

Survival Simulation

Objectives:

TEAMWORK - to work in solving problems that affect the group as a whole. The number one rule, simply stated, is that everyone who begins this activity **MUST** survive. No one is allowed to be left behind. If the group ever chooses to “kill” someone off, the whole group fails. Amazingly enough, even though you will stress that they are never to kill anyone off, most groups will opt to take people out over trivial matters.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS - to develop a familiarity with basic survival skills including fire and shelter building, signaling and first aid, as well as a respect for the environment and natural elements

COMMUNICATION - to encourage group interaction and increase ability for quality interpersonal exchange

Props:

"Decision Point" should have matches, tarp, rope, pot, Bible, broken flashlight, articles of clothing, roll of toilet paper, books, scratched magnifying glass, cup, salt and pepper, empty first aid kit, broken compass and any other nonessentials for survival. You will also need a stopwatch.

Discussion

1. Introduction

Tell group that in a little while they will be put in an unusual emergency situation. The actions of the entire group will determine how many people survive. The group will be taught everything they need to know to survive, but they must pay attention and learn quickly. The lives of the entire group depend on it. Their goal, overall, is to have everyone survive. They must not leave any teammate behind, no matter what has happened.

"Every individual has basic needs that must be met. What are they?"

FOOD, SHELTER, WATER¹

"If you were stranded in the wilderness, what things might be useful to know?"

FIRE BUILDING, FIRST AID, SIGNALING, ORIENTEERING...

2. The Rules of Threes

3 seconds	_____	(PMA – Positive Mental Attitude)
3 minutes	_____	(Air)
3 hours	_____	(Shelter)
3 days	_____	(Water)
3 weeks	_____	(Food)

This is the order in which you need to think about your survival. First, relax; if you panic, you are lost. Second, you need to find air. While this is normally a given on planet earth, it could be a problem if you are trapped in an avalanche, cave-in, etc. From there, we move into:

3. Finding Directions

If you are lost it is usually best to stay in one place. Finding your way out of a wilderness area can be difficult. If you keep your head, it is possible, however. The key thing to think about is trying to find your tracks from when you entered the forest, identify any familiar landmarks, etc. This is where PMA becomes critical!

"If you need to get out of an area, what could you use to determine the best direction to head?"

¹ Note: we assume that Oxygen is a given on planet earth.

MAPS, COMPASS, SUN DIRECTION, NORTH STAR, LANDMARK TRAILS, SHADOW METHOD

There are only three directions you can find in nature without a compass, they are: north (north star), east (sun rises) and west (sun sets). People will tell you that rivers flow from north to south. Most do, but they also wander back and forth as they flow! People will tell you moss always grows on the north side of trees. I can take you to the Pointe and show you moss growing all the way around a tree! There are other “folklore” methods of finding directions, but there are only three directions you can tell in nature without a compass.

*Show groups how to use the above methods.

4. Shelter

Most survival situations do not last for more than 24-hours, so shelter becomes a priority. Hypothermia is a fatal condition that occurs when a person's core body temperature drops below 98.6 for too long. Exposure to cold, wind or moisture can cause this type of condition. Constructing a shelter may be critical to survival under certain conditions in order to avoid hypothermia and stay alive. Knowing wind directions (N-S-W-E) is very important. (Fun fact: you can freeze to death on an 80 °F day; all you need is water and a strong wind!

"When building a short-term shelter, what things do you need to consider?"

-MATERIALS AVAILABLE:

NATURAL SHELTER (cave, tunnel, thick vegetation, overhang);

VEGETATION (pine branches, sticks, logs);

ROPES FOR LASHING (can also use cloth, vines, bark); OTHER SUPPLIES (tarp, blanket, poncho)

-TIME FACTOR - *HOW FAST YOU CAN BUILD SHELTER CAN EFFECT YOUR CONDITION*

-WEATHER CONDITIONS / WIND DIRECTION

*Show the group how to build a lean-to structure using different materials and anchoring techniques.

5. Fire Building

Fires need three ingredients: oxygen, fuel and energy.

"What are the three types of wood?"

TINDER - very small, dry pieces (dead twigs, shavings, birch bark, paper)

KINDLING - small dry, dead wood that can easily catch fire

FUEL - larger size from a finger to a leg in diameter, dry

"What if it is raining?"

YOU CAN MAKE TINDER BY SHAVING DOWN TO DRY WOOD OR FIND DEAD BRANCHES THAT ARE STILL ATTACHED TO TREES.

