- To begin preparing yourself for the natural disaster that may be coming, try to anticipate what your likely response to the situation will be.
- Expect that the situation will be highly stressful and think about how you usually react to stress. Although these reactions are very natural they can get in the way of other necessary preparations.
- If you understand your usual reactions you can learn ways to be better prepared to manage them when they happen.

### Step 2: Identify

It's important for people to tune into the specific feelings and thoughts they are having in response to a threatening natural disaster, as this will help them to find ways to manage them.

People usually become



physically aroused in highly stressful situations. Common physical symptoms include:

- Racing heart and palpitations
- Shortness of breath and dizziness
- Tense muscles
- Fatigue or exhaustion
- Nausea
- Numbness or tingling
- Headaches.

When these physical reactions to stress begin, they usually trigger stressful thoughts such as:

- I can't cope
- I'm so afraid
- I'm panicking
- I don't know what to do.

### How to identify your own feelings and thoughts

- Notice what is happening to your body and the physical sensations that tell you that you're feeling anxious.
- Try to focus in on the frightening thoughts you may be having that are adding to the fear. What exactly are you saying to yourself? Are your thoughts helping you or making things harder? Check whether you are jumping to conclusions.
- Remind yourself that strong bodily sensations and frightening thoughts are normal reactions to stress but they are not helping you to stay calm and clearheaded. Don't get too critical of yourself though!

## Step 3: Manage

In stressful situations, people can feel more in control through two strategies:

1. Slowing down breathing to help calm the physical arousal symptoms
2. Replacing frightening thoughts with more helpful ones ('self-talk').



### Learning to breathe and think more calmly

- To slow your breathing down, take smaller breaths and pause between breaths to space them out. When you have breathed out slowly, hold your breath for a count of three before inhaling your next breath. Sometimes people find it helps to breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth.
- While concentrating on breathing out slowly, say to yourself 'Relax', or 'Stay calm', or 'It's OK, I'm managing OK'. These are good words to use because they are associated with feeling relaxed and in control.
- Try not to dwell on the bad things that might happen, but instead tell yourself that the calmer you are, the better you'll be at managing exactly what needs to be done.

- Remember you need to be able to draw on your own strengths and survival resources and your coping ability. It's important not to let unhelpful feelings and thoughts get in the way of careful and well planned actions.
- Remind yourself that this is an emergency situation and that it's natural you are feeling anxious and stressed. You cannot directly control what's happening but you can manage your responses in this emergency and influence the impact on you and your family.

### Helping others to cope with their feelings

- Teach others the simple breathing exercises.
- Be sensitive and supportive to them, rather than judging. They may be feeling scared, anxious or embarrassed if they are not coping as well as you.
- Encourage them to talk about how they are feeling with you.
- Assist them to find more helpful thoughts to say to themselves and others.
- Get people involved in occupying their time rather than worrying.
- Encourage them to take responsibility for a task that needs attending to.



## Common stresses and how to overcome them

### Pain

Pain, like fever, is a warning signal calling attention to an injury or damage to some part of the body. It is discomforting but is not, in itself, harmful or dangerous. Pain can be controlled, and in an extremely grave situation, survival must take priority over giving in to pain.



The biological function of pain is to protect an injured part by warning you to rest it or avoid using it. In a survival situation, normal pain warnings may have to be ignored in order to meet more critical needs. People have been known to complete a fight with a fractured hand, to run on a fractured or sprained ankle, to land an aircraft despite severely burned hands, and to ignore pain during periods of intense concentration and determined effort. Concentration and intense effort can actually stop or reduce the feeling of pain.

You must understand that pain can be reduced if you identify its source and nature; recognizing it as a discomfort to be tolerated; concentrating on necessities, such as thinking, planning, and keeping busy; and developing confidence and self-respect. When

personal goals (maintaining life, honor, and returning) are valued highly enough, a survivor can tolerate almost anything.

### Thirst and dehydration

The lack of water and its accompanying problems of thirst and dehydration are among the most critical problems facing survivors.

Thirst, like fear and pain, can be tolerated if the will to carry on, supported by calm, purposeful activity, is strong. Although thirst indicates the body's need for water, it does not indicate how much. If you drink only enough to satisfy your thirst, it is still possible to slowly dehydrate. Preventing thirst and the more debilitating dehydration is possible if you drink plenty of water any time it is available, especially when eating.



When the body's water balance is not maintained, thirst and discomfort result. Ultimately, a water imbalance results in dehydration and death. The need for water will increase if the person is sick, is fearful, or expends a great deal of energy.

