



# MEMBERS UPDATE

July 2020



## TACTICAL HANDGUN MASTERY: AT HOME

9 Ways to Stay Sane in an Apocalypse

16 Forgotten Skills for Tough Times

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## How to Stay Sane in an Apocalypse

As many of us have now experienced firsthand, thanks to COVID-19, major shifts in our work and social routines have a way of making us feel crazy. All of us have support systems that help us through our days, whether we realize it or not. Here's what to do when those systems go offline in a big way.



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## Tactical Handgun Mastery

People think we're crazy when we say that the shooting range is a terrible place to develop tactical handgun skills. They think we're even nuttier when we tell them the best place to train is at home. Why does the NSRA put forth such crazy ideas? In this two-part guide, we'll explain it all in detail.



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## 16 Forgotten Skills for Tough Times

When times get tough, the tough are going to need to roll up their sleeves and meet the same challenges their ancestors did throughout the ages. Whether it's feeding a family, storing preserves for a rainy day, or repairing items that are no longer "replaceable," the best place to look for answers may be the wisdom of the past.



## Top Tips for Maintaining Your Mental Health After the SHTF

As much as some of us may not want to admit it, mental health is by far one of the most critical – and often precarious – aspects of our overall well-being. As a result, this makes taking proper care of our emotional and mental health a top must-do item for all survivalists. It may not be as exciting as target practice or visibly rewarding like pumping iron. Still, it's going to be one of the most significant deciding factors of whether you live or die in a truly apocalyptic situation.

### *Mental Health: The Stats You Need to Know*

Even during normal times, mental health issues are a major challenge. In the US alone, 47.6 million people (19.1% of Americans) experience some type of mental illness every year. An additional 11.4 million (4.6% of Americans) battle a severe mental illness. Anxiety disorders and having at least one major depressive episode are among the most common issues.

**2** During the COVID-19 pandemic, these numbers rose significantly. A survey conducted at the

beginning of May 2020 by the NORC at the University of Chicago found that 60% of American adults were experiencing anxiety, depression, loneliness, or hopelessness. And this was despite the fact that 49% of respondents were still working, and 63% of Americans reported communicating with their family and friends daily. At the same time, alcohol sales increased by 55%, and overdose deaths shot up by 50% in La Crosse County, WI.

Now imagine what those numbers would look like if there were no access to mental health services (or liquor stores) during a SHTF scenario. Those who found it borderline impossible to stay at home even with their everyday luxuries still intact are highly likely to lose it when the grid goes down, and grocery stores stop getting new deliveries.

Even those who maintain a high level of mental, emotional, and physical fitness will have your endurance pushed to its limits. So, how can you keep your wits about you while living through a post-apocalyptic wasteland? Read on!

## Take Steps Against Isolation

Ideally, you'll have at least one other person with you whom you can trust. This approach will give you a good chance of fighting off the often-debilitating effects of long-term isolation. But even if you get stuck by yourself, there are ways to beat your loneliness.

We all remember the Tom Hanks movie "Castaway." In it, Hanks' character is stranded on a deserted island with little more than a volleyball for company. If you ever find yourself in a similar situation, do what Hanks did; name the ball and talk to it regularly. Believe it or not, this is a viable method for reducing feelings of isolation.

There are many non-fiction examples of it working too, including Yossi Ghinsberg's terrifying debacle in the Amazon rainforest. Ghinsberg found himself separated from his friends and then wandered around for weeks without any supplies. After the third week passed, an emaciated Ghinsberg was rescued. What's interesting about the ordeal is that he credited part of his survival to an imaginary woman he wanted to save. Ghinsberg's coping mechanism may not be a volleyball, but it's basically the same thing. His isolated mind gave him someone to talk to, and it kept him going when he probably would have otherwise given up.

## Just Breathe

When you're stressed out, it's difficult to reason, let alone to stay calm in an intense situation. The following two breathing practices can help you slow things down and re-engage with your rational mind.

**Meditation** - Meditating is very useful for people of all ages, genders, beliefs, and backgrounds. Of course, this isn't something you're going to do in the heat of the moment. Instead, you should set aside at least five to 10 minutes per day to sit calmly and quietly.

Mindfulness meditation will be the most helpful as it teaches you to feel your emotions without judging them or trying to move on from those that make you feel uncomfortable. By simply learning to sit with your feelings and breathe, you can gain better

control over your emotional reactions, thereby keeping your mental health stronger.

**Box Breathing** – Want to become as grounded and rational as a Navy SEAL in a high-pressure situation? Box breathing can be done pretty much anywhere and at any time.

