

**SHTF**  
**SCHOOL.COM**

*real life survival experiences*

**Selco**

one year in hell

**SURVIVAL GUIDE**

## 1. Read this first

Hello and welcome.

First of all I want to thank you for joining this course. I am humbled that you have chosen to learn from the hard experience I have been through and hope that what I share here might save someone's life. Thank you.

As with all materials of the course, there will be updates and new articles in the members area on an ongoing basis. You can also share your insights and knowledge in the [lesson notes forum](#) and ask questions in the [Q & A forum](#).

### Scope of this course

This course is about the simple and raw side of survival and not the fancy bells and whistles part. I believe this raw and very basic side of survival sometimes gets forgotten. But in the end it is not things like fancy freeze-dried blueberry muffins that will help you survive when TSHTF (The Shit Hits The Fan).

There is nothing wrong with trying to prepare to keep your living standard even if TSHTF, but that is not the point of this course.

No matter how many freeze-dried blueberry muffins you have stocked, the day will come when the last one is gone and all you have is your big sacks of rice or grain, if anything at all.

This course begins at that day. The focus here is on the uncomfortable, stinky, brutal and depressing side of survival. This is what I can talk about best, because this is what I experienced.

This course is mostly about what I experienced in my time during the Balkan war, how I coped with it and what helped me to survive. Often in life, we learn only when we are forced to, and in this course I will share what I was forced to learn during my year in hell.

## Fewer rules, more principles

Jay and I sat together and tried first to establish some basic principles. Because unlike rules, principles are universal and in all sorts of unexpected situations they will help guide you toward right decisions and right actions.

There are many great books and resources concerning technical aspects of survival: so no, you will not find recipes for candle-making in this course. It is simply better to get a book about that.

## The three parts of the course

The first part of the course consists of the interviews Jay did with me. These will introduce you to the experiences that taught me the tough lessons I am trying to pass on to you. You will come to understand the mindset that helped me survive and stay sane during my year in hell . Walking in my shoes a bit will prepare you to better cope with unexpected situations that may arise in your own life.

In the second part of the course, you will find several chapters of advice on topics such as security, trading, movement, water & food, and first aid & hygiene. While the interview part of the course lays the foundation and helps you to see things from my point of view, in this part of the course I offer concrete and practical advice. I will talk about the lessons I've learned, and how I might approach the next crisis differently.

In the third part of the course, I go through some of the equipment and resources I keep on hand, providing you with a detailed list of what I stock and why.

## Been there, done that

In the end, this guide is a set of personal opinions, based on a set of person-

al experiences. There is no one single way that works for everyone. If this course can help you to anticipate and adapt to any unexpected and dramatic upheaval that may come your way—the kind of disaster we all hope never comes but must be prepared for anyway—it will be a success in my eyes.

Since my experiences during the Balkan war I have been preparing for whatever might come next. I have never stopped. It was first all about weapons but my focus has changed over time. I have settled on a way of preparing which I'm confident is the right way for what I expect to happen in the future.

As a member of this course, you will be informed whenever I modify my setup or plans. So as long as we all have the Internet let's enjoy the ride into the darkness together.

You will learn a lot of things in this course, but like learning to play a guitar only practice will get you ready for the challenges that might await us in the future.

Please use what you learn here, think about it and put it into action. Just having a map that shows you how to get up the mountain doesn't mean you are ready to get up there. The only way to know this is to get out and try things. Throughout the guide I will recommend ways of practicing the techniques I have shared with you.

Finally I want to send a big thanks to my family and friends, to Jay for contributing his psychological knowledge and coming up with all those hundreds of questions that helped me to remember, Scott for editing this guide, and also to everyone on the Internet who has encouraged me to share my experience. Thank you and now let's get started.

## 2. Understand your survival situation

If we could predict exactly what kind of survival situation we might be in one day, it would be much easier to prepare. Unfortunately that's not the case. But there are ways to stay on top of what is happening and be ahead of the crowd who is less aware of what's going on than we are.

