

Be Prepared

By Tara Spinelli for Jersey Moms Blog

If I were a Tribute in the Hunger Games, sure, I'd love to be Katniss Everdeen, girl on fire, victor, revolutionary. More likely, though, I'd be Tribute #5 who gets killed about 11 seconds after she steps off the platform into the arena. Boom goes the cannon as my unmemorable face appears ever so briefly in the sky. Poor...what was her name again?

I recently stumbled upon Season 2 of Discovery's *The Colony*, a reality show in which diverse volunteers have to work together to survive a simulated global catastrophe that is threatening civilization with extinction. This controlled experiment, as the producers call it, takes place somewhere in the Louisiana Bayou in a sort of bombed-out ghost town without running water, electricity, communication tools, or government.

The cast includes Sally the auto mechanic; Deville the retired contractor; Amber the logger; George the artist/inventor; Jim the carpenter; Reno the construction worker; Michael the anatomy instructor; Sian the teacher; and even Becka the model (who has proven that you can look hot in dirty camo shorts AND be bad ass). Also, hiding among the others for an entire month without detection, there's Tick the ex-marine sniper.

Together, they've made a power plant out of pig carcasses and a broken tractor, fought intruders with handmade weapons, built a windmill, negotiated for release of a hostage, wrestled and killed an alligator for food, rebuilt a boat...all before a breakfast of fried cockroaches.

These death-of-democracy and post-apocalyptic scenarios have me thinking: just what skills do I have to offer under extreme circumstances?

For about 10 years, "Family Emergency Plan + Supply Kit" has been on my to-do list. I've been through FEMA's preparedness website a time or three. Knowing what to expect under different circumstances—natural disasters, pandemics, accidents, technological hazards, terrorist attacks—is a start. Having a plan and supplies on hand to respond is another good step. But what do I really know how to do that would help my family survive after the supplies run out, assuming there were still a chance of that?

When a snowstorm hit NJ this past Halloween, it became apparent that leaves and snow don't belong on a tree at the same time. The combined weight took down tree limbs and power lines all over town. Our power went out, and didn't come back until almost 6 days later. Not much of a disaster by any standard, but definitely inconvenient, and a challenge to accomplish some semblance of business-as-usual when most everything is ordinarily just a thoughtless flip of a switch or press of a button away.

So what did our prolonged power outage reveal about my “survival” skills? 1) I know how to plan. I can look several steps ahead, get everyone where they need to go in one piece, and create as much of a sense of normalcy as circumstances permit. 2) I have hope. I believe things will change for the better sooner rather than later. 3) I know how to stay warm. Who says clothes can’t be worn under pajamas or pajamas under clothes? It’s ok if the distinction blurs. 4) If there’s an Internet connection or working source of electricity to be had, I’ll have it. 5) I’ll always find a way to make a decent cup of coffee.

And even on an ordinary day when all the switches and buttons are working, and the abundant privilege and good fortune that my family enjoys are freely flowing, life can still feel like an endurance test at times.

While I wish I already knew how to rebuild an engine, rig a power supply, construct shelter, fashion a weapon, identify edible plants, handily kick the bad guy’s ass, and whatever else I might need to know under whatever circumstances might arise, I’m hoping I might have just enough resourcefulness and guts to figure it out if the time comes.

Maybe it’s premature to bet against Tribute #5 after all.

<http://dsc.discovery.com/tv/colony/>
<http://www.scholastic.com/thehungergames/>
<http://www.ready.gov/>