



PLAYFUL PREPAREDNESS

**PREPARE YOUR
CHILDREN—FOR LIFE**



**26 GAMES FOR TEACHING SITUATIONAL AWARENESS
AND THE SURVIVAL MINDSET TO CHILDREN OF ALL AGES**

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PREFACE

I recall playing outside as a youngster until dark, when mom would call me home—usually for the third time. My mother, like her mother before her, could recall the same memory from her childhood.

Today's children will have no such childhood recollection.

While I, like most children from the '60s or '70s, spent hours *each day* playing outdoors, a recent study revealed that the typical American child spends only four to seven minutes per day playing outside. By contrast, digital screens hypnotize our children for more than seven hours each day. With this digital assault on their education, it's hardly a surprise to learn that children can recognize over 1,000 corporate logos, but fewer than 10 native plants.

Since the time I was a kid, childhood has transitioned from outdoors to indoors, and virtual reality has replaced the *real* world.

Even though I thought of playing outside as—well—playful, in truth my play prepared me to survive in the world. The games I played with others taught skills from teamwork to negotiation, as we bartered baseball cards. We kids foraged for blackberries and muscadines, built forts and tree houses as shelters and knew how to fish and hunt *alone* before we were 10. We sometimes slept outside and tended our campfires, and we knew a little something about how to avoid violence when we could, but defend ourselves (and others) when we couldn't.

From outer space, Earth may look the same as it did during my childhood, but a close inspection reveals that

we live in a very different society. Today, violence surrounds us, from terrorism to school shootings to road rage. As our society has become more fragile and dependent on electricity and fossil fuels, disasters cripple us more frequently than ever, whether they are manmade, natural or accidental.

What skills do today's children have to prepare them to face these threats of violence and disasters? For that matter, what skills and resources do their parents have?

This book, *Playful Preparedness*, is designed to open the door to preparedness. The 26 games and numerous survival skills listed in the bonus sections will help you learn critical survival skills that, perhaps, weren't taught to you. Then you can teach your children those same skills in a fun, family oriented way.

While you can easily play some of the games in a moving car or inside your home, most of them will reacquaint you with nature, while introducing your children to it for the first time. The activities in this book are appropriate for all ages, from toddlers to teenagers, and I've included many ways to increase the challenge of each game as your children improve their skills.

I hope you enjoy *Playful Preparedness*, and that it helps you and your children to become better prepared—for life.

Tim Young

*Preparing children for disasters is more important than
teaching them how to tie their shoes*

— Tim Young

INTRODUCTION

THE ORIGINAL PREP SCHOOL

Until I was four years old my family lived in the “old house.” It was a wooden, four-room cabin perched on a mountain stream that my grandfather built in the 1940s. I didn’t know it, but we were behind the times since most people had moved beyond our very “primitive” lifestyle.

When we wanted a drink of water we walked to our spring, filled a bucket and toted it home. If grandma needed hot water she had to start a fire first.

While my sister and I played outside in the dirt, grandma cleaned clothes on a washboard in the creek and wrung them dry. She let us “help” when she churned butter or shucked corn, then taught us to start a fire for the wood stove while she killed a chicken for dinner. After dinner we “got to” feed the pigs, harvest the garden and stack the jars of food on the shelf that grandma canned. For fun, I would sit on the porch and practice knife skills by whittling away on a piece of hickory.

As it turns out, my childhood was the original “prep school”—the one that prepared me for life.

By contrast, most of today’s parents (and even *their* parents) didn’t grow up learning those skills. Instead, they were born into a life of dependence on modern conveniences. As a result, today’s children are only taught *modern* survival skills—such as flipping a switch that turns on lights and turning on a faucet to get drinking water.

Today’s children can navigate with technology, but not with a paper road map. They can find Wi-Fi in any city, but ask them to purify water from any source and they

can't. They can use a microwave, but they can't build a fire.

Beyond the basic survival skills that we're failing to pass down to our children, our world has many more violent threats than it did a few generations ago. In addition to common natural disasters, our society is becoming increasingly and indiscriminately violent. Unspeakable tragedies include abductions, sexual assaults, and deadly shootings at schools, from kindergartens to universities.

We're shocked when we see headlines of violence, such as these real-life examples from recent years:

- Bombing at the Boston Marathon.
- Gunman kills 26, Including 20 Schoolchildren in Connecticut.
- Thirteen Dead, 29 Injured at Fort Hood Shooting.
- Gunman shoots 70, Kills 12 at Batman Movie.
- Virginia Tech Shooting Leaves 33 Dead.
- Nine Killed at Church in Charleston, SC.

We keep glued to the news reports and cringe when we contemplate the truly horrific nature of the tragedy. But do we change our behavior or do anything to prepare ourselves for such an event? **Do we take our children aside and teach them skills that could save their lives?**

For most people, the answer is no. We turn our heads and remain inactive. The unfortunate truth is that so many deadly life-altering tragedies surround us that we are, ironically, unaware of them.

These newsworthy events seem less real when absorbed through television and news reports—more like something from a movie than real, human suffering.

Soon, the horrific images fade, normalcy bias takes over and we get on with our own lives.

But the fact is that small and large-scale disasters happen all the time, every day, and it can happen to you and your family. When it does, your *prepared* child could just save your life—as Kenneth Riggins learned.

Kenneth Riggins smelled smoke when his dogs woke him at 2:00 a.m. He rushed to wake his five-year old daughter, Angelica, who had just participated in fire safety training at school. Incredibly, she knew what to do and crawled out of the house on her hands and knees. She ran to the neighbors, who called 9-1-1. Within moments the fire department arrived and Angelica told them that her dad never followed her out of the house. They rescued Kenneth Riggins, thanks to his prepared and brave daughter.

This book is about helping you to empower your children with the crucial skills they need to survive and thrive. Just as the famous motto of the Boy Scouts is, “Be Prepared,” I want parents, teachers and guardians to empower all children to take care of themselves.

This guide will help you to help them achieve preparedness.

Don’t just send your children to prep school—be their prep school!

The best way to teach preparation is to MODEL it, which is what our family does and what I teach others to do in my book [Start Prepping!: Get Prepared—For Life.](#)

PLAYFUL PREPAREDNESS

Unlike most adults, children stay in a constant state of learning just by being kids. By nature, skill building is in their bones. We teach them with everything we do—even if we think we are doing nothing.

So, what do our children learn from us when we disregard the news story about a child abduction five states away? Perhaps they learn that it isn't anything to worry about—that it can't happen to them. Or maybe they learn that no one will care if they are abducted (since we show no apparent concern to the news event), allowing fear and dread to penetrate their psyche rather than situational awareness and survival skills.

However, if we use these teaching moments to model for our children, they can grasp a more valuable lesson—one that could save their lives. So why don't we?

One reason is because we don't want to scare them. But, as you'll soon see, you can teach preparedness and survival skills in a playful way. When you do, it removes the fear factor and allows you to assess their progress as they “play.”

Play is nature's way of assuring that young mammals, including young humans, will practice and become good at the skills they need to survive and thrive in their environments. In his excellent book, *Free to Learn*, author and developmental psychologist Peter Gray says that,

“Play is activity for its own sake, not activity aimed at some serious goal such as food, money, gold stars or praise. When we offer such rewards to children who are playing, we turn their play into something that is no longer play. Because play is activity done for its own sake rather than for some conscious end, people often see play as frivolous, or trivial. But here is the deliciously paradoxical point: Play's educational power lies in its triviality.”

In other words, play is something that all children want to do. Play is nature's way of teaching them. As parents, we must make conscious choices for guiding our children's games to make sure they learn the skills they

need to be prepared for life. It's our role to orchestrate the balancing act of allowing children to play while ensuring the skills they practice are the survival skills we want them to become proficient in.

There's an appropriate message for children regardless of their age, and an appropriate way to deliver the message. You're the parent—you know best, but by improving *your own* survival mindset you will model and teach them theirs just as surely as you taught them how to look both ways before crossing a street.

For example, you could teach a preschooler the skills to plan a survival bag simply by making up a game. Tell them to pretend they can't take the bus (or car) home from school (or playgroup) and you get to walk. Let them help pack the backpack. Many toddlers will no doubt add life-sustaining plastic dinosaurs and goldfish crackers, but this gives you an opportunity to show them a map, discuss sun, shade, and rain, as well as food and water. On your pretend journey, which could be from the pretend school in your garden shed back to the child's bedroom, let them decide if the sun is blazing hot or if you're trapped in a sudden downpour. They make the rules of play; you simply play with them and practice an important skill, such as taking shelter, making a play tent and so on.

As your children age, you can transition this to a real-life example by helping them pack important survival gear into their school backpacks, such as a poncho, survival whistle, extra water or food and a list of important contact data. The message gets modified as your children mature until you have developed a teenager who independently is prepared when she leaves the house.

And it all starts with play.

There are countless games you can play with young and older children, and this book includes dozens of ideas to get you going. As they develop their survival skills and broaden their thinking, you can share with your children why you bought the extra cans of tuna and why you're showing them how to filter water. Rather than being afraid they'll get it, just as I did when grandma showed me. Preparedness play should be fun, never scary.

As your children mature, you can build on the skills they've learned so they have a fighting chance in case they have to face an emergency on their own. This, of course, is our end goal—to prepare our children for life.

TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT PERSONAL SAFETY

Before we get to the games, let's spend a moment on how and why to teach children about personal safety.

Since we don't want to alarm our children, it can be difficult to talk with them about what to do if there is an emergency. After all, children need to know they are safe, and we parents want more than anything to make sure they both *feel* safe and *are* safe.

However, one of the most troubling aspects of our society is the horrific acts of violence and disasters we hear about in the news. We need to prepare our children for when they encounter something awful, such as a fire, natural disaster, or a public shooting. A way to do that is to make it fun and non-threatening for a child to learn disaster preparedness skills.

That's what this guide is all about.

One of the most awful realizations for a parent, at least for this parent, is that we cannot always be there to protect our children. Therefore, the best we can do is to calmly but consistently teach them the skills they need to

stay safe, and I firmly believe this topic has a place for all parents, whether you consider yourself to be a “prepper” or not.

Adults should seek opportunities for teachable moments to introduce and reinforce personal safety skills to children. If an incident occurs in your community or on the news, and your child asks about it, speak frankly but with reassurance. Explain that you want to discuss personal safety with them, so they will know what to do if they are ever confronted with a difficult situation.

Of course, not all conversations need to be formal. An open dialogue about safe versus dangerous situations should happen continually.

Something I do with my very young daughter is to discuss this while she watches a favorite animated movie. For instance, there are a few dangerous scenes in the movie Finding Nemo, such as when a predator fish attacks and eats all eggs other than Nemo in the opening scene, or when Nemo disobeys his father and swims in the open sea to a boat.