Back then my family and I were naive. We did not want to see what might happen to us and trusted the wrong people. I will never make this mistake again. Politicians and media lied to us.

During the war information was the key and whenever one army was operating in an area they had a small miniature version of the same area built in their command room in the regional headquarters. They used small figures, vehicles and other items on this playing field to plan their next moves. Just as war is a brutal reality where mistakes can be very costly, so is a survival situation.

### 1. You have to be aware of all players and your playing field

Make a list of all factors, whether human or environmental, that can impact your life. Those are the players and your playing field is your environment. I have simplified these factors into three broad categories.

- The big picture: This category includes global and national politics that could affect you, as well as global threats such as water and food crisis, pandemics and pollution and so on. What global or national problems can impact my life?
- The local level: This category includes factors like the unemployment rate, local building projects and also your location and everything that comes along with it. For example: Will you get snowed in during winter? How is your local climate throughout the year? What are your local

politicians doing? Simply, what factors in or around 100km (70 miles) can screw me?

- The personal level: This category involves the most personal factors of your situation. Do you have a family or support network in your area? Do you smoke or have health problems? [ Include anything that could directly affect your everyday life here.

When you do this you will end up with a lot of things in the personal level category. That's fine. This list just makes you aware of all the things you should pay attention to.

## 2. You have to understand what each category means

The global and local categories are full of early indicators of human-made SHTF situations (and in some cases also of natural disasters). The personal category is full of factors you can influence. It is full of things you can improve.

I personally do not pay too much attention to politics because I believe the small and gradual changes on a local level are the best indicators that something bad will happen. I also try to stop by local demonstrations or big public events for a short time to get an understanding of the mood of the people. Such events have started it all in the past and might start something again in the future.

## 3. You have to understand how each factor is related to the other and plan accordingly

We made the mistake of trusting the media and politicians. We also didn't question the motivation of why each party involved in the Balkan war did what they did and spread the message they did.

Try to really understand what everyone who is involved gets out of this situation and what agenda they have. Stay critical and alert of all moves on the playing field. Try to find more information if possible.

It takes time to make a truly informed decision so try to get your hands on as much information as possible and not just information that confirms what you already believe. Look for evidence that you are wrong.

To do this you have to stop labeling things, individual people and groups of people. You have to look at things without judging them. If you favor the conservative party in your country, labeling a liberal politician as a “communist” will prevent you from seeing the situation clearly. Once you have labeled a person or group, you will only pay attention to information that reinforces your existing opinion. You will ignore or filter out other information that could be vital to your survival. If you avoid labeling, you will have access to better and more complete information about the situation.

Labeling will also make you more likely to be misled by your side or people who share the same belief you do.

**Everything and everyone should undergo the same critical testing.**

Making the right decisions is one of the most essential parts of survival. Understanding all factors involved, the players and the playing field is mandatory.

## How to gather information

Make sure to get your information from a wide variety of sources. Here are the services I use for that.

- Twitter real time search
- Google news
- Google news alerts

Don't forget to listen to the word on the street. I work in the medical field and often deal with the police, junkies or get called to fix people up in pris-

ons. Getting first-hand information from these kind of circles can be very valuable and insightful, even if they are just rumors.

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### 3. Situational awareness and your ego

If you are into mountain-climbing you might know that most fatal accidents happen at rather easy passages on the mountains. Most people do not think they should get into their full climbing gear for such easy passages, or they go with a group and follow the lead of more experienced climbers who choose not to use their gear. The lesson here is that it is easy to let down your guard when the danger is not obvious.

Letting down your guard can be fatal in a survival situation just as it is in mountain-climbing. For example, when people started leaving the area to go on “vacation” and stopped showing up to work, it appeared that life continued as usual. No one wanted to admit that people were fleeing the country.

When some of the wealthier people began to leave the city, my alarm bells should have gone off. I should have started preparations, convinced my family to leave, and left myself as well.

Like in many other areas of life in which a bad decision can make the difference between life and death there is no room for one’s ego. Do what you have to do no matter how others might think about you.

I’m not scared now but I do know what can happen and there is no need to take unnecessary chances.