Dehydration decreases the body's efficiency or ability to function. Minor degrees of dehydration may not have a noticeable affect on a survivor's performance, but as it becomes more severe, body functions become increasingly impaired. Slight dehydration and thirst can also cause irrational behavior.

While prevention is the best way to avoid dehydration, virtually any degree is reversible simply by **drinking water**.

### Cold and heat

The normal human body temperature is 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit (°F). People are known to have survived with body temperatures 20°F below normal, and up to 8°F above normal. Any deviation, even as little as 1 or 2 degrees, reduces efficiency.

Cold, serious stress even in mild degrees lowers efficiency. Extreme cold numbs the mind and dulls the will to do anything except get warm. Cold numbs the body by lowering the flow of blood to the extremities; this results in sleepiness.



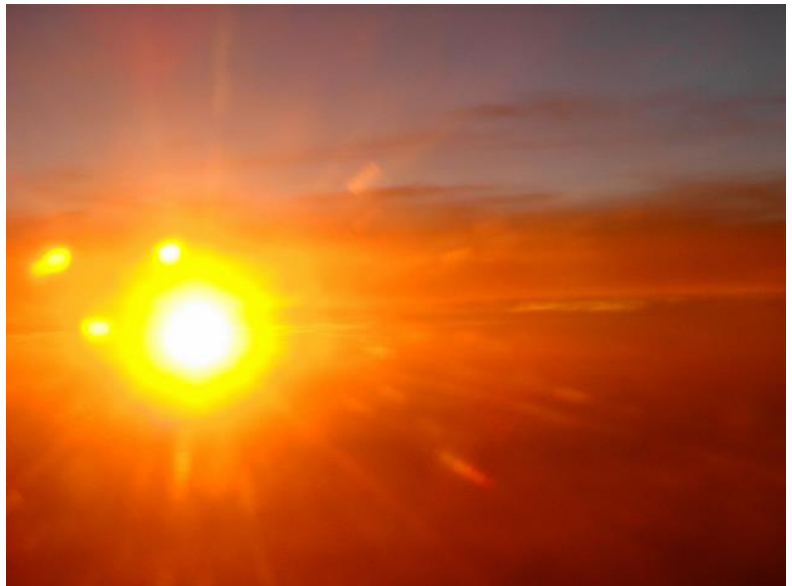
Survivors have endured prolonged cold and dampness through food, shelter, exercise, and proper hygienic procedures. When flying in cold weather areas, wearing proper clothing and having the proper climatic survival equipment are essential to enhance survivability.

Just as numbness is the principal symptom of cold, weakness is the principal symptom of heat. Most people can adjust to high

temperatures, whether in the hold of a ship or in a harvest field on the Kansas prairie.

It may take from two days to a week before circulation, breathing, heart action, and sweat glands are all adjusted to a hot climate. Beat stress also accentuates dehydration. In addition to the problem of water, there are many other sources of discomfort and impaired efficiency directly attributable to heat or environmental conditions in hot climates. Extreme temperature changes, from extremely hot days to very cold nights, are experienced in desert and plains areas. Proper use of clothing and shelters can decrease the adverse effects of such extremes.

Bright sun has a tremendous effect on the eyes and exposed skin. Dark glasses or improvised eye protectors are required when confronted with direct sunlight or rays reflecting off the terrain. Previous sun-tanning provides little protection; protective clothing is important.



Blowing wind, in hot summer, has been reported to get on some survivors' nerves. Wind constitutes an additional source of discomfort and difficulty in desert areas when it carries particles of sand and dirt. Protection against sand and dirt can be provided by

cutting small slits in a piece of cloth for vision and tying it around the head.

Acute fear has been experienced among survivors in sandstorms and snowstorms. This results from the terrific impact of the storm and its obliteration of landmarks showing direction of travel. Finding or improving a shelter for protection from the storm itself is important.

Loss of moisture, drying of the mouth and mucous membranes, and accelerated dehydration can be caused by talking or breathing through the mouth. Survivors must learn to keep their mouths shut in desert winds and cold weather.

Mirages and illusions of many kinds are common in desert areas. These illusions not only distort visual perception but sometimes account for serious incidents. In the desert, distances are usually greater than they appear, and under certain conditions, mirages obstruct accurate vision. Inverted reflections are common occurrences.