My young daughter has an adorable habit of putting her hands over her ears while keeping her eyes open anytime she witnesses something that alarms her, and this visual cue tells me when I can reassure *and* educate her at the same time. As needed, I explain that any creature can be a predator, whether it's a fish, chicken, fox, or human. We're never too young to learn the difference between good guys and bad guys. Look for situations that are right for you and your children.

Here are some ideas that I hope will be helpful.

- Speak to your children about personal safety in **small doses** at first. Be careful to use a calm,

non-threatening tone so you don't scare them. Instead, tell them that, while many people are good and trustworthy, not everyone is. As they become more comfortable, create drills to increase their awareness of their own instincts, when to say no, and when to run and seek help. If you don't think you can do this, you can. You're their parent and it's your job.

- **Speak openly** about safety issues. Children will be less likely to come to you if the issue is enshrouded in secrecy. Children need to know that **they can safely tell you** or a trusted adult if they feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused at all.
- Don't confuse children with the concept of "strangers." Young children don't have the same understanding as an adult might of who a stranger is. The "stranger-danger" message is **not effective**, as danger to children is much greater from someone you or they know than from a "stranger." Of all children under age five murdered from 1976 to 2005— fathers killed 31 percent, mothers killed 29 percent, male acquaintances murdered 23 percent and other relatives killed seven percent. Strangers killed only three percent.
- Older children and teens may think they already know all this or they are "too cool" for lecture. They aren't, and **teens are equally at risk** from victimization. Speak to them about the situations they put themselves in and if possible, allow them participate in the conversation with younger siblings. This will reinforce issues they hopefully already know.
- As for parents, we need to **know where our children are**—at all times. If you can't be with your child, there are many GPS trackers available

for children so you can know their location, and receive alerts if they go out of approved areas. Newer devices, such as one by hereO, simply act as a colorful watch that young children love.

- Above all, teach your children that it is more important to **get out of a threatening situation** than to be polite.
- An example of a video that may help you to teach young children is at tinyurl.com/iceabduct. In this social experiment video created with parent's permission, an ice cream truck operator demonstrates how **frighteningly easy it is to abduct children**. As a father of a young daughter, it's hard to watch, but what could be more important than teaching our children about safety? The time to begin developing their survival mindset is as soon as possible.
- Practice what you talk about. You may think your children understand your message, but until they can incorporate it into their daily lives, they may not clearly understand it. Find opportunities to practice "**what if**" scenarios, demonstrate and model excellent situational awareness, and show them that you value personal safety by being diligent every day. For younger children, be sure to make it playful and fun.
- Lastly, one great thing you can do for your family is to get them **working out together**. Martial arts and self-defense classes can be found in just about every city, but if this is not feasible, don't give up. There are many books and videos that show you how to practice right in your own home. This will not only develop a value of fitness but will teach your children lifelong skills.

I believe it is critical that we discuss the issue of safety with our children, and do so often. Not to scare them, but

to heighten their awareness of the world that surrounds them.

Now—let's get on to the games!



THE GAMES!

INTRODUCTION

To prove that introducing survival concepts to children needn't be scary, let me show you how to have some fun with playtime!

The following pages include 26 games, to be played in no particular order, that teach preparedness skills, situational awareness and the survival mindset so children can avoid threats of violence and survive disasters.

Play these games with children of *all ages* to instill survival skills. As needed, make adjustments to the games that are appropriate for your child's skill level. Just as young children learn their alphabet by singing the ABC song (over and over!), you can help them learn valuable life skills by practicing these games over and over. Use your judgment of what is best for each age level, and by all means invent new games or customize these to meet your specific goals.

You can play many of these games with little to no preparation, so keep a lookout for opportunities to play any game at anytime. Make playful preparedness a priority in your family.

Just let your children guide you and remember:

Always keep it fun!

GAME 1: SNAPSHOT



SUMMARY

Build your children's observational awareness skills by encouraging them to take a mental snapshot of their environment and recalling as many details as they can.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Situational awareness.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

None.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Look around at what you will ask your child to observe. Think about what they are likely to remember and choose a few details you consider important to their safety that they are likely to miss, such as exit signs, etc. If they have missed these items at the end of the game, you will point it out and discuss why it's important (you can also connect this to news stories).

HOW TO PLAY

Stop all distractions, i.e., turn off radios, stop walking, etc.

Tell your children to look around and take a mental picture of everything around them. Give them a time limit (one minute, 10 seconds, etc.).

During the time limit, make your own notes of what is important for them to see.

When time is up ask them to close their eyes and describe their picture to you. Pay attention to the types of details they notice.

With their eyes still closed, draw their attention to something you thought was important that they missed. Prompt them to try to remember more. For example, ask them, “Did you notice any exits in the room? Where are they?”

When done, ask them to open their eyes and discuss what they remembered. This is a great time to coach them on things that are good to pay attention to.

ASSESSMENT

Each time you play, see if your children recall the environment in greater detail. If they don’t assess a threat right away, that’s fine—just be sure they increase their awareness and continually improve. Encourage them to focus on details that relate to safety.

Continually challenge them as they become proficient observers by asking them to take a snapshot in busier and more active places, or simply introduce distractions.

Also, let your children turn the tables on you! Tell them that they can pick a place for you to close your eyes and recall what you remember. This gives them the power to put you in the “hot seat” while still accomplishing your goal of increasing their observational awareness. After all, they’re trying to find threats that you missed.

GAME 2: I-SPY!



SUMMARY

Help your child draw attention to important survival items in her environment by using the traditional “I-Spy” game.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Situational awareness.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

None, but young children (or older children wishing to play independently) may benefit from pictures of important items in the form of a board game.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

This is a game that you can play spontaneously, but for a more planned lesson, or to get children playing this game on their own, create a board game ahead of time using a file folder or old DVD case. To do this, print out pictures of important survival items that they are likely to find in a public place. For example, exit signs, fire alarms, water sources, pay phones, etc. You can laminate these items for durability and place Velcro on the back. Use a file folder or an old DVD case as the board with corresponding Velcro dots to hold the pictures on one side, while making a designated spot on the other side for items that were found. For example, your child may

move the pictures into an outline of a suitcase once she has spied them.

HOW TO PLAY

Choose an item in the environment you want your child to notice and give them a clue about it by saying something like, "I spy something that has red letters and an arrow."

She in turn must find the item, tell you what it is and point to it. For example, "It's an exit sign and I see it over there!"

Continue playing with different objects and be sure to let your child spy some things for you to find.

If you are using the board game:

Explain to her that some or all the items will be in the scene you are at. As she spies them, she must move them into a designated spot on the board.

ASSESSMENT

See if your child is familiar with the items you are giving clues for. Determine if she has already noticed them by how quickly she is able to find them.

GAME 3: THE “A” GAME



SUMMARY

Increase your child’s situational awareness by having him answer questions related to something you have experienced. Earn points or rewards when he brings his “A” game!

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Situational awareness.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Decide what motivates your child. Some children are happy to earn stickers, while hugs and affection motivate others. Whatever motivates your child, be sure to have plenty in stock.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Determine your own personal rules for the game. Each parent will feel differently about what and how they want to reward and where the boundaries of this game should lie.

HOW TO PLAY

Tell your child that you will be playing The “A” Game today.

Teach him the rules of The “A” Game. Explain that “A” stands for Awareness and that being aware of your surroundings is a very valuable skill.

Tell him that being aware means we are paying attention to what is happening around us. Your rules may involve some things such as asking him questions randomly, and at any time. The questions will cause him to remember something that he just saw. If he answers correctly, then it shows he was aware and paying attention. Reward him with a sticker (or whatever you choose) each time he answers correctly.

Throughout the day, surprise him with questions and see if he brings his “A” Game! Ask questions that assess his situational awareness. Depending on the age of your child this may involve things such as:

- While standing in line in the bank ask, “What’s the name of this bank? How did we get here? How many ways are there to exit?”
- After a party or play date you may simply ask, “Who was at your friend’s party? How many adults were there? How many were men and how many were women? Who did you not know?”

Each time he answers a question correctly make a big deal out of it. Tell him that he is really on his game today and gets an “A” for awareness!

At the end of the day, review with your child how many questions he was able to answer. Discuss the questions that he missed and explain why you thought it was important for him to notice those things.

If you have teenagers, you can encourage them to play this game with younger siblings, thereby teaching both at the same time.

ASSESSMENT

Determine if your child is increasing his awareness by answering more questions correctly. Quiz him during

times when you know he is not paying attention to draw his attention to this fact.

GAME 4: GUTS!



SUMMARY

Help your children become aware of the value of their “gut instincts” by discussing feelings in different scenarios.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Trusting instincts.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

None, however young children who are still learning how to label emotions may benefit from pictures of faces showing different feelings.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Identify a situation where you will be with your children that has the potential for something uncertain to happen (**Note:** Uncertain does not mean that something bad could happen.)

A good situation is one that is new to them, where they are naturally uncertain of what will happen next. However, you can also play this game in a situation that they have experienced many times, but have become so comfortable that they no longer seem alert to their surroundings. Imagine events that could take place while you are there. To keep this non-threatening, be

sure to consider possibilities that are both exciting as well as slightly concerning.

HOW TO PLAY

If the situation is new to your child, such as the first trip to the dentist, starting a new school year, their first sleep over party, or first ride on a roller coaster use the following steps:

As you are getting there ask your children, “What are you thinking about now?” If they are not thinking about the upcoming situation, then prompt them by saying, “You are about to go somewhere new. What do you think it will be like?”

Follow up with, “How are you feeling about this?” If they are very young you may ask them to choose a picture of a face that shows how they are feeling. Help them label their feelings and discuss what their body’s natural reaction is doing, which tells them what they are feeling. For example, if they are nervous, they may be quiet and have a jittery feeling. If they are happy and excited, they may smile and feel energetic.

Ask the child to try to describe what is causing them to feel the way they do. If they need help you can give them clues such as, “You said you were feeling excited. Is there something specific you are looking forward to?” Or, “You said you were feeling nervous, is there something that you are thinking about that scares you?”

Reassure them that their “gut instincts” are very strong and that it is a good thing to think about them and to try to determine what is causing them to feel the way they do.

Help them to understand their feelings by assessing the surroundings when you get to your destination. Point out clues in the environment that should confirm their

emotions. For example, if they are nervous about their first roller coaster ride, point out that it is very high and fast and so you understand why they are feeling nervous, but if they look at the people's faces who are coming from the ride, they'll see that they everyone is smiling and having fun. If their instincts give them any negative feelings be sure to talk them through the upcoming situation and help them to weigh the risks and rewards. For example, if they are afraid to go to the dentist, explain that you have been many times, everything always went fine and the dentist took care of your teeth, keeping you healthy.

