

## Survival Training Exercises with Babies and Children

By Joseph Parish

When preparing for emergency survival situation you cannot properly prepare if you leave half your family at home. When having a survival exercise you must take each member of the family with you or your time is nothing but wasted.

These family members should include small children and infants. Let's face it should a real emergency occur these members will be with you then so don't leave them at home with a baby sitter.

If your bug out vehicle is equipped to live in then half your problems are over. However should you need to utilize a tent of sorts then certain additional considerations must be extended due to the baby or toddler. The safety and security of these small children should be utmost in your mind when planning around your survival equipment as well as your procedures.

If you are using a tent you should consider a smaller tent like structure for the baby. This small enclosure will hold one baby with its associated infant seat. This enclosure is actually a screen enclosure that you place within your tent to protect the baby from insects. This equipment will protect the baby from receiving spiders and mosquitoes bites. Be sure to bring a small sleeping bag for your baby that will be used inside your tent when the child is not in the baby enclosure. This baby will feel much more secure when in the sleeping bag then merely wrapped in a blanket.

The key here is to make the baby feel more at ease and less apprehensive since he is not at his normal home with his usual surroundings. Prior to going on your survival exercise let the baby nap in the sleeping bag at home for a few nights to accustom him to it. Ensure that you make the baby its own activity bug out bag to include his familiar toys or whatever he is used to playing with at home.

Since you do not have all the amenities that you would at home you may want to bring certain things to make the baby a bit more comfortable. You may consider a small child's pool and if the child is of age where he can play games by all means include some.

Stress to your young children that it is imperative that they follow your rules exactly. During the exercise it may not be important however if it were an actual emergency the lack of following even the simplest of rules could have serious effects. Provide each child with a whistle to hang around their neck. Inform them that this is an important life saving tool and not a toy. Tell them and make them understand that should an emergency happen to them that then and only then should they blow the whistle. Let them know also that they should not wander off from the main camp. Side trips and excursions are definitely out.

If you are using a tent it is also important to stress to your children that no food of any sort should ever make its way into the tent. Most of the times our exercises are in the woods where wild animals are certain to be wandering around. No food not even a few cookies should ever be permitted within your tent. Even if this particular exercise is located in an area where no bears are known to exist the rule should be followed. You must remember that even in the event that you are diligent about food rules it is possible that raccoons and small animals as well as insects will evade your site.

Instruct your child that they should never approach, feed or pet any wild animals no matter how cute they may appear. If your child is at an age where they can understand then let them know about the risk associated with rabies and wild animals.

Weather is another of those influences which you have absolutely no control over. I remember one time we had a survival exercise in the middle of a storm. It was before I had outfitted a vehicle to serve as a BOV. We had one heck of a time keeping the tent up and finally gave up – quickly packed the tent in the trunk of the car and proceeded to sit inside the vehicle. Bear in mind that there is a difference in a rain shower and a storm.

With small children and babies a wet survival exercise outing can be definitely less than fun. To handle situations such as these make sure you bring a solar-powered flashlight and radio or as I now have the wind up versions. Let the children tune into the weather station information to find out if the storm is merely passing by or of a more permanent nature. Don't automatically assume that since it is storming we may as well go home. Believe me that is not an open option in a real life situation. Merely sit back and let the storm pass. The kids particularly enjoy sitting in the tent talking, playing games, share their favorite stories or simply read.

In the event of a severe storm first get away from any trees and get the family out of the rain. Jump in your BOV although it is not necessary to drive away at this time. Keep in mind that sometimes a storm may only last ten minutes or so. Listen to your radio. The storm will eventually ease up. Try to maintain a good attitude about the event as your attitude will be reflected in the children's. There is a vast difference between planning a survival exercise and being surprised by something not planned such as the storm. Plan your exercise, plan for the storm and only then will you know exactly what to do should the storm hit. The key is be prepared and you can have a successful survival exercise no matter what the weather.

I always have packed in my BOB as well as in my first aid kit plenty of insect repellent and sunscreen. These essentials are particularly important if you have small children on your exercise. You may consider one of the Dollar Stores screen huts which run only \$10.00. They are an open-enclosure which is open on two of the sides but closed on the other two sides. For eating outdoors is a great benefit to place around your table as it cuts down on the number of insects and mosquitoes attacking your food. It is a lot of fun for your kids as they enjoy sitting under the unit. Since part of this enclosure is screened while the other part is cloth it tends to provide a bit of needed shade on those sunny and hot days.