### Hunger

A considerable amount of edible material (which survivors may not initially regard as food) may be available under survival conditions. Hunger and semi-starvation are more commonly experienced among survivors than thirst and dehydration. Research has revealed no evidence of permanent damage, nor any decrease in mental efficiency from short periods of total fasting.

Frequently, in the excitement of some survival, evasion, and escape episodes, hunger is forgotten. Survivors have gone for considerable lengths of time without food or awareness of hunger pains. Make every effort to procure and consume food to reduce the stresses brought on by food deprivation. The physical and psychological effects described are reversed when food and a protective environment are restored.

Returning to normal is slow, and the time necessary for the return increases with the severity of starvation. If food deprivation is complete and only water is ingested, hunger pangs disappear in a few days; even then

depression and irritability occur. The individual tendency is still to search for food to prevent starvation. Such efforts might continue as long as strength and self-control permit. When the food supply is limited, even strong friendships are threatened.



Food aversion may result in hunger. Adverse group opinion may discourage those who might try foods unfamiliar to them. In some groups, the barrier would be broken by someone eating the particular food rather than starving. The solitary individual has only personal prejudices to overcome and often tries strange foods. Controlling hunger during a survival situation is relatively easy if you can adjust to discomfort and adapt to primitive conditions.

## Frustration

Frustration occurs when a person's efforts are stopped either by obstacles blocking progress toward a goal or by not having a realistic goal. It also occurs if the feeling of self-worth or self-respect is lost.

A wide range of environmental and internal obstacles can lead to frustration. This often creates anger and is accompanied by a tendency to attack and remove the obstacles to goals. Frustration must be controlled by channeling energies into a positive and worthwhile obtainable goal. The survivor should complete the easier tasks before attempting more challenging ones. This relieves frustration and instills self-confidence.



## Fatigue

In a survival situation, a survivor must continually cope with fatigue and avoid the accompanying strain and loss of efficiency. A survivor must be aware of the dangers of overexertion. In many cases, a survivor may already be experiencing strain and reduced efficiency as a result of other stresses.

You must judge your capacity to walk, carry, lift, or do necessary work, and plan and act accordingly. During an emergency, considerable exertion may be necessary to cope with the situation. If you understand fatigue and the attitudes and feelings generated by

various kinds of effort, you should be able to call on available energy reserves when needed.

You must avoid complete exhaustion; complete exhaustion may lead to physical and psychological changes. You should be able to distinguish between exhaustion and being uncomfortably tired. Although a person should avoid working to complete exhaustion, in emergencies certain tasks must be done in spite of fatigue.

Rest, a basic factor in recovering from fatigue, is also important in resisting further fatigue. Rest (following fatiguing effort) is essential and must be sufficient to permit complete recovery; otherwise, residual fatigue accumulates and longer rest periods are necessary to



recover. During the early stages of fatigue, proper rest provides rapid recovery of muscular and mental fatigue. Sleep is the most complete form of rest available and is basic to recover from fatigue.

Short rest breaks, during periods of extended stress, can improve total output. Rest breaks provide opportunities for partial recovery from fatigue and help reduce energy expenditure. They also increase efficiency by enabling a person to take maximum advantage of planned rest. Boredom is relieved by breaking up the uniformity and

monotony of the tasks. As a result, rest periods increase morale and motivation.

You should rest before output starts declining. If rest breaks are longer, fewer may be required. When efforts are highly strenuous or monotonous, rest breaks should be more frequent. Those that provide relaxation are the most effective. In mental work, mild exercise may be more relaxing.

When work is monotonous, changes in activity, conversation, and humor are effective relaxants. In deciding on the amount and frequency of rest periods, the loss of efficiency resulting from longer hours of effort must be weighed against the absolute requirements of the survival situation.

Fatigue can be reduced by working "smarter." Practical ways include adjusting the pace of the effort (balancing the load, rate, and time period) and adjusting the technique of work. Walking at a normal rate is a more economical effort than fast walking. The way in which work is done has a great bearing on reducing fatigue. Economy of effort is most important. Rhythmic movements suited to the task are best.

Cooperation, mutual group support, and competent leadership are important factors in maintaining group morale and efficiency. This reduces stress and fatigue. A survivor usually feels tired and weary before the physiological limit is reached. Feeling fatigued involves not only the physical reaction to effort, but also subtle changes in attitudes and motivation. Remember, a person has energy reserves to cope with an important emergency even when feeling very tired.

As in other stresses, even a moderate amount of fatigue reduces efficiency. To control fatigue, it is wise to observe a program of periodic rest. Because of the main objective - to establish contact with friendly forces - survivors may overestimate their strength and risk exhaustion.

