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Planning For Survival

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In light of recent events, such as the Persian Gulf War, terrorism, and economic instability, many individuals and families are taking a fresh look at the dreaded "S-word," survivalism.

As with any beginners, these people need some sort of plan for these uncharted waters. I hope that this article can give some useful guidance to those new to the field, and perhaps some new insights to others who have been left to their own devices in coming to grips with this virtually all-inclusive field.

This plan consists of nine major points: 1. Determination; 1. Becoming/staying healthy; 3. Allocating your Budget; 4. Developing plans of action; 5. Have a "bug-out" kit; 6. Plan for

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duration; 7. Get training; 8. Practice; 9. Don't advertise.

The first requirement to insuring your (and your family's) longevity is DETERMINATION. You must want to survive. Contact others upon whom you might rely (and whom may likewise rely upon you) in a crisis. This is not a game, although games can play a part in the training aspect. If we are to survive as individuals, as families, as a society, we cannot approach this as a one-person show. It will take cooperation of the highest order. The stakes are literally life and death.

Many people take the attitude that "If it happens, I wouldn't want to live anyway, " This is an attitude which almost guarantees defeat or death. A husband, father, or single mother with this attitude is virtually condemning his or her family to a similar fate.

BECOME/STAY HEALTHY. Every-one in the family or group should get a complete medical, dental and vision checkup. Find your weaknesses and limitations so you may cope with them, before

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they take you by surprise Get caught up on immunizations such as tetanus, hepatitis, and measles. If eyeglasses or contacts are needed, get at least one spare pair, or save old ones. Stock up on cleaning solution if you wear contacts. Work to bring your teeth up to the healthiest level possible. A toothache can be a major problem even in normal times when a dentist is available. Imagine trying to make critical decisions while suffering with a toothache when there may be few, if any, dentists in operation.

Make sure your feet are in good condition. They may someday be your only mode of transportation. Begin and maintain an exercise program which balances strength with endurance and flexibility. Running, swimming, and stair climbing are all excellent conditioners.

ALLOCATE PART OF YOUR BUDGET. Acquire supplies as your budget allows. Be practical; set priorities. For example: set aside \$10 per month for weaponry (including ammunition and cleaning supplies, (\$10 per month for clothing (if you don't have the proper clothing already on hand. Three-piece suits or tennis

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outfits have very limited survival applications) , another \$10 a month for reserve food and medical supplies, and so on. If money is tight, you can alternate purchases from month to month.

The important thing is to make some sort of survival-based acquisition regularly, or at every opportunity. In making survival investments, you should consider the following points: a) Might you actually need it (Does it serve a legitimate survival need, such as food) ? b) Do you have the skill to use it properly, and would you be able to repair it when it inevitably breaks down? c) Will it need something else, such as electricity, gas, heat, or water to operate? d) How many/much will you need, and how long do you expect it to last (see Plan For Duration) : e) Is it practical for the conditions you anticipate, such as proper clothing for the climate?

DEVELOP PLANS OF ACTION. You should discuss with your family or group the conditions under which you would run (Where?) or stay; whether to hide (For how long?) or fight (Whom? How?) . Every member of the group must be in agreement with the final

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plan. One dissident could destroy all your intentions; for instance by "setting-out" the group to an adversary.

You should also develop "backup" plans to cover various contingencies such as those mentioned. Plan for the worst-case scenario and work down from there.

HAVE A "BUG-OUT" KIT. Keep a short-term (up to one week) survival kit handy in case you must leave NOW. Remember the priorities: shelter, water, food, medical supplies, weapons, communications. Ideally, you should have several kits; one for each member of the family and group, another one in each vehicle in case a crisis occurs at an unexpected moment (as they usually do) . and a large cache of supplies away from the home, in a place safe from discovery or disaster; in the event you must evacuate your home quickly, as in the case of fire, earthquake or war. Each of these kits or caches should be planned to supplement and extend the capabilities of the next smallest kit.

Avoid making your personal bug-out kit too heavy to run with;

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you may have to carry it long distances, quickly.

PLAN FOR DURATION. Try to realistically anticipate how long you expect your scenario may last, and add a little more to the estimate as a buffer against shortsightedness.

Do you expect your disaster scenario to last for days (such as waiting for disaster relief after a major storm, fire, or earth quake) , months (i.e., a major strike by unions; re building after a disaster) , or years (such as being caught in the clutches of a dictatorship, foreign invasion, or persecution) ?

Try to be realistic in your preparations. Plan for the consumption of food (calories per person per day, plus other essential nutrients) , water (gallons per person per day, for drinking, cooking and sanitation) , ammunition (as much as can be obtained, with a suggested minimum of 500 rounds per weapon) , air quality (while in shelter, or masks for outside) , medical supplies (including prescription medicines) , and so

on.

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Some of your scenarios may look unlikely in the context of present conditions, but it only takes an open-eyed look at the world, the nation, or the neighborhood, to see the potential for frightening situations to rapidly develop which would not allow time for preparation after the fact. For instance, note that many people reacting to a disaster often converge on all the nearest stores for provisions such as food, candles, bottled water, batteries, and so on. Frequently, the crowd gets impatient, not wanting or waiting to be left without essentials for themselves or their families. Occasionally, rioting and looting begin, feeding upon itself as the unprepared start to panic.