- Expel all the air from your lungs.
- Hold your lungs empty until the count of four.
- Inhale through your nose for a four-count.
- Hold the breath in your lungs for four counts. Don't create back pressure or clamp down. Keep your body open.
- Exhale smoothly through your nose to the count of four.

That's it! Try it right now and see how it feels. According to former Navy Seal Mark Divine, it's best to practice box breathing once per day with reps lasting anywhere from five to 20 minutes. It's also a good idea to toss in a few daily one to two-minute sessions as well. Then, when you find yourself stressed out, you can utilize box breathing to center yourself and boost your alertness.

## Safely Express Your Emotions



In the military, and throughout the world of mental health experts, there's a process known as critical incident stress debriefing or CISD. The process is a proven psychological intervention that can dramatically reduce the long-term side effects associated with PTSD. If you've had to deal with a traumatic incident such as shooting someone or leaving everyone you love behind, you can use CISD to reduce the emotional, mental, and physical

# *Box Breathing Instructions: Step-by-Step*

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side effects. Otherwise, the incident could haunt you for days, weeks, months, or even years afterward.

CISD is best done with someone else, but you can do it yourself, if necessary. There are seven key steps:

- Assess the impact of the incident.
- Identify and correct any immediate issues pertaining to security and safety.
- Use defusing to express any feelings or reactions to the incident. It doesn't matter what type of emotions or thoughts are expressed. All of them are valid and should be validated.
- Consider what reactions and potential events are still to come as a result of the experience.
- Examine any existing maladaptive responses or behaviors. Don't criticize yourself for them, but be aware they exist.
- Try to identify any possible positives from the event to help give yourself closure.
- Debriefing is the final step and requires a non-critical review of everything that led to the incident, along with what happened during and after.

As you can see by reviewing these steps, many components are best done by someone else. For instance, another person could assess the impact, consider possible future reactions, examine any maladaptive responses, look for any positives, and conduct the debriefing review. But, again, if you're alone, you can modify these steps to help yourself. You may find it easier to write down the assessments and verbally express your feeling and reactions (or vice versa).

### *Find Some Meaning in Every Rough Situation*

Logotherapy is a term that was coined by a survivor of the Holocaust. In a nutshell, it's a therapeutic practice that revolves around the meaning that the person has ascribed to their life. Per Viktor Frankl, the survivor behind the invention of logotherapy, there's a vital concept everyone needs to grasp:

Life offers meaning and purpose, but it does not owe you happiness or a sense of fulfillment.

Frankl further explained that there are three ways through which a person can find meaning in life. He emphasized that you can get there by:

- Accomplishing a task or creating a work that motivates you.
- Fully loving someone or experiencing something else fully.
- Adopting an accepting attitude toward your own unavoidable suffering.

Within these meanings of life, there's a lot of room for people to cause themselves emotional harm. Fortunately, Frankl also came up with a plan for helping people attain as much happiness and fulfillment as possible.

- If you become overly absorbed or obsessed by trying to attain a goal, you can center yourself by redirecting your attention toward thinking of/helping someone else.
- Use humor and ridicule to help yourself face the things you fear the most.
- Recognize that the answer to your personal problems lies within you. In the vast majority of cases, we need to improve our self-awareness and be open to the solutions this can provide.

Please Note: This does not mean that you are responsible for every single circumstance that comes your way, nor does it mean you can actively fix every incident. Let's use the COVID-19 pandemic as an example. While you can't fix the pandemic, you can adjust your attitude toward the unavoidable suffering that comes with it.

Unhappy that your state has a stay at home order? Start a meaningful project in your house to accomplish a goal with your frustrated energy.

Are you stressed out about being laid off? Sign up for unemployment to relieve some of the financial tension and then use some of your free time to do something you've always wanted to do, such as reading a long book series or learning how to paint.

No matter what you choose, the point is to find some meaning in the situation and, hopefully, to make that meaning as positive as possible.

## Thirty Minutes of Daily Exercise



The connection between mental and physical health is powerful. In fact, it's impossible to have one without having the other. To get the most out of daily exercise, you should start right now. After all, you're going to want to be in the best physical and mental shape possible before the SHTF. Trying to make up for lost time after society crumbles isn't a good idea.

There are many ways to get your daily exercise in, and none of them require you to do things like go running. Merely taking a walk is a great way to boost your mental health, improve your physical strength and endurance, and reduce your risk of countless medical problems.

To shake things up, you could also do something as simple as play frisbee with your dog for 30 minutes. Other options include playing catch, shooting hoops, swimming, cycling, playing a video game that requires physical movement, yoga, martial arts, or dancing. If you need a low-impact exercise, consider tai chi. Walking is also considered to have a low impact on your joints.