If you are in a situation that your child is very familiar and comfortable with such as eating at a restaurant, waiting for the bus, or going to the movies, use the following steps:

Ask your child to assess their feelings while in the situation. Validate their emotions by saying something such as, "I can see you feel fine because you look very relaxed. You are sitting back and playing with your phone. I'm glad you feel safe. "

Next, introduce a "what if" possibility that could potentially happen in the current situation and ask the child how this would change the way they feel. Begin with positive scenarios and with discretion and experience, introduce alarming situations. For example, if you are in a restaurant and a sudden clapping starts with people singing Happy Birthday, how would this make them feel? Graduate to something such as, if you are at the movies and all of a sudden you hear people behind you start to yell and argue, how would this make them feel?

Draw their attention to what their "gut instincts" would be telling them. Ask them to explain why they think they would feel that way if the "what if" scenario happened.

If the pretend situation aroused negative feelings, then use this time to discuss action plans. Ask your children what they would do in that situation and help guide them to respond in an appropriate manner.

ASSESSMENT

After playing this game many times, assess if your children are becoming more aware of their feelings and gut instincts. See if they are *listening* to their body's reactions and weighing this against their observations in the environment. For more experienced children, assess whether they are considering potential things that could happen in a situation without your prompting. When they start teaching you, you'll know that you're developing children who are prepared for life.

GAME 5: WHAT IF?



SUMMARY

By asking questions starting with, “What if,” your child will imagine potential events and begin developing plans of action for each situation.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Contingency planning.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

None, but if your child has difficulty imagining “what if” scenarios, print out pictures of events you want him prepared for to use as prompts. For example, a severe blizzard that causes a power outage, arriving home with the front door pried open, getting to your car in a parking lot and finding a window broken, the smoke alarm going off while you are sleeping, etc.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Think of some real-life situations where your child will have to think on their feet and react to something unfamiliar. In order to keep this game light-hearted and fun, be sure to think of some positive situations as well, such as opening the door to find a delivery person with a gift basket of chocolate chip cookies.

HOW TO PLAY

Tell your child you're going to play a game where he will use his imagination. He is going to imagine something pretend that could happen and you want to know what he would do in that situation.

Begin with a positive scenario by either asking the "what if" question or showing him a prompting card. Ask the child to describe how he would react. Use guiding questions such as, "What would you do? What would you do next? How would you feel? What do you think would happen after that? Is there anything you shouldn't do in this situation? If your little brother (or friend) was in this situation, what do you think he would do? What do you think he should do?"

As your child describes his imaginary reaction, you can discuss his choices with him. Compliment him when he makes good decisions and reiterate why it was a good choice. If he makes risky decisions, point out the consequences that might come of it and brainstorm another path to take.

ASSESSMENT

Observe if your child can imagine these pretend situations. Pay attention to his feelings in the scenarios and see if he is uncomfortable imagining something he perceives as scary. If so, help him to become more comfortable and confident in his ability to react over time.

GAME 6: FREEZE FRAME



SUMMARY

By having your children “FREEZE” before they make a risky choice, they will become aware of things they do that could be harmful and learn to make better decisions.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Making safe choices.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

None.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Observe your children and determine the common behaviors they exhibit that you feel are potentially unsafe or that demonstrate bad habits. Consider the choices you would like your children to make.

HOW TO PLAY

Teach your children to freeze like an ice sculpture. Tell them that every time you say, “FREEZE!” they must stop what they are doing and stand perfectly still in their current pose.

Practice freezing in ordinary situations, such as when they are about to take a bite of food, in the middle of getting dressed, while they are walking, etc. Make it playful and fun by trying to catch them in silly poses.

When they can react quickly to the command, call “FREEZE!” the next time they do something risky. While the children are frozen ask them what they were about to do.

Make them aware of the dangerous nature of their behavior by discussing the potential consequences. Ask them what they should do instead or, if they don’t know, tell them what you would like them to do and why it’s important.

Depending on your children’s age and behaviors, potential risky behaviors to react to could be standing on a chair, not holding your hand when walking in a parking lot, running away from you in a store, walking down the road while texting, etc.

ASSESSMENT

Assess if your children are able to identify the risky behavior. Can they come up with better choices? As you play the game over time, continually monitor to see if their behavior improves.

GAME 7: HIDE & SEEK



SUMMARY

Teach your children how to find safe places to hide using the traditional Hide & Seek game. Help them become skilled hiders by practicing staying still and quiet.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Hiding in a secure place.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need a safe area either indoors or out that has multiple places to hide.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Assess the area where you will be playing. Determine some of the best hiding spots for your children if they were in serious danger and needed to hide or find shelter. Decide what you consider to be some of the worst places for them to hide, such as where they may become trapped. Also, be aware of dangerous hiding spots, such as places with sharp objects or areas where it is dark and there are things to trip or fall on.

HOW TO PLAY

Tell your children that you are going to play a hiding game. Explain that they are going to hide and you are going to have to find them. It is best to start this game

inside where the children are familiar with the surroundings and then moving to more challenging locations, such as in the yard.

Before starting, discuss what an effective hider would do. Tell them that they will have to find a spot where you can't easily see them and then they will have to stay very still and quiet or you will be able to find them.

Before you allow them to hide, go over some safety items. Point out any areas that could be dangerous. For example, tell them that hiding by the wood pile is not a good idea because there could be nails or snakes. Offer younger children an alternative by pointing out a few good places to hide that would be safe for them.

Give the children a few minutes to think for themselves about where they could hide, then close your eyes and count to ten. While you are counting they will hide.

In the beginning and for young children, you may want to count to 10 and say, "ready or not, I'm going to find you!" However, try and move beyond this phase when you feel comfortable, since the goal is to prepare them for a real scenario when they may have to hide. As horrible as it is to write this, terrorists don't announce that they're coming, and surviving violence is part of what we have to prepare children for.

After each turn review their choice of hiding spot and let them know how you found them. Be sure to offer them praise and advice on improving their hiding the next turn. You may say things such as, "It was great that you decided to hide under the bed, but I knew you were there because I saw your feet sticking out." Or, "You picked a great spot, but I found you because I heard you moving around. Next time try to stay very still."

An advanced version of this game is to use two adults, one playing the part of a criminal and the other the part of an authority figure, such as an officer or teacher. Tell the children that, once the clock starts, the criminal will have 60 seconds to find them. After that time they will hear the teacher's voice telling them it's safe to come out. As they progress, challenge them on how they know for sure that it was a teacher rather than the criminal disguising as a teacher.

Be sure to let the child be the seeker on occasion. Make mistakes on purpose so that they can find you and learn from what you did.

For children that are more aware of real scenarios where hiding is a good strategy, you can slowly introduce dialogue to improve their skills. Try discussing what they might be hiding from. If they are outside and get caught in a thunderstorm, talk about places to hide where they can stay dry and away from metal objects. If they are inside you may play "the bad guy" and tell them that they must hide from someone who has entered the house. Continue to reinforce the idea of when it is safe to come out in a real-life situation. No matter what, even when discussing serious situations, keep the game fun by always laughing and smiling when you find them hiding.

ASSESSMENT

Once your children have learned how to play the game, you can assess their survival instincts by observing the places they choose to hide. Are they choosing places that are safe and offer a lot of cover? Are they staying very still and quiet while they are hiding? Do they choose places that have options to call for help, such as near a telephone? Rate their progress by seeing if they are improving their skill at hiding by choosing more strategic spots.

GAME 8: INCOGNITO



SUMMARY

Teach your children how to blend into their environment by camouflaging objects and eventually themselves.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Camouflage techniques.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need some toys to manipulate with camouflage material. For example, your child may not mind covering a washable plastic duck toy with dirt, but may panic if you scuff up her favorite princess doll. Alternatively, if anyone in your family is a hunter, borrow camouflage clothing.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Gather some toys that you can bring outside and think about the best areas you could demonstrate camouflaging with them. Choose one toy for a demonstration and camouflage it outside in a safe place.

HOW TO PLAY

Invite your children outside and tell them that you have hidden their toy somewhere nearby. Explain that they are hidden very well so they will have to look closely to

find them. If needed, give clues to help them find their toy.

When the toy is found, without moving it, discuss what you did to help it blend into the environment. Maybe you covered it with leaves or you found an area of the same color for it to blend in to. Teach the word *camouflage*.

Next, choose another toy and work together to camouflage it into the environment. Ask the children things such as, “What color(s) out here would it blend with?” Or, if the color does not naturally blend in, “What could we use to cover up this bright color so that no one can see it?”

Use some different techniques to camouflage toys such as rubbing some mud on them, layering leaves and sticks around them, burying them deep in the grass, etc.

When all the toys are hidden invite another family member out to try to find the toys. Let your children feel proud by being the one to offer clues when the family member can’t find any more of the toys.

With experience and age, you may want to graduate from camouflaging toys to letting your children camouflage themselves. Let them try to blend into the environment with camouflage paint or clothing. Take their photo to show them what a good job they did.

Be sure to play this game throughout the year so that your child can learn to camouflage in different seasons. As every hunter knows, it takes a different approach to blend into lush summer forage than it does to hide in the bare, frigid winter landscape.

ASSESSMENT

See if your children understand the concept of camouflage by observing the choices they use to hide

their toys. Are they choosing locations for their toys that make sense? Are they covering the toy completely to help them blend in? Can they camouflage only on the ground, or did they hide things (or themselves) in trees as well?

GAME 9: WHAT'S YOUR SIGN?

SOS

SUMMARY

When your children are in a situation where they are lost or must hide from danger, they may have to call for help with signals. Teach them how by using everyday materials whether they are inside or outside.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Signaling for help.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need to progress through different signaling techniques, each one requiring different materials. Some items you may need are flashlights for flashing on and off, mirrors for reflecting light, marking tape for marking a trail to a site, and large objects found outside such as rocks and tree branches for making very large arrows or spelling "SOS" for search aircraft.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Survey the area in which you are going to play and decide what materials are present for signaling. If needed, add your own materials.

HOW TO PLAY

Tell your children that you are going to play a game of lost and found, but the rule is that no one is allowed to talk. Explain that you are going to look away, go in the

other room, or close your eyes while they hide. When you open your eyes you will pretend that the children are lost and they can't call for help. You will have to look for their signals to find them.

Brainstorm some ways they can signal for you without making any noise. Draw their attention to materials in the environment by saying things such as, "Here is some orange marking tape. How could you use this to show me where you are?"

Give the children some time to set up their signal and to hide. Call out when time is up and begin searching for them. When you find them make a big deal out of it as if you were searching for them for a long time. Celebrate with hugs!

In order to introduce new ways of signaling, turn the tables and allow them to search for you. Use a signal method that the children are unfamiliar with, such as using a mirror to reflect the sunlight. When your children find you ask them what clues they saw and show them how you created that signal.

While you are playing, discuss or role-play scenarios where signaling would be necessary. Using your discretion, have the children pretend they are lost in the woods and you are part of a search team that is looking for them. Or, keep it light-hearted by pretending that Santa Claus is in the house setting out presents, but he doesn't see your children watching him. They need to signal you so that you can see Santa too!