## The benefit of not knowing

In the first few weeks many people died in rather stupid ways. It was the testing phase and people often learned about their mental or physical limits at the cost of getting hurt or losing a friend or family member.

If there was one great thing about not being prepared it was that I knew I had no idea what was going on and I was aware of that. Back then I was simply scared to die whenever I left my house.

In a survival situation you must know your limits, and you must know what you don't know. It can be fatal to assume you fully understand a situation. It is important to be brutally honest with yourself because everything that deludes your idea of yourself or your abilities can kill you. You have to be able to judge your abilities correctly and know what you can do and maybe even more important what you cannot do. I saw many people simply die because they overestimated their abilities.

You must also understand that in a survival situation things will happen that you cannot possibly foresee.

How do you think my neighbor felt after his wife got shot and he had to run away and leave her behind? If you want to mentally prepare yourself for SHTF you need to brace yourself for messy situations like this. I'm not saying there were no heroic scenes, but the tragic, brutal and unfair situations were way... way more common.

## Knowing that you don't know

Back then I knew that I knew nothing or very little and whenever the time comes again I will keep this attitude, regardless of all the preparation and training I have. Knowing what you don't know is the best way to keep your mind sharp and flexible and avoid stupid mistakes based on your ego.

It does not mean that you have to be a coward or unsure about your abilities. It is a fine line to walk.

**Be careful not scared. Be determined not fearless. Don't be a coward, don't be a hero.**

## Being curious

It is good to be curious about finding new resources, for example – but only be curious if there is something to be gained. Don't check out a piece of plastic sticking out of the rubble just because you are curious. Make sure you really need it first.

Do not leave your home just because you are bored or are curious about the loud impact you heard nearby. If there is fighting let them come and fight on your terms in an area you pick. Being too curious can get you killed fast or at least get you into trouble, being not curious enough leaves you with less information or resources but in some situations you might be able to afford this.

It is always a trade off between security vs resources.

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## 4. Don't be good, don't be bad. Be both.

Keeping your options open enables you to adapt to changing situations. Think of how a chameleon changes its color to match its surroundings. If the chameleon was limited to green color tones and tried to hide on a dark brown tree branch it would not stay hidden for long and camouflage is the only defense a chameleon has.

## **When it comes to dealing with people you have to be like a chameleon.**

In survival situations flexibility is your biggest asset. I found that the most successful people were those who could be nice and gentle in one situation, and then threatening and demanding in another. You never knew what person you might come across so you constantly had to adjust your behavior to get what you wanted.

People who appeared too nice or weak became easy targets. People who appeared too bad or dangerous were left alone and avoided. Of course there are success stories for both extremes but flexibility offers you the best of both worlds.

Being both, being not black or white but grey, means you will avoid making personal enemies while still being strong enough to convince other weaker people to give you what you needed.

Many people take the simple approach and choose just one side. They lack the mental flexibility to adjust to a situation or it takes them too long. Many of the too bad or too good people died. Some of the bad people had to flee the city after everything was over because they had too many enemies.

Look at yourself and be honest with yourself... how flexible are you? Can you be kind and also cruel if you have to? The more flexible your nature, the more options you will have available to you.

## **Train yourself to be flexible**

Do you always do things one way? Try it another way. Do you always think about things in one way? Try thinking about them in another way.

If you have always been a tough guy, try being nice and gentle sometimes. This is one of the best exercises to prepare yourself for a survival situation. Nature, enemies, the condition of other people in your group or other fac-

tors will dictate you what you have to do or how you have to be and you need the flexibility to react in different ways quickly.

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## 5. Strength in numbers

Your best asset in a survival scenario is a reliable group. Since the beginning of mankind we humans have roamed the land in groups because it increases our chances of survival.

- A group can compensate for the sickness or injury or weakness of individual members.
- Individuals within a group can specialize and enable the group to become more efficient.
- A group can deter potential attackers and better secure locations.
- More people = more different skill sets.
- Companionship can calm people.