On the other hand, neither an isolated individual nor a group leader should underestimate the capacity of the individual or group on the basis of fatigue. The only sound basis for judgment must be gained from training and past experience. In training, a person should form an opinion of individual capacity based on actual experience.

### **Sleep deprivation**

The effects of sleep loss are closely related to those of fatigue. Sleeping at unaccustomed times, under strange circumstances, or missing part or all of the accustomed amount of sleep cause a person to react by feeling weary, irritable, and emotionally tense and losing some efficiency. The extent of an individual's reaction depends on the amount of disturbance and other stress factors that may be present.

Strong motivation is one of the principal factors in helping to compensate for the impairing effects of sleep loss. Superior physical and mental conditioning, opportunities to rest, food and water, and companions help endure sleep deprivation. If a person is in reasonably good physical and mental condition, sleep deprivation can be endured five days or more without damage, although efficiency during the latter stages may be poor.

You must learn to get as much sleep and rest as possible. Restorative effects of sleep are felt even after catnaps. In some instances, survivors may need to stay awake. Movement, eating, drinking, activity, and conversation are ways a person can stimulate the body to stay awake.

When one is deprived of sleep, sleepiness usually comes in waves. A person may suddenly be sleepy immediately after feeling wide awake. The feeling soon passes, and the person is wide awake again until the next wave appears. As the duration of sleep deprivation increases, periods between waves of sleepiness become shorter. The need to sleep may be so strong after a long deprivation period that one becomes desperate and does careless or dangerous things in order to escape this stress.

### Isolation

Among the most severe survival stresses during isolation are when survivors experience loneliness, helplessness, and despair. People often take their associations with family, friends, military colleagues, and others for granted. Survivors soon begin to miss the daily interaction with others. These, like other stresses, can be conquered. Isolation can be controlled and overcome by knowledge,



understanding, deliberate countermeasures, and a determined will to resist it.

### Insecurity

Insecurity is the feeling of helplessness or inadequacy resulting from varied stresses and anxieties. These anxieties may be caused by uncertainty regarding individual goals, abilities, and the future. Feelings of insecurity may have widely different effects on your behavior. You should establish goals that are challenging yet attainable. The better you feel about your abilities to achieve goals and adequately meet personal needs, the less you feel insecure.

### Loss of self-esteem

Loss of self-esteem may occur in captivity. Self-esteem is the state or quality of having personal self-respect and pride. Lack or loss of self-esteem in survivors may bring on depression and a change in perspective and goals. Humiliation and other factors brought on by the captor may cause the survivors to doubt their worth.

Humiliation comes from the feeling of losing pride or self-respect by being disgraced or dishonored and is associated with the



loss of self-esteem. Prisoners of war (PWs) must maintain their pride.

They must not become ashamed because they are PWs or because of the things that happen to them as a result of being a PW. Survivors who lose face (personally and with the enemy) become more vulnerable to captor exploitation attempts. To solve this problem, survivors should try to maintain a proper perspective about the situation and themselves.

### Loss of self-determination

A self-determined person is relatively free from external controls or influences over his actions. In everyday society, these controls and influences are the laws and customs of society and of the self-imposed elements of our personalities. In a survival situation, the controls and influences can be very different. Survivors may feel as if events, circumstances, and in some cases other people are in control of the situation.

Some factors that may cause individuals to feel they have lost the power of self-determination are a harsh captor, captivity, bad weather, or rescue forces that make time or movement demands. This lack of self-determination is more perceived than actual. Survivors must decide how unpleasant factors will be allowed to affect their mental state. They must have the self-confidence, fostered by experience and training, to live with their feelings and decisions. They also must have the self-confidence to accept

responsibility for the way they feel and how they let those feelings affect them.

## Depression

As a survivor, depression is the biggest psychological problem that has to be conquered. It should be acknowledged that everyone has mental highs and lows. People experiencing long periods of sadness or



other negative feelings are suffering from depression. A normal mood associated with the grief, sadness, disappointment, or loneliness that everyone experiences at times is also depression.

Most of the emotional changes in mood are temporary and do not become chronic. Depressed survivors may feel fearful, guilty, or helpless. They may lose interest in basic life needs. Many cases involve pain, fatigue, appetite loss, or other physical ailments. Some depressed survivors try to injure or kill themselves.