If you're planning to shelter in place and don't think you'll be able to get outside for exercise, you could invest in anything from a powerless treadmill to a stair stepper, spinning bike, or even an under the desk exercise bike.

Don't forget that doing some strength training is also important for your overall stamina and physicality. When you feel energized and more capable of taking care of yourself, you're going to feel better mentally.

## Keep Your Brain Occupied

Shows like "The Walking Dead" fail to show just how boring it can be to live in a post-apocalyptic world. Sure, there's lots to do to keep your shelter in order, and you might even have to fight off some zombies. But the reality is that you're also going to have a lot of free time on your hands, which could be dangerous for your mental health.

Consider how lonely it could be if you're the lone survivor from your group. There would be many negative things to ruminate over, including sad memories and even survivor's guilt. Although you do need to deal with these things (see the section earlier in this piece about CISD), you also need to give your mind other things to mull over.



For many, reading is the most natural solution. It helps you escape your current reality for a time, while also keeping your brain healthier — a factor which can slow (or even eliminate) the onset of dementia. Studies have shown that even in normal times, reading for pleasure for as few as six consecutive minutes per day can bring your stress levels down by 68%. That's a significant gain that requires a very minimal effort.

If you're not a reader, you can listen to music and reduce stress by as much as 61%. If you're wondering how to keep music and eReaders working after the SHTF, don't forget about solar-powered and hand crank chargers.

According to a study conducted by Harvard Health, taking 15 minutes daily to write about your emotions may also offer mental health benefits. If putting your negative emotions on the page seems



to have the opposite effect, you'll need to stick with chronicling only happy thoughts and experiences. That's because research has also discovered that people who are battling with existing mental health issues can actually find it detrimental to express their negative emotions and fears in writing.

### *Look for Personal Connections*



We all want to believe that we could conquer the post-SHTF world by ourselves and come out no worse for the wear. But the truth is that's just not going to happen. Countless studies have shown that long-term isolation wreaks havoc on our mental health. Even "The Walking Dead" has made a continual point of showing us the beneficial differences between Darryl when he stays with the group vs. when he sets off on his own and gets all kinds of weird (walker ears necklace, anyone?).

The importance of face-to-face contact with another human being simply cannot be overstated. This fact is a big part of the reason that so many single people started to feel their mental health deteriorating during the first couple of months of the US coronavirus outbreak. We need to see and speak to others, and we also need to touch and be touched.

A pet such as a dog can help reduce these feelings of isolation, thereby making us less prone to mental health issues. However, the time will come when we'll have to connect with another human or risk devolving into a semi-feral state.

Safely connecting with another person may seem like the most dangerous thing you can do in a SHTF world, but there are ways of feeling

others out before you make any commitments. If possible, observe the person from afar for a while. Even better, trail them (from a great distance; use binoculars) when they go out on a supply run to see how they act if they encounter someone else.

When you decide that someone is likely safe to approach, do so in as non-threatening of a way as possible. Don't sneak up on them. Announce your presence early, and don't point a weapon toward them. Of course, you won't want to have your weapon completely put away, either. You do have to protect yourself if things go awry, after all.

Don't expect too much from another person. They're going to be wary of you, and they have every right to be. You'll probably have to slowly earn their trust over several days before there's going to be any real level of connection. But if you pick a decent person, it's going to be worth all the effort and will improve your mental health.

### *Solve Puzzles and Play Games*



Another way to keep your mind busy – and to hopefully socialize – is by playing games and solving puzzles. Strategizing is always a good workout for your brain, and it can help you learn to see and solve puzzles in difficult real-world situations.

For example, pattern recognition can become a highly useful skill when you're tracking an animal or keeping an eye on an enemy camp. This skillset is something you can work on by building jigsaw puzzles or solving "spot the difference" games.

Learning how to effectively bluff your way out of a bad encounter is another critical skill. Luckily, this

level of expertise can be picked up by playing cards or chess. Convincing your opponent that your next move will be different from the one you've actually got planned is also an excellent way to gain a sense of accomplishment once your full plan comes to fruition.

From a mental health standpoint, playing games and solving puzzles keeps your brain engaged, enables you to accomplish a goal, gives you a pleasant serotonin boost when you win, and helps keep your mind sharp.

### *Practice Gratitude*

Okay, okay, we get it; the world as you know it has come to an end, and there's not much to feel grateful about, right? But what if you looked at the entire thing a different way?

Rather than being angry about the world falling apart, could you feel grateful that you were smart enough to prepare for it and survive? Instead of dwelling on the mistakes and pains of the past, be thankful that a deer walked into your path this morning and provided you with several meals instead.

This type of mindset may be hard to start, but if you can write down or name just three things that you're grateful for every day, it will boost your mental health.