When *pretending* they are lost in the woods, it's a good time to teach children what SOS means—just be sure they understand that their letters may look big to them but seem TINY to an airplane or helicopter.

ASSESSMENT

If you are playing inside, see if your children know where to find items such as flashlights and mirrors. When outside, assess if they are using natural materials to signal for help. Determine if they are hiding and keeping quiet if the situation calls for it or if they are banging things and making loud noises if they are lost and need to call for help.

GAME 10: DOCTOR DOCTOR



SUMMARY

Let your children apply basic first aid to a pretend injury that a stuffed toy or doll suffers. Practice using real-life medical supplies and learn what actions the children should take to heal the toy.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

First aid.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need a stuffed animal toy or doll. Something with arms and legs will allow for more of a variety of injuries you can doctor. You will also need some basic medical supplies to match whatever injury you are treating.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Determine what type of injury you want your children to learn about. If needed, practice doctoring the toy yourself to find the best course of first aid.

HOW TO PLAY

While playing with your children and the toy in an imaginary game, have the toy fall and get hurt. Say to the children, "Oh no, teddy got hurt. We have to help him!" Demonstrate for the children how to help an injured person by telling the toy to sit quietly and rest.

Proceed by instructing your children to find out what part of the toy is hurt. Show them how to ask the toy where it hurts or to ask them to point to the injured area. Speak for the toy to tell the children what has happened.

Tell your children that you have some medical supplies that could help. Bring them and show them where you keep a basic first aid kit in the house. Explain that the first aid kit is always in the same spot and show them what is inside, being careful to not allow access to scissors or objects you consider dangerous for their age.

Together, bring the first aid kit back to the suffering toy and treat its injury. Each time you play the game you can introduce a new type of injury. Some ideas are basic cuts, burns, insect bites, splinters, bumps and bruises, hit in the head, something in their eye, twisted ankle, or broken arm.

Include concepts such as when the toy can recover on its own after basic first aid versus when the toy must go to the doctor for more treatment. Also, act out what to do after an injury such as resting and taking it easy for the rest of the day.

Modify this game for older children by doctoring each other. For example, during a family game of baseball you may pretend that dad was hit with a pitch and requires first aid. Sometimes you will need doctoring and sometimes you will be the doctor for your child's pretend injury. Either way, your children will learn where the medical supplies are, how to do basic diagnosis and first aid skills.

ASSESSMENT

You will know if your children are internalizing basic first aid concepts if you hear them playing this game on their own with their toys. Something else to look for is if

they are relating it to real life when they get their own minor injuries. When they come running to you with a scraped knee ask them what you should do to take care of it or where to go for the medical supplies. If possible, give them their own first aid kit with real (but empty) supplies so that they can practice with their toys and become familiar with what the real supplies look like. This can include some band aids, an unfrozen ice pack, an empty bottle of ointment and disinfecting wash, some rubber gloves, a sling or splint, etc.

GAME 11: BUG OUT!



SUMMARY

Teach the concept of evacuation and what is important to bring by simulating an event where their toys must leave home.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Strategic evacuation.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need a favorite character toy, a bag, and some basic supplies for the toy to have such as clothes, food, water, blanket, etc. A doll with doll items would be perfect, but you can also use a superhero action figure with some play food, or even a stuffed dog with pretend dog food and bowls.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Choose one of your child's toys that will have to bug-out or evacuate their home. Have available some items that the toy will need to pack for their evacuation around the child's room along with a bag.

HOW TO PLAY

Play a simple game with your child using the target toy and the items they need for day-to-day living. For example, if you are playing with a superhero figurine that is flying and jumping on the child's bed, make part

of the game be that he needs to stop for a drink of water or something to eat. Later in the game, play with the child that he is getting cold and needs to wrap up in a blanket. Play this way until the child is familiar with the toy's daily needs and where to find the items necessary to fulfill the needs.

Next, you will simulate a scenario where the toy needs to evacuate. Try to use a situation that could actually happen in your location. For example, if your area is prone to snow storms, use that. If not, you may say that a tornado is coming or there is a forest fire nearby. Tell the child that something is happening and the toy must bug-out or evacuate to a safe place.

Note: *If these terms are new to your child, explain what “bug out” or “evacuation” means. Make it fun by smiling and saying, “Oh no! A snowstorm is coming! Let’s bug-out—quickly!”*

Hand the child the bag and tell them to pack it with things the toy may need.

As necessary, give them guidance about what items belong in the bag. For example, say something such as, “Your dolly might get hungry, should we put some food in the bag?” Or, “What if your dolly gets cold in a snowstorm before she gets to her shelter. What could we pack for her?”

With the bag packed, take the toy and the bag to an imaginary safe location, which could be another room in the house. Review the items that the child packed in the bag and see if anything might be missing. Relate it to their life by asking what they might put in a bag if they had to leave their house in an emergency.

As the child matures and becomes more complacent with the game, look for safe opportunities to introduce

more realistic elements, such as evacuating with the toy in *actual* bad weather to an outside building or playhouse. That way your child will get a more realistic appreciation of the importance of life-sustaining items and skills.

ASSESSMENT

If your children are new to the idea of evacuation, assess their reaction to the imaginary situation. Do they stay calm, yet concerned for their toys? Do they understand that the toys will have to leave their homes and that they can only survive with what they bring with them? Observe what items your children choose to put in the bag. Over time, they should pack a bag more quickly and with items that cover all the toy's basic needs.

GAME 12: PICNIC ATTACK!



SUMMARY

Simulate a bug-out scenario by going on a picnic at the spur of the moment with your child.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Evacuation skills.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need a pre-packed bug-out bag and a picnic spot.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Review the contents of your bug-out bag to make sure you have items needed for a survival picnic.

HOW TO PLAY

Hopefully your child is already familiar with the concept of a bug-out bag and has an idea of what items are necessary for their daily living, should they have to leave home for an unknown amount of time. If not, start by going through your bug-out bag with them before helping them to build their own bug-out bag with appropriate contents for their age.

Explain the rules of the game to your child. You will adjust them to fit your needs, but basically you will give your child the freedom to call, "Picnic Attack!" Surely

you will have time slots available when they can use this freedom. When they call, “Picnic Attack!” you must grab your bug-out bags and head out for a picnic with no other supplies.

You and your child will head out on foot to one of three pre-determined “bug-out” spots, have a picnic and stay awhile.

Put your survival bag to the test. During some trips you can drink the water you brought, but look for opportunities to practice filtering and purifying water you find, such as from park streams or fountains. Use the hand sanitizer you have and then eat the food in your bag. Use the items in your bag you have brought for simple shade or shelter such as tarps or space blankets.

During your picnic analyze the contents of your bags. Did you enjoy the food? Should you have packed something different? If so, discuss what and talk about shelf life. Is there anything else you need to include in your bag? What if you were out and it started raining—are you prepared? Should you include an item or two in your child’s bag for entertainment?

When you get home from the picnic modify your bag and replace items as needed.

ASSESSMENT

You can evaluate your child’s understanding of evacuation by how quickly she moves once she announced a Picnic Attack. Did she dawdle, or did she grab her bag and head for the door? Also, you can determine her critical thinking skills in this area by her suggestions of how to improve her bug-out bag. Did she consider the weight of the items she suggested? Did she consider different scenarios she may face after evacuation to predict what items she needs?

GAME 13: SCAVENGER HUNT



SUMMARY

Go on a scavenger hunt outside to teach your children about the resources in your area.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Identifying natural survival resources.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will want to take pictures of items you want your children to find and print them out in a list type form. You will also want a marker, and to make it extra fun give your children a magnifying glass and binoculars!

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

You can play this game many times with different items on the list. It is good to categorize the items each time you play it. For example, you can go on a scavenger hunt for wild edibles, and the next time you can hunt for fire starting materials. Other ideas include medicinal plants, water sources, shelter building materials, etc. Whatever items you wish to teach about on that particular scavenger hunt should be on a paper that you can bring with you. You will also need a marker for checking items off the list.

HOW TO PLAY

Tell your children that you will be going on a scavenger hunt!

Before leaving the house, show them the list of items you will be looking for. Discuss what they have in common and where you might find them. If there are items they are unfamiliar with, you can explain them briefly, but tell them that you will discuss them in more detail when you find them.

Take a walk outside and let your children find the items on the list, crossing them off as they go. Each time they find an item you can observe it more closely and teach them about it.

If they would like, they can collect a sample of each item to bring back to the house for further study. For example, if you are hunting for edible plants, they could bring some inside for cooking later. If you are hunting for fire starting material they could collect samples and sort them into categories when they get home such as, wood, dry leaves, pinecones, synthetic materials like string or paper, etc.

ASSESSMENT

Observe what items your children are becoming familiar with. Can they identify them quickly and correctly? Do they know where to look to find certain items? Can they add more items to the list?

GAME 14: DRINK UP



SUMMARY

Teach your children the best places to find drinking water along with unexpected sources such as ponds and puddles once you have practiced purifying and disinfecting it.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Water purification.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

There are various methods of making water safe to drink. The materials you use will depend on which method you are practicing, but they could include a pot with a small fire, a water purification tool such as a [Lifestraw](#) or a [Big Berkey](#) water filter/purifier, or water purification chemicals such as [Aquatabs](#).

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Become proficient at purifying water using whatever method and tools you are supplying. Practice this skill yourself many times before inviting your child to participate. If you need help, refer to the book [Start Prepping!](#), which describes in detail how to make water safe to drink.

HOW TO PLAY

Tell your children it's time to get a drink of water. Go to the faucet, but pretend with them that it doesn't work. Hypothesize with your children about reasons why the water might not work such as, the electricity is out or there is a broken pipe. Say that you are very thirsty, but you can't get water from the usual source. Ask your children where else you might be able to get some water to drink.

Explain that you will have to go outside to look for water. If they can, let them lead the way to a water source. Discuss the different sources that are available to you such as ponds, streams, puddles, rain barrels, etc. Ask them if they think it's safe to drink water directly out of these places. Explain how the water could be contaminated with bacteria from the soil or animals, which would make the children sick.

Tell them that you know some "magic" ways to make water safe to drink. There are many ways and each time you play this game you may want to demonstrate another method.

Follow these steps for the various methods:

Boil it

Collect some water in a cup. Pour it through a filtering cloth, such as a bandana, into a pot. Put the pot on the stove or hang it over a fire and boil the water for one minute. When the water cools it will be safe to drink.

Use a Water Purification Tool

Follow the manufacturer's directions for the tool you are using.

Chemical Treatment

Follow the manufacturer's directions for the chemical treatment you choose.

Solar Purify

After pre-filtering water through a cloth, fill a clean, clear two-liter bottle. Place it outside in full sun for a day as described in [Start Prepping!](#), and the sun will purify it.

After you have demonstrated the method, allow the children to take part the next time at whatever level they are capable of.

