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SHORT AND LONG TERM SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

The world is an uncertain place. Although this may not be breaking news, many people argue that the dawn of the Information Age as made the economy more volatile than ever before. Rapid shifts in the economy are a direct result of technology's ability to move vast amounts of money in an instant. Impending threats from terrorist organizations, a global nuclear movement, and changing political allegiances also impede upon daily life.

When one of these events occurs, society could break down completely. Suddenly thrust into a life that resembles that of your ancient ancestors, how will you cope? More importantly, how will you survive? Full scale collapse has the potential to result in crime, riots, and even outright lawlessness as people try to carve a place for themselves in a tumultuous new world. Nothing will be certain other than a need for you and your family to survive.

For this reason, it is imperative to have a survival plan in place. Waiting until an event happens is often too late. Without proper planning, you may not have enough food or supplies. You may not even have a safe place where you can retreat until things calm down. Most experts agree that in the event of widespread collapse, most grocery stores will be completely out of food within three days. Once the supply chain has been interrupted, the shelves will remain empty. Planning for this as well as other shortcomings in advance places you among an elite group of people that are actually prepared for catastrophe. Unfortunately, as much as 60 percent of the US population assumes that the government will take care of them during a crisis. The fact that you are reading this guide means that you are most likely not part of this group and wish to guarantee your own safety, success, and future by planning for the worst now.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A PLAN

Just as a builder creates a plan before constructing a home and an investor maintains an accurate financial plan, survivors need a plan that guarantees them the absolute best chances of survival in any situation. With all the occurrences that threaten daily life, creating a plan may seem like a daunting task. The truth is that a good survival plan will account for multiple possible outcomes. Whether economic collapse, bioterrorist attack, or nuclear war, a solid plan will increase the chances of survival exponentially.

An effective survival plan starts now. Waiting until an event occurs often leaves you controlled by the environment. A solid plan keeps you in control of your actions regardless of what craziness may be surrounding you.

The first consideration should be whether to "bug out" or stay at home. This is not a decision that should be taken lightly. "Bugging out" typically refers to an alternative location where you can safely evacuate during a catastrophe. Both choices have advantages and

disadvantages inherent to them. Many people who have setup bug out locations choose areas that are remote. During an attack, a remote location provides a strategic advantage as most of the population will be left to fend for themselves in more congested city areas. Of course, you will have to travel through these areas to the bug out location. This could prove difficult, if not impossible, depending on the situation.

Staying in your home during a crisis is advantageous because you are not exposed to excess danger while traveling to a bug out location. If you take the time to fortify your home properly, it can be a safe haven during even the most serious of catastrophic events. However, if you live in a populated area, the risk of attack by other, less prepared individuals becomes greater especially if a crisis lasts for an extended period of time.

If you choose to bug out, take some time when selecting a suitable location. Ideally, the location will be remote while still offering relatively easy access. Having multiple routes to access the property is a good idea in case one or more routes become impassable. You should also consider the land surrounding the property and any natural resources available when choosing a bug out location. When an emergency happens, it may not be readily apparent how long you will be residing in your bug out location. If the situation lasts for months or even longer the location you choose should allow for sustainable resource creation or gathering. A fresh water stream, for instance, will provide water indefinitely. Open land can be used for gardening and forests for hunting. These ideas may seem far-fetched and unnecessary but the truth is that no one really knows how long it will take society to recover (if it ever does) following a large scale disaster.

The ideal scenario is to have a secure bug out location established that compliments a fortified home. Having supplies to survive a disaster on hand as well as in another location allows you to choose the appropriate time to vacate your current residence; either immediately or in the future. The more contingencies you successfully plan for the greater your chances of survival become.

Someone who is properly prepared should have at least a 14 day supply of food and other items on hand and an additional six months of supplies in a bug out location. Even this may become inadequate if life does not return to a normal relatively quickly. Again, this is where the sustainability of a designated bug out location comes into play.

Just as important as creating a survival plan is practicing your plan with almost religious regularity. A plan is only as good as the people who participate in its execution. Without practice and proper training, other members of your family may not be capable of carrying out the plan efficiently. At least once every six months (although more frequently is better), simulate the onset of a catastrophe and go through each person's role in the survival plan. Think of any possible contingencies that you can and consider how you will overcome these obstacles. For instance, if travel routes are blocked and you are unable to retreat to your bug out location,

how will you survive until you can make it there safely? If either your home or bug out location are destroyed, what other options do you have available? Although it is impossible to think of everything, you will be better prepared if you invest some time thinking of various possibilities.

