



fundamentals of preparedness

TRAIN TO SURVIVE



5 Ways to Improve Your “Disaster Personality”

*Excerpted and edited from “How to Survive a Disaster” by Amanda Ripley,
TIME Magazine, May 29, 2008*

Referenced Scenarios: 1994 Sinking of the *M.V. Estonia* in the Baltic Sea, 1977 Beverly Hills Supper Club fire outside Cincinnati, OH., 2001 Terrorist Attack on the World Trade Center in New York (Rick Rescorla, Morgan Stanley Dean Witter)

1. **Attitude** – avoid the victimization trap (“*if it happens, there’s nothing I can do*”) and teach yourself to be proactive. Believe that you can influence events, find purpose in life’s turmoil, and learn from both positive and negative experiences.
2. **Knowledge** – allow yourself to be correctly informed. For example, did you know that most serious plane accidents are survivable? Therefore, it makes sense to pay attention to in-flight safety briefings, which serve to *sharpen the mind* so it will update its program on what you need to do in the event of an emergency.
3. **Anxiety level** – learn to keep it under control with coping devices, such as controlled, rhythmic breathing. Many police officers are now trained to do such breathing whenever their guns are drawn. This is important in order to help your brain choose the right course of action under extreme stress.
4. **Body weight** – take it seriously. When it’s time to move quickly, go up or down stairs or through narrowed spaces, physical strength and body agility may improve your chances for survival. During the attack on the World Trade Center on 9/11, people with low physical abilities were three times as likely to be hurt while evacuating the towers.
5. **Training** – practice will improve your performance...especially when under duress. Train your brain and your muscles now and they will perform better when you must make quick and accurate decisions.

Also by Amanda Ripley: [The Unthinkable](#) is a fascinating book, an in-depth look at human behavior *under extreme pressure*.