

Hacking Your Preps for Everyday Life

You've probably heard someone say, "Prepping is a lifestyle" sometime or another.

I totally agree with that statement; but I wonder how many of us actually live it out every day. I'm not just talking about the part of prepping that involves spending money here; I'm talking about using our preps in everyday life; integrating them into everything we do.

There are actually a lot of ways that we can integrate our preps into our lives, many of which will help us to live a better life. But there are also the day-to-day vagrancies of life, which our preps can help us get through. If we are trying to prepare for anything and everything that might happen, doesn't it just make sense to take advantage of it, even when small things go wrong?

One of the biggest things that seem to go wrong for just about everyone, is running out of money a few days before payday arrives. With so much of the population living paycheck-to-paycheck, that's really not much of a surprise. Well, as far as I'm concerned, that's as much of a problem as a natural disaster, so we might as well treat it as such, taking advantage of our preps to see us through until payday comes. The only thing is, just as with any other disaster, we need to make sure to restock whatever we use.

Rotate Your Stock

Rotating your stock is a great way of making use of it, while ensuring that it keeps from going bad. Granted, most of us repackage our food stocks to give them a long shelf life; but we can also gain a long shelf life by simply rotating stock.

If foods from the grocery store are packaged to last a year and we stock a year's worth of those foods, then we should never need to repackage it.

The key to rotating your stock is to have a system; otherwise you're going to end up using it and forgetting to replace it. The first step in creating a system is to decide your basic stocking level. That stocking level should equal what you will use in three months, six months or a year; however, long you are building your stockpile to last.

Let's use canned spaghetti sauce as an example. Maybe your family goes through an average of a jar a week and you've got a one year stockpile. So, your basic stocking level for spaghetti sauce is 52 jars. That probably seems like a lot, but for many families that's a high use item.

Whenever you go grocery shopping, you will want to restock your spaghetti sauce (and everything else) back up to that basic stocking level. But here's the problem. Most of us don't want to have to take inventory every time we go to the grocery store. So, how do you figure out how much spaghetti sauce to buy, without having to do inventory?

Store it Right

The key here is how you store it, and that's going to depend a lot on the storage space you have available. Some people make up racks for canned goods like this, allowing them to load the new purchase into the back and have the old ones roll down to the front. If you can do that, then that's great; but not all of us have the space to do so. Roughly the same thing can be accomplished by having a specified area for a particular item, especially a high use one, so that you can see how much space is left vacant by what you've used. Then you just buy to fill that space.

With a system like this, all you have to do is write how many

you need on your shopping list. If you create a preprinted shopping list for your common items, then literally all you have to do is write in the number and you're ready to go to the store. In this way, you'll never be in the situation of running out of food a few days before payday; you'll have enough to get you through a number of paydays.

One last thing I'd recommend is to mark the containers with the purchase month and year. Be sure to do so in a way that is going to be visible as it is stored. That way, you can always be sure to grab the oldest one for use, rather than taking a newer can or box of the item.

Going Beyond Food

Rotating stock can and should go far beyond the food in your pantry. Many other things we use everyday can be rotated as well. I have most of our personal hygiene items on a rotation, from shaving cream to toothpaste. That keeps any of them from getting old.

I also stockpile about 55 gallons of gasoline for an emergency. That can be a tricky one, as gasoline tends to go bad after a while. However, as long as it is rotated, that's not going to happen. So, I keep my gasoline in a 55 gallon steel drum, laid on its side. That gas is then available for the lawnmower, chain saw, generator and other tools. In addition, at least once a month, I fill my car from that drum, rather than at the gas station, refilling it with fresh gas.

Step Up Your Gardening

Gardening has become a regular part of prepping, with many of us having a vegetable garden in our backyards. But how much of a vegetable garden do you have? Is it enough to really make a dent in your grocery bill?

The idea behind gardening is to be able to grow enough food to

survive through a long-term survival scenario. That's going to take a whole lot more than a 12 by 12 garden. It's probably going to take your whole backyard. So you may as well start now, expanding that garden and growing enough food to can and to make a good dent into your grocery budget.

My vegetable garden measures 15 feet by 35 feet, allowing me to grow quite a bit. That's in addition to the 15 fruit trees that we have. Last year, I was able to pull a couple hundred pounds of produce out of my garden. While that still wasn't as much as I would have liked to have grown, it was enough to augment what my wife and I bought from the grocery store considerably.

Animals Too

The next step, which goes hand-in-hand with gardening is growing animals or at least chickens. I'm just now getting started in that, but I have a friend here in the area who has enough chickens and quail to meet he and his wife's needs. They are actually growing all of their own food.

