

The Worst Case Scenario Activity

Instructions:

Use these scenarios from *The Worst Case-Scenario Survival Handbook: Travel*, by Joshua Piven and David Borgenicht, to reflect on what students would do in these incredibly stressful situations. You can also refer to the book itself for dozens of other scenarios.

You can do this activity one of two ways: 1) You can explain each scenario and have the students come up with what they would do, then read the answers, or 2) You can read each scenario and have the students write down their answers in groups before explaining.

Scenario 1: How to survive in a plummeting elevator (PG 89)

Imagine you step into an elevator (alone) on the top floor of the tallest building in your city. You hit the “down” button, the doors close, then the cable snaps. Your elevator is in a freefall. **How do you survive the plummeting elevator?**

Answer: Flatten your body against the floor of the elevator and cover your head.

Explanation: *“While there is disagreement among the experts, most recommend this method. This should distribute the force of the impact, rather than concentrate it on one area of your body. (Standing may be difficult anyway.) Lie in the center of the car.”*

Scenario 2: How to escape from a car hanging over the edge of a cliff (PG 77-78)

Imagine you are driving in a car (alone) across a bridge over a thousand foot deep canyon. Unfortunately, you lose control of the car, smash over the guardrail, and find yourself teetering over the edge with your front wheels hanging over the side. **How do you exit the car safely?**

Answer/Explanation:

1. Do not shift your weight or make any sudden movements,
2. Determine how much time you have: Is the car teetering, does it sway when you move?
3. If the front doors are still over land, use these doors to make your escape. Sometimes, the easiest solution is to simply get out of the car
4. If the front doors are over the edge, move to the rear of the car, slowly and deliberately.
5. Re-assess. Will opening the back doors cause the car to slide? If not, open them slowly and get out.
6. If you think opening the back doors will cause the car to slide over the edge, you might break a window. Punch the window in the center, preferably the door glass and not the rear glass.
7. Get out as quickly as possible.

Scenario 3: How to survive when you fall through ice (PG 110-111)

Imagine walking along a beautiful snow-covered meadow in the dead of winter when you hear a crack underfoot. Unfortunately, you have walked over a frozen pond without realizing it. The crack gives way, and you plummet into the icy water. **How do you get out of the water and make it back to land?**

Answer/Explanation:

1. Breathe steadily. The shock of hitting the cold water will be great, but remain calm.
2. Turn in the direction from which you came. You most likely came from the area with the strongest ice.
3. Use your elbows to lift yourself up on the edge of the hole. Do not get out yet. Hold yourself in that position to let as much water as possible drain from your clothing.
4. Reach out onto the solid ice as far as possible. If you have car keys, a comb or brush, or anything that might help you dig into the surface of the ice, use it to help pull yourself out.
5. Kick your feet as though you were swimming and pull yourself up as you continue kicking.
6. Once on the surface of the ice, do not stand up. Stay flat and roll away from the hole. This distributes your weight more evenly and decreases your chances of breaking through the ice again.

Scenario 4: How to get out of the jungle when lost (PG 92)

Through a series of unknown circumstances, you find yourself lost in the middle of a dense jungle. You are alone and do not have many supplies. **How do you get out of the jungle?**

Answer/Explanation:

1. Gather anything you can bring with you for survival. This could include sharp sticks, dry wood, or vines for lashing together wood.
2. Don't try to climb any trees to gain a vantage point. Most likely, the wood is wet and you will have difficulty coming down from the top of the tree. Plus if you make it to the top, you likely will only see the tops of other trees.
3. Look down. Try to find even a "trickle" of running water. If you can't find running water, follow animal trails. Generally these will lead to running water. Each body of running water will join up with a larger one, eventually leading you to a river, increasing your chances of finding civilization – typically found on rivers.