

How to Survive Comfortably

or

What Friends are really good for...

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Once you have studied the realities involved in surviving a long term catastrophe (years, not weeks), it becomes painfully obvious that maintenance of a reasonable comfortable standard of living in a post disaster situation is beyond the resources of one individual or one family.

It is simply impossible to know enough... to learn enough... or to afford enough to meet all the needs of a family unit living at more than a bare subsistence standard of living... a standard of living far below what we would now consider to be "third world". This is a future I would wish upon my family only if death were the only alternative. We can, however, do better... much better.

"How?", you ask. "With a little help from our friends" is the answer.

Team work is the key to survival, not only individual survival, but survival of an acceptable standard of living... even survival of a productive society. It is simply not possible to cover all of your future needs from within your family unit.

For example, you may be a great gardener, but can you build and maintain the tools necessary for production level farming. Even if you can forge plowshares and tan leather for tack, what if

your animal gets sick, or what if your family gets sick? Can you diagnose the problem, and if you can, will you have stored the supplies needed to treat the problem?

What if you are a great farmer, a great blacksmith, a great vet, and a physician on the side? What if someone attacks your family while you are in the field?

Who will spin the yarn? Who will weave the cloth? Who will make the clothes? Who will tan the leather? Who will make the shoes? Who will teach your children? Even if you have every one of these skills, you are not likely to have the current resources to stock the supplies needed to maintain the trade. Even if you stock everything that might possibly be needed for every one of these trades, there will simply not be enough hours in the day to meet even your most basic needs.

What is the answer? The answer is specialization. This is the root foundation for human society. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Forget the idea that you will survive in your secure fortress with your solar power, your tons of wheat, and your thousands of rounds of ammunition. You will succumb to a superior force, or to disease, to starvation, or to isolation and depression.

The "dream" survival situation would be a small, relatively isolated community with a large agricultural base and some manufacturing resources. It would have its own power supply, temperate weather, and a good mix of trade skills. Very few of us have the luxury to live in such a place. In fact there are very few such places at all. Even if you can find one, they are not likely to welcome a total stranger into their community during the turmoil of a post-catastrophe situation.

If you know of such a place, consider moving there now, even if it means a career change and an income reduction. You may have to give up your weekly trips to the symphony and the theatre, and you might not have a choice if 15 different French restaurants, but you might find your life very much richer for the safety, fraternity, and slower pace of life.

I realize that we cannot all live in small town utopia, and even in these communities, the vast majority of people don't give a moment's thought to post-disaster survival. They don't have on hand even a fraction of the supplies needed to carry on their trade for even a few days out of touch from the regional and national distribution system. Life in America is just too comfortable just now to think about things.

So what can you do? You can learn all you can about everything you can. You can stock up on reference books. You can collect all the supplies needed for short term survival and intermediate term subsistence. But most importantly, you can learn a practical skill, then stock deep in what you do well, then recruit friends of like mind who will do the same for other complementary skills.

A carpenter with some wheat and a rifle with loads of ammunition might be in a poor situation with a sick or hungry child. A carpenter who has seen fit to put aside a top quality set of hand tools and several hundred pounds of nails might be a rich man in a community with a need for shelter and building skills.

A physician may be a lousy shot and unable to defend his family, but a physician with the tools to diagnose illness and a stockpile of medicines to treat them is guaranteed to have the whole community turn out in his defense. The combination of his knowledge and his supplies, not necessarily either one alone is what makes him an immense asset to the community. The whole is

again worth more than the sum of the parts.

After realizing that the team or group approach to preparedness is superior, one must consider what skills are essential in order to know what to learn or who to recruit.

Skills might be divided into essential or primary, and desirable or secondary, based on whether they are necessary for personal or cultural survival respectively.