THE FIRST 72 HOURS

When a disaster strikes, the first 72 hours represents arguably the most important time period in your quest for survival. Although the exact course of events will differ from event to event, there are some effects that will be felt almost immediately and these should be your primary concern.

Stores will run out of food and other supplies within days. You can see evidence of this whenever a major storm is announced in your area. People flock to the stores and purchase as many supplies as they can all at once. This effect will be ten times as drastic in the event of an actual emergency. Non-perishable food items, water, and propane will disappear within hours. Assuming that the supply chain is broken as a result of the catastrophe, these empty shelves will not be restocked anytime in the near future either.

Banks will run out of cash quickly as people rush to close checking and savings accounts. Even if you have thousands of dollars in the bank, it will be useless if the bank cannot honor your withdrawal request. Furthermore, cash will rapidly lose value. Bartering and trading will become a much more valuable asset in the days following economic collapse. This effect will be even more evident as time progresses without any improvement in the situation.

Crime rates will skyrocket. People who are not properly prepared will panic and begin looting when necessary. Unfortunately, there are unscrupulous people who will look at the disaster as an opportunity to commit crime unnoticed. Look at the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina if you are skeptical of this fact. Entire neighborhoods were raided as citizens came to grips with the reality of their situations. During that localized crisis, crime rates increased seemingly overnight. Even in adjacent states, such as Texas, crime rates increased by as much as 10 percent as refugees poured into the area. Like everything else in a post-catastrophic era, these statistics exhibit only the beginning as more and more people who are not prepared struggle for survival.

These are just a sample of the many perils you will face during the initial chaos brought on during a catastrophe. Obviously, the more serious or wide spread the damage the more acute these effects will be. After the September 11th attacks, even the US government began advising citizens to have at least a 72 hour supply of essentials on hand at all times. It is often assumed that emergency services will be sidelined for at least this long (although history has proven that it is often much longer) so having food, water, and basic medical supplies can mitigate the risk to you and your family during this time period.

Putting the Plan into Action

Hopefully you were wise enough to have created a survival plan in advance. During the first 72 hours, your plan will be more important than ever. Quick decisions and sound judgment are needed to make it through this chaotic period. One mistake that many people (even those with a sound survival plan) make is that they fall into a state of denial. Once you have determined that disaster is imminent; take action. Too many people have perished because they failed to take action soon enough. Once the crisis is in full swing everything becomes more difficult. Travel is especially affected as masses of people attempt to evacuate simultaneously.

The point is not to wait until it is too late to act. Decide quickly if you will be staying home to ride out the catastrophe or if you will be evacuating to a safe location that you have set aside with designated supplies on hand. Assuming you have a bug out location and you have decided that it provides a safer environment given the circumstances, the next step is to get there as quickly as possible.

As part of your survival plan, you should have established a variety of routes to access your bug out location. Traffic, flooding, and damaged or obstructed roadways are a very real concern immediately following a disaster. Whenever possible, consider using routes that are less conspicuous. The last thing you want to do is attract the wrong attention from the wrong people en route to your location. A bug out location should be secure and the best method of accomplishing this is through being discreet. Even friends or neighbors can become enemies in dire circumstances.

What If You Don't Have a Plan?

If a catastrophe occurs before you are able to make a survival plan, surviving even the first 72 hours can be difficult. However, it is not impossible. Without a plan, you have no bug out location. Your home may be a safe place to wait for the situation to calm down unless it has been directly affected by the event. If flooding, fires, or another threat are an immediate concern to your home, it is best to evacuate anyway.

The ideal location would be a relative that lives out of the area that has been directly affected. Although that location may not be safe for the long term, it will take some time for adverse reactions to spread across the surrounding areas. If you have no relatives to stay with, many cities will have shelters that can be used temporarily. Keep in mind that these are short term solutions and are often extremely crowded.

Publically available shelters can be helpful but they often present dangers of their own. Again looking at the events that occurred shortly after Hurricane Katrina made land fall, many people found temporary shelter at the Superdome. Although many alleged crimes were discredited afterward, a confirmed increase in crime did occur inside this "safe haven." As many as 9,000 people were housed in the Superdome prior to the entire city being evacuated without adequate services to support this many residents.

Crowded, unsatisfactory conditions will often lead people to behave in ways that they normally would not. Understanding this danger, it is best to use a public shelter as an absolute last resort and seek alternative housing arrangements instead.