Psychiatrists have several theories as to the cause of depression. Some feel a person who, in everyday life and under normal conditions, experiences many periods of depression would probably have a difficult time in a survival situation. Depression is a most

difficult problem because it can affect a wide range of psychological responses. The factors can become mutually reinforcing. Fatigue may lead to depression. Depression may increase the feeling of fatigue. Fatigue leads to deeper depression and so on.

Depression usually begins after a survivor has met the basic needs for sustaining life (water, shelter, and food). Once these basic needs are met, there is often too much time for that person to dwell on the past, the present predicament, and future problems. The survivor must be aware of the necessity to keep the mind and body active to eliminate the feeling of depression. One way to keep busy (daily) is by checking and improving shelters, signals, and food.

## Fear

Fear can either save a life or cost a life. Some people are at their best when scared. Many downed fliers, faced with survival emergencies, have been surprised at how well they remembered their training, how quickly they could think and react, and how much strength they had.

The experience gave them new confidence. On the other hand, some become paralyzed when faced with the simplest survival situation. Some have been able to snap themselves out of it before



it was too late. In other cases, a fellow aircrew member was on hand to assist. However, others have not been so fortunate and are not listed among the survivors!

A person's reaction to fear depends more on the individual than the situation. This has been demonstrated in actual survival situations and in laboratory experiments. It isn't always the physically strong or happy-go-lucky people who handle fear most effectively. Timid and anxious people have met emergencies with remarkable coolness and strength.

Anyone who faces life-threatening emergencies experiences fear. Fear is conscious when it results from a recognized situation (an immediate prospect of bailout) or when experienced as apprehension of impending disaster. Fear also occurs at a subconscious level and creates feelings of worry, depression, uneasiness, or general discomfort. Fear may vary widely in duration, intensity, and frequency and may affect behavior across the spectrum from mild uneasiness to complete disorganization and panic.

People have many fears. Some are learned through personal experiences, and others are deliberately taught to them. Fear in children is directed through negative learning, such as being afraid of the dark, noise, animals, or teachers. These fears may control behavior; a survivor may react to feelings and imagination rather than to the problem.

When fantasy distorts a moderate danger into a major catastrophe, or vice versa, behavior can become abnormal. There is a general tendency to underestimate. This leads to reckless, foolhardy

behavior. An effective method of controlling fear is to deny that it exists. No sharp lines are between recklessness and bravery. Behavior must be checked constantly to maintain proper control.

Throughout military history, many people have coped successfully with the most strenuous odds. In adapting to fear, they found support in previous training and experience. There is no limit to human control of fear.

Survivors must control fear and not run away from it. Appropriate actions should be to understand fear, admit it exists, and accept fear as reality.

Training can help survivors recognize what individual reactions may be. Prior training should assist survivors in learning to think, plan, and act logically, even when afraid. To effectively cope with fear, a survivor must try to keep in mind the following abilities:

- Develop confidence – Use training opportunities. Increase capabilities by keeping and maintaining fit.
- Be prepared – Accept the possibility that “it can happen to me”. Be properly equipped and clothed at all times. Have a plan ready.
- Keep informed – Increase knowledge of survival environments to reduce the unknown.
- Keep busy – Prevent hunger, thirst, fatigue, idleness and ignorance about the situation, because they increase fear.
- Practice religion – Don’t be ashamed of having spiritual faith.
- Cultivate good survival attitudes – Keep the mind on a main goal and everything else in perspective. Learn to

tolerate discomfort. Don't exert energy to satisfy minor desires that may conflict with the overall goal, which is to survive.

- Cultivate mutual support – The greatest support under severe stress may come from a tightly knit group. Teamwork reduces fear while making the efforts of every person more effective.
- Practice discipline – A disciplined group with good habits has a better chance of survival.
- Lead by example – Calm behavior and demonstration of control are contagious. They reduce fear and inspire courage.

Every person has goals and desires. The greatest values exercise the greatest influence. Because of strong moral, religious, or patriotic values, people have been known to face torture and death calmly rather than reveal information or compromise a principle. Fear, a normal reaction to danger, can kill or save lives. By understanding and controlling fear through training, knowledge, and effective group action, fear can be overcome.

### Anxiety

Anxiety is a universal human reaction. Its presence can be felt when changes occur that affect an individual's plans, safety, or methods of living. Anxiety and fear differ mainly in intensity. Anxiety is a milder reaction and



specific causes may not be readily apparent; whereas, fear is a strong reaction to a specific, known cause.

Anxieties are generally felt when individuals perceive something bad is about to happen. A common description of anxiety is butterflies in the stomach. Anxiety creates feelings of uneasiness, general discomfort, worry, or depression. Common characteristics of anxiety are resentment, indecision, fear of the future, and a feeling of helplessness.