You can have so many “but ifs” but in the end being in a group might be the single most important factor in your survival.

### Building your group

If you do not have a family or friends you can rely on in case TSHTF, become active in your community and find people in associations that are similar to what we preppers do. Your local gun club is a possibility, as are outdoor-oriented groups such as climbers or mountaineers.

You want people who are capable of understanding what a survival situation is. In the best case you want to find people who **have had hard lives**. People who have had a hard life are more used to unfair situations and struggle,

and have already been forced to develop coping skills. They can accept bad situations and take action more quickly than people who have never struggled. They usually have more control over their feelings.

You also want your group members to be **flexible and open-minded**. The best group members can caution you when you are overly enthusiastic and encourage you when you feel desperate. Someone who is always cautious or always encouraging isn't as valuable. You want people who can take on a variety of physical jobs and are also mentally able to fill in different positions. Who can take leadership if you or another leader is sick and who can follow orders when everything is fine.

Pick those who in normal times can organize and handle their lives. During a SHTF situation **most unstable people simply break** and become a liability instead of an asset. Of course that doesn't mean you leave your old, immobile mother out in the cold to rot. But you have to plan accordingly and, for example, think of jobs handicapped members of your group can do that benefit the whole group.

Even within your family don't advertise that you are a prepper. Those who don't understand the idea of prepping and the real dangers of a survival situation might talk to others who come knocking on your door. If you are a real prepper nobody knows that you are a prepper.

## Qualities of a good group

Our group worked so well because everyone understood it was the only way to survive. If you look for people to join your group make sure they are people who value harmony and place the well-being of the group over their own individual desires. Members of your group have to be ready to endure pain and hardship for each other and have to understand that this is the only way to survive.

Pick people for your group who showed up when you were moving during good times and are **happy to help you even if that means additional**

**work for themselves.** Pick those who volunteer for good causes. Most people who fall into this category are people who not only see short-term goals but also the bigger picture and the **importance of the group itself.**

In the best case those people will not steal because it is unethical and because disharmony can be fatal for the group.

In our group we decided right from the beginning that we would all eat together and save food for anyone who was absent . That helped us to eliminate one potential source of conflict.

I think the biggest reason why everything worked so well in our group was that nobody looked for excuses and we all understood the severity of the situation. It was simply no time to be lazy.

## A hierarchy is more efficient than democracy

Democracy only works in good times. Many people cannot make tough decisions in crisis situations. Tough decisions could potentially divide the group. Every day we faced decisions that had to be made quickly so there was simply no time for any voting or discussion.

## Some more advice on selecting a group

Like everything in this guide, this is simply my opinion. If you know 5 people who are preppers and 5 people who are friends there is no way to know who the right people are to pick. The preppers have more resources but might turn more easily against you in hard situations, while your friends are probably more trustworthy.

Some people might simply stock weapons for their friends and then visit the preppers... and that brings me to the next point that you hopefully already know...

Do not let anyone besides the people you plan to stay with during SHTF know that you are a prepper. Maybe even not them. No matter how close people are if they do not really understand preparing they might just mention that "Selco is a bit crazy about a potential crisis and stocks water and food."

Whoever hears that will laugh about it now and probably think Selco is crazy, but remember it again once TSHTF and come knocking on your door.

I have training in tactical shooting and of course I'm pretty good now with first aid and even more advanced field medic procedures. It would be easy to show off my skills and be proud of them but I do not. Most people don't even know that I carry guns. I keep my ego under control so later on I can decide who I want to help and who not. It is this little bit of "freedom" and control that can dramatically alter your destiny.

## My basic dream team

If my family and I could be with twenty special ops soldiers who are also field medics that would be ideal. But this is not realistic. So here is a basic group setup I think that makes sense and is more realistic.

Be with twenty people, family or very close friends. People who are connected and understand the situation. For example 2 or 3 close families with good family leaders. That is similar to smaller squads in the military.

Women are great but I would prefer to have more men in the group because they can work harder and are usually more ruthless. Of course a woman who prepares and has learned skills is way more desirable than a regular muscle-packed idiot. But I talk about just regular people and not preppers.

