

How Competitive Shooting Can Effect Your Survival

You may think this is extreme; that I look more like I am going to battle in the deserts and mountains of Afghanistan. However, this is not too far off from what our world may look like in the next couple of years. One of the biggest hurtles that I believe America faces today is the fact that, we as a collective believe that we are impervious to the types of warfare, terrorism, conspiracies, emergencies, crime, economic meltdowns, etc. that the rest of the world faces on a daily basis. Venezuela's economic crash and subsequent government tyranny is one good example. Currently, we watch Ukrainians picking guns out of crates with no gear and no experience, and they have been called on to fight in the resistance. If there ever was a time to wake up it would be now.



Photo by Crystal Perry

We have lived so long in a world of comforts that we know no different, and we can't imagine it or deal with it when it happens. Why is this so? I believe it starts with the age old argument of nature verses nurture. I do not believe one or the other prevails in every case, but I believe we each manifest attributes from both in different percentages. Some of us have more natural instincts that dictate to us what we choose, for good or evil, and some are more influenced by the education and people that are around us. In our society and education system we have nurtured our children to psychologically believe that they are entitled to a certain

standard of living. And for the most part they have lived this life. These feelings of entitlement and something I call the normalcy theory. In my opinion, what dictates how people will react to a disaster or an invasion will be what they consider to be normal. And our normal here in America is non-violence and hot showers. One of the most common things said by victims after a violent attack here, is I never thought it would happen to me. The same psychology we have instilled in our people now, will carry over into a crisis. Ignorance can be bliss, but in a crisis it usually means hysteria and submission. You might think you are impervious, it's just the entitled next generation who doesn't get it. The reality truly is, unless you have lived it you don't fully get it. Even, I find myself caught in this trap and I have studied and lived in the survival, self-defense world for my whole adult life. Yet, I find myself looking to the conflicts around the world and asking myself am I capable of surviving and succeeding in that environment. Here is where we have to put ego aside and be brutally honest with ourselves or we will be in more trouble than we expect. So my answer is truly, I don't know. I have never faced those conflicts. I have trained for them, educated myself about them, lived and breathed scenarios but I don't really know. I hope my training kicks in and I hope I find myself capable of all the things I have trained to do.

So then are we completely doomed to never be fully prepared for a survivalist type situation because we don't live it? Should I just give up my pursuits because I don't know? The answer is no, we might not fully understand until we are there but there is training, mental and psychological processes that can get us pretty darn close. Usually when we think of training it consists of classes to teach us how to shoot, fight, survive in urban and rural environments and the list goes on. Putting yourself through a week of only using a certain amount of water a day. Living out of your 72 hour kit for 72 hours. This training is extremely important to build

your gear bag and be ready for what may come. These tangible trainings and the gear bags, knives, fire starter are all invaluable and it should always be our goal to have that stuff ready and continually updating and refining.

That being said, I think there is one thing no matter our financial situation, lack of time or inability to access training or gear that can really set us apart and prepare us for the world we may face. It doesn't cost money, it doesn't take a lot of time but it will make all the difference. It is the only thing that can help us identify if we truly could handle the survival situations or conflicts we may have to face in the future. I think it should be the first thing you put in your 72 hour kit or bug out bag. The thing I am talking about is mental and psychological preparation. We are a unique creature here on earth in the fact that we have an imagination. Our imaginations are so powerful that they can create real genuine emotional responses and here is the kicker. You don't have to live it to understand it, at least the emotions, psychological state and how you could react. You can make decisions and figure out options. It's so powerful because you can play out a scenario a million times and find the solution that best works for you. You can do this all while sitting in your armchair at home. Now to get real benefit out of this exercise, you must take it seriously and it must be something that you deeply internalize. You must visualize and process what your reactions would be. This is powerful stuff and it has been used for all kinds of stuff not just survival. As a firearms instructor, I use these exercises to help people use violence when it's against their nature. For a bug out scenario you can visualize ways to cope with the tragedies you might see and come up with options for problems I might face. If you find yourself struggling to come up with scenarios. Turn on the news. When you hear that the people of Ukraine have to leave their families and go fight the Russians. Pause, imagine that is you and really try to process the emotions, thoughts and situations you will face.

Cry, laugh, struggle in your mind and when the situation presents itself in real life you will at least recognize it.



Photo by Crystal Perry

Many of you might think this is an odd practice but it is actually fairly common. We have all heard of sports psychology. Well, this is the same, our sport just happens to be survival. I shoot competitively and struggle with anxiety and nerves. A lot of that has to do with self-image and negative thinking practices. I am not a negative person by nature but that is what the world taught me to be and it teaches you that too. If you fail, you are taught to focus on the failure. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that you fail again because that is all you think about. Changing the culturally ingrained BS that has been force fed to us and our kids is hard. Social media makes it even harder as now we are constantly subjected to likes or no likes, which makes a bigger impact? There is a book I use to help clients called, *With Winning in Mind*. It talks about the mental aspects of competition and that when it comes to high level athletics, it is not talent that separates the gold medalists from the silver medalists it is mindset. In survival a gold medal is living and a silver medal may not be. It's the hardest most mentally taxing competition and it's important that your bug out plan includes mental and psychological conditioning. Have you ever heard the term, *Rise to the Occasion*? Well its total crap, we don't rise to the occasion we fall to our greatest level of training. You may not be able to go to the range every day, or work on your gear, trek in the mountains or go hunting. But you most certainly can sit in your arm chair every day and train scenarios in your mind and build your mental and psychological stamina.

Finally a word of caution, we can't come up with every scenario and we can't predict the future. Don't get so wrapped up in your imagination that you become inflexible. Use as a tool for adaptation, not as a tool to predict what will happen and only have one response and try to force it. We seek balance and the better we can see the better we can change.

So start your bug out bag now, no matter your budget or time

constraints you have your first tools to put in your tool bag. You can start today with a little bit of quiet time and practical application. Never underestimate your imagination it can take you all over the world you can be the bad guy, the good guy and a bystander all in the same scenario. You can break social convention with no consequences. You can process the emotions of having to shoot someone without going to jail. You can cry over loss of loved ones and feel the bravery of standing up again to fight after the tragedy. You can feel the joy from succeeding. There will be not just fighting and tragedy but hard moral decisions as well. Will you feed your neighbor when they come asking for food? Don't make that choice when it happens. Imagine it, feel the emotions, and make that decision now. So that when the day comes you rise to your training.