

How to Prepare Small Children for Survival Situations

Children are a joy and a blessing, as well as being a burden that we have to bear. Anyone who has children recognizes this dichotomy, whether they openly admit it or not. Generally speaking, we tend to focus on only one of those characteristics at a time, even though we can readily switch back and forth, depending on the circumstances and how our children are acting.

There is nowhere where the burden of caring for our children can be felt stronger than in the midst of a crisis, especially a survival situation. People without a strong moral compass can easily feel that the burden is too much, to the point where some might be tempted to abandon their family. I would have to say this is especially true of men, as men will not only feel that burden; but don't have a mother's instinct to lean on. Mothers will die protecting their children; men of low morals might not.

Personally, I don't believe that there are preppers who would consider that. We don't go through all the struggle and work of preparing for a disaster just for ourselves; but rather, for our families. Still, knowing what to do with our children, especially our smaller children, in those times can be challenging.



My children are all grown up; but that just means that I have grandchildren to concern myself with. Our survival planning has included the idea that our children and grandchildren would return home after a major disaster. We stockpile food and other supplies with that in mind. While we would be rather crowded, we have a large house, making it possible to fit everyone in.

None of my kids are really survivalists, to the extent that I would like them to be. Even growing up in a home with my interest in survival, they didn't learn as much as I would have liked them to. Nevertheless, they all have skills which would be useful, including hunting, fishing and gardening. The question then becomes, what do we do with our grandchildren, whom I love dearly; but who are too young to be much help in a post-disaster survival scenario?

Training Counts

I'm sure I'm not the only one with this concern. If you have small children, you're facing the same problem. Like me, you're probably wondering what to do; so, let's look at some ideas.

I've heard people say to start teaching children survival skills as young as possible. While there are limitations to that; there are some skills that they can be taught; like collecting sticks for the fire and working in the garden. Any skills you teach your children have to be age specific. Yes, give them responsibility; but don't expect them to do more than is reasonable.

On top of that, there are many important things to teach your children; things that may not be considered to be survival skills, while still being essential to their survival:

- **Obedience** – One of the key things that any military organization teaches new recruits is instant, unquestioning obedience. That's a necessity in combat, as failure to obey can cost people's lives. It's no different in survival, where not obeying could get your children killed. Obedience needs to include obeying your rules too, not just what you tell them in the moment.
- **Staying Quiet** – Should your family come under attack or there be someone looking for you to attack you, it may be necessary for your children to remain quiet, so that

they don't give away their position or the family's position.

- **Hiding** – Going hand in hand with staying quiet is being able to hide. Children naturally like to hide, but are really poor at it (think hide and seek). What they need to learn is to look at their hiding place from other people's point of view, whether people can see them.
- **Truly Noticing Their Surroundings** – Being able to truly see what is around is has to be one of the most essential survival skills. This skill is the starting point for many other skills, such as foraging, finding water and even finding a hiding place.
- **Being Alert** – Hand in hand with noticing their surroundings is being alert to what is happening around them. Dangerous predators, both two-legged and four, try to blend into the surroundings. But if one is alert, they can catch the signs of what dangers there are. Please note: I'm not saying to teach them to be afraid of danger, but rather to see what is there. They will probably recognize most dangers on their own.
- **Finding Their Way Home** – There's always a possibility that a child will become lost or separated from the family. When that happens, rather than sitting down and crying, they need to learn how to work out where they are and how to find their way back home. This is a complex skill, as there are many places they could be. But the better they know their neighborhood and community, recognizing key landmarks and how they relate to home, the better they will be able to do.
- **Willingness to Work** – Children naturally want to play and not work. I mean, how many children do you know, who actually want to clean up their bedrooms? There are things we can do, to make working more fun, like turning it into a game; but they need to learn the diligence to follow through and actually do what we're telling them to do. That's called self-discipline.
- **Physical Training** – Physical strength and stamina are

important to survival. Granted, this is going to be limited with any child; but they need to gain whatever strength and stamina they can. We live in a time when children sit and play with electronics, rather than playing outdoors. That's not going to help them survive or do the things necessary for survival, should that time come.

Helping Them Understand Their World

Teaching children survival skills has to start with teaching them about their world. Specifically, what I mean by that is teaching them what their needs are and how those needs are met. Take water for example. Children get thirsty and want something to drink, usually something sweet. But the thirst is not simply a mental or emotional desire, it's their body telling their mind they have a need.

Water

Understanding what that need is, is the first step in learning how to meet that need. Many children learn where their favorite drink is stored and will go there to get one. Either that, or they'll go to the fridge and get a cup of water from the dispenser, assuming there is one.

Okay, the next step is teaching them what to do if there is no water in the fridge. Where else can you go to get water? The typical answer is the sink. Step them through from there – what if there's no water in any of the sinks? Where else can you get water? That's the basic survival process, for water. You and I, as adults would first go to our typical water sources. But if those didn't work, we'd go to alternate or backup sources. We're just breaking it down to their level.

The next step is teaching them what water is safe to drink and what isn't. This is tricky, considering that there is little naturally occurring water that is safe. However, it is a

natural lead-in to teaching them about using a straw-type water filter for drinking any water they find.

Food

After dealing with water, we can do the same with food, especially if we've got a vegetable garden. Working in that garden is a great starting place for teaching your children how to harvest that food and eat it, even if they're on their own. While it may not have the appeal of chocolate cake and ice cream, carrots, bell peppers, tomatoes and other vegetables that can be eaten raw will suddenly taste better when they're really hungry.

Of course, we all have food stockpiles; but the majority of the food in those stockpiles are things that our children can't prepare on their own. Take the time to look at your stockpile and try to fit some things into it that your children can eat on their own, should the need arise. Then show them those things, explaining why they are there.

Warmth

Our other major priority, retaining our body heat, is both easier and harder to teach our children. On one hand, they will naturally try to escape being too cold or wet, going indoors. But until they are old enough, it would be dangerous to teach them how to light a fire in the fireplace. Rather, we need to teach them how to retain their body heat. That will go a long way, especially if they are in the shelter of your home, even without heat.



One Last Thing

Of course, if you're there, they won't have to depend on their own knowledge. Their need to fulfill these top survival

priorities is primarily if you're not there. But that's not going to be enough. Regardless of what happens to you, your children need to be able to survive. Considering that we can't teach them all the survival skills they need, to make it on their own. They need a fallback plan that they can use.

Mostly, this means someone they can go to, if you're gone. It's unlikely that you've got neighbors who are also preppers, although I realize that some people do. But even if none of them are preppers, are there any you trust? Are there any who are friends or family, who your kids could go to?

Here's the thing, if you're gone and not coming back, your children will need someone to care for them. Fortunately, they will have an ace in the hole, if they need to play that card. That is, they're not showing up empty-handed. Rather, they can lead those people to your stockpile, turning your food, water, other supplies and survival gear over to them. That's why it need to be someone you can trust. Your stockpile could then become your children's ticket to surviving, even without you.