*Ask the group if they know how to build a fire. If most brag about their fire-starting abilities, DO NOT explain how to build one! If just a few raise their hands, demonstrate fire-laying techniques. Point out the importance of having plenty of wood on hand before you strike the match. Explain placement of the fire in relation to keeping a person warm in various situations - lean-to, open area, etc. Also point out that they should have a big fire before trying to boil the water.



6. Water

A person can normally live less than one week without water. In fact, most humans cannot survive more than four days without water. (On the fourth day, most people have their tongue swollen and filling their mouth; are semi-conscious; delirious; and are continually passing out.) Thus this is a critical factor.

"What are some sources of water you could find?"

RIVERS, LAKES, SPRINGS, PUDDLES, RAIN, SNOW, DEW, DIGGING

"What are some problems with getting water from these sources?"

WATER MAY BE CONTAMINATED.

*Boiling water for at least five minutes is necessary to assure it is safe to drink. Thus being able to build a fire is important.



7. Food

Most people can survive 3-4 weeks without food, so in a short-term survival situation, food is probably not a critical need. However, when a person goes without food for several days, lack of strength and resistance to illness may enter in as important factors.

"What can we eat in the forest?"

PLANTS (bracken ferns, sumac, cattails, wintergreen, seaweed...)

ANIMALS (squirrels, fish, insects...)

*Show edible plant chart and explain where to find these plants. STRESS that it is important never to eat a plant that you cannot positively identify. The best way to demonstrate this is to read the following sentence and have the group figure out what is wrong with it.

"I think that is sumac, we can eat it."

Any time anyone ever uses the word "think" in the sentence, don't touch it!!!! If you are not 230% sure that you know what the plant is, don't eat it!

8. Signaling

The most important signal to be aware of in a survival situation is the "international distress signal" which is three of anything given in short intervals.

- *three flashes of light
- *three gun shots
- *three cloth panels laying on the ground
- *three fires

Does anyone know what the Morse Code distress signal is? (SOS) What are the dots and dashes in SOS? (3 dashes, 3 dots, 3 dashes) Notice the use of three in the code? How many sets of three are there? (Three) If “3” is the international distress signal, and I’m trying to build a shape to show I’m in distress, what shape should I build? (A triangle) Why? (It has three sides) How many triangles should I build? (Three) What should the final shape of the triangles be? (A triangle) So, if you build three triangles in the shape of a triangle, you’ve just made a distress signal!

Where do you want to build your triangles? (In the middle of an open space) Why? (You’re trying to signal planes!) What is the best building material to use if you want to convince people it’s man-made, rather than natural. (At night, fires; in the day, clothes)

8. First Aid

Some injuries that could occur during a survival situation include cuts, sprains, fractures, shock, hypothermia, frostbite and heat stroke. Because of a limited amount of time the group will concentrate how to deal with bleeding and sprains/fractures. (Feel free to add other conditions if time allows.)

Bleeding - Apply direct pressure with a clean cloth to wound, elevate cut and bandage to a position above the heart (vertically) to keep wound from reopening. Push on pressure points located in upper arm and/or thigh area. (Do NOT use a tourniquet. If you do, you have just killed the person! In a day, gangrene will spread throughout the body and the injured person will die.)

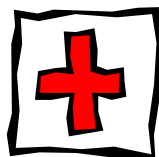
Sprain/Fracture - Immobilize the joints above and below the injury by splinting with ropes or cloth and sticks. Do not move victim unless absolutely necessary.

Hysteria - If someone is injured, they will probably not be calm. Talk to them. Touch them on the hand (if it’s not injured) and speak gently to them to calm them down.

Shock - Most deaths in the wilderness don’t occur from the injuries, themselves, but from the shock which follows. The body simply shuts down. Keep the victim warm (not too hot) and, if possible, elevate their feet.

Spinal Injury - If someone is unconscious, it means they hit their head. If they hit their head, it is also possible that their spine is damaged. If you have someone you suspect has a spinal injury, move them as little as possible! Wedge their neck in such a way as to prevent it from moving. In the wilderness, you will probably have to transport that person because if you leave them behind, they will certainly die. To do this, build a stretcher, place them on it as gently as possible and try not to bounce them as you carry them.

*Demonstrate first aid techniques.



Facilitator Notes

The goal of this activity is to present situations that will require the group to:

1. Determine a leader.

This leader may or may not be the one you want. Many groups will choose leaders by volume: whoever shouts the loudest, leads. Your goal is to try to encourage the group to find people who are knowledgeable and worthy to be followed. This is not easy, however. Your other goal is to NOT interfere with the group. You must be subtle in your interactions...

2. Work together.

Many of these activities are structured so as to be impossible for a small group to accomplish unless they work together. You want to motivate everyone to pitch in and help. The more, the merrier!

