

5 WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR SURVIVAL I.Q.

Adapted from the Article: "Training for Survival: 5 Ways to Increase Your Survival I.Q."



David and Two Other Classmates that Survived the 40 Day Sigma III Survival Instructors Class

Do you have the mental toughness, strength of character and tough as nails resolve to survive when a crisis strikes and your plans must change? Let's find out as we look at 5 simple ways to increase your "Survival IQ."

Lessons from the Marines...

Being a former Marine (and one who loves a good challenge) I can appreciate the incredible hardship that a Marine Scout / Sniper Cadet has to endure to be equipped for the field. The training is frankly insane and more than a little inhumane, but when all the agonies of the training are over, the 50% of the original number of men (that made the cut) have the sweet satisfaction of the well earned title "Marine Scout / Sniper" and know how much more they are capable of beyond the physical, emotional and mental limits they thought they had.

So what does that have to do with you? Well, we all have our comfort zones and self-imposed limits. But how often do we push ourselves to step outside of them....on purpose?

Here are some tips to help you increase your survivability taken from this specialized training:

Intentionally Push Your Limits...

It is good to be pushed to your limits. Then you know what they are and you also know what you can overcome. This is valuable knowledge.

Marines are taken beyond what they think their breaking point is... and the ones that "make it" realize there was more "in the tank" than they realized.

How often do you choose the easy way or the path of least resistance? I'll always remember my



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high school basketball coach who drilled into me the idea that there is no gain without pain.

If I wanted to be the best, I needed to push myself.

Now the truth is that I was NO basketball All-Star. In fact, during my entire high school career I NEVER started, nope not once. I sat on the bench the majority of every game. But I will tell you that I loved the game and at every practice I was there, pushing my personal limits, learning discipline and making the starters work to keep their spots.

Pushing the limits of what you think you can do is tough and almost always painful, especially when there is no glory in it and it takes all the guts you can muster to just keep going.

Why do we hail Olympic athletes so profusely? Because their lives are dedicated to pushing beyond the athletic records set by the best of the best of us. We admire their discipline from afar, but how many of us emulate it?

If you want to grow in your ability to survive any situation, as far as it depends on you, that is, you must learn to push your limits. It can be something as simple as snatching up one of your kids with a backpack on and seeing how far

you can run with them before you fall exhausted to the ground. It could be seeing how long you can do without something you think you need to survive. (Obviously, not water or basic nutrients.) Identify your limitations and purpose to break through them.

Purpose to Do Things You Don't Want to Do...

Doing things you don't want to do for long durations develops an ability to turn off the voice that says, "I don't wanna," and tune into the one that says, "I can do this!"

In Marine Corps Basic Training and Scout Sniper School -- as well as any life-threatening survival situation -- the first days are a head game that you play with yourself. Some don't make it because they give in and decide, "I can't" or "I won't."

The root out of which "I don't wanna" grows is laziness. Laziness never accomplishes anything and carries condemnation onto the person who is paralyzed by it.

In a survival situation being paralyzed mentally or emotionally can soon result in death.



Real survival is tough... practice by doing hard things

Aesop's The Ant and the Cricket tells a woeful tale of a cricket who sang all summer while the ant was storing up for winter. You can imagine each of their conditions when winter came.

Industry and perseverance are the character qualities this children's tale was meant to encourage.

It IS hard to do what we don't want to do. Some folks go to a job every day they don't want to go to because they have to - this is survival training!

As a child my wife had to work on their family farm on Saturdays and summer days when all her friends were cavorting at the local swimming hole or otherwise having some kind of recreation together. It was very H.A.R.D. for her but she is very grateful for the work ethic and spirit of excellence forged into her character from those long hard days. It has served her well... and helped her to "deal with" all the crazy, ridiculous things I have put

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her through over the past 25 years... LOL.