Twenty people is a good number because such a group is possible to manage yet you have enough people to get many things done, even if two or three are bed-ridden because of sickness or injuries.

All of them are trained in basic weapon handling, basic medical stuff and basic wilderness survival like I describe in the part about learning skills. If they do not have such skills you might want to prepare a few basic survival lessons for them.

In my dream team I also would like to have one true medical professional, one hunter, a person who can fix clothes or make new clothes from old clothes, and finally someone skilled at basic mechanical maintenance and home repair. I would also like to have a few people with military background who can maintain and even repair guns. Someone who can grow plants and harvest them would be fantastic too.

In the end you will probably have a very different group if you have a group at all. In this case just take who you can get and who you can trust and teach them what they have to know.

## Action team

When leaving your home base, do so in groups of three. A group of three can still easily hide and is more versatile than a group of two.

For example, two guys are not enough for some tasks like checking a building. If three guys have to check the building one can stay outside and observe the area while two check inside. A sniper is always good to have as well.

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## 6. A machine with feelings

If you want to work well with your group you need empathy. That means you have to understand and respect other people's feelings.



Empathy means you understand other people's feelings, not that you necessarily have the same feelings they have. Being emotional clouds your awareness and in a survival situation this is dangerous.

In times of crisis maintaining empathy for others can be very hard and demanding because everyone is experiencing extreme feelings and going through a tough time. Be prepared for that. I worked in the medical field before the war started and even though I just worked for a year I had to deal with people who were in a lot of different mental states. I encountered scared, sad, angry, depressed but also happy and hopeful people. This helped me to become more resilient while remaining emphatic with other people's feelings.

Try to be someone people feel comfortable turning to, someone they can share their problems with, someone they know will listen to them. Most people simply want someone to listen to them. This not only builds a bond of trust within the group. It also helps you to develop more empathy and resilience in the face of extreme emotions like desperation, strong fear, shock, sadness and hate. Listen but do not get too emotional.

**Learn now to deal with emotions now because when TSHTF you will be confronted with a lot of extreme emotions. Your own and those of people around you.**

## The many roles to play

If you are just the cold tough guy without emotions right now, you won't be much help to your group and you won't be prepared for the many intense emotions you yourself will experience. If you are not cold enough you will get too involved in the suffering you see and will lose control over your own feelings. The middle way is what you should aim for.

You have to keep a certain distance from the situation to properly function. Sometimes the stress and brutality of a situation will make it feel unreal. That is ok, it is a defense mechanism helping your mind remain sane.

## Find something to hold on to

Also, find some way to vent your feelings. Find an activity that can give you balance and keep you stable. I meet with friends and we talk complete rubbish or back then I went to parties and it helped me to release my feelings but mostly things didn't touch me. I guess I was born a bit like that.

Basically, get comfortable with all sorts of different feelings but do not let them take control over you. Accept the feelings of others but do not let this interfere with your own state of mind. You are just the observer and detached from what is happening around you. You do what you have to do.

**It's a bit like becoming a machine, but one that can still function and be nice to the people around it.**

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## 7. Helplessness and having no control

In the beginning after TSHTF I just felt small. Like a child. When things changed radically from one day to the next it felt as if I had lost control of my life and of course to a certain degree that was true. Feeling helpless and without any control is something that is quite hard to get used to.

You have to let go of the idea that your individual actions determine what comes next. It feels like being in a car that is out of control. In a survival scenario, events seem random and people often got lost in the initial phase of shock and horror at everything being so uncertain. At some point the only option is to accept the situation and make the best out of it.

**You have to surrender to what is going on without giving up.**

Most people were forced to arrive at this point of acceptance because one can only endure so much pain, hunger and tragedy. For me, getting to that point was a big relief. I stopped thinking and worrying so much about everything. I just did what I had to do and if I got shot or buried in a collapsing building then so be it.

### Not suicidal but “comfortable”

I didn't get less careful – in fact I became calmer and that helped me to react better to dangerous situations. Probably some of it was that a certain routine kicked in as well.