If staying in your home is not an option, consider packing as many essential items as you can manage comfortably. Food, clothing, and blankets should be considered top priority. Although a vehicle is the fastest way to evacuate under normal circumstances, damaged roadways could make traveling by vehicle difficult at best. Furthermore, the additional attention created by driving a vehicle through streets that are potentially packed with desperate people trying to escape could invite an assault on you and your family. No matter which way you decide to leave, make certain that you are as inconspicuous as possible while doing it.

At the very least, take the time to assemble a simple emergency kit in advance. Although this kit is not very elaborate, it may be the difference between life and death; especially if you do not have a structured plan in place. The following items should be included:

- Water (at least two liters per person per day)
- Non-perishable food items
- Can opener
- Battery-powered flashlight
- Radio
- Keys
- Basic First Aid kit
- Toilet paper
- Basic hand tools
- Duct tape
- Pocket knife
- Extra clothing
- Sleeping bags or blankets
- Cash
- Seven day supply of required medications

Although this list is not meant to all-inclusive, it gives you a general idea of things that will be required to survive the immediate effects of a disaster. Make sure the kit is easily accessible so that it can be grabbed in a hurry if necessary. Ideally, you will have the resources to assemble two of these kits. One can be kept in the home and the other can be put into the car. This ensures that you will have adequate supplies whether you deem it safer to stay home or leave.

Many minor disasters will resolve themselves (at least partially) within a few days. Having a small cache of supplies and the willingness to leave home if necessary should be enough to get you through this type of disaster. If it seems like cleanup is taking longer than

expected, once again evaluate if there is a friend or relative outside of the affected area where you can stay temporarily.

Some disasters will not resolve themselves quickly. In fact, they may never resolve themselves at all. Economic collapse or a large scale terrorist attack could leave the entire country in shambles. If one of these events occur, it is necessary to re-invent your life. You must start thinking of long term survival strategies. The world may never be the same again and the only way to ensure the safety of you and your family involves creating a new, sustainable lifestyle that is capable of weathering the changing societal tides.

LONG TERM SURVIVAL

The possibility of life as you know it ending is a real threat. Some natural disasters take years to cleanup thoroughly and the lives of those affected are altered for a long period of time. However, the laws of society that bind communities together, along with infrastructure services in place to handle these disasters, could be destroyed during a serious catastrophic event and make reconstruction nearly impossible.

Many experts have speculated about what life will be like after one of these cataclysmic events. No one is certain of the long term ramifications; however, there are some effects that are universally accepted. Although you will not be able to plan for everything in this new and uncertain world, there are some possibilities that you should expect and plan in advance for if you want to survive for weeks, months, or even years after such an event.

As mentioned previously, money will be of no value. Paper currency loses value annually even in the best of times and after a crisis of any magnitude, it will become obsolete entirely. Real assets that can be traded for things you need will be much more valuable than a stack of money.

As the situation begins to stabilize, look for other people that may also be in your vicinity who took the time to prepare as you did. Although uncertain times require extra diligence when contacting others, a network of like-minded individuals is an invaluable asset. These are people who you can safely trade with and work side by side with on projects requiring assistance. In the world following catastrophe, this may be the greatest tool you have towards building a sustainable life.

Expect increased violence in more populated areas. The majority of people will not have spent any time at all preparing for disaster and these people will be desperate to survive. Struggling to find their way, unprepared people will have an increased propensity to violence as they look for ways to eat, stay warm, and find shelter.

There are many other drastic changes that will occur post-disaster. Contaminated food and water supplies, severe weather conditions, wild fires, and disease could all be dangers that

plague daily life. Although some of these are out of your control, some of these risks can be mitigated with proper planning.

Sustainable Food Options

Even with proper planning you are only able to store a finite amount of food. A six month supply of non-perishable food items may be sufficient for many disaster scenarios but any longer than that and you need sustainable food options. Creating your own food is necessary when there are no stores to visit or when food reserves run low. The location where you are residing will often dictate the food options that you have. If at all possible, try to equip yourself with the tools you will need to manage these food sources well before you actually need them.

Hunting

Hunting can be an integral part of surviving over a long period of time. Of course, hunting effectively requires tools. Whether you choose a firearm or bow, there are few areas in the world where there isn't some species of game present and available for harvest. Many people hunt recreationally already. For these individuals, adopting a hunting plan as a sustainable food option is very easy. If you have no experience hunting, there is a learning curve associated with successful hunting. This means that it may take longer to reach a level of proficiency that can consistently put food on the table. In other words, do not wait until your food stores are depleted to begin hunting.