### *Eat a Healthy Diet*



Research shows that getting proper nourishment will help keep your emotions at a stable level. Stay away

from the following for the best mental health results:

- Sugary food
- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Fried Foods
- Refined Carbs
- Trans Fats
- Highly Processed Food

Instead, feed your body and brain helpful things like:

- Avocados
- Nuts
- Omega-3-Rich Fatty Fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring, and anchovies)
- Beans
- Flaxseed
- Fresh Fruit (especially berries)
- Leafy Green Vegetables (broccoli, spinach, lettuce, kale, etc.)

### *Other Tips for Good Mental Health*

Putting everything listed above into practice can help your mental health now and after the SHTF. Keep in mind that everyone needs to get at least seven hours of sleep on a nightly basis to maintain a positive emotional state. It's also vital to eat regularly, remain hydrated, and always give yourself some downtime.

Self-care may seem like a froufrou phrase to some, but neglecting it is one of the quickest ways to damage your overall mental, emotional, and physical health. After all, you are the only person you can always count on to be around, so you have to learn how to take good care of yourself.





## THE BEST PLACE TO TRAIN WITH YOUR TACTICAL HANDGUN

Sometimes, the most direct route to solving problems is to stop fighting an uphill battle and take a detour. That's because taking a step back gives you a broader view and breaks your goal down into its most basic parts. In essence, you need to make the game as simple as possible.

Imagine a baseball player who's having a tough time at the plate. What's the best way to really improve his batting average? Should he just keep racking up strikeouts under the pressure of the crowd, or spend more time at batting practice?

As popular as shooting sports have become in recent years, it's no surprise that the number of shooters seeking to remedy stubborn issues has skyrocketed. There are as many competing schools of thought out there as there are shooters at the range. And, some of the ranges we've been to lately had a wait of an hour or more -- and that was before COVID-19.

There are, however, still a few things that virtually all high-level marksmen agree on. The first one is

Going to the range requires a significant effort, but getting there only to find out that there's a waiting list? That's a whole new level of inconvenience, especially if you're short on time and have a new toy or tactic that you're itching to try out.



The second is that to advance to the next level, shooters must spend an absurd amount of time with a gun in their hand (not in their shooting bag). We all need that critical number of reps drawing from our holster, practicing sight alignment, and pulling the trigger to move to the next rung of the ladder. The fact is that even a very dedicated shooter would have a tough time putting in the range time required while also holding down a job and juggling family life.

## TRAINING VS. PRETENDING TO TRAIN



While it might sound tempting, we don't recommend quitting your job to spend more time at the gun range. Nor do we recommend that you neglect your loved ones. The answer is an activity that makes some hobby shooters roll their eyes: Dry fire training.

What folks don't know that haven't tried dry fire training is that this attitude is holding them back, both in terms of proficiency and enjoyment.

For them, dry weapons training seems esoteric and nerdy. Perhaps they see it as busy work that is utterly unrelated to their objective, similar to that scene in the movie, *The Karate Kid* when Mr. Miyagi instructed Daniel-san to "paint the fence."

If we were recommending some type of "Yoga for Shooters," we could understand the pushback. We're not sure why gun nuts believe they won't enjoy handling firearms, even without live rounds. First-person shooter video games are entertaining, aren't they, even though there are no "live rounds."

When someone tells you that dry fire training is boring, they're probably doing it wrong. If that same person goes on to tell you that drawing, sighting, or firing a training pistol is not going to appeal directly to the enjoyment of shooting (not to mention their skillsets), then they are kidding themselves.



The main thing keeping most shooters from taking this important step in their training is fear. We don't mean the gripping kind that keeps you up at night, but the fear that causes procrastination. Fear that they won't enjoy the hobby they've come to identify with. Fear that they'll fall out of love with handguns. Also, the fear that they'll discover their technique has massive flaws.

If we're brutally honest here, most shooters never train to improve. They pretend to train by doing the same thing they usually do while sometimes "trying harder." This lackluster approach makes it almost impossible to assess their specific training needs and strengths.

The worst part is that they're depriving themselves of attaining some low hanging fruit when it comes to their hobby. Dry weapons training is the easiest way to rack up practice time, while also tuning up techniques no range would ever allow.

## WHY IT WORKS



First off, let's take a quick look into the theory behind dry firing or dry weapons training, and why in so many cases, it's more effective than live weapons training.

The term dry fire is derived from the term "dry run," which has its origins in firefighting, believe it or not. Particularly in the 19th Century, firefighters trained by enacting these dry runs. To sharpen their skills, firefighters responded to a fake fire emergency precisely as they would a real one, just without the water.