Your aim must be to store adequate supplies for all intended members of your group for the longest time that you will likely be on your own, with self-sufficiency being your goal. The federal government recommends having at least three to five days supplies on hand, to sustain you until relief agencies can get into action. The more serious the crisis, the longer you may

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have to wait for outside help.

If you are able, lay in extra supplies for a few additional persons who will, most likely, show up either on their own, or with members of the group ("My mother was visiting at the time; I couldn't just leave her"). As pragmatic as you must be, you must also not surrender your humanity completely. Otherwise, you are no better than the predators you may be fleeing. Of course, there is a practical limit to how much you can be expected to cope with. Examine your own conscience on this issue.

A plan must also be drawn up to deal with waste management. Essential "luxuries" such as toilet paper, soap, and proper means of disposing of human waste and garbage will become major issues during a survival situation. Goods and services we have always taken for granted may no longer be available.

You must also plan to cope with your people's emotional survival. The abrupt change in lifestyle, the day to day fight to stay alive, will take its toll psychologically if not treated quickly

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and continuously. Find things to alleviate boredom, such as games or projects. Give every able person in the group a job they will be responsible for. Even children can be instructed to secure trash, act as lookouts, or help with food preparation or gathering supplies. Also attempt to continue with their education, albeit with a different emphasis. Find duties which require a person to study the situation and come up with a solution. Hold meetings to keep everyone current on what's happening, and conduct frequent and regular classes for everyone in survival arts. Keep your people, and yourself, busy. Despair may be your worst enemy.

GET TRAINING. Your group should learn how to use weapons effectively. Safety, maintenance, handling malfunctions, and marksmanship are all of equal importance in a survival context. Because this is an area where mistakes can be fatal, instruction should be sought from qualified professionals, such as the National Rifle Association. Also, everyone should study unarmed self-defense under a qualified instructor; one who teaches combative, not tournament techniques.

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Tactics are another important area of study. Learn how best to utilize your weapons under various conditions and environments, such as snow, rain, or at night. There are several reputedly good schools for this type of study. There are also many books such as military manuals which can be of help, if accompanied by lots of practice.

Study first aid diligently, as this is one of the most essential areas of self help study. The American Red Cross has excellent, inexpensive courses on CPR and basic and advanced first aid. Everyone should be encouraged to take and pass such a course. A study of improvised medicines and first-aid equipment would also be useful. Some community colleges offer non-credit courses in herbology, folk medicine, and edible wild plants. There are many very good reference books on the subject. Another variation on this theme would be the study of medicinal minerals. You might seriously consider taking an Emergency Medical Technician course (or a Paramedic course if already an EMT) and joining a volunteer ambulance corps. Not only would you be con

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tributing to a vital community function, you would also be gaining practical, real-life, hands-on experience which no course can give by itself. Remember, in a crisis, your body does what it has been trained to do. The untrained reaction to crisis is usually panic. Practical experience aids tremendously in overcoming the panic which accompanies disaster.

Fieldcraft is another valuable area of study. Learn the difference between, and uses of, cover and concealment. Learn how to survive in rural or urban wilderness, how to find or construct proper shelter, how to gather food and collect and purify water, the use of correct sanitation procedures, basic land navigation, and much more.

PRACTICE. Conduct realistic simulations with your equipment and your people to gain valuable experience and confidence working together. Get the bugs out while it's relatively easy. Learn what works and what doesn't.

Go to the firing range often, preferably when you or your

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group can use it without onlookers. Practice on human-shaped targets, using tactics. Train in firing techniques for real world situations (such as varying weather conditions, target distance and size. Learn different firing positions, practice in-house techniques, etc.). Always rigidly enforce appropriate safety procedures while training with weapons.

As an EMT, you can work on an ambulance or in the emergency room to practice and to accustom yourself to the suffering of others. It's certainly not pleasant, but it is crucial in overcoming the shock of seeing something happen suddenly, perhaps to someone you love. This allows you to get on with treating the patient rather than wasting valuable seconds in panic. With practice, reaction becomes almost automatic, and confidence is gained. Without practice, hard-earned skills are gradually lost.

You should try to incorporate your survival skills into every day life, making it a normal part of your existence.

Don't, however, carry it to extremes, such as walking around in

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public wearing cammies with a 10-inch knife on your belt. Be discreet. Shooting and hand-to-hand practice, ambulance duty, making your own clothes, and canning your own food; all these skills and more will not only add to your survival repertoire, they will enhance the quality of your life, as you become less dependent on "the system" and more confident in your own abilities.

Learn the strengths and weaknesses of your equipment, your people, and yourself. Without practice and effort you are just wasting time and money, and someone close to you could die needlessly.

DON'T ADVERTISE. Keep your actions and intentions as low-profile as possible. You could risk discovery and the loss of everything you have been working for, or wind up with a lot of people on YOUR doorstep in a crisis; people whom you cannot support, and who may have no positive survival value. If you intend to support dependents, prepare for them with your supplies.

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One last thought. Because predatory people are out there, firearms are an essential element of survival planning. Unfortunately, they have been abused frequently enough to give the whole survival movement a bad reputation in the eyes of the general media, who too often seem to be looking to discredit and ridicule the movement. Survivalists should respect firearms and view them as tools to protect what they have: their lives, families, homes, and provisions; not as weapons of conquest. The more you prepare, the more ready you must be to defend against those who don't.

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