ASSESSMENT

By asking your children what types of water are safe to drink you will see if they understand the difference between potable and non-potable water. Have them point out different water sources in your immediate area and explain how they would make it safe to drink. As they progress, they can demonstrate their water purification skills by showing you how to do each step.

GAME 15: GIMME SHELTER!



SUMMARY

Expand on the natural interest all children have to build tents by using these skills outside to construct simple shelters.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Finding and building shelter.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You can play this game many times, so the materials will vary each game. Before starting, make sure that you have the basic materials needed for building whatever type of shelter you will be making.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Learn about some simple shelter building techniques through books and online research. Ideally, you will have practiced making your own shelter before teaching it to your child.

HOW TO PLAY

With small children you will likely start indoors by building forts in their bedrooms out of chairs and blankets. This is something that all children do, but your job is to notice this and turn it into a teachable moment. Talk with them about what they are doing and introduce some simple construction techniques. Discuss the

materials you have available to you and how you can use each of them. While you are building, share some reasons why a simple shelter would be needed such as during a blizzard or rainstorm, when you need shade from the hot sun, or protection from wind. Pretend some of these events are happening so you can use the shelter. Say things such as, “Oh no, the rain has started, let’s get into our shelter!”

Show your children some examples of simple shelters. Look at pictures of lean-tos, teepees and huts. Discuss the materials and the construction techniques used.

When appropriate, take your children outside to build your own shelter. You may wish to start by providing some simple manmade materials such as tarps, twine, and duct tape, but eventually you will want to practice building shelters using only natural materials that you can find right around you.

Look for sturdy trees close to each other that you can use. String some twine between them and drape a tarp over it while weighing down the edges with rocks. This will form a simple A-frame tent. During later games, graduate to digging a shallow depression using rocks and sticks, then lining the bed with small logs and dry leaves. Bend soft branches over the top to make a hoop-style hut and cover it with evergreen boughs. If you’re fortunate to have them in your area, look for caves and natural overhangs that can serve as shelters.

Be creative and let your children come up with their own designs. Visit the shelters when it’s raining to see if the interior is dry—if not, help them problem solve using what is around. They will learn best through trial and error so let them experiment and perfect their skills.

ASSESSMENT

Your children will be successful at building shelters with practice. Each time you play they should try something they think will work. Assess if they are choosing sturdy materials and if they are considering weight-bearing items as well as balance. Are their structures safe in a strong wind? Are they choosing safe spots to build—away from overhanging tree limbs that could fall? Are they out of flood zones? Do their shelters stay dry and give them warmth or shade and protection from the elements? Also, make sure that they understand the *need* for building a shelter and they know *when* it is necessary to seek cover.

GAME 16: LIGHT BRIGADE!



SUMMARY

Teach children how to light a dark room when the electricity goes out by practicing various ways to create light.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Navigating through a power outage.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need a variety of materials to create light such as a flashlight, candle and matches, oil lantern, glow sticks, etc.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Assemble your materials and close shades, turn off nightlights, etc. to make sure the house will be dark when you turn off the lights.

HOW TO PLAY

When unexpected, turn out the lights and simulate a power outage. Tell your child to FREEZE! (if you have played Freeze Frame) so that no one walks into anything in the dark. Explain that you are having a pretend power outage and the lights will not work. Their challenge is to light up the room. Ask them if they have any ideas of how to create light.

Let your children guide you and try out their ideas, but your goal is to show them where you keep the flashlights and how to get there safely in the dark. Help them to walk slowly and to feel their way around the house to get to the flashlights, if necessary. Then practice turning the flashlight on and off and using it to navigate around the house.

During later games, if appropriate, you can show them how to light an oil lamp or candle. Otherwise, let them see you light it and carefully carry it around the house. Show them flammable materials that they must avoid.

When your children are ready for the challenge, tell them that soon there will be a pretend power outage and they will become the Light Brigade. It will be their responsibility to call out the words “Light Brigade” and make a siren sound when the power goes out! Then they must safely navigate to the flashlight, and bring light to the rest of the family.

ASSESSMENT

Flashlights are simple tools that even very young children can use, but skills such as navigating through a dark house to find them and using them to light a path as you look for other family members in the house is challenging. Assess how well your children move in the dark. Do they walk slowly? Do they hold their hands out in front of them so that they don’t walk into anything? Observe how your children handle a flashlight. Can they turn it on? Do they hold the light out in front of them when they walk? Can they shine the light around to search for items?

GAME 17: FIRE IT UP



SUMMARY

Using various materials, work with your children to make a safe and controlled fire so that you can cook a snack.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Fire starting skills.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need basic fire starting materials such as matches, magnesium strip, cotton balls, petroleum jelly, tinder, kindling, sticks, and newspaper. You will also need a safe place to build a fire such as a fire pit, shallow metal barrel, ring of rocks, or even an old baking pan for a small fire. Include an ability to put the fire out, such as sand and a shovel or a bucket of water. Prepare a simple snack to cook over the fire such as toasting marshmallows or cooking hot dogs.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Practice starting and putting out fires on your own so that you are proficient at the skills you are teaching.

HOW TO PLAY

Your role is to supervise and make sure the children have fun while learning a healthy respect for fire. Before

you begin, discuss the four basic elements of fire with your children: spark, tinder, fuel and oxygen.

Have your child explain what materials would start a fire and keep it burning. Look around and collect some materials to test.

Review fire safety and include whatever rules you feel are necessary such as, “Never start a fire unless I am there to help you.”

Explain that you are The Fire Team and will work together to start and put out a fire and that you have brought a special treat to cook once the fire is lit. Everyone will have a specific job to do, but it is everyone’s job to keep an eye out for safety around the fire. Delegate roles as you see fit. Even very small children can take part by collecting leaves, hay, or dried pine needles.

Once you have your materials gathered, work as a team to build a small pile of combustible material, demonstrating how to start with small tinder and slowly building up with larger items in a “teepee” like fashion.

If you feel they can do so safely, let your child light a match and hold the flame to the tinder. In later outings they can use a magnesium strip to create sparks or try using a lighter.

Show your child how to build the fire slowly by adding larger material. Blow on the fire together to show them how the oxygen feeds the flames.

Test the materials you gathered earlier by adding them to the fire to see if they burn well. Let your child conclude what good fire starting material is.

When you have a strong fire burning, you can enjoy your snack as a reward for a job well done!

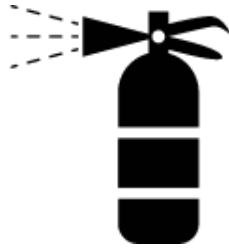
When the game is over, let the child help put the fire out as appropriate. You can suppress the fire as they watch and then they can take turns shoveling sand or dumping water on the hot coals. Discuss how to tell when the fire is safe to leave unattended.

As your children become more comfortable with fire, have them help pack some fire starting supplies for your camping or bug-out bag. Let them help you soak cotton balls with petroleum jelly, which they can then pack into small containers. Show them how easily this all ignites during one of your fire team lessons.

ASSESSMENT

The most important item to assess is your children's level of responsibility about fire. Do they understand the danger and have a healthy respect for fires? Do they take seriously the safety precautions necessary when around fire? Once you are confident that they are responsible with fire, you may begin to assess their fire starting skills. Do they know what types of materials to collect and how to assemble them? Can they create a spark with various materials? Do they know how to extinguish a fire?

GAME 18: EXTINGUISH!



SUMMARY

Teach your children to identify if a fire is safe or a threat, then find help them find the best method to either control or extinguish the fire.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Fire extinguishing skills.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need materials to start and control a small fire, matches, a jar candle with a lid and a chemical fire extinguisher.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Find a location to safely build a fire, such as a fire ring, a metal drum or even a charcoal grill. Be sure the fire is in a safe location and not adjacent to a home, structure or dry woodlot.

HOW TO PLAY

As discussed in Fire it Up, fire can be scary and dangerous. However, the ability to *control* fire is one of humankind's greatest achievements, so let's help children understand both of these facts.

The tactics you use will depend on the age and ability of the children. For younger children, begin by

demonstrating the many ways that a lit match can be extinguished. After lighting a match, simply shake it to use the relative wind to douse the flame. Then light more matches and put them out using sand, water or simply blow on them.

To show that fires require oxygen, light a candle in a jar and then cover the top with a lid to extinguish the fire.

Use pictures or discussion to differentiate between “helpful” and “harmful” fires. For instance, controlled *helpful* fires allow us to cook food, boil water, and even burn trash. Harmful fires are always *uncontrolled* or accidental, and create great risk to structures, land (wildfires) and life.

Look for opportunities to share the fire tragedies on the news with children and discuss how it may have started, what could have been done and ask your child how they would have responded.

Find a VERY safe site, such as a fire pit in a large, sandy area or an isolated fire drum. Place newspaper and kindling in the container. Then, light a stick and, rather than blowing it out, *accidentally* drop the burning stick on the flammable material. Adults may want to practice this first on their own to ensure the desired effect is achieved.

Create a small campfire (or a series of small campfires) and demonstrate many ways to extinguish them, such as safely stomping them out, using sand, water, etc.

Create a larger campfire or drum fire and, as appropriate, allow children to extinguish the fire using the same type of chemical fire extinguisher that is in their home. Show them the proper way to use it, where to stand and where on the fire to apply the suppressant.

Once children understand the basics of fire and ways to extinguish them, introduce them to other fire threats, such as electrical fires or fires from propane hoses. Discuss the fuel for the fire threat (electricity, propane, gasoline, timber, etc.).

Inform them that water should NEVER be used on an electrical fire, as it can make it worse or create a risk of electrical shock. For electrical fires a chemical fire extinguisher is necessary.

Also, be sure your children know to never put water on a grease fire! Water is heavier than the oil (grease) and, as a result, sinks to the bottom and becomes superheated. The resulting explosive force of the steam blows the hot oil out and creates a fireball that can reach a kitchen ceiling. Rather, extinguishing a grease fire requires a chemical fire extinguisher, or turning off the heat source and covering the pan with a metal lid.

Make a game of rewards for identifying fire threats by sight. For instance, during one game you may want to isolate the game to the living room and kitchen. Teach children to look for frayed electrical appliance cords, combustible materials (that you “accidentally” left) next to toasters, etc., electrical wires running under rugs, portable heaters sitting on top of newspapers, a fireplace without a screen, etc.

During another game, isolate the backyard and see if the children can find threats around a grill, an overused extension cord that is powering too many outside devices, a lawnmower and gas can with a very dry pile of leaves next to it, etc.

In addition to sight games, safely make a game of finding things that *feel* hot, such as the tops/sides of most televisions, the sides of portable heaters, etc.

Monitor your children as they move their hands safely above an illuminated light bulb or lit candle to feel the heat, as well as over a toaster and other devices.

Finally, show children how to test and replace batteries in smoke alarms. Let them hear the sound the smoke detectors make in a calm setting and explain what to do if they ever hear that sound. Let them help you to replace batteries and explain the batteries are necessary if the power fails.