To overcome anxiety, you must adopt a simple plan. It is essential that you keep your mind off of your injuries and do something constructive. For instance, one PW tried to teach English to the Chinese and to learn Chinese from them.

### Panic

In the face of danger, a person may panic or freeze and cease to function in an-organized manner. He may have no conscious control over individual actions. Uncontrollable, irrational behavior is common in emergency situations. Anybody can panic, but one may go to pieces more easily than another.



Panic is brought on by a sudden overwhelming fear and often can spread quickly. Every effort must be made to bolster morale and calm the panic with leadership and discipline. Panic and fear have the same signs and should be controlled in the same manner.

## Hate

Hate is a powerful emotion that can have positive and negative effects on a survivor. Understanding hate and its causes are the keys to learning how to control it. It is an acquired emotion rooted in a person's knowledge or perceptions. The accuracy or inaccuracy of the information is irrelevant to learning to hate.

A person, object, or anything that may be understood intellectually (political concepts or religious dogma) can promote feelings of hate. These feelings (usually accompanied with a desire for vengeance, revenge, or retribution) have sustained former PWs through harsh ordeals. If an individual loses perspective while under the influence of hate and reacts emotionally, rational solutions to problems may be overlooked and the survivor may be endangered.

To effectively deal with this emotional reaction, the survivor must examine the reasons why the feeling is present. Once reasons have been determined, the survivor should decide what to do. Whatever approach is selected, it should be as constructive as possible. A survivor must not allow hate to control him.

## Resentment

Resentment is experiencing an emotional state of displeasure or indignation toward some act, remark, or person that has been regarded as causing personal insult or injury. Luck and fate may play a role in any survival situation. A hapless survivor may resent a fellow PW, travel partner, and so forth if that other person is perceived to be enjoying a success or advantage not presently experienced by the observer.

The survivor must understand that events cannot always go as expected. It is detrimental to morale and could affect chances of survival if resentment over another's attainments becomes too strong. Imagined slights or insults are common. The survivor should try to maintain a sense of humor and perspective about ongoing events and realize that stress and lack of self-confidence play roles in bringing on feelings of resentment.

### Anger

Anger is a strong feeling of displeasure and belligerence aroused by a real or supposed wrong. People become angry when they cannot fulfill a basic need or desire which seems important. When anger is not relieved, it may turn into a more enduring attitude of hostility, characterized by a desire to hurt or destroy the person or



thing causing the frustration. When anger is intense, the survivor loses control. This may result in impulsive behavior which may be destructive. Anger is a normal response that can serve a useful purpose when controlled carefully. If the situation warrants and there is no threat to survival, one could yell, scream, take a walk, exercise vigorously, or get away from the source (if only for a few minutes). The following person could not control his anger.

### **Impatience**

Psychological stresses brought about by impatience can manifest themselves quickly in physical ways. Internally, the effects of impatience can cause changes in physical and mental well-being. Survivors who allow impatience to control their behavior may find that their efforts prove to be counterproductive and possibly dangerous. For instance, evaders who don't have the ability or willingness to suppress annoyance when confronted with delay may expose themselves to capture or injury.

Potential survivors must understand they have to bear pain, misfortune, and annoyance without complaint. In the past, many survivors have displayed tremendous endurance (mental and physical) in times of distress or misfortune. While not every survivor is able to display such strength of character in all situations; each person should learn to recognize things which may make him impatient in order to avoid acting unwisely.

### **Dependence**

The captivity environment is the prime area where a survivor may experience feelings of dependency. The captor will try to develop feelings of need, trust, and support in prisoners. By regulating the availability of basic needs (food, water, clothing, social contact, and medical care), captors show their power and control over the prisoners' fate.

Through emphasizing the prisoner's inability to meet his own basic needs, captors seek to establish strong feelings of prisoner dependency. This dependency can make prisoners extremely vulnerable to captor exploitation. By recognizing this captor tactic the PW has the key to countering it.

Survivors must understand that, despite captor controls, they control their own lives. Meeting even one physical or mental need can provide a PW with a victory and the foundation for continued resistance against exploitation.

### Loneliness

Loneliness can be very debilitating during a survival situation. Some people learn to control and manipulate their environment and become more self-sufficient while adapting to changes. Others rely on protective



persons, routines, and familiarity with surroundings to function and obtain satisfaction.