The comparison holds up remarkably well in several ways. Did firefighters really need extensive training on how to spray water on a burning structure? Not exactly. The real area of need was in improving

response times, gaining experience with the equipment, the loading and unloading procedure, etc. Many of the same methods apply when it comes to firing handguns.

In cases of our firearms, our “water” is, of course, our ammo. Dry fire exercises give us a chance to fine-tune all of the necessary components of shooting a handgun – drawing, grip, sight alignment, stance, and even getting the feel of your handgun’s trigger, all without experiencing the kick of its recoil. These characteristics are what makes the dry firing technique superior.

## NOT JUST CHEAPER, BETTER



Many detractors say that ammo is expensive, and maybe it is. On the other hand, can you really put a price on fun? Handgun ammo, particularly practice ammo, is not all that expensive. The problem isn’t that practice ammo is costly; it’s that it’s not ideal for practicing.

There, we said it. Try not to fall over in your chair. Instead, take a deep breath and rest assured that we love the sound, the smell, and the fun of blasting through live ammo as much as any other red-blooded gun nut.

When it comes to practicing your technique, however, live ammo is really the final exam stage. It applies almost exclusively to a couple of elements like follow-up shots and recoil management, but it has virtually nothing to do with the rest of your shooting mechanics. In fact, it sometimes makes it harder to identify some shooting mistakes.

**12** If nothing else, using live ammo slows down your training significantly. But there’s a mental

component here that’s a little harder to pin down. Ask yourself this: As you practice your draw with a brand-new holster, would you want the gun to be loaded? How about when you’re practicing a close-quarters scenario that involves a palm strike and quick draw? How about as you practice your front sight focus in the garage?

The simple fact is that it’s far better to be free from the stress of live fire as you tune up your mechanics. It’s certainly much easier to repeat the exact movements you want to work on, saving you time. Not to mention, any mistakes you make during a dry weapons training are certainly more forgiving than a negligent discharge.

## YOUR DRY FIRE TRAINING FACILITY

We highly recommend that you store all live ammo in a completely separate place from your practice space. That way you’ll avoid even the slightest possibility that your dry fire training becomes an inadvertent live fire training session.



It can be very liberating to drill, practice, and improvise without the caution necessary around live ammo or even real firearms. We’ll expand on this concept later in this series. Our primary goal for the time being is to illustrate just how crucial strict safety standards are instilling and instill a productive dry fire training mindset.

Think of it like this: The better you can focus on your training and remove any misgivings about drawing and pulling the trigger, the faster you’ll progress.

One thing all great instructors believe in is deliberate training. Setting yourself up for success is a huge part of that deliberate training mindset. And creating a great space in which to train, i.e., your Dry Fire Facility (or shed or garage), is a major component of setting yourself up for success.

Let's take a quick look at a few of the features of an ideal "training facility." First off, your training space should be entirely free from ammunition, loaded magazines, or even any firearms that aren't part of your immediate training.

Obviously, safety is paramount here. From an effectiveness standpoint, however, these elements interfere with the safety of your training space, which creates hesitation, confusion, and the need for redundant safety checks throughout your drills.

The next step is to ensure that you clear out plenty of room to ready the area for the type of drills you'll be doing. For example, if you intend to practice holding on target as you walk through a location, you'll need a decent runway. Also, be realistic about the amount of space you need because it's usually more than you think.



Next, let's talk about targets. While it may not be entirely realistic, we find it's best to choose a relatively static position for the targets you use in your training. You'll be drawing on these, holding your sights, and practicing trigger control. As an example, you may not feel right about pointing a weapon, even completely unloaded, in the direction of a family member's bedroom. Pick the general direction you feel best about and save yourself the distractions later.

On the topic of distractions, you must arrange your practice space to help you focus as intently as possible. Mental discipline is critical if you want to make real strides. One way to set yourself up for success is to remove as many distractions as you possibly can.

While you might like to watch TV while you use the elliptical machine at the gym, a muted TV is a monumental distraction in this type of training. Getting the most out of your brief training time should be your mission. If your training facility has thin walls, i.e., and you can easily hear what others in your house are doing, you might consider drowning it out with music, a box fan, or another ambient noise source.

Many expert shooters focus and visualize about what they're trying to achieve or simulate before beginning exercises. Another beneficial activity is to write down a plan for how you will train. All of this requires remaining focused, so it's well worth taking a few steps to ensure your space is free from distractions.

In next month's NSRA, we'll delve into exactly how to run drills in your Dry Fire Facility and the science behind why it works so incredibly well.



A man in a dark t-shirt and blue jeans is plowing a field with a wooden plow. A dark brown donkey is harnessed to the plow and is pulling it. The field is dirt with some green plants growing. The background shows a line of trees and a clear sky.