ASSESSMENT

Assess your children's understanding of fire through their appreciation of and respect for it. Do they understand a fire's properties? Can they differentiate between a controlled and dangerous fire? Do they know how to put a small fire out? Most important, do they know how to call 9-1-1 in the event of any uncontrolled fire?

GAME 19: BREAKER BREAKER



SUMMARY

Show your children how to use walkie-talkies to communicate with a family member who is far away from them.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Two-way radio communication.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need two-way radios and an area large enough that you can separate beyond vocal distance.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Become familiar with your two-way radios by reading the manufacturer's instructions.

HOW TO PLAY

Introduce the two-way radios to your children by teaching them how to use them appropriately. Show them how to turn them on, change and use the channels, speak into them, wait for a response, etc. Explain and demonstrate the range that your particular radios have and how things such as walls and closed doors will affect their performance.

Use the radios where you can safely be separated from your children's vision so that you can communicate via

radio only. If necessary, have another adult present to work with your children while you are separated.

Tell your children that you are going to give them a challenge and the only way you can communicate is with the radios. Separate and then use the radio to give them a task to complete. For example, you could tell them to go into your sock drawer and bring you a pair of black socks. The children will have to communicate with you to get further instructions such as, which drawer holds your socks and where are you located so that they can bring them to you. If outside, you could challenge them to bring you a drink of water to where you might be working on an outdoor project.

When your children become proficient at communicating via the two-way radio, throw in some distractions such as instructing them to change to a different channel mid conversation or simulate being out of range to see if they can determine how to get back in touch.

ASSESSMENT

By using two-way radios on a frequent basis you will see how well your children understand them. Do they view them as tools and not toys? Can they handle them appropriately? Are they effective at communicating, following instructions, and problem solving when interruptions happen?

GAME 20: WEATHER REPORT!



SUMMARY

Let your children broadcast a weather report with a hand-crank radio by tuning into the emergency weather band.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Using a hand-crank radio.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need a hand-crank radio and a cardboard box to cut out like a television.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Place the pretend television in a room where the family gathers and at a level where your child can act as a weather reporter. Understand how to use your hand-crank radio by reading the manufacturer's instructions and practicing tuning into the local weather station.

HOW TO PLAY

Designate a time when the family is together to simulate a power outage and pretend it is due to bad weather. Explain that the television is not working and you need to find out what the current weather conditions are.

Show your children where you keep the hand-crank radio and explain that it will work even if the power is out. Let them crank the handle and turn it on. Allow them to tune the radio until you reach a station that is broadcasting the weather. Listen to the weather report together.

Introduce the emergency broadcast system and explain how, in a time of emergency, this system will give ongoing weather reports.

When your child is able to use the radio, give them the challenge of delivering a weather report to the family. They will have to find the hand-crank radio, turn it on, tune it in, and listen to a current weather report. They may then return to the pretend television and act out the weather report for the family.

ASSESSMENT

Observe your children's use of the hand-crank radio. Do they know how to crank it? How to tune it? Can they recognize a weather report for your area? Evaluate if older children can deliver an accurate weather report to the family and what their understanding of weather is, in terms of safety. Do they know what it means when there is a severe thunderstorm *watch* versus a *warning*?

GAME 21: LOST IN SPACE



SUMMARY

Find your way home after pretending you are lost. Depending on the age of your children, you can simulate an adventure while driving and allow them to use a road map or compass to follow street signs. Or, vary this game by setting up a map of your home where they must navigate through the rooms they are familiar with.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Map skills.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need a road map, compass, and possibly a pencil if marking a photocopied map.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Be very familiar with the area you are navigating and choose a location with little to no traffic. Be sure that you know many alternate ways home and are able to navigate your own way home should your child take you on some wrong turns.

HOW TO PLAY

After taking a short drive out, tell your children that you are pretending to be lost and you want their help finding the way back home.

Stop the car in a safe place and provide your children with a road map. If the children are experienced with this game, you can make it more challenging by only providing a compass and no map or if they are very new to the game you may want to provide a photocopied map and a pencil so they can mark their route home.

If necessary, help them find your location on the map and your home street.

In the beginning, you may have to help the children plan the route to take, but your goal is to have them navigate as much as they can. As they use the map more, they will become more proficient at determining the best route to take.

Have the children call out to you what street you are looking for and which direction you should turn. Together you can read street signs while you search for the correct one.

If your children tell you to take a wrong turn, take your time and follow their directions so that they may learn. When you both find yourself off course or if the child becomes confused, pull over and regroup. You can say things such as, "This doesn't look familiar to me. Have you seen this on the way home before? Maybe we are off course." Look at the map together and use guiding questions to help them get back on track such as, "Where are we now? Where do we want to be to get back on track? What road could we take to get there?"

Celebrate when you arrive home and together review the route you took. In time you can find alternate routes. Don't be afraid to toss in imaginary roadblocks to get trigger their problem solving.

ASSESSMENT

Monitor your children's progress to determine if they are reading the map correctly. Watch them and ask questions even when you are not playing the game to see if they are internalizing a sense of direction when you are driving. Ask them randomly if they know what street you are on. Have them begin to estimate time and how long it might take to get to a specific destination. See if they use landmarks to become familiar with a location. As they become more comfortable with maps, allow them to help you choose a route when going to an unfamiliar place.

GAME 22: TRACKER



SUMMARY

This will introduce your children to hunting skills through identifying animal signs in your area.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Animal tracking.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need a drawing pad, pencil, and a basic book or printouts that shows detailed pictures of tracks from animals in your area.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

If you live in an area where animal tracks are easy to find, then you need no preparation. If not you will need to find an appropriate area, such as a park or forested hiking trail.

HOW TO PLAY

Tell your children that you are going on an animal hunt. Ask them what animals they might expect to see when they go outside. Say something such as, “We might not see any real animals, but they will have left some signs to let us know they have been there.” Ask them what you could look for as signs that an animal had been around.

Give the children a drawing pad and pencil to bring with them and head outside for a walk.

Take them to places where animals may have been and look for signs. Some examples could be next to a bird feeder where you may see spilled bird feed and possibly tracks, near a place where dogs run where you might see paw prints, in the forest you may see deer scat or hoof prints, and around the base of nut or fruit trees you may see cracked shells or partly eaten fruit.

When you find a sign of an animal, try to figure out what type of animals might have been there. Use your resources of the animal tracks combined with the surroundings to determine what animal has left the signs. Have the child draw a picture of what they think the animal was doing when they left the signs and copy the animal's tracks from the ground or from your resources.

As your children progress, help them to begin estimating how fresh the tracks are, where the animal came from and where it is headed. Encourage them to look around and tell you *why* an animal was coming from a certain direction (shelter, cover) and *why* it may be headed in a specific direction (water, food).

ASSESSMENT

While the children are playing outside or while you are taking family nature walks ask them to show you signs of animals. See if they can identify what types of animals have been around and what their tracks would look like.

GAME 23: TRADE YA!



SUMMARY

Teach children how to procure an item without spending any money, but rather trading something that they have for something they want or need.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Bartering.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You may not need any pre-planned materials for this game, but as you progress to bartering with other people you will need to be prepared with items for trade.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Think of some items you are willing to barter with your children. What is something that they may want? What do they have that you are willing to accept as payment?

HOW TO PLAY

If your children are familiar with money, then you will have to explain what bartering is and how sometimes you can buy items without money. For younger children, you can relate bartering to trading with friends. Grandparents can share stories of how they traded (bartered) baseball cards when they were kids.

Set up a scenario where you have something your children want, such as a cookie or small toy. When they ask for it explain that they will have to pay for it somehow. Since you don't want money, they must offer something else as payment. Guide them by saying something such as, "I don't want money for it, but I could really use some crayons for something I'm working on." As they begin to understand guide them by saying, "What do you think I might want in return?"

Work together to reach an agreement for bartering your items. Tell them that a successful barter is when both people get something that they want.

Be sure to teach them that it is perfectly acceptable to barter services for stuff. For instance, in a disaster a person may trade construction services for bottled water. Likewise, your children may want to barter their housecleaning services in exchange for something you have.

You can play this game many times with small items such as trading food at dinner time or bartering to see who gets to choose the TV channel. Sometimes you can start the barter by asking for something and offering a trade and other times allow your child to suggest bartering.

As you play this game more and more, you can become more stringent with what you will accept as trades, requiring your children to come up with more attractive offers.

Using your discretion, when your children have demonstrated proficient bartering skills, you may want to try a real-life example by trying to barter at a yard sale or with friends and family.

ASSESSMENT

Trading is something that many children try out on their own. Therefore, be on the lookout for teachable moments. The problem is that many children do not learn how to barter successfully. They do not offer something that the other person may value. Assess your children's understanding of the barter system by observing their negotiating skills. Are they thinking about what the other person may want? Are they offering items of equal value? Are they declining offers politely and offering alternatives?

GAME 24: GERMINATE!



SUMMARY

By planting and caring for seeds your children will learn how to germinate and grow basic vegetables seedlings.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Gardening.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need an empty soda bottle or milk jug, planting soil, vegetable seeds and water. Some vegetable seeds that are easy to germinate and grow are melon, summer squash, green beans, and cucumber.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Cut the bottom of the bottle off about 4 inches from the bottom, but do not cut it all the way around. Leave a small part uncut to act as a hinge. You can lift the top of the bottle back exposing the bottom 4 inches of the bottle as a container for holding the soil. Poke some holes in the bottom of the bottle for drainage.

HOW TO PLAY

Invite your children to grow a plant with you. Ask them what a plant requires to grow. The basic necessities are that the seed needs soil, water, and sunlight.

Have your children fill a container with soil and add some water to dampen it. Mix the soil and water together until it is the consistency of a rung out sponge.

Allow your children to fill the bottom of the bottle with damp soil, tamping it down lightly with their hand.

Next, have them use their finger to poke a hole in the soil, place the seed in, and then cover the hole back up with soil.

Give the seed some water and then close the top of the bottle back over, leaving the lid off for ventilation. Place the bottle on a plate in a warm sunny spot.

Each day water the seed together with your children and make observations. When the seed germinates discuss what is happening and together assess if the seedling's requirements have changed. As the plant grows you will notice that it needs more water, more sunlight, and more space.

Harden the seedling off after the danger of frost has passed. Explain to your children that you do not want to "shock" the plant by transplanting it outdoors before it becomes acclimated to the temperature variations. To do this, bring the jug outside during the morning, slowly exposing it to the outside temperatures. Use the hinged top to regulate the temperature inside the bottle (if it is hot, open the top and if it is cold, close it).

When the seedling has acclimated to the outdoor elements, transplant it into a garden or larger pot where it can finish growing. Enjoy harvesting and eating fresh vegetables from your seedling!

ASSESSMENT

Allow your children to have a small garden. This can be an area the size of a sandbox or even in a few pots on a

balcony. Help them to plant and care for vegetable seeds. Do they know how to plant a seed? Do they remember to water it? Can they tell you the basic things that their garden requires?