The ability to combat loneliness during a survival situation must be developed long before the situation occurs. Self-confidence and self-sufficiency are key factors in coping with loneliness. People develop these attributes by developing and demonstrating competence in performing tasks.

As the degree of competence increases, so does self-confidence and self-sufficiency. Military training, specifically survival training, is designed to provide individuals with the competence and self-sufficiency to cope with and adapt to survival living.

In a survival situation, the countermeasure to conquer loneliness is to plan, to be active, and to think purposely. Developing self-sufficiency is the primary protection since all countermeasures in survival require the survivor to have the ability to practice self-control.

### **Boredom**

Boredom and fatigue are related and frequently confused. Boredom is accompanied by a lack of interest and may include strain, anxiety, or depression. This is particularly true when no relief is in sight and the person is frustrated. Relief from boredom must be based on correcting the basic sources-repetition and uniformity.

Boredom can be relieved by varying methods-rotating duties, taking rest breaks, broadening the scope of a particular task or job, or other techniques of diversification. The ungratifying nature of a task can be counteracted by clearing up its meaning, objectives, and in some cases, its relation to the total plan. One survivor couldn't think of anything to do, while another survivor invented something to do.

### Hopelessness

Hopelessness stems from the negative feeling that, regardless of actions taken, success is Impossible or the certainty that future events will turn out for the worst no matter what a person tries to do. Feelings of hopelessness can occur at virtually any time during a survival situation. Survivors have experienced loss of hope in:

- a. Trying to maintain health due to an inability to care for sickness, broken bones, or injuries.
- b. Returning home alive.
- c. Seeing their loved ones again.
- d. Believing in their physical or mental ability to deal with the situation.

A person may begin to lose hope during situations where physical exhaustion or exposure to the elements affects the mind. During captivity, deaths occurred from no apparent cause. Individuals actually willed themselves to die.

The original premise (in the minds of such people) is that they are going to die. To them, the situation seemed totally futile, and they had passively abandoned themselves to fate. It was possible to follow the step-by-step process. The people who died withdrew themselves from the group, became despondent, then lay down and gave up. In some cases death followed rapidly.

One way to treat hopelessness is to eliminate the cause of the stress. Rest, comfort, and morale building activities can help eliminate this psychological problem. Another method is to make the person so angry he wants to get up and attack the tormentors. A positive attitude has a powerful influence on morale and combating the feeling of hopelessness.

Since many stress situations cannot be dealt with successfully, it may be necessary to work out a compromise solution. The action may entail changing a survivor's method of operation or accepting substitute goals.

Evaders faced with starvation may compromise with their conscience and steal just this one time. They may ignore their food aversion and eat worms, bugs, or even human flesh. A related form of compromise is acceptance of substitute means to achieve the same goals.

### **The will to survive**



The will to survive is defined as the desire to live despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles (mental and physical). The tools for survival are furnished by the military, the individual, and the environment. Survival training comes from training publications, instruction, and the individual's own efforts.

These are not enough without a will to survive. In fact, records prove that "will" alone has been the deciding factor in many survival cases. These accounts are not classic examples of how to survive, but they illustrate that a single-minded survivor with a powerful will to survive can overcome most hardships. There are cases where people have eaten their belts for nourishment, boiled water in their boots to drink as broth; or have eaten human flesh-though this certainly wasn't their cultural instinct.

One incident where the will to survive was the deciding factor between life and death involved a person stranded in the desert for eight days without food and water. He traveled more than 150 miles during searing daytime temperatures and lost 25 percent of his

body weight because of the lack of water (usually 10 percent loss causes death).

His blood became so thick that the lacerations he received could not bleed until he had been rescued and received large quantities of water. When he started on that journey, something must have clicked in his mind telling him to live, regardless of any obstacles he might confront.

Let's flip a coin and check the other side of will. Our location is the wilderness. A pilot ran into engine trouble and chose to dead stick the plane onto a frozen lake rather than punch out. He did a beautiful job and slid to a stop in the middle of the lake. He examined the aircraft for damage.

After surveying the area, he noticed a wooded shoreline only 200 yards away where food and shelter could be provided - he began walking in that direction. Approximately halfway, he changed his mind and returned to the cockpit of the aircraft where he smoked a cigar, took out his pistol, and blew his brains out. Less than 24 hours later, a rescue team found him. Why did he give up? Why was he unable to survive? Why did he take his own life?

On the other hand, why do people eat their belts or drink broth from their boots? No one really knows, but it's all related to the will to survive.