And because of her having to do hard things while growing up... she now has the amazing ability to “suck it up” joyfully and happily say “Yes” when help is needed for grunge work that nobody else wants to do. She’s quite an amazing woman and is loved by many because of her kindness and willingness to serve people by doing what others don’t want to, and aren’t willing to do.

Intentionally Do Without...

Enduring forced withdrawal from everything comfortable makes you uncomfortable with what’s comfortable.

U.S. Marines are literally stripped of everything within the first hours of boot camp. They gain a quick and keen awareness that their comfort is not the necessity they thought it was.

Back to my wife (Carin)... she was blessed to be able to spend a season in a Burmese refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border. These precious people had run for their lives over the mountains between Burma and Thailand with only what they could carry, which often was a child or two. No comforts of life whatsoever. Eating only what could be found along the way.

Some were able to grab a small bag of rice, but that was the exception.

They were welcomed by the Thai government into camps that they had to build with the resources available from the surrounding jungle. Help was sent for the obtaining of water pumps. Food was still scarce, but joy was everywhere.

Carin mentioned that she had never stepped into a more peaceful and purposeful environment than while she was in the refugee camps. Oh, bad things happened there, but they had a peace that passes understanding. Their lives had been reduced to essentials ONLY and without the distractions of “normal life”, they were able to focus on the enduring things that really mattered: family, friends and faith. That is why, every morning, Carin was awakened to the most beautiful wake-up call ever: voices singing praises to God.

It’s a great idea to take a trip somewhere where you would be uncomfortable. To a different culture. To a poverty or disaster stricken area. Or to a hard core survival school. You will soon learn what is essential and what is not. And you will be liberated.

Living without can help you learn to be content in hard times...



Live in the Moment by Always Appreciating What You Have...

Being cut off from those you love just binds them more tightly to your heart. There’s nothing like doing without to enhance appreciation of what you have!

“Absence makes the heart grow fonder” is really true. I was recently challenged by a quip on Facebook which said, “Don’t be a person who only appreciates what you have after it is gone.” Oh, what a gift to be able to look around us and see the value of the treasures we are surrounded by!

And honestly, these days, I just don’t like to be anywhere by myself. I want to be where my loved ones are, doing as much life as possible with them and sharing joys as well as challenges and making memories.

I wouldn’t recommend leaving home for a long trip to test this theory, but if you are someone who has to take business trips or be away from home for other reasons, may I challenge you to

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count the blessings you are leaving behind and stir up a hunger and passion to return to these gifts with more fervency than ever and seize the day with them? These gifts are our touchstones in an ever-changing world, the pull of 'north' on our heart's compass.

Embrace Challenges!

Being confronted with ever changing challenges makes one eager to learn the lessons to be gleaned from each situation so you can move on.

For every season there is a purpose or, to rhyme, a reason.

When I look back over my life at the hard challenges I have been brought through, I can see where my character was challenged, stretched, forged and grown.

I can see changes wrought in how I look at or think about things.

I can see a growth in my ability to quickly forgive and move on or

extend grace to someone who I find irritating, irrational or immature -- realizing they are a work in progress, just like I am.

Marine Corps Recruits and Scout Sniper Cadets are moved onto a new challenge when their instructors see that they have acquired the necessary skills, attitudes, or intuitions needed to survive the most challenging situations imaginable. But the ultimate goal of their training (and ours) must go beyond simply surviving, but to thriving in the midst of life's most difficult situations, whether in combat, a survival situation, disaster or on the harder days we all face.

Look around at the challenges and trials you are currently in. How can you be growing?

What needs to be changed in your outlook or attitude? What life skills do you need to add to your personal tool box?



For me, I always ask God about these things and get my answers from Him.

It is an awesome and wonder-filled moment to look back after a huge trial and realize that you are not the same person you were before that trial. You are now more equipped for the next challenge that is surely around the bend.

You haven't just survived, but you've taken ground! You've thrived in the midst of life's hard days. You are better prepared for tomorrow. And more confident, capable and compassionate than you were yesterday.

Mission accomplished!

~ David and Carin

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