# Forgotten Survival Skills You Need to Know

As the severity of the coronavirus pandemic becomes more evident, scores of people all across America continue to rush grocery stores to panic buy just about everything from the shelves. And, from big-box supermarkets to smaller, community grocery shops, the ripple effect that COVID-19 leaves in its wake continue to reverberate throughout the food supply chain.

The worst of it isn't over, either. Factors such as viral outbreaks at food plants are exposing a weakness inherent in the industry and upending food plants across the nation. That development, coupled with shortages on items such as toilet paper and hand sanitizer, is leading people to wonder if the supply chain is secure, and what we'll do if we ever reel toward a meat shortage.

Current events like these are unfortunate, but in the midst of this, doomsday preppers are experiencing a sort of renaissance. That's because they've always seen the proverbial writing on the wall and prepared adequately for SHTF scenarios that can plunge the world into desperation.

Prepping for doomsday scenarios has sometimes earned them ridicule, but all the current events unfolding seem to be vindicating their stance. And,

**14** if anything positive comes out of COVID-19's

harsh lessons, it's that self-sufficiency and being prepared is nothing to joke about.

The approach harkens back to a time when there was more subsistence living, and this lifestyle is looking more attractive as situations grow more uncertain and grimmer. The following are skills everyone should know, and if you can master them all, you'll be ready for whatever challenge the wilderness throws at you.

## HUNTING



If widespread meat shortages ever become a reality, knowing how to hunt is one of the forgotten skills you'll want to pick up. If you are an excellent hunter, a shortage of meat shouldn't phase you. Learning how to hunt also allows you to gain the satisfaction and confidence of being self-sufficient.



Excellent hunting opportunities are not only enjoyed in the countryside, as there are several places you can hunt game within city limits. Surprisingly enough, you can bag game that ranges in size from the 500-pound Rocky Mountain elk to gray squirrels (chicken of the trees) within some states' city boundaries.

## Butchering



So, you've learned how to hunt, and that's all well and good. Sadly, it's not going to amount to much if you or someone you know can't skin, butcher and carve up your kill. The same goes for when you are raising livestock for slaughter or catching fish.

Proper butchering is, for the most part, a skill that is quickly disappearing, along with the family farm. If you choose to learn how to do it, consider the technique for skinning and butchering a squirrel isn't going to be the same for butchering a hog. When you think about that aspect, it's best to hone your skills if you plan to be independent and butcher your meat.

## Rendering Lard



Rendering lard is a practice where you remove the leaf and kidney fat from pigs to use for cooking and mechanical lubricant. You may be surprised to discover there are two different classifications of the porkers, too. The

classifications are lard breed pigs and bacon breed pigs.

Lard should be strained to remove any errant leftover bits that find its way in during the rendering process. There are bound to be some leftover "cracklins" strained from the lard, as well. Cracklins are similar to pork rinds, except pork rinds don't have any fat on the skin. Cracklins are also delicious and taste good sprinkled over a salad, cooked into cornbread or cut up into small pieces and served as a snack food by their lonesome.

## Foraging



If you know how to forage the right way, odds are you will never go hungry. People can successfully forage for food if they simply know what to look for and where to look. Amazingly, there are even several edibles in the Sonoran Desert, one of the most barren places in the country. If a SHTF situation ever arrives that's bad enough to interrupt the food supply, knowing how to search widely for wild food provisions would serve you well.

What's more, wild food is richer in nutrients. Think of foraging as a combo of gardening and hiking, even though you may only need to walk a few feet to find some edible weeds in season. For instance, dandelions are nutritious, and they are everywhere in the spring and summer. Recipes for delicious, fried dandelion blossoms abound, and they are even in that throwback from the past, the Old Farmers' Almanac.

## Purifying Water

It's been rumored that filthy drinking water was behind giving United States President, William Henry Harrison sepsis, thereby killing him. We will



never know for certain, but if a disaster ever strikes, there will be plenty of Americans that won't have access to clean water. People are bound to suffer deadly GI issues if they slurp H<sub>2</sub>O from watering holes and gutters that look clean at first inspection. Scores of them might even perish if the SHTF.

Sadly, water that looks safe to drink can be a lethal, efficient killer. Having clean water to drink is essential to survival, and during hard times you may not always have access to clean, municipal tap water. Fortunately, knowing how to purify water in the wilderness is a skill that most serious preppers know well.

There are several ways to purify water, but the easiest and most effective way of doing it is to collect it and boil it. On the other hand, building an open fire may not be possible if you are in a damp area. Knowing different ways to make drinking water safe will be necessary in this case, and this vital forgotten survival skill is relatively easy to learn.