Accepting the situation I'm currently in without fighting it in my mind is the biggest change I went through during the war. I knew that fighting reality would only make me suffer so after a few weeks I stopped comparing my current situation with my desired situation.

You have to get to this point as quickly as possible and the first step is to realize that while you may not be in control of the situation, you are in control of your reactions to the situation.

You call two people assholes and how do they react? The first guy might simply laugh because he doesn't know you and doesn't care what you say, while the second guy might get angry because he is not that confident and feels insulted. In a survival situation you have to be the first guy and realize that no matter what is thrown at you, you have the power to react however you want to.

It is like the famous Nazi death camp survivor Victor Frankl said:

***Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.***

I saw a lot of people wasting time and energy complaining about the situa-

tion, looking for someone to blame or hate. It took me some time to get over this as well. But once I did I stopped feeling like a victim and stopped blaming someone else for my situation. The situation was bad but on some level the reason did not matter.

## Appreciating the little things

Being so helpless also makes you humble. You start to appreciate the very small things in life and realize how many things you took for granted. Look for these small things that can make a difference and celebrate them. If you are a smoker living a normal life, you might not be aware of more than half of the cigarettes you smoke.

Back then, smoking a cigarette was a big deal. It felt like a huge celebration to smoke a single cigarette. We made a kind of donut with tomato sauce and sweetened it so it might resemble jam. It didn't but it was still amazing to eat.

After many months some soldier brought a ghetto blaster and it was the first time I heard real normal music. What an amazing feeling.

## Having yourself, is all that's left

I cannot make this a rule but I saw many people with little self-esteem not recovering from the initial shock and loss of control.

It makes sense. If you believe in yourself and your skills then you also believe you can overcome problems or whatever gets in your way. It gives you something to hold on to, even if everything else seems to be falling apart.

This is another purely mental reason why learning various survival skills beforehand is so helpful. You not only learn how to do something. You also become more confident in your ability to master new skills, and as a result you gain self-esteem.

**You have to learn that when everything around you breaks down, you can still rely on one thing... yourself. And if you can remain in control of the one thing you have control over, yourself, you will be calmer and make better decisions.**

It is easy to spot people with low self-esteem: usually such people have an external focus and define themselves by external factors such as the car they drive, the job position they have and so on.

In the event of TSHTF, make sure to be extra careful when dealing with such people, because they will fall further down into the darkness when all these external factors are taken from them.

It will be hard for them to change their life overnight but unfortunately this is what all of us had to do and what we might have to do in the near future again.

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## 8. Learning skills and being valuable

People with special skills, such as dentists or doctors, were valued and had a way to get resources by providing a service to others. I believe it is essential to learn a few skills in the following areas:

- Wilderness survival
- Weapon handling, maintenance, shooting and basic self defense
- First aid

I list here the bare minimum skills I believe everyone should know. It makes no sense if you know 20 different traps but have never made one of them

yourself. It is better instead to know 2 different traps for critters in your area, practice building them and knowing where and how to correctly place them.

**Learn the basics, get those techniques right, and then add extra skills or variations on what you already know.**

## Wilderness survival

Many of you who read this will already know some wilderness survival techniques, like making a fire with flint or how to get clean water. I just include this here to make the list more complete. Let's begin with the absolute basics everyone should know.

- Learn how to make fire in different ways. Know local tinder and other natural resources that burn well.
- Learn several ways to get clean water. This is an area where it is essential to have several different options.
- Get a book about your local edible plants and go out and pick and eat them from time to time.
- Learn to build an outdoor shelter. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. A simple "lean-to" is a good start.

## Weapon handling, maintenance, shooting and basic self-defense

Learn how to keep your weapon working properly and how to maintain and repair it. You do not have to be a weapon specialist, but you must know how the "usual" weapons in your area work, and you must know your own weapon of choice perfectly.

Prepare yourself to be able to pick up a common weapon in your area and use it. Get familiar with all common safety locks and firing modes. Always

have a weapon that is “normal” to have in your area. That means a weapon many other people have, because it will be easier to obtain ammunition for it.