Primary skills needed for personal survival, and the people to provide them, might include:

- 1) Sustenance - storage, preparation, and production of food and water
 - A) farmers
 - B) serious gardeners
 - C) cooks and bakers
- 2) Shelter - short and long term protection from hazards of toxins, fire, radiation, the environment, and antisocial behavior, including maintenance of existing shelter
 - A) builders - electricians, plumbers, carpenters, masons
 - B) wood cutters
 - C) sanitation or radiation engineers
 - D) mechanics
- 3) Security - protection from the antisocial conduct of insiders or outsiders
 - A) law officers

- B) military personnel or veterans
 - C) hunters or others skilled with weapons
 - D) administrators (yes, even after the great disaster there will be a need for a few petty bureaucrats. Someone has to keep the ducks in a row.)
- 4) Medical care - maintenance of the personal and public health of the community
- A) physicians, especially Family Practitioners and Surgeons, a Pathologist might have his place but would be of less general use than a primary care clinician or surgeon.
 - B) dentists
 - C) nurses, physicians' assistants, paramedics, EMTs, ex-military medics
 - D) pharmacists
 - E) sanitarians and public health officials

Secondary skills are things you personally might be able to live without, but society cannot.

- 1) Education
- A) teachers - parents can teach, but not as well or as comprehensively as someone who is trained in it professionally. Note also that teachers frequently make good administrators if you don't want any real bureaucrats in the group.

- B) parents - education is their principle job anyway.
- C) lawyers and accountants - Their primary skills may be useless, but they are well educated people. Don't let lawyers administrate, however, unless you want a new world as screwed up as the old.
- 2) Transportation - life proceeds very slowly when you must walk everywhere.
- A) mechanics - There will be no shortage of surplus vehicles, but keeping them running will be a task.
- B) chemists and/or distillers - Those surplus vehicles and machines must run on something.
- C) animal breeders - If you can't get the truck run you can ride an animal. This form of transportation is also edible and produces fertilizer. Petroleum may be hard to come by as well.
- D) wood and leather workers - to make harnesses, saddles, wagons, etc.
- 3) Communications - vastly increases the efficiency of production, distribution, and security.
- 1) ham radio operators - they almost always have plenty of equipment and they think a lot about emergency preparedness.
- 2) telephone technicians - the telephone system will still be there but keeping it working will be a vital help to the community.

- 3) electricians or electronics technicians - the generation and storage of electricity is vital to communications and very helpful to almost every other sector of the community.
- 4) athletes - If you can't get the message there any other way, you can always send a runner.

Others might add quite a few more categories to this list, but it's easy to see that the scale of the task in mastering even a fraction of these skills is beyond reasonable expectation.

A practical way of dealing with this problem can be found in studying the organizational principles of the U. S. Army Special Forces.

Among the concepts taught in the Special Forces is the idea of limited specialization. Every Special Forces soldier is expert in the basic skills of soldiering such as weapons, movement, concealment, survival, etc., but he is also a specialist with very advanced knowledge in one particular area such as communications, intelligence, demolition, or medical. Every team member is familiar with the skills of the others, but he is expected not only to be able to utilize his skills in a superior manner, but also to teach his skills to others.

The Special Forces soldier is a consummate warrior, but his principle mission is not to fight but to teach, lead, and inspire. The "survivalist" should consider this to be his mission as well. The Regular Army NCO would be expected to lead a squad of ten or so men. The Special Forces NCO would be expected to teach his skills to a large number of indigenous sympathizers and then lead a group as large as a company or a battalion... jobs

usually held by captains or lieutenant colonels.

So too should the dedicated survivalist consider himself a leader and teacher. After having mastered the basic skills of self-reliance his next priority must be to master his specialty skill, and having learned it well, to stockpile the tools of his trade. He must then work on the other specialties important to survival, with special emphasis on skills not yet filled by recruitment.

A good plan would be to become a specialist in one of the primary or secondary skills, develop a good working knowledge of all of the primary skills, and become familiar with the secondary skills.

The camouflage clad, rifle toting loner of the popular media isn't practicing survival, he is practicing for suicide. Don't imitate him, and don't recruit him. Survival means teamwork, and the bigger the team the more comfortable the future.

Just think, if everyone thought like a survivalist, then it's likely none of us would ever need these skills and supplies we work so hard to obtain. The best life insurance policy is the one you don't have to collect on.