

Busting Top 6 Survival Myths That Might Get You Killed

Survival preparedness has become a hot topic in the last decade or so thanks to the abundance of TV shows and movies covering the topic.

Regardless of the media channel you are following to get your information, you will always find something that gets you hooked and demanding for more. The problem with some of the survival knowledge being spread out there is that some of the survival myths that we learned of since our childhood are still managing to pass through the “fact check” filters. Often times, incorrect information is passed to the audience, creating what I call “false survivors.”

What the consumer learns from the media, does not always reflect the actual reality of what true survival is. This will eventually lead to a false sense of security, and consumers will accumulate knowledge that has no practical value. If one of these people will find themselves in a survival scenario, the information developed to entertain the masses won't do them any good. If disaster strikes, they will be armed with inappropriate information, and they will not get a fighting chance to endure the survival ordeal.

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That being said, I honestly believe it's time to unlearn some of these so-called “survival rules.” Most of these myths may not be as accurate as you may think, so read on and stay informed.

Debunking survival myths

1. Food is your number one priority

Our generation is used to being spoiled with all sorts of foods and snacks. We are somehow programmed and manipulated to see food as our top priority, and we consume a lot of products (we also waste a lot). On a day to day basis, this is a common habit, but when you are in the woods, and your survival is at stake, food should be considered a priority only when you took care of all the other survival tasks.

You will last quite a lot of time before hunger will affect your judgment, and there are other tasks you should take care of first. Finding water and purifying it should be your main concern. Erecting a shelter and starting a fire are two survival tasks that also require your immediate attention. First, because it will keep you safe from the elements and will keep hypothermia away, and second because it will help you stay mentally prepared for what happens next.

Your belly may not agree with you and protest, but there are priorities you should be taken care of before searching for food. You could survive for weeks before succumbing to hunger, so get your priorities straight.

2. Making a fire is easy

You've seen the main lead in movies or TV shows banging two rocks together or rubbing two sticks of wood, and by magic, fire is created. If only would be that easy...

In the wilderness, fire is not a given, and I can't be created as easily as shown in movies or TV shows. If you have a lighter or some fire starting gear in your pocket, you are in luck. However, if that's not the case, you're going to learn the hard way how difficult it is to create a fire. Things become even more complicated if you are in an unknown

environment and if you lack resources for building the fire

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You will try to make fire by friction, but I can guarantee that such task is impossible if you don't have enough field experience. Even experienced survivalists know that making a fire without tools is a daunting task and primitive fire starting methods take time and a lot of patience.

Other factors you need to consider are the need to have proper material, moisture in the air, location, and so on. Never assume that fire is a given in a survival scenario and always carry a fire-starter with you at all times.

3. Hypothermia occurs only in cold environments

This is one of the survival myths that get most people killed. Hypothermia has been associated with cold environments, and people falsely believe that they can get it only in cold climates. They are wrong (dead wrong in some cases) since hypothermia may be caused by various factors. Most times, a wet environment, blowing wind and high elevation is all it takes for hypothermia to set in.

The above mentioned conditions can be found almost anywhere on the planet, and it doesn't matter if you're in a jungle or a damp forest.

To survive in an unknown environment and avoid hypothermia, you should follow a simple (common sense) rule; stay warm and dry. By doing so, you will prevent your body temperature from dropping to a life-threatening level. There are basic survival

rules to follow here, and you need to dry your clothes once they get wet, you have to build a fire and always add an insulating layer between you and the ground.

Don't envision a winter scenario when thinking about hypothermia. You don't need snow and ice to stay alert, and you should acknowledge that it can sneak up on you even in a friendly environment.

4. Wild edibles will save you from starvation

Many times you've seen your favorite actors picking up berries and what not to calm their growling belly and keep hunger at bay. They seem to survive in the wild with the bare minimum, and somehow, the majority of the plants they encounter are edible. To be honest, this is one of my "favorite" survival myths, and it irritates me how it makes foraging seem like a walk in the park.

In reality, foraging is a totally different endeavor, and few people actually know what this skill requires. It takes a great amount of knowledge and experience in the field to learn what Mother Nature can provide, how and if her food resources are practical and the amount you need to avoid starvation.

For everyone being suddenly dropped in an unknown environment picking the right plant to eat is like playing Russian roulette. The vast majority of plants you will encounter are poisonous, and you will make yourself ill without knowing it. That's the best case scenarios because most first-time foragers will not get a chance to try another wild edible if picking the wrong plant.

Not to mention that the foraging myth has more ramifications than just picking plants and eating them. There is a false sense of security that makes people blindly believe (including experienced preppers and survivalists) that eating nothing

more than wild edibles is enough to survive.