GAME 25: FISH STICKS



SUMMARY

Teach your children how to catch fish with a stick and a line, rather than a commercial rod and reel.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Semi-primitive fishing skills.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need items to fashion a makeshift fishing pole such as a bamboo pole or long stick, fishing line, and a commercial fishing hook. You will also need a container for bait.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Locate an area where fish are present and fishing is allowed.

HOW TO PLAY

Tell your children that you will be going fishing today, but that you are leaving the rod/reel at home (if you have one). Your challenge is to make your own fishing pole that they can use to catch a fish.

Together you can find a pole that would be a good length and is sturdy enough not to break. Have the children tie the fishing line on the pole and offer help as needed to make sure it is not going to slip off.

Show your children how to tie on a hook and then ask them what else you need to catch a fish. As you progress with this game, you can experiment with making hooks from natural materials, such as thorns.

Find your own bait by digging for worms or looking under rocks and rotten logs. Collect bait in a container and then help your children to bait the hook, if needed. Having extra line and hooks will come in handy.

Have fun fishing! If your pole design does not initially work, you may need to make adjustments. Brainstorm and problem solve together. Are you fishing at the right time of day? What is the weather doing...what stage is the moon in? How does weather and the moon affect fish activity?

Hopefully you will catch a fish, but if not use this time to discuss fishing techniques, such as using bobbers and sinkers and using the correct type of bait.

ASSESSMENT

Fishing is a skill that can offer a lifetime of enjoyment. Do your best to help your children enjoy fishing experiences by spending quality time together, packing a picnic, and hunting for treasures while you are by the water. Monitor if they look forward to fishing trips and assess their skills by challenging them to make their own rod from scratch, find their own bait, and successfully catch a fish.

GAME 26: CAMP OUT



SUMMARY

This is the culmination game that ties the other prepping games together! Make a shelter, sleep outside, build a fire and cook over it, preferably with the fish you caught playing Fish Sticks! You can play Lost in Space, Tracker, Scavenger Hunt, Extinguish and more, all safely in your backyard or at a campground.

Camping lets you show your children how to survive without modern conveniences, even if only for overnight. It allows you to teach them about potential hazards, such as dangerous wildlife, bad weather and fire, and how to remain alert. Prepare them ahead of time by playing the games in this book so they gain confidence in their ability to be self-sufficient.

CONCEPTS TAUGHT

Integrate all survival skills.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

You will need a camping spot and materials as specified in the earlier games.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Play and practice as many of the previous games as you can. Alternatively, you can simply introduce some of the

previous games, such as Tracker, Drink Up!, etc. on a camping trip.

HOW TO PLAY

Plan a camping trip! It can be a formal, multi-day trip in the woods or at a campground, or it can simply be overnight in your backyard.

Allow the children to help you plan the trip by using a checklist of skills you want your children to learn and demonstrate.

Start by making a checklist together of each important survival category. For example, start with shelter. Ask them what you will use for a housing structure (tent, primitive shelter, etc.), what you will use for a bed (sleeping bag, hammock, etc.), how you will stay dry and so on. Do the same for food, water, heat, sanitation and all areas covered in [Start Prepping!](#)

Before packing, have your children check the weather report and let them recommend what to pack based on the forecast.

Once the list is complete let your children do as much of the packing and checking off the list as possible. Be sure to add to the list anything you will need to complete the games you plan to play on the trip.

Suggested games to play include, Weather Report, Drink Up, Extinguish, Fire it Up, Breaker Breaker, Fish Sticks, What's Your Sign, Tracker, What If?, Guts and Snapshot.

ASSESSMENT

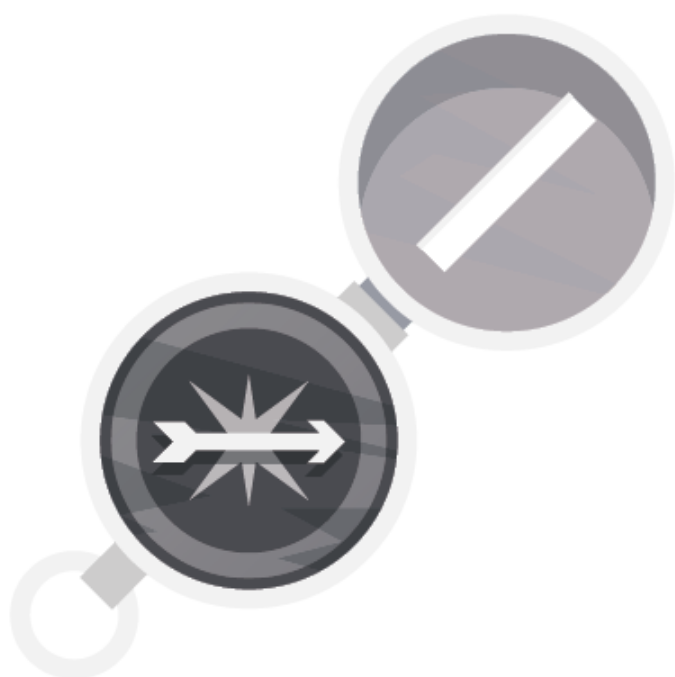
For each game, follow the assessment guidelines as described before. For the camping trip itself, check how effectively your children planned the trip, completed the checklist and packed the supplies. Did they forget any

crucial areas or survival items? Were they efficient in packing?

As they mature and their skills improve on later trips you may want to throw them some “curve balls.” For example, what if you *misplace* the water purification tablets. How will they respond? Do they know multiple ways to purify water?

The goal is for your children (and you) to become comfortable with their (and your) survival and decision-making skills. Achieving that takes practice, sometimes with stress induced. However, remember that this is all about learning very serious survival skills in a very FUN way. So keep it fun!

I hope you enjoy playing all these games with your children, but before you go, check out the bonuses on the following pages to teach even more survival and prepping skills!



FIRST BONUS!

FAMILY PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGES

When it comes to preparedness, having skills is just as important as having stuff. Below are 12 challenges that you can practice to become a more prepared family—in good times or in bad. Most of these challenges cost no money; some cost just a little. They're designed to get you thinking, practicing, and prepared for whatever comes your way.

You don't have to do them all at once, of course, but I do hope that you do them all—in time!

PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGE #1—SAFE SPOTS

- Find the safe spots in your home for each type of disaster you can imagine and practice with all family members.
- For example, during an earthquake you would want to practice “drop, cover, and hold on” under a sturdy desk or table.
- During a tornado, you would want to seek shelter in a tornado shelter, or a lower-level interior room without windows.

PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGE #2—HOUSE TENTS

- On a very cold day, set up a dome or pup tent within your house.
- Turn off the heat and practice staying warm with just your body heat warming the tent.

PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGE #3—MAKE CONTACT

- Memorize family's contact information, such as making up a song to learn the phone number, address, etc.
- Many children don't know this information and, with the reliance on speed dial, many parents don't either!

PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGE #4—FIRE DRILL!

- Discuss and practice escape plans and a meeting place.
- Have everyone pretend to sleep in his or her beds.
- At least twice a year, push the smoke detector button to start the drill.
- Practice crawling on ground to avoid smoke inhalation, covering your mouth with a wet cloth and safely getting out of the house.
- Designate a meeting spot safely outside the home for all family members to meet.
- Designate a spot outside the home to safely call 9-1-1.

PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGE #5—CAN IT!

- Try canning something—preferably pressure canning.
- If you don't know how, ask someone to help, read a canning manual or watch a reputable YouTube video.
- If you don't have a canner, buy one if you can or find someone who has one that you can borrow.

PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGE #6—GRID-DOWN WEEKENDS

- Have your family simulate two grid-down weekends—one in the summer, one in the winter.
- Go from Friday at 6:00 pm to Sunday at 6:00 pm.
- Use painter's tape to tape all light switches off.
- Shut off the house water supply or water breaker, and remember to shut off the water heater.
- Unplug landlines and turn off all cell phones (since cell phones won't work grid down).
- You may use battery-operated devices (such as laptops, tablets, etc.) but must recharge them with alternative energy sources.
- Use only your existing preps for food, fire, etc.

PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGE #7—FIRST AID CHALLENGE

- Write several types of injuries on cards.
- Have each family member draw a card and administer appropriate first aid to another family member.

PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGE #8—HOME INSPECTION

- Do a home intrusion inspection—to determine where intruders can gain access.
- Where are the bad-guy hiding spots outside the home?
- Have the family try to gain access to your secured home to find areas to improve. Is it easy for someone to walk up to your windows, or do you have thorny bushes protecting them? Do you have guard dogs, or can someone simply walk to

the front door? Are the doors partially made of glass making it easy to see inside and break in?

PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGE #9—ESCAPE!

- Determine the best escape routes from your home in case of fire or intrusion.
- Try to find two ways out of each room. Try going out windows if it is possible to do safely.
- Plan a meeting spot for the family to regroup.

PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGE #10—HAZARD HUNT

- Conduct a home hazard hunt with your family.
- During a disaster, anything that can move, fall, break, or cause a fire is a home hazard.
- For example, during an earthquake a hot water heater or a bookshelf could fall and injure someone.
- Look for electrical, chemical, and fire hazards.
- Contact your local fire department for help in identifying specific home fire hazards.

PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGE #11—SHUT DOWN

- Show each family member how and when to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at the main switches.
- This is important to do if you are forced to evacuate.

PREPAREDNESS CHALLENGE #12—9-1-1

- Simulate a family member needing emergency help (choking, heart attack, etc.).

- Show children how to call 9-1-1 on a non-working or pretend phone.
- Have an adult pretend to be a 9-1-1 operator and see how the child responds.

SECOND BONUS!

AGE-APPROPRIATE SURVIVAL SKILLS

This section does not include games, but rather offers ideas for you to consider. I've listed many suggested survival skills on the following pages and categorized them by my idea of what age each is appropriate for. However, you know your child, so it's up to you to decide what skills you want him or her to know and how you want to teach those skills.

I hope this list is helpful to both you and your children.

Ages 3-5

- **Climb a Tree:** In addition to being fun, climbing a tree is effective at evading threats. It can also give children a bird's-eye view of their environment so they can assess danger and navigate to safety.
- **Start a Fire:** Teach about gathering kindling, firewood and fire safety. Start at three years old and add instructions as the child matures. Progress to starting supervised fires with wet materials as children age.
- **Stay in Place...Until:** If lost in public or in the woods, teach children to stay in place so adults can find them—IF they are in a safe area and not in immediate danger. However, if they're in public and mom or dad do not find them, teach them to ask an adult with children for help.
- **Know Mommy's Name:** Teach your child to call your real name, rather than shouting "mommy" or "daddy" if they're lost, since it's difficult to distinguish children's voices in public. Repeat

this over and over to young children until they understand.