Once again, this is something that needs to be done now, so that you can be ready to produce enough for your family's needs in a post-disaster world. You aren't going to be able to start from zero, two weeks after a disaster happens, and be feeding your family totally from what you grow in six months. You'll be fortunate if you can get to that point in a year.

The average family of four spends something like \$700 per month on food. So if you can get your garden and your animals growing good, you could conceivably save over \$8,000 per year.

Your Car

Keeping your car, truck or SUV in good shape makes good prepping sense, in case you ever have to bug out. But it also makes good everyday sense. If your car isn't reliable, it's

going to cause you all sorts of problems; little things, like getting to work late.

But there's something else that makes sense for your car; that's keeping emergency equipment in it. I can't count how many times through the years I've had a breakdown away from home. I just had one a couple of weeks ago, where the thermostat in my car went bad, causing it to overheat. Fortunately, I had enough tools and water with me, so that I could pull out the thermostat, reseal the housing and refill my radiator.



Things happen; we all know that. They don't have to be big things for them to qualify as an emergency. Granted, a bad thermostat is a pretty minor repair; but it still qualifies as

an emergency in my book. I couldn't drive my car, without fixing it. That's enough.

Figure out the most likely emergencies that you will encounter and make sure your vehicle is ready for them. Carry whatever you need, rather than running around with an empty trunk. Even if you never have an emergency while away from home, you might be able to help someone else who does.

Your EDC

My EDC bag has grown through the years. Once upon a time it was about the size of a paperback novel. Today it's a pretty good sized cross-body bag. It's still a combination of being my emergency bag and get home bag, but now it has a lot more things that I can use to take care of problems day-to-day. Let me show you a few:

- Spork – For those times when I don't have anything to eat with
- P-38 Can opener – To get to that stuff to eat
- Esbit stove & fuel – Very compact stove, originally intended for C-Rations, which allows me to make a cup of coffee or heat a can of food anywhere, anytime
- Stamps – You never know
- Safety pins – Emergency clothing repair
- Elastic hair bands – Besides the obvious use, they're much better than rubber bands for holding things together
- Rain poncho – Who wants to get soaked?
- Faucet key – Ever need some water and can't figure out where to get it? With this, I can get water from any hose faucet on a commercial building
- Batteries – I don't know about you, but my flashlight's batteries always seem to go dead at the wrong time
- Headlamp – Saved my bacon when my thermostat went out. Nice for changing tires too

- Over-the-counter medicines – Always a good thing to have on hand

As you can readily see, many of these items can easily perform a dual purpose, being useful both in a day-to-day situation, as well as a survival one. The only thing I have to do is make sure I keep my EDC bag stocked, which I handle by inventorying my EDC once a month, just to make sure I haven't taken anything out and forgotten to put it back.

First-Aid

Several years ago I built a family emergency first-aid kit in a large fishing tackle box. I like using tackle boxes for this, because the cantilevered trays provide lots of little compartments to keep things organized and in place. I have enough in that kit to take care of gunshot wounds, broken limbs and much more.

While built for use in a post-disaster scenario, that first-aid kit probably gets more use than just about any piece of prepping or survival gear I own. I use it on my kids, my neighbor's kids and just about anyone else I run across who is injured. While I am not an EMT or trained to be any other sort of medical specialist, I have had some training in first-aid, gunshot wound care and other emergency care.

The thing about first-aid, is that if you don't practice those skills, you will never be competent in them. People who are studying to become an EMT are required to ride with ambulances, gaining hours and experience. That's why I'm not qualified; I've never thought I could spare that time. Even so, I recognize that I need all the practice I can get. That's why I make good use of my first-aid kit, whenever I have the opportunity.

Let me say here that there is a risk in providing first-aid; especially if you do something wrong and end up causing the

injured person more harm. But as long as you stick with what you know and don't go beyond that point, there is little risk of anyone saying that you've done wrong and taking you to court over it. Most people will be happy and thankful that you helped, even if that help is minimal.

The thing is, the faster that first-aid can be applied, the better. So, if I'm the first person at the scene of an accident, it makes sense for me to do what I can. Then, when the professionals show up, I turn it over to them, giving them a full report of everything I've done.

Of course, like the other things I've mentioned, this means that I have to keep my first-aid kit stocked, checking it regularly. I keep a box, filled with extra supplies on hand, just for restocking it. That way, I'm never in the position of being without the necessary first-aid supplies, just because I have already used them.

A Final Thought

Obviously, these are not the only ways that you can hack into your preps, using them to help you every day. There are many other things that you can do. What I'm trying to do here is show you a new way of looking at integrating prepping into your life. Where you go from there is up to you.