Think about our ancestors if you will, and you will sooner or later understand that they didn't rely only on plants to survive. They were hunters and gatherers and they could subsist on wild plants only by supplementing their meals (every once in a while) with the meat from the animals they hunted.

6 WILD PLANTS YOU CAN EAT



Plantain



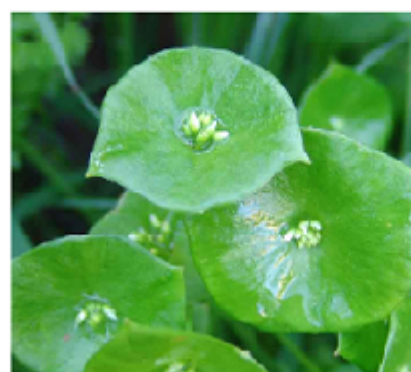
Chickweed



Garlic Mustard



Lamb's Quarter



Miner's Lettuce



Mallow

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To keep it simple, there are certain times and places that you could live of wild edibles for months at a time. However, this may be true only if you find yourself in a deserted environment and only during the fruiting season. I underlined the deserted word because that's a key point. If there are other humans or animals in the same environment, there will be a lot of competition for those food resources, and you may not be able to cross the finish line.

I can go on with examples of why the foraging survival myth is a dangerous one to keep perpetuating, and it will become a never-ending discussion. Just think about the winter season, a brutal time of the year for every forager (both humans and animals). When there's snow all around, covering everything, even animals have a hard time finding food. What makes you think you will be able to outsmart them?

I don't want to scare you straight, but you just need to understand how the plant life cycle works, what can be foraged and when. Running in the woods and picking plants, hoping to survive is just wishful thinking.

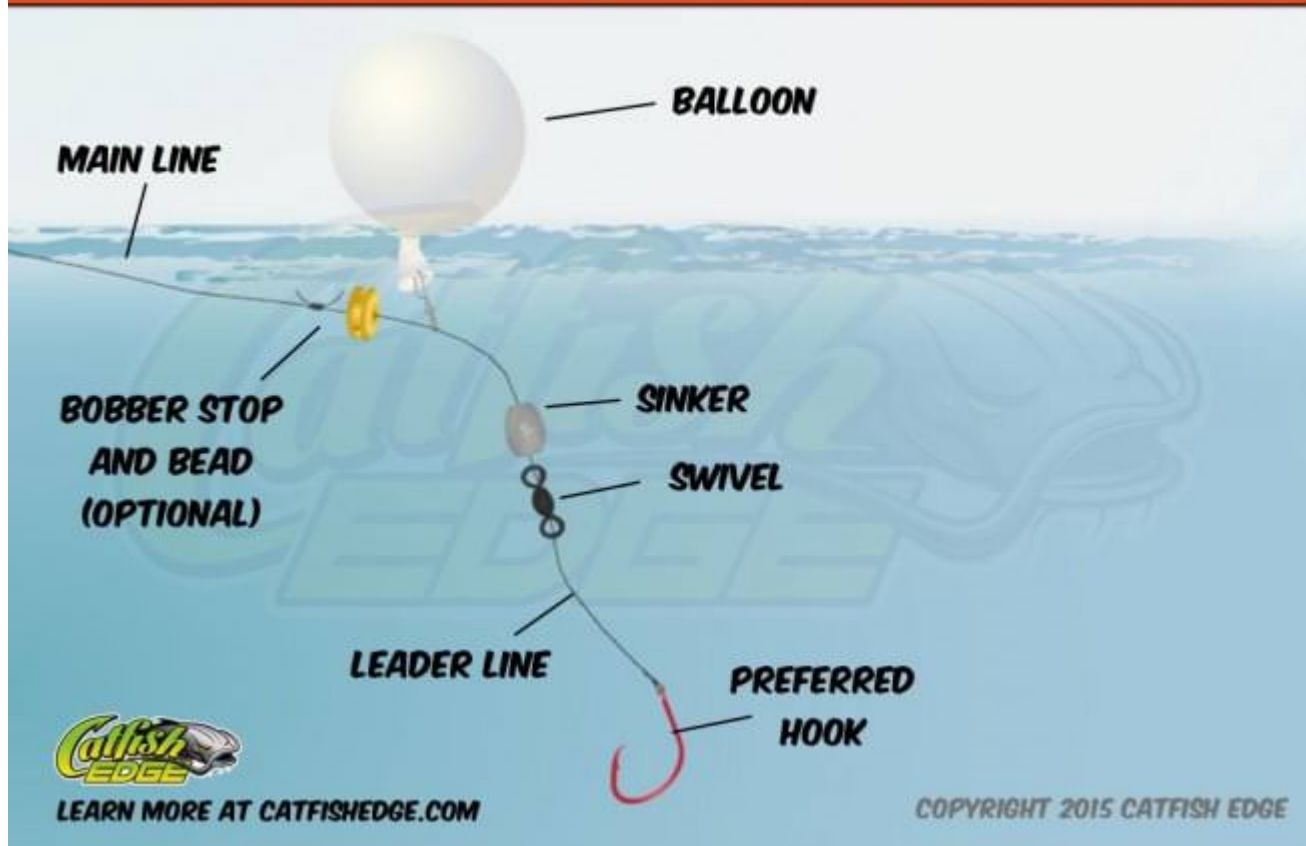
5. I can supplement my meals by hunting and fishing