### **Overcoming stress**

The ability of the mind to overcome stress and hardship becomes most apparent when there appears to be little chance of a person surviving. When there appears to be no escape from the situation, the "will" enables a person to begin to win "the battle of the mind." This mental attitude can bridge the gap between the crisis and coping periods.

### **Crisis Period.**

This is the point at which the person realizes the gravity of the situation and understands the problem will not go away. At this stage, action is needed! Most people experience shock in this stage as a result of not being ready to face this new challenge. Most recover control of their faculties, especially if they have been prepared through knowledge training.



Shock during a crisis is normally a response to being overcome with anxiety. Thinking is disorganized. At this stage, direction is required because the individual is being controlled by the environment. The person's center of control is external. In a group survival situation, a natural leader may direct and reassure the others. If the situation continues to control the individual or group, the response may be panic, behavior may be irrational, and judgment is impaired.

In a lone-survivor situation, the individual must gain control of the situation and respond constructively. In either case, a survivor must evaluate the situation and develop a plan of action. During the evaluation, the survivor must determine the most critical needs to improve the chance of living and being rescued.

### **The Coping Period.**

The coping period begins after the survivor recognizes the gravity of the situation and resolves to endure it rather than succumb. The survivor must tolerate the physical and emotional effects of stress. These effects can cause anxiety which becomes the greatest obstacle to self-control and solving problems. Coping with the situation requires considerable internal control. Those who fail to think constructively may panic. This could begin a series of mistakes which result in further exhaustion, injury, and sometimes death.

Death comes not from hunger pains but from the inability to manage or control emotions and thought processes.

The survivor must often subdue urgent desires to travel when that would be counterproductive and dangerous. A person must have patience to sit in an emergency shelter while confronted with an empty stomach, aching muscles, numb toes, and suppressed feelings of depression and hopelessness.

### **Attitude**

The survivor's attitude is the most important element of the will to survive. With the proper attitude, almost anything is possible. The

desire to live is sometimes based on the feelings toward another person or thing.

Love and hatred, two emotional extremes, have moved people to do exceptional things (physically and mentally). The lack of a will to survive can sometimes be identified by the individual's lack of self-esteem; lack of motivation to meet essential survival needs; and lack of emotional control resulting in reckless, panic like behavior.

The will to survive must strengthen during an emergency. The first step is to avoid a tendency to panic or fly off the handle. Sit down, relax, and analyze the situation rationally. Once thoughts are collected and thinking is clear, the next step is to make decisions. In normal living, people can avoid decisions and let others do their planning.

This seldom works in a survival situation. Failure to decide on a course of action is actually a decision for inaction. This lack of decision making may result in death. However, decisiveness must be tempered with flexibility and planning for unforeseen circumstance.

An aircrew member down in an arctic non-tactical situation decides to construct a shelter for protection from the elements. The planning and actions must allow sufficient flexibility for the aircrew to monitor the area for an indication of rescuers and for them to be prepared to make contact (visually or electronically) with the potential rescuers.

Tolerance is the next topic of concern. A survivor or evader has to deal with many physical and psychological discomforts; that is,

unfamiliar insects, animals, loneliness, and depression. Aircrew members are trained to tolerate uncomfortable situations. That training must be applied when dealing with environmental stresses. Survivors in tactical and non-tactical situations must face and overcome fears to strengthen the will to survive.

Fears may be founded or unfounded, generated by the survivor's uncertainty or lack of confidence, or based on the proximity of enemy forces. Indeed, fear may be caused by a wide variety of real and imagined dangers. Despite the source of the fear, survivors must recognize it and make a conscious effort to overcome it.

## Optimism

One of a survivor's key assets is optimism-hope and faith. Survivors must maintain a positive, optimistic outlook on their circumstance. Prayer or meditation can be helpful.



## Final thoughts

The health of the mind is the most important part of survival, because without the focus, the assurance, and the knowledge to get through any situation – whether man-made or natural disasters – your actions and reactions will more than likely remain within the realm of chaotic and aimless.

Now that you have acknowledged the risks and learned how to face them, you can rest assured that you are safe. It doesn't matter if it happens in three years or twenty; you know that you're going to be okay.

You must know that survival is more than food stores and ammo. Survival means more than taking care of the physical body. Survival also means you still take the time to stop and smell the roses, enjoy a beautiful view, hold your loved ones and read a book. Survival also means your peace of mind. And this is what I'm trying to offer you with my books. The survival mission is not an easy one, but I trust it is one in which success can be achieved.