It is not enough to know how to shoot, you must know how to shoot in stressful situations. Tactical shooting practice is a good start for that.

Also learn some basic self-defense. You might be surprised but we had a lot of regular street fights during that time. Sometimes people who knew each other did not want to kill each other and just beat the crap out of each other. So knowing how to defeat someone without killing them comes in handy too.

## First aid

If you do not know how to treat wounds, shock, different kinds of food poisoning, bad water and poor hygiene-induced diseases... LEARN IT.

Take this step by step. Start with the most basic ways of treating a certain condition and then work way up to more advanced techniques. After you have the basic skills, get the basic equipment you will need. (For example, stuff like iodine, compresses, butterfly closing, antibiotic cream, etc. for basic wounds. And then more advanced supplies for things like suturing wounds, antibiotic IM treatment, etc)

Stocking extra medical supplies is always a good idea because will always be valuable for trading. But keep in mind, if you prepare yourself in this first aid / medical area, knowledge is the key. So keep learning. There are not pills for everything.

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## 9. Fear but wrong fear

In a survival scenario it is natural to be afraid and easy to be afraid of the wrong things. We focus our fear on armed attacks when in reality you are more likely to die from drinking bad water and coming down with chronic diarrhea.

**Being afraid of the wrong thing can cause you to lose perspective.**

You might be extremely careful when sneaking through an area at night and then not so careful when cleaning your hands. Keep that in mind when preparing. While security is important, so is hygiene and first aid. You might be the best shooter in town but don't know more than one way of disposing of your shit.

It is tempting to spend more time imagining the big firefight and not the stupid mistake when we slip and fall head first in some makeshift toilette and die from some resulting disease.

### Understand the real threats and your fear

Understand that each crisis you prepare for has a personality. In our case, by the time we got to know the personality of our SHTF situation it was too late. But over time as I saw more people dying from hygiene-related problems and small festering wounds, it put things in perspective. Is the SHTF situation you prepare for really all about shooting? Or will one of your loved ones die because they fall into a deep depression and commit suicide and you don't know how to help them?

In the beginning I was really scared to get shot, but later on I was more worried about getting sick. Most of the time I was way too busy to have fear. Stay busy to avoid being consumed by fear.

So what makes us fear one thing more than another?



- **Control:** If you are driving 120 mph in a car, you might feel safer than if someone else is driving.
- **Unfamiliarity:** Going at night through a forest you do not know feels different than going through the forest you pass by every day.
- **Imagination:** Due to images in the media, you might be more concerned about being eaten by a shark while swimming in the ocean, when in fact being swept out to the open sea by currents kills far more people every year.
- **Fairness:** Some things, like the possibility of losing a child to violence, feel so wrong we fear that it could happen to us more than it is likely to happen.
- **Current situation and experience:** If your brother died from a car accident you will be more fearful of driving cars than someone whose brother died from food poisoning.
- Be aware of these factors when you try to understand the game and play field.

When something is in the news, it is new and that means probably uncommon. All these things that are not in the news because they are so common should worry you probably even more. Think about the classic statistic that every year more people die from falling coconuts than from shark attacks.

**Humans are irrational, emotion driven creatures... try to understand what drives you.**

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## 10. Trading

Think more about the usage and purpose of something instead of the quality. If someone needs a lighter they need it to make fire and do not care if

it's a zippo or some other lighter.

Have a lot of small things, everyday things that are not special, because things that attract attention are bad. If you trade with the same people more often, try to give them different things each time you trade. You never want to be known as the guy who has a lot of X.

Some ideas (more in my supply list):

Small tools and knives, lighters, all sorts of medical stuff, tarps, sturdy bags to carry heavy items with several persons, bags to bury things, all sorts of legal drugs (tobacco, caffeine, alcohol), small treats like chocolate cookies.

## Everything is normal... at least for some time

Also think about the desires of other people in this situation. They crave normalcy and everything that can get them feel like things are normal are precious.