This is another one of those survival myths that keep getting spread over and over again. Jumping on a wild boar with an improvised spear like Rambo and setting traps is not as easy as it looks in the movies.

First things first, don't assume that wild game and fish will be plentiful in the wild. If there's competition for such food sources (like in a regional disaster), there are high chances others will be more experienced than you when it comes to these "hobbies." Even if you are stranded alone in the wilderness, wild game and fish will not just wait for you to get there.

Hunting and fishing are two skills that require practice to master, and you need a lot of knowledge to be able to bag something. You may be able to obtain a good meal, but you need to know a few key elements if you want to succeed. Things such as what types of animals can be found in your environment, what type of fish populates the water holes in the region, what's the season and cycle of life of the fauna and most importantly what can you improvise for a successful catch without spending too much energy.

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Even with the proper gear, you will often times come home empty-handed. How do you think it will work out for you when a survival situation catches you unprepared?

My suggestions would be to concentrate on trapping and snaring on the land and fishing where the situation calls for it. This will help you avoid spending unnecessary energy, and you can deal with other survival necessities in the meantime. I think it goes without saying that you need to learn a thing or two about trapping and snaring before trying your hand at it. Even an apparently simple fish containment pen is hard to put together, no matter how many TV survival shows you've seen.

However, I must warn you that even with all the knowledge you accumulate, the chances are that the outdoors meal you are hoping to feast on may never arrive. These are skills that require a lot of time and practice, and you may not have those luxuries in a survival scenario.

6. Drinking urine will quench your thirst

I personally hate this one and I've seen it more and more popping up in the media as it was exploited by certain survival TV personalities to gain a large audience and make it go viral. It's a shocking alternative to quench your thirst, and it grabs people's attention. Many rookie preppers or survival enthusiasts think it's ok to drink their own urine due to these TV shows.

However, just because it's yellow, that doesn't make it lemonade.

Before resorting to drinking pee, you should first acknowledge how much you can survive without water in good (not ideal) conditions. That being said, if you covered the shelter issue to protect yourself from the changing weather, you can live three days without water and even stretch it to four days in certain conditions. In some cases, lucky survivalists have managed to stretch this amount of time with another day or two by drinking their own pee. Even so, this is not a good practice, and you shouldn't bet your life on it.

You may be in good shape, well-hydrated and you eat healthily, but your urine is still laden with waste compounds. By this age, most of you should have learned that no urine is sterile. Your body is eliminating urine for a reason, and that's to get rid of toxins and bacteria. Your urine contains more than 2,000 compounds, and around 100 of those are bacteria. The other compounds are waste from bodily processes.

This means that that most of the chemicals found in your urine come from your diet, environment, medicines, cosmetics, and what not. Since your body can't recycle these chemical compounds, it will eventually try to get rid of them through urine.

Even more, in a survival situation where you are approaching a

hydration deficit, drinking urine will make things worse. There will be a much higher concentration of bacteria in your urine, than usual.

It's not by chance that the U.S Army field guide has a section dedicated to liquids one should avoid drinking if faced with a dehydration scenario. If you take the time to read it, you will notice that urine is right next to blood and ocean water. Even more, they specify that if you get injured, your pee will become even more dangerous than the one of an unharmed survivor.

Rather than risking it all and drink your urine, you should look at the alternatives. Almost all environments provide you with an opportunity to gather water to stay hydrated on the field. Only the driest deserts will leave you with no alternatives. Otherwise, numerous plants contain water which you could extract or tap during various seasons. Just make sure you correctly identify the plants you plan on using and determine during which season they provide water.

Another alternative is to collect sap or dew or use the perspiration method to gather the lifesaving liquid. If you have the energy, you can also build a solar still.

The bottom line is that this survival myth will not provide you with the hydration you need and will get you ill.

Conclusions

There are other survival myths out there lurking their way into the minds of unsuspecting people, and we should all learn to separate fact from fiction if we want to keep ourselves alive in a worst-case scenario. The above mentioned survival myths are the ones that bug me the most, and I'm doing my part to educate people and make them aware of the dangers of following such survival myths. Do your part as well and share this knowledge with the people you care about. Stay safe!



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