- **Take Their Shoes Off:** Since it is difficult for young children to remember key contact information, consider writing your name and phone number inside your preschooler's shoe. Then teach your child that if you get separated to take his shoe off and show it to a grown-up with children.
- **Emergency Help:** It's appropriate at a very young age to teach children how to call 9-1-1 and seek emergency help. Reinforce these skills as they mature.
- **Swim:** Swimming is fun, sure, but learning to swim could one day save your child's life. Teach them early.
- **How to Remain Calm:** Teach young children to stay calm and not panic during emergencies. You'll have to determine the best way to do this for your children, but one idea is to turn off the lights in their room with the door closed. Let them know you're in there with them and turn the lights back on. Progress to standing outside the door and let them find the door handle in the dark, to simulate a power outage. Monitor their breathing and assess how calm they can stay.

Ages 5-7

- **Read the Sky:** The sky can tell children what time it is, which direction they're headed and if bad weather is approaching. All children need to know what the sky is trying to tell them so they can be prepared.
- **How to Escape a Fire:** Hopefully you've played Extinguish! and introduced children to fire safety

and smoke detectors. It's critical that they know how to actually get out of a burning house, car or building, and how to keep toxic smoke from entering their lungs. Talk to your fire department or research if you need to, but be sure to teach your children how to save their own lives. This may include teaching them how to escape through a window, etc.

- **Basic Navigation:** Point from one place to another and ask the child to determine the best route. Let some routes be safer and some faster to see how they react. Introduce other challenges as needed.
- **Know the Neighborhood:** Know the streets, multiple ways to get home and who the neighbors are in case of an emergency.
- **Basic Animal Husbandry:** I believe it's important for children to learn basic animal husbandry skills, such as feeding rabbits, pigs, chickens, etc. and handling chores such as collecting eggs, providing fresh water and cleaning waterers. Teach your children what different animals eat and what they need. If you don't have animals yourself, perhaps a friend or relative does. Or, just visit localharvest.org for a list of farms in your area. Many offer tours and would be happy to help you.
- **Catch a Fish:** Start by digging for worms; then go fishing. You can use a commercial rod and reel or play the game Fish Sticks. Also, experiment with using lures and teach the child why lures work (they often mimic a natural fish food in the environment, or trigger the strike mentality of a predator species).
- **Safely Handle a Knife:** Teaching a child to safely handle a knife is scary for many parents,

but it is a very important skill to learn. For young children, begin with plastic knives or child scissors that won't allow them to cut themselves. Progress to sharper kitchen knives and allow them to help you prepare food, making sure that they always know where the first aid kit is.

- **Clean a Fish:** Now that your child knows how to handle a knife and she has caught a fish, teach her to clean it. If you're not sure yourself, just do a web search for ways to clean the fish you're trying to catch (before you go fishing).
- **Purify Water:** Teach your child why water must be purified, and how to do so with iodine, boiling, bleach, solar purification, etc. If you want more information yourself, read [*Start Prepping!*](#)
- **Pitch a Tent or Shelter:** If you have a commercial tent, allow your children to follow its assembly instructions and let them erect the tent. Once they can do it, look for opportunities to supervise them doing it in poor weather. If you're comfortable, allow them to build a survival shelter from natural materials.
- **Dress Appropriately for Weather:** Children must understand why it is important to layer clothing, as temperatures and conditions change throughout the day and often without warning. Hot weather requires light clothing and limited sun exposure to eliminate the risk of sunburn. Cold and damp weather requires three layers: a base layer for insulation and moisture removal, a middle layer for heavy insulation and a top layer for wind and waterproofing.
- **Handle Money:** Teach children at this age to count money, calculate expected change from small transactions and ensure they receive the correct amount.

- **Teach Chess:** Chess wasn't a survival game I listed earlier, but learning the game teaches patience, planning and complex decision-making.
- **Fire a Gun:** Even if you are averse to firearms, teach children about their proper use. Seek expert help if necessary so that children learn the deadly danger AND the potential life-saving nature of firearms.
- **How to Use a Slingshot:** If you don't have one you can buy an [inexpensive slingshot](#). Learning to effectively use a slingshot provides a firearm alternative to hunting small game, such as squirrels and rabbits.
- **Use Hand Tools:** Teach your child to use a handsaw, hammer and screwdrivers.
- **Make Dinner from Freeze Dried Pouch:** Show your child how to boil water, interpret instructions, check the clock and serve food from a [freeze-dried pouch](#).

Ages 7-10

- **Tie a Secure Knot:** Knowing how to tie knots properly will enable children to pitch tents, secure boats, hang a clothesline and build shelters. There are many knots to learn. If you need help, check out [The Everything Knots](#) book.
- **Become a Scout:** First graders and up can become Cub Scouts (boys) or Daisy Scouts (girls). The social and survival skill benefits of participating in these activities are well-known.
- **Advanced Navigation:** Introduce navigating by maps and GPS. Allow children to plan trips for you and to navigate. Look for opportunities to

praise decision-making while pointing out inefficiencies and threats as appropriate.

- **How to Help Others:** Let your children see you volunteer at a hospital, food drive or anytime there's a local emergency. This not only gives them insight into potential disasters, it teaches empathy, leadership and helps them realize the value of fitness and preparedness.
- **How to Answer the Door and Telephone:** Teach the child that, if he's alone, to never say, "Mom isn't here." Rather, instruct him to say that, "Mom is in the shower," etc. Be sure to teach him why it's important that he not reveal that he is alone.
- **How to Repair Things:** Unfortunately, many children learn that when something breaks they should just buy a replacement. When I was a kid the motto was, "use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without," and that's still a good lesson to teach children. Look for rusty cast-iron skillets at yard sales and teach children to restore them. I wrote [an article](https://selfsufficientman.com/castiron) at selfsufficientman.com/castiron that describes how.
- **The Family Communication Plan:** See my book, [*Start Prepping!*](#), for details on how to develop and share a family communications plan in the event of disaster or evacuation. Children need to know how to reconnect with their parents.
- **Play Sports:** Participating in sports, such as basketball, skiing, baseball, etc. helps children to increase strength, learn endurance, develop teamwork skills and builds their self-esteem.
- **Identify Spoiled Food:** There's no "one size fits all" approach to identifying risky food, but you

can teach your children that food must be safe to eat. Show them bulging cans (ask your grocer for any “bad” cans), shriveled/wrinkled potatoes, weeping lettuce or leakage in a produce bag. Allow them to smell “bad” milk and meat and look for signs of mold or mildew on lids, inside of jars or on food. At the same time, show them blue mold on blue cheese and teach them that it *is* safe to eat. Let children know that all fresh foods (fruits, meats, vegetables, etc.) spoil and must be consumed while fresh or safely preserved.

- **Know Basic Self-Defense:** Sure, your child can take martial arts, but as I discussed thoroughly in [*Start Prepping!*](#), the best self-defense starts with situational awareness. Playing games such as Snapshot and Guts will teach your child to use their heads and avoid danger. So while I (and you) may encourage teaching self-defense fighting techniques, it’s generally best to teach how to avoid and escape from dangerous situations.
- **Develop a Love of Science and Math:** Seriously. Think about how these skills will help them understand ratios of purifiers to water (for potable water) or recipe ingredients, calculate time and distance (navigation, lost in the wilderness), estimate probability, how chemicals react (to avoid the deadly horrors of calcium hypochlorite that I described in [*Start Prepping!*](#)) and more. Don’t abdicate this only to school teachers—model your love of the subjects for them.
- **Forage for Food:** Take a foraging exploration with your child and find something to eat! If you need training in this area, look for a class or

check out the excellent book, [*The Forager's Harvest*](#).

- **Cook Over an Open Fire:** After starting a supervised fire by themselves, have your children cook over an open fire using cast iron or a metal sheet.
- **Money Management:** Teach your children to make a budget and calculate the cost to prepare a dinner. See if they can come up with ways to lower the cost while not decreasing calories, etc.
- **How to Survive a School Shooting:** I wish I didn't have to put this on the list, but...it's a reality. Find out what your school shooter plan is (if they don't have one—change schools) and assess it. Share the plan with your child in an age-appropriate manner (as with the rest of this book) so they know the plan. **I want to emphasize that, as a parent of a young child, I know how hard this is.** Since we're not always there to protect them we have to *help them* the best we can, while always remembering that we're trying to *prepare them*, not scare them.

Ages 10+

- **Earn Money:** Encourage your children to safely earn money. Help them open a savings account and develop their money management skills. When they want to buy something, teach them the value of earning the money and saving for it, with the realization that there's only *so much* money.
- **How to Hunt:** This may include using firearms, archery or traps. It is a very important survival skill that all of our ancestors knew. Pass it on.

- **Internet Safety:** Grandma didn't teach me this, but times have changed. Teach your children common sense guidelines on using the Internet, such as not sharing birthdays, phone numbers, addresses and personal information. Teach them about the dangers of predators, cyberbullying and sexting (or whatever new concept exists when you're reading this), and don't rely on your search engine filters to keep their eyes protected from the real world. Rather, teach them about the real world, how to make good decisions and how to stay safe.
- **Use Power Tools:** Now that your child is older, help her learn to use power drills, saws, and so on. Build an animal pen or something survival related.
- **Tend a Garden:** After playing the game Germinate!, allow your children to plant a very small garden, and have them tend it for an entire season. When they harvest the crop (s), allow them to prepare the food for the family over an open fire!
- **How to Feed Themselves:** If they are alone in the house, your children should be able to feed themselves. This includes making nutritious food choices, cleaning food, prepping and cooking. It also includes applying first aid if they have an accident.
- **CPR:** When you feel they're ready, enroll your children in a CPR class. It could end up saving *your* life.
- **How and When to Seek Help:** This includes teaching teens to ask for help if they feel threatened at school or elsewhere and who can help them (parent, teacher, officer), as well as

how to seek help if the child himself feels depressed or suicidal.

- **How to Mentor:** This is especially valuable if you have both older and younger children. When children show and explain survival skills to others, they gain self-confidence and increase their own understanding of what they are doing and why. Let your older child know how much you need him and how important a responsibility he has to mentor and help others. If you don't have younger children, perhaps he can mentor neighborhood children.
- **How to Travel Alone:** I mentioned earlier that I grew up rather self-sufficiently. When I was younger than 10, I traveled to my grandparents on buses—alone. The trip was often 4-5 hours. Most of us wouldn't consider allowing children to do that today, but at some point they will have to travel safely without you. It's best to create opportunities for that as safely as possible so that you can teach them situational awareness and safe travel habits.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

While flying high over corporate America, Tim Young received a call he couldn't ignore. He shredded his business cards, said goodbye to the conveniences of urban life and become a farmsteader. Along the way Tim became an award-winning cheesemaker and Amazon bestselling author. Today he lives with his wife—the most beautiful and caring woman in the world, his delightful daughter, and a Silky Terrier named Alfie who speaks to him in condescending broken English.

Tim's website is selfsufficientman.com

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