In my case it was coffee because it is part of every gathering among friends or family and having a bit of coffee with good people gave us all the feeling that we are still alive and like normal humans and one day things can get back to normal. People often connect certain emotions with items and those items bring back those emotions. This is also a kind of escape that everyone enjoyed... a lot.

## Safety matters

Being surrounded by death was one of the reasons why ammunition was always good for trading. Weapons of all sort were valuable. Just make sure they are not used against you later or even while trading them.

## Forget about getting the best deal

**I found it was more important to trade safely than to worry about getting things cheaply.**

If you are buying, don't show how badly you need something. If you are selling, don't reveal you have more stock at home. In other words, don't look like a trader or like a desperate guy.

Try to trade your stuff through different group members. Like a stock portfolio if you plan on storing things to trade you should have a well-rounded portfolio of different items. That will make you safer for different times, when different items are needed.

As I said before, having different items to trade makes you also look more like someone who does not have much of anything particular which might attract too much attention.

There is not much more to say about trading because while it was necessary it did not play a big part in our lives. Everyone needed something and most people were willing to exchange something for what they needed.

Safety was the most important aspect so all other aspects became less important. This will be different in a more civilized SHTF situation of course.

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## 11. My Philosophy of Preparing

Keep things simple and easy to manage, and forget about the bells and whistles. It is way more important to get a few of the core things right than knowing all the fancy little things. "Jack of all trades and master of none" is not what you want to be in a survival situation. Stay focused on the areas that matter.

In addition, I try to keep my assets hidden, including my expertise. I want to choose the people I will help. I want to be able to determine the risk of helping and then decide, I want to be in control. Get your priorities right or you end up knowing 30 different knots but without a rope.

I always try to simplify things and find shortcuts. How can I achieve the most with the fewest materials? How can I get most done in the least amount of time or different steps? Every extra step might be one step too much when your life is threatened and you have reached your mental limits of what you can handle.

I do not spend time now and work on plans how to keep my living quality when TSHTF. Things will change anyway so I work on areas that really make a difference and set me apart from the unprepared sheeple.

I also accept that there is no perfect plan or preparation. After mastering the basics, choose one skill you want to be really good at, one thing that makes you valuable.

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## 12. What would I do now if SHTF

Here is the situation. My family members are at work or in school, all around town and SHTF.

You have to practice leaving everything behind before you are in this situation. Being fast and acting fast is the key. It is harder than many people realize. In uncertain situations people want to save things or take as much as possible and just because of this, every year many people die in fires who would have survived if they acted more quickly. They do not understand that every moment matters.

Some people stayed in our city just so their kids wouldn't lose school days and later got killed because they didn't leave fast enough.

In the best-case scenario I would simply pick up my family members and go to my bug-out location (BOL). In the future I hope I can sense the signs early enough and leave in time, I'm not attached to anything anymore and know how important it is to simply leave everything behind when it matters. In this case I would take my car and get to my BOL.

### If I don't get the timing right

I would not try to escape once widespread looting has begun. In this case it is better to bug in and wait until the main targets in your area are looted and then try to make it to the BOL. At that point there will be fewer problematic people on the street and looters will wait and see if they can get away with stealing and if that works they will come out to do worse.

The next step for looters after all shops are empty is everything else and that includes homes.

When bugging in I would simply hide in my apartment. I would make it look as uninteresting as possible, as if it had already been looted. I would break some of the things in my apartment and throw out front. Add warning signs for mines at strategic positions and also add some dead animals or other things that create the stench of death to repel attackers.

**The best protection is always to stay hidden. Think like an assassin, nobody can attack something that is not there and can also not defend themselves from a threat they do not know about.**

Long term bugging in is not an option for me. My BOL is not that far away and family members live there all year around (and they already live a bit like SHTF, they live off the land) so it would be worth the risk no matter what. Please keep in mind this is just my current SHTF plan. So many factors determine what makes sense and what not so things might be very dif-

ferent in your case.

You can post your SHTF strategy in our forum to get some feedback from others.

» [Click here to share your own SHTF strategy and learn from others](#)