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The Prepared Child

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If you ask most people why they are prepping, the immediate response is "For my children." We want to give them a chance at surviving whatever disaster may befall the world as we know it today. Through our own research, preppers know better than anyone the terrible results of a disaster.

Most of us have covered many of the bases in disaster preparedness as far as food, shelter and self-defense are concerned. Children, however, have a psychological need for security and stability that require other types of

preparations.

Obviously, the stability you normally provide will be completely rocked if you have to grab your bug-out bags and set off on foot in the middle of the night one terrible evening. Surviving a horrific natural disaster that wipes out a child's familiar home will take a bite out of any child's sense of security.

We must prepare our children by building their natural resilience. Like any other characteristic we want to instill in our kids, (like honesty or kindness) positive reinforcement and repetition can bring these natural traits to the forefront.

Teach your kids to think critically.

The ability to think for one's self is vital in a survival situation. Kids have to know that their own logic and instincts are to be respected, and that just because someone is an "authority figure" it doesn't mean that person has their best interests at heart. Sometimes this can be difficult for us as parents, since we expect (okay, we'd like it a lot!!!) our kids to obey us immediately and without question. We have to temper that desire with the encouragement of reasonable questions from our kids.

Ask your kids the following questions to ingrain the habit of critical thinking.

1. Why do you think I want you to do this?
2. When watching a movie or TV show, pause the program to question the actions of the characters with your kids. Did you see how the man asked that little boy for help? What do you think the boy should do? If someone asked you to do this, how would you react?
3. How does this (choose a current event) affect us? What do you think about what is going on?
4. What do you think would happen if (choose a disaster or event) occurred? How would other people react to this?

Point out the advantages of a prepping lifestyle.

Many children find a sense of peace in knowing that Mom and Dad are ready for whatever might happen. When a disaster occurs elsewhere in the world, point out to your children some of the beneficial things that you have done to prepare if the same thing happened in your area.

For example, when people are frantically looting the grocery stores for the last items on the shelves, you can remind the kids that your family could go for 6 months (or however long is applicable) without ever setting foot in a store. When the heat is taken out in an ice storm somewhere in the world, you can point out the propane heater or the woodstove that is at the ready to keep them warm.

Include the kids in the preparations.

Let your kids feel like part of the solution by allowing their input and enlisting their assistance.

My daughter enjoys helping me repackage foods that we've purchased in large quantities. We work together in the kitchen, pouring dried beans into glass jars and have some great discussions about how many meals can be made out of what we have just purchased. She helps me choose between black beans and kidney beans at the bulk store. We slice up fruit to go into the dehydrator and sneak samples to see if it's ready yet.

We have also created some disaster plans together. She knows precisely what to do in the event of a tornado. She also knows where we will meet up if disaster strikes when she is at school. She understands the importance of home security and is by far the most "street smart" of her friends.

Practice makes perfect.

Don't just talk about survival skills: PRACTICE them!!! Kids love learning wilderness skills and you will get the added bonus of bonding moments.

1. Go camping – not with the RV, but with a tent in the middle of the woods.
2. Go hiking and bring along a field guide to identify edible plants.
3. Learn about and experiment with solar power – you don't have to invest in a kit of solar panels – start small by building a solar cooker together and then making a meal in it.
4. Go fishing or hunting.
5. Grow a garden and preserve your harvest.

Don't forget to prep for fun.

If the power is out for an extended period of time, many kids of today will be in for some serious culture shock. With no stereo, no Playstation, and no television, the refrain of "I'm bored" will ring in your ears like a bad case of tinnitus. Plan ahead by stocking up on activities that don't require any power but that of their imaginations. (I purchased many of these items at yard sales and thrift stores).

1. Board games and card games
2. Books
3. Craft supplies
4. Puzzles
5. Sketchpads and art supplies

Don't forget classic games like I Spy, Charades and Mother May I, none of which will cost you a penny!

Familiarity is the key to comfort. If your prepping efforts are a part of life for your kids, then in the event of a disaster, the shock will be lessened. Instead of having to be coddled throughout the ordeal, your child will be a productive member of the family team.

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