As omnivores, humans require fresh meat to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Vegetarians may cringe at that statement but a healthy vegetarian must consume vitamin supplements to acquire many nutrients naturally found in meat. Since these supplements will not be available after a catastrophe, meat should be considered a necessary food option for survival.

Effective hunting requires work. Animals must be located by either tracking their movements or by setting up in areas that provide natural food sources for them. With time, it becomes easier to locate the best areas to harvest game. You may be fortunate enough to have animals residing in close proximity to your residence. This is ideal because you are not required to expend large amounts of energy hiking for miles in search of animals. This is the greatest challenge of hunting for sustenance. Sometimes you will be required to expend large amounts of energy stalking animals only to come home empty handed. It is not a guaranteed food source but the rewards are great when you do succeed. A single large animal such as a deer or bear can provide food for weeks. Even though you may not be successful every time you hunt, a large meat harvest will keep you well fed for a while.

Choosing the tools you will use while hunting is another important decision. For someone not familiar with hunting, a firearm is the best choice. With a small amount of practice they are very easy to use and just as safe as any power tool you may own. Ideally, you will have a variety of firearms at your disposal. A large caliber firearm ranging in size from .280 to .308

calibers is a good choice for taking down large animals. This weapon will not be very useful for smaller animals such as squirrels or rabbits because the large bullet will destroy most of the meat. A smaller caliber firearm, such as a .22, is much better suited to smaller game for this reason. Although a single large animal provides a lot of meat, a sack full of small game is just as good.

A shotgun is another good option to consider. The spray of pellets from a shotgun shell is the most effective way to harvest birds and waterfowl. It is difficult at best to shoot a flying bird with a rifle. The same task is relatively simple with a shotgun loaded with proper ammunition. In fact, using shells designed for birds can be used effectively on other small game as well. Shotguns are an excellent choice for rabbit hunting or for any other fast moving small game animal.

More experienced hunters may choose to use a bow for hunting. Especially when hunting large game, a bow is a very effective method and it has the added advantage of being relatively silent. If you are in an area where you are concerned about other people locating you, using a bow adds the element of stealth to your arsenal.

The drawback to using a bow is that you must be significantly closer to the animal before shooting and often the arrow will not kill the animal immediately. Whereas a well-placed rifle shot will usually drop an animal where it stands, animals shot with arrows can run for a mile or more before succumbing to their injuries. At the very least, this is extra energy being spent looking for the animal. Worse still, it is not uncommon for a hunter to be unable to locate the animal at all. Although an arrow through a major organ will take down an animal as effectively as a firearm, arrow shots are typically not as accurate except for the most experienced of archers.

Hunting can be a challenging and rewarding way to create sustainable food for you and your family. If you are not a proficient hunter already, it is advisable to get involved in recreational hunting now so you are better prepared when your life depends on it. Most states require that new hunters participate in a hunter safety education curriculum prior to being issued a hunting license. This course alone provides valuable insight into the many facets of successful hunting in addition to the many safety considerations that need to be accounted for.

Fishing

If you are fortunate enough to have access to a body of water, fishing is another excellent food source. Streams, ponds, lakes, and rivers are all excellent habitats for sustenance fishing. There are a variety of techniques to fish successfully with the two most common being rod and reel fishing and net fishing.

Fishing with a rod and reel is an enjoyable, often relaxing, pastime that puts food on the table. Fishing poles are very inexpensive and are often collapsible for easy transport and storage. Bait can be anything from table scraps to insects but trial and error will dictate what works best

in your fishing location. Like hunting, rod and reel fishing can be an all-day event and you can only catch one fish at a time. If the fish are biting, it won't take long to fill a bucket but it is not guaranteed. You could spend all day and be lucky if you catch one fish. Meanwhile, other tasks around the home are left undone.

When fishing for survival, an often preferred method is to use a gill net or similar device. Especially effective in moving bodies of water, a gill net is stretched across a section of water and catches every fish that swims through it automatically. Not only is it possible to catch many more fish simultaneously, but the autonomy provided by a gill net means you can focus on other tasks while the net does the work. You can set it in the morning and check on it in the afternoon. Bodies of water with a healthy fish population will usually provide ample amounts of food using this method.

Trapping

Although nearly a lost art in modern times, trapping animals once provided a large portion of food to early settlers. It is still practiced by some for both meat and the furs of the animals and can be an effective way to add diversity to your sustainable food arsenal.

The premise of trapping an animal is to lure it with bait or place the trap in an area heavily traveled by animals. Depending on the style of trap being used, the animal is held until you check the traps and harvest the animal.