## Soap Making



16 Soap keeps our bodies clean, and the importance of soap in the role of preparedness can't be emphasized enough. However, soap making is a

basic skill that has slipped away from most of us.

Luckily, the process of making soap is easy to learn, and you can also make fancy versions that have nice additives. For instance, adding coffee grounds and oat bran to a batch of soap acts as a natural exfoliant and imparts a wonderful fragrance. The result is an excellent way to pamper yourself during an apocalypse!

## Cooking from Scratch



There have been reported shortages of supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially prepared and instant foods. If a lack of frozen pizza and biscuits covers you in hives, it signals a need to return to basics. And, by that, we mean learning to cook from scratch. In modern times where convenience rules, we often let people at fast food places and sit-down restaurants cook for us. It's a wonder anyone learns how to cook something like bulk rice at all, yet rice is an essential staple food for preppers.

It's best to return to basics and learn what to do when the cans of beans run out, and you have to prepare them from the dried stash. Know this: If the grid goes down, you won't be able to watch a YouTube video that shows you how to cook from scratch. Keeping that in mind, it's best to learn how to cook from scratch as soon as possible. There are certain advantages to cooking from scratch. And nine times out of ten, it is usually cheaper and healthier for you than dining out.

## Gardening

Gardening ranks high on the list of essential skills that are being forgotten. And, much like hunting,

we need to get it back on it ASAP. In fact, one survey given to children in school yielded some worrying statistics. Of the children surveyed, 80 percent reported never seeing a rake before, and eight percent were unable to identify a trowel. Most alarmingly, 79 percent of the kids believe that worms in the soil are bad for gardens.



In terms of survival, if you know how to hunt and grow produce, you'll have more food security, and much of your problems will be licked.

## Seed Saving 101



Seed saving is an art that goes hand in hand with gardening. Most importantly, the yield of your crop or garden will likely be zilch the next time growing season rolls around if you don't know how to save seeds and replant them. Plus, it never hurts to know the basics of this handy skill.

There are many different facets to seed saving, too. For instance, did you know that growing a plant to save the seeds from it is different than growing ones to eat? How about this: You shouldn't bother saving seeds of hybrid varieties? If you know the answer to those two questions and others about proper seed saving, then you are ahead of the learning curve of most people alive today. The rest

of us that want to eat when the SHTF should really catch up quick on Seed Saving 101.

## Root Cellaring



Building root cellars, a holdover from storing produce during WWII, is a forgotten skill. On the other hand, there are still people that have them. Root cellar builders construct them for their properties, and some even provide building plans and tutorials that show you how to add one to your basement or put one outside your home.

It is a clever idea to have a root cellar since it's a low-cost and effective way to store fresh produce. In fact, root cellars use very little energy and require little to no maintenance. If you are growing cabbage, beets, onions, rutabagas, potatoes, and more, you should seriously consider having one.

## Straw Cellaring



Straw cellaring is another simple and inexpensive method of cellaring. It's also a good, self-sufficient way to store homegrown food long-term. A straw cellar requires no costly building methods or electricity, and it's even cheaper to maintain than a root cellar. If you are looking to extend the home garden harvest year-round, a straw cellar is a must.

Using the straw cellar method, gardeners can store vegetables where they grew them. The trick is to spread about a foot and a half to two feet of straw over the vegetables. For best results, the blanket should be one continuous blanket of straw.

## Meat Hanging



Meat hanging is a culinary technique used to dry-age meat. It has also become a forgotten skill that is now performed mainly for commercial purposes. Those that practice this dry-aging method are skilled at hanging meat correctly, allowing it to develop full flavor and tenderness. Lots can go wrong, though, if you don't do it correctly. For example, if the room is too cold, the meat freezes and halts the dry-aging process. If the room is too hot, the meat will spoil, and everyone gets sick.

Preserving meat and other foodstuffs have fallen by the wayside for the most part. That's because home refrigerators and freezers have eliminated the need to learn how to preserve food. If these appliances ever become scarce in a doomsday scenario, then knowing how to preserve food by methods such as canning, smoking, salting, and dehydrating will be a lifesaver.

## Healing

Imagine a world where you have learned how to secure food, clean water, and more. In fact, you think that you are sitting pretty when it comes to being prepared. Despite knowing quite a lot, you should always keep learning skills since it is the one that you don't know that will ultimately get you. For instance, even during the best of times, people get sick and injure themselves.

In addition to other things, a shortage of medication, sedatives, and painkillers are expected to be the next crisis attributable to the COVID-19 outbreak. For the United States to be such a developed country, the number of meds in undersupply and frequency of alerts is shocking.