3. Pull together.

The group **MUST NOT** leave anyone behind. When I score this activity, I take points off for the mistakes they make. After each activity area, I process their performance, seeking feedback and encouraging participation so that the group can improve. It is up to the group to pull in members who are not participating or that the group may not like. Stress that in the real world, everyone is important, everyone can contribute and everyone can make a difference. What was their goal, again? To keep everyone alive!

4. End together.

If, during the activity, the group has managed to lose three or more life levels, I offer them a choice: one person (for every three life levels they have lost) can die and the rest be healthy, or everyone can have a “nasty paper cut”, in other words, they will “share” the damage.

If they ever opt to kill someone, I immediately become exceptionally harsh. Every small mistake will cost the group eight life levels. The group will die. Why? They chose to leave someone behind! This is not an option in teambuilding!

At the end, when I explain to them that they are all “dead”, I ask why they failed. Occasionally, you’ll have one person say, “Because you were unfair.” To this I answer: “You left one of your team members to “die” in the forest. Who is being unfair?”

Survival Simulation

While traveling to a YMCA Camp for a fun and exciting day of teambuilding, the bus driver decides to take a detour through the national forest that lies between the camp and _____ [insert name of their school/business here]. All of you are hanging out in the back of that luxury bus, swimming in the Olympic-sized swimming pool, playing video games, watching movies on the big screen television, and so you don't notice the "shortcut". Suddenly, an annoying little squirrel jumps out onto the road. The bus driver, a nature lover at heart, swerves to avoid the squirrel and crashes into a tree. You are now stranded in the middle of nowhere, miles from safety.

You sort through the bus and pull out this small crate, containing things you think you can use. The bus driver tells that if you try to follow the road, it will take you approximately 300 years to get home. (So the road is not an option.) If you travel north for three days, you will make it safely to camp. (So food is not an option.) He decides that he is going to stay with the bus since he is too shook-up to move. Therefore, you are on your own...

From this point on, nothing man-made exists. You may use what you have on you, except for things like lighters and bug spray! All adults are now mute (unless it's an all-adult group) and you, the Facilitator, will only present the problems; they must figure out the solutions on their own.

As you go, several life threatening incidents will take place that your group must overcome together in a limited amount of time. Each group member receives three life levels, so this group has a total of _____ life levels. Mistakes, failing to accomplish the task and taking too long will result in a loss of these life levels. Fighting is another way to lose life levels. The goal is to reach your destination while losing as few life levels as possible.

Remember: if you have 1/10 of a life level, you are still alive and functioning. Your goal is to get the entire group to survive this experience. You must not leave anyone behind!

*The Trail\Crew Leader's responsibility is to keep the stopwatch, inform the group of life levels, clarify location and instructions and provide encouragement. The leader is not to help or give suggestions. After each activity, count up how many life levels were lost and, with every three lost, give them the choice of having everyone injured or having someone die. Make sure you stress that no one is to be left behind; the only way to win is for everyone to survive.

Task #1: "DECISION POINT" -

Of several things rescued from the accident the group can only take four. These four items must be: pot (for water), matches (for building fire), tarp (shelter and first aid) and rope (shelter and first aid). If the group does not choose these, take away a life level and trade them for not so important items. If the group argues over items, take away life levels. The group has five minutes to accomplish this task. If they take longer, deduct one life level for every minute over time.

Task #2: Fire Building -

You have been on the trail for over a day and know you must get water. Find water and boil it (1 cup) for at least five minutes. You have 15 minutes to complete this project. You will lose a life level for every minute beyond this. You will lose half of all your life levels if you run out of matches before starting the fire. You will lose life levels for fighting and arguing.

Task #3: Shelter Building -

A sudden change in the weather has taken place. A bitter, cold wind out of the north means hypothermia is an immediate danger. Build a shelter facing the right direction as quickly as possible with the available materials. You will also need to put out a distress signal to attract the attention of a passing airplane. You have 10 minutes to complete these projects. For every minute beyond that and every error made you will lose a life level. You will lose life levels for fighting and arguing.

Task # 4: First Aid -

One of the members of your group has tripped over a rock and cut their lower left leg and broken their left arm. It must be treated immediately. Apply proper first aid care to ensure this victim's survival. You have 5 minutes to properly treat the victim. (You, as Facilitator, may add another "victim" and additional injuries, as time allows...)

Processing

What is a leader? Someone who helps others be successful? Did anyone stand out as the leader? Was it because they were vocal or because they were knowledgeable? Which is more important? Why? Were there different leaders at times?

Pick a situation where something was not going as well as it could... What was the problem? How were people responding? What were the resources you used to discover the solution to the problems? Are many heads better than one? What did you learn from this simulation?