

# Paratus Survival

## Key Elements of Survival Scenarios

**Timely Reporting of a Survival Situation-** One of the most basic, but critical components to any rescue effort is for the appropriate people to be notified that you're in need of rescue. It sounds so elementary, but it is the most overlooked component to survival plans. Most fatal strandings and survival related deaths, both on land and at sea, can be traced back to failure of the deceased to notify concerned persons of their latest travel plans. You cannot be rescued if no one knows you're missing. A proper trip plan consisting of: **destination, path of travel (route), # of persons in your party, supplies on hand, return route, return time, and continual updates to your plan as they change-** can help you avoid a survival situation by identifying weaknesses in your plan before you embark, and can increase your chances of a timely rescue by providing a written itinerary (Lifeline) by which to track you in your time of need. And when you are stranded, knowing that your absence will be noticed and reported can be a source of great hope.

In addition to having a trip plan filed with someone who cares about your welfare, it is also important to realize the moment you become disoriented. The sooner you can identify (admit) that you're in a survival situation, the sooner you can start surviving. When people delay the realization that they're lost, the longer they'll continue to wander and waste critical, life-saving time, resources, and mental stamina. The tendency for most people, when they initially realize they are in unfamiliar territory is to enter three phases of Disorientation Rationalization and Realization (**DR&R**). Each phase of DR&R worsens the current situation.

**Phase 1- The Next Bend (Hopeful Wandering):** The first phase most people enter when they become disoriented is to minimize their situation and assume they are on the correct (intended) path. Phrases like "I'm sure the car is over that next ridge" or "My campsite must be around that next bend in the trail" or "Wow, I don't remember this part of the trail, but I'm sure I parked on the other side of this hill" become the optimistic cry of a confused individual on the brink of a cold night in the woods. "If I think happy thoughts the problem will go away . . . right?" Wrong!

Phase 1 is an understandable tendency for lost persons because if the car **is** just around the bend, then it would be foolish to set up camp and spend a night in the woods unnecessarily. If base camp **is** just over the hill, then the problem is solved and they won't have to face the more looming prospect of being stranded, alone, and in the dark. The only thing more embarrassing than getting lost, is getting lost just a few yards away from your vehicle. People rationalize their situation *into* what they most dread. The longer a person avoids confronting the situation (ie. "I'm lost"), then the worse it becomes.

Often it is pride that pulls a person deeper into a desperate situation. We often don't allow room in our ego for mistakes. "I can't be lost. I am a master woodsman." "What will the guys at the office think if I get lost at our favorite hunting spot?" "I've biked down this path a thousand times. Only an idiot would lose their way on an established trail." People quickly turn an embarrassing afternoon wandering in the mountains into a life or death struggle for survival. Why? **PRIDE**, which as you know, often prefaces a fall. However reasonable it may be for people to think this way, the reality is that **if** (and it's a big **if**) your destination is just around the next bend, then you would probably recognize and be familiar with the path you're on. The **Paratus Survival RAFT** system deals with these human tendencies and provides a detailed plan to cope with the ordeal.

**Phase 2- Hurry, It's Getting Dark:** After wandering aimlessly in the wilderness for an unknown amount of time, a person will generally enter into phase 2 of DR&R. Phase 2 takes all the principles of phase 1 and

speeds them up. Like water in a sink; the closer to the drain we get, the faster we spiral into darkness. We begin to feel fatigued and thirsty and are ready for this “little mix-up” to be over. The primary fact people don’t want to face is that they may just be starting the adventure. With phase 1 and 2 in full swing, they hurriedly rush over the next hill, and through the unfamiliar meadow, and get soaked from perspiration and an unexpected slip while crossing a tiny creek (which didn’t look nearly that deep). In desperation, the lost person begins to look for some familiar landmark before the sun sets on an unknown fate.

The results of “successfully” entering into phase 2 include:

- wet clothing from sweating or illogically crossing a water feature (hypothermia)
- debilitating injuries incurred from hiking, biking, running, paddling, too fast down paths of unknown terrain and obstacles while tired, hungry, thirsty, and desperately looking for familiar territory
- being miles from the original place of intent with no idea how to get back . . . or forth.

Phase 2 leaves us more fatigued, hypothermic or suffering from heat exhaustion, suffering from potential medical emergencies, and much farther away from our original point of disorientation. Phase 2 rapidly can lead to the next phase where the realization of our situation begins to painfully set in.

***Phase 3- “Am I Going To Make It?” (Panic):*** Have you ever been in a situation where you were forced to sit down and take inventory of your current predicament and realized, “I’m in a tight spot!” - You need help, and you need it quick or you may not recover? Have you ever had to say to yourself, “I might not make it through tonight?” Project for a minute and imagine yourself in a similar situation and it becomes easier to see why people who find themselves in a survival situation begin to panic. Panic can manifest itself in many different ways, none of which are positive other than it may be the first time you have actually understood the magnitude of your situation. The most crippling aspect of phase 3, however, is the loss of hope. *Hope is an intangible tether that keeps desperate individuals out of the grave.* Once you cross over into hopelessness, it is extremely difficult to think your way back into the situation. Don’t lose hope! Just remember- *You’re not lost, your just getting ready to be found.*

Had we taken inventory of our situation early in phase 1 of this dilemma, we would have been much more capable to deal with a night in the woods. This is why it becomes so important to subvert our natural tendencies when we become disoriented and avoid the downward spiral of hopeful wandering. The moment you feel that chill in your spine when you first realize that “something is not right” and you ask yourself “am I going the right way?” you should simply STOP. A person’s IQ will only go down in a stressful situation so do yourself a favor by turning your legs off and your brain on. This basic survival technique can save your life.