Modern medicine and conventional therapies are usually what you rely on if you get sick or ill, but what happens if you don't have access to them? What will you do then? In short, preppers deal with this by using herbal healing practices, whereby medicinal plants are used as alternatives to conventional medicines. Likewise, they often use herbal therapies to treat and cure illnesses in the form of essential oil and tinctures.

The practice is similar to foraging for food, but instead of finding vegetation to nourish you, you are searching for plants with healing properties. Many of them are one and the same. Best of all, many plants with healing powers can be found or grown on your property.

## Minor Surgery



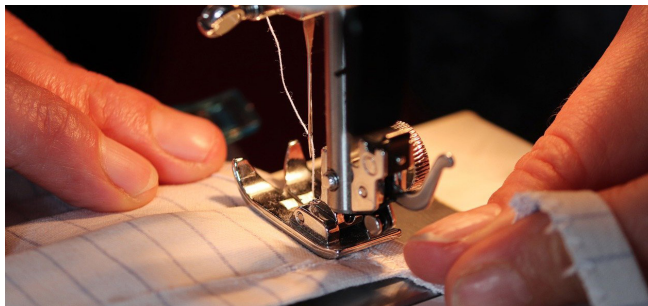
Would you know how to use the components of an emergency or trauma kit if you were faced with treating yourself or someone else that has been injured? Probably not if you're like most of us. Expertise for using the materials needed to perform minor surgery or apply stitches mainly belongs to the elite in the medical workforce. Don't fall into the trap of always letting other people know how to treat your wounds, though, because this is a forgotten skill you can use today in your trips and travels in the wilderness.

You can be the ultimate prepper if you know how to do simple, uninterrupted stitches and other types

of wound closures. Knowing how to care for wounds to accelerate the healing process is great to know, as well.

From tutorials learning how to apply deep-absorbable tissue sutures to ones on how to apply several types of wound closures, YouTube has you covered. Get back to these basics soon enough if you are serious. As we mentioned before, there is going to be no YouTube if the grid goes down.

## Sewing & Repair



The Great Depression lasted a decade, and during that time, people had to rely on their skills and make do with what little they had. Their skills included sewing, hemming, and knowing how to make repairs to what they owned to make it last. Knowing how to repair clothing such as shoes is valuable prepper knowhow, and it also saves you a great deal of money in the process.

Included in these skills are also DIY projects that make shoes and sandals from recycled materials. In a SHTF situation, you'll want to move on to making more permanent and high-quality clothing. Unfortunately, material will eventually start to run out, and you'll need to go back to basics to learn how to clothe yourself and others.

Knowing how to make cotton clothes from machinery such as a cotton gin is bound to be a hit among survivors of a doomsday event. Being adept at rendering leather to make shoes, belts, etc., ties in nicely with forgotten skills such as butchering and drying meat.

## Growing Grapes and Fruit Trees

**19** Most of us would probably be clueless if we were tasked with getting a grapevine started. Yet nothing



is easier to grow. Grapes taste delicious eaten fresh, drunken in juice, or savoured in winter preserves. They also thrive in harsh conditions and require no fertilizer. Let's not forget that grapes are the main ingredient in some impressive batches of homemade wine.

If you've ever tasted fruit from an orchard, you know that the experience is extraordinary. Many fruit trees grow in the United States, and in the Southwest, you can grow some tropical and desert varieties such as dragon fruit, Medjool dates, and pomegranates. More common varieties of trees that you can grow include apples, figs, pears, cherries, mulberries, pawpaws, and some citrus varieties. Once you get past the initial cost of getting the trees to root, you'll realize that they are a huge bargain since they renew their bounty every season. In addition to saving money, fruit trees provide a great source for nutrition and fiber.

## Beekeeping



You will probably get some painful stings while learning this forgotten skill, but hardworking bees help furnish a variety of products that preppers can appreciate and use. Knowing how to acquire bees, house them, and harvest honey requires some knowledge and finesse. As you can imagine, things

can get ugly pretty quickly if you don't know how to handle them the right way. Since the stakes are so high for you and the bees, it's best to study under a mentor that already knows how to keep bees or take classes.

Learning how to mine honey will be a significant benefit during post-apocalyptic times. And, what do you do if that day never comes? Well, you can take comfort in the fact that you and your family will enjoy some honey, and that your mad bee managing skills are doing their part to prevent the insect apocalypse.

## Final Thoughts

We hope you enjoyed this list of forgotten skills and hope that it will get you started on the path of getting back to basics. We also think that embracing them is bound to up anyone's survival game because they are at the very heart of preparedness. Be sure to join us next time when we discuss common prepper pitfalls you'll want to steer clear of while learning forgotten survival skills.



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