The simplest form of trap is called a snare. Typically fabricated from copper wire, a snare is similar to a noose and works by tightening its hold on an animal as it struggles. Commercially available snares are very inexpensive and are best setup along paths that animals regularly travel or right outside a suspected animal den. Snares can also be made easily using copper wire found in appliances. Using approximately a two foot length of wire, loop it through itself to make a slipknot and anchor the loose end to a tree or other immovable object. Baits and lures around the snare can make the trap more appealing but is not always effective.

Many mechanical traps are commercially available and make trapping even easier. Especially in warm climates where a strangled animal will perish and begin decomposing quickly, using "live traps" that hold an animal alive until you return are often the best method of trapping. This ensures fresh meat that has not been contaminated by maggots or other insects.

Like net fishing, trapping is advantageous because the traps only have to be checked once a day leaving you time to complete other tasks. Make sure to check traps everyday as it is irresponsible and cruel to leave an animal stuck in a trap for any longer than necessary.

Gardening

Fruits and vegetables are also part of a healthy lifestyle. In some areas, wild fruit may grow locally and can be gathered easily. In other areas, any vegetables will have to be grown.

An effective garden can be grown either indoors or outside depending on the method used. There are two primary methods of gardening: hydroponic and conventional.

A hydroponic garden does not rely on soil as a growing medium. Instead, water with added nutrients is fed directly to the root system of the plants. Not only does this make growing indoors very easy; it usually results in more robust plants as well. Small hydroponic gardens can be setup indoors using mostly household items. The only real drawback to a hydroponic setup is the nutrients are a commercially available item that may not be sustainable. Additionally, indoor hydroponics will require artificial lighting which may be difficult to procure or maintain.

A conventional garden relies on soil as a growing medium. If you are fortunate enough to have land available, a conventional garden can be as large as you like. Remember that a bigger garden requires more work to maintain and it can draw unwanted attention from other people who may be residing in the area.

Gardening is a skill. You will not produce your best harvests immediately as it takes practice to get maximum production. A garden also takes a season or more to fully mature and begin producing maximum yield even if you are an experienced gardener. Look to supplement your garden with other food sources while it reaches maturity and your skill level builds.

If you think gardening may become part of your long term survival strategy, be sure to include some seeds in your survival kit now. Healthy seeds could be impossible to find after a disaster has already occurred. Remember that in most areas of the country gardening is dictated by the seasons. Take any surplus crops and store them properly for use in the off months.

Self-Defense

A good survival plan is important. Just as important is planning to protect your new lifestyle in an uncertain world. Less prepared people may try to take your shelter, food, and supplies for themselves in an act of desperation. Although being prepared is always the best course of action, you consequently become a target for attack.

Your residence (bug out location or your home) should be fortified as well as possible. Having locks on doors and windows is a good start. Be wary of broadcasting your survival strategies as this may provoke an attack. If you have an outside garden, try to use natural cover such as trees or shrubs to hide it from plain sight. Even if someone doesn't directly attack you, they may help themselves to your hard earned produce.

Trees and shrubs are a good idea around the perimeter of your home as well. Acting as a passive defense mechanism, a perimeter makes your home less inviting to intruders who will most likely go looking for an easier target elsewhere. It will also serve as a funnel and direct trespassers into smaller areas where they can be handled more directly.

Even if you choose not to hunt for food, a firearm is one of the most powerful deterrents available to thwart a potential attack. In a survival situation, morality is not as important as protecting your family from harm. Rifles can be used at longer ranges if you feel an attack is imminent. A handgun is more preferable for close encounters that may occur within the walls of your home.

The amount of effort you expend on defensive measures is a personal choice that is also dictated in part by the environment. Naturally occurring barriers such as rivers or streams around the home may mean that you have to spend less time or resources constructing artificial barriers. Try to consider all possible access points and make it as difficult as possible for someone to gain access. Statistics show that as many as 80 percent of home invasions are crimes of opportunity. If it looks too difficult, most criminals will move on to another, more easily accessible target.

Even now, the world is an uncertain place. Just imagine what things will be like after a large scale disaster. One only needs to look at the daily news to see the adverse effects of even a small catastrophe. The consequences of national or even global collapse would be much worse.

You cannot plan for every possible situation that you may encounter while surviving in a post-catastrophic world, but making a basic survival plan and understanding the many facets of sustained survival over long periods of time puts you at a significant advantage over the millions of people who live in denial. Those same people will be wishing they had prepared as you have when disaster strikes.