

Why prepping looks good on paper and why reality hits differently

Just getting into prepping? You may sometimes fall prey to overheated talk and “hype” when it comes to this lifestyle. You might see articles that make it seem like prepping is just another hobby. Build a bug-out bag, stock some food and water, and you’re good, right? Not quite.

Some people out there equipped with good intentions have romanticized the idea of prepping, and they make it seem like there isn’t much to it. While a year’s worth of supplies and other extensive preparations sound great on paper, prepping goes much deeper. Here’s a reality check for new preppers, along with what to expect on this ongoing journey.

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Prepping realities:

You are alone, and you will most probably remain alone

You’ve seen online videos showcasing families working together to achieve their goals, and the same narrative is being shown in many movies to highlight the fact that anything can be done as long as there’s unity and acceptance of one’s choices.

While the same description can be applied to prepping, reality

hits differently when you realize you'll probably have to tackle this new approach all alone. In fact, emergency preparedness is still seen as a peculiar activity, and even loved ones struggle to grasp its purpose.

While they might understand the value of being prepared during a crisis, few are willing to give a helping hand and actively participate. Even more, when your prepping lifestyle starts causing friction, and they realize it might be a full-time job, they will often distance themselves from it. That's when your spouse starts asking questions like, "Don't you think this is a little too much?" or "Aren't you overspending with your prepping?"

Sure, the same thing can be said about any other activity or hobby, and perhaps some of you have heard this one: "What do you need another gun for?". To them, prepping might seem like a financial and time drain, and it takes a lot of work to get them on your side. While some manage to convince loved ones to join, others face the reality of going it alone. This is a common experience, and acknowledging it helps new preppers set realistic expectations.

It's a life of learning journeys

Emergency preparedness is a continuous learning process, and so far, I've never heard anyone say they know enough. There's a reason why true survival experts are rare – the knowledge and skillset are immense. You'll never master everything, and aiming for that can become a full-time job, unrealistic for most. It's obvious that such a thing is impossible for most folks, and they will probably never achieve the level of preparedness that would make them feel safe and comfortable.

Even after 15 years as a prepper, I've never called myself an expert. I've helped countless people begin their journey, but I constantly strive to improve, knowing I'll never learn or do it all. I prioritize what matters most for myself and my loved

ones.

Here's another crucial point: information is valuable, but only if tested and verified. There are still many dangerous survival myths perpetuated today, and folks don't even bother to question them.

Now, let's say you do acquire a vast amount of knowledge and test some of it. Is that enough? Experience tells me honing your skills takes hundreds of hours. Unless survival is your profession or you have ample free time, replicating those hours might be difficult. Don't believe me? Try starting a fire using primitive methods – it's a humbling experience.

The financial hurdle of prepping no one talks about

Cost is a major reason people abandon prepping, especially with rising prices. With the growing costs of EVERYTHING, it has become more obvious that emergency preparedness is expensive. Sure, you can cut corners here and there by learning DIY skills like foraging, fishing, gardening, canning, and so on to save on food, but you will still have to spend money here and there.

According to a November 2023 study, over 60% of Americans live paycheck to paycheck, with 20% struggling with bills. Prepping becomes less of a priority for those living hand-to-mouth, often leading them to delay or quit altogether.

There's no one-size-fits-all budget-prepping solution. Tips like shopping at discount stores or yard sales may help, but securing everything you need can be challenging.

Everything costs money and time in this world, and how you manage these two resources is a personal choice that depends on many factors. Time and money are finite resources, and managing them depends on your personal circumstances. Some may

sell skills or work overtime, but this adds another burden. It's important to be realistic about the upfront costs of prepping and explore options for increasing your income.

There's a lot of stress

Once you grasp the demands of prepping and the dedication it requires, stress can become a constant companion. You might feel overwhelmed by the time commitment, the financial burden, and, ultimately, the sheer volume of tasks involved. You might even start questioning the purpose of it all.

This sense of urgency to prepare and achieve peace of mind existed even before the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. However, these recent events have undeniably amplified the stress and transformed prepping into a perceived race against an uncertain future.

I understand this feeling intimately. There were times when I felt like I was constantly falling behind, no matter how hard I tried. The turning point came when I took a step back and re-evaluated my plans. Prioritization became key – focusing on what mattered most for my specific situation.

Only after I accepted that prepping isn't a race with a finish line did I learn to manage the anxiety and constant stress. It's a marathon, not a sprint. You set the pace and define your own goals. Once you reach a point of preparedness that feels comfortable for you, it's entirely your decision whether to take on additional challenges. Remember, prepping is a lifelong journey meant to empower you, not control your life. It should be approached with a sense of purpose and accomplishment, not become a source of constant stress.

There is no guarantee of survival

Everyone I talk to asks about surviving specific emergencies.

I offer advice and steer them in the right direction, but I'm also honest. No matter how much you prepare, survival isn't guaranteed.

There's an element of randomness, an unpredictable factor, I call it. Things can change drastically in an instant, leaving even seasoned preppers vulnerable. That's why I recommend a Plan B and even a backup plan for your Plan B (just like I do).

No matter how much you struggle and how much you try to become an expert survivalist, there's no guarantee you will succeed.

The randomness can't be eliminated, but it can be mitigated. It's like risk management in business – the better prepared you are, the higher your odds of success. But predicting the future is impossible, so there's no 100% survival rate.

One thing I've noticed when discussing randomness is the occasional arrogance. Some people get defensive, insisting they're completely prepared. But these same folks often get flustered when I ask if they've recently checked their bug-out bags for expired items or restocked their supplies.

Remember, prepping isn't about proving yourself to me or anyone else. Do it for yourself and your loved ones.



Always stay ahead of the herd

“So, you can't guarantee survival? Why prep?”

This is a legitimate question some might ask after reading this article. Here's an analogy: Imagine a bear chasing you and two others. You just need to be faster than one, not necessarily everyone.

It's the same thing with prepping for emergencies; you can't prepare yourself for every possible scenario (even though certain scenarios require similar preparations), and you can't learn everything about survival to become a walking encyclopedia. However, prepping helps you stay ahead of the curve when things go bad. All you need is a fighting chance, and that's a good start.

As I keep telling people, emergency preparedness is a personal choice, and how you prepare depends on multiple factors, such as time, income, skills, and knowledge. Prepping requires analytical thinking, planning, and organization. Most folks don't even make a threat analysis to establish what they should be prepping for. They jump into information overload and shopping sprees to make sure at least the basics are covered.

Take it slow. Prioritize your resources (money, time, actions). Remember, you just need to be faster than the one next to you.

Concluding

Prepping can feel overwhelming at first. The sheer amount of information, the financial investment, and the seemingly endless tasks can trigger stress and anxiety. You might even question the point of it all. But here's the key takeaway: prepping isn't a race with a finish line. It's a lifelong journey meant to empower you, not control your life. So, start small, stay focused, and enjoy the journey of building a more secure future for yourself and your loved ones. The sense of security and empowerment that comes from preparedness is a reward worth striving for. Embrace the process, and let

prepping be a source of confidence, not a burden.