Prepping With Children
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As preppers, it’s easy to see which family outwardly stands the best chance of survival in a given situation by looking at the makeup thereof. For example, a family with two healthy, strong adults in their mid forties and two fit children in their late teens seems ideal; that family has lots of manpower and strength, is highly mobile, and can fight back like adults. But not all families are at that stage – consider that the same family we mentioned was at one point a husband and wife in their mid twenties with two infant children – not an ideal situation at all. Infants and toddlers pose a security risk; they are loud, they must always be watched, they can’t move very far on their own, and they’re highly vulnerable. Even so, if your family is made up of children, you need to plan accordingly, and thus your plans are going to be very different from the family with adult children or even no children at all.

While the concept of prepping with children may not apply to you, consider that by extension – it just might. You never know what the future may hold; you might have a family with young kids seek refuge with you or you might even find a newly orphaned child seeking refuge, making you instantly a “family with kids” overnight. Everyone was at one point a child, yet few people recall the planning required to deal with kids. Even parents with adult children will only vaguely remember the hardships involved raising infants and toddlers. This week we’re going to break down how to prep with children, and we’re going to cover all of the age groups and hopefully provide some strategies to point you in the right direction.
INFANTS – FROM ZERO TO ONE YEAR OLD

Infants represent the most challenging kinds of children to prep with and for, and unfortunately every child must pass through this most difficult phase. Realize, however, that although infants are not ideal to have on hand during a disaster situation, many cultures, even primitive nomadic ones, have survived quite well with them. Here’s what we recommend:

**Food:** Overwhelmingly and without hesitation, we recommend breast milk if at all possible. Besides the fact that countless studies show the benefits that breast milk has on the development of children, it is readily available and highly nutritious, and a lactating woman can maintain a supply of breast milk for *several years* if need be. As with anything, there is one caveat: the nutritional needs of the mother must be accounted for, especially calorie wise. She must have extra calories in her diet as there is no free lunch; in order for her to produce milk she needs more food than she normally would. This means a little extra planning, but not much. We don’t recommend planning by calories, rather we recommend planning by meals, and it’s safe to say that for planning and portion purposes, a lactating mother will eat on average as much as an active male adult. Plan accordingly.

If a situation arises where the mother is unable to produce breast milk, is unavailable, incapacitated, or even deceased, you will need to plan for that eventuality, and that means baby formula. Even if your spouse does breastfeed, for prepping purposes,
you should still keep *at least some* formula on hand. Baby formula is expensive and must be prepared in a certain manner in order to give the child the proper nutrition. Keep in mind that watering it down too much will absolutely result in malnourishment, and at this stage in a child’s life, could have serious impacts. While there are older folk style replacements for formula that are based on cow’s milk and other natural additives, we don’t think these ingredients are as easily found in a survival situation, while powdered baby formula, on the other hand, will keep for some time and most infants only require an 8-10 months supply of it from birth. If your spouse breastfeeds (and she should!) then plan on keeping a 30 day supply of formula on hand just in case. *Note that this is a great barter item, even if you don’t use it.*

**Mobility:** Native Americans had it 100% right here, with the invention and use of a piece of gear called the *papoose*. This excellent and essential gizmo is still available today and allows the mother to sling the child tight to her chest or back and remain mobile in a survival situation. Note how the native papoose provided far less range of motion to the child than the modern equivalent; they were bundled in tight which kept them not only restrained, but warm and protected. *If you have an infant, you need a proper carrier.*

**Diapers:** An inevitable eventuality, diapers represent a prepping crux. On the one hand, you can (at great cost) stockpile months worth of diapers, but they will be bulky
and exceed the cost of even your food supply. While not as popular as they once were, we recommend cloth diapers for a survival situation as you can reuse them much as has been done for millennia. Sure, it’s more of a hassle, but if the flow of synthetic diapers dries up overnight during a disaster, you are in deep…well, you know.

**Bug in or Bug out:** We’re recommending a bug in plan here, and it’s no secret why – your infant will do much better sitting put and being sheltered by your home. While it’s true that the natives took their kids all over the place and in all conditions, it’s not an ideal situation and families with infants will be much better off staying put if at all possible.

**Other things to purchase and plan for:**

- Keep paracord on hand. When the infant begins to crawl, you can use it to fashion a lanyard to keep them in one spot (never leave an infant unattended with a lanyard on, however). You can also use it in conjunction with four stakes to make an improvised playpen.
- Err on the side of heavier clothes and jumpsuits. You can always take them off if the child is hot. Always keep a baby’s head covered outdoors.
- Stock up on diaper rash cream in bulk. Not only does it have other uses besides treating baby bottoms, there is nothing that irritates a baby more than a chapped posterior and during a survival situation, this could lead to greater problems.
- Baby bottles should be heavy duty, and should be boiled frequently to avoid contamination. Stockpile lots and lots of nipples and religiously boil them before use.
- Never make baby formula with contaminated or suspect water. Boil or SODIS treat all water first.
- Cleanliness needs to be ramped up with infants. Treat their surroundings like an operating room; a sick infant is highly vulnerable to illness which is not easily treated in survival situations.
TODDLERS – FROM AGE ONE TO THREE

Prepping with toddlers becomes somewhat easier than with infants, although toddlers have their own specific challenges to deal with in this great transitional phase:

Food: From a prepping standpoint, every attempt should be made to wean your infant off breast milk at about one year of age, and begin feeding your new toddler solid foods as soon as practicable. This sometimes happens automatically as the child becomes less and less satiated with milk alone. The key here from a prepping standpoint is to avoid baby food. Realize that prior to the advent of commercial baby food, babies more or less ate what their parents ate. Since a toddler’s teeth and mouth muscles aren’t fully developed for chewing, however, their food must be finely minced or pureed, none of which represent a big problem. The reasons why we recommend feeding your babies what you eat from a prepper perspective are:

- Not having to stockpile baby food means one less thing to plan for.
- In a prolonged disaster, baby food will not be available anyways.
- Baby food is expensive.

Potty Training: The American average for toilet training children is about 36 months, but realize that this is far greater than in some countries. Some African tribes have toilet trained their kids as early as 12 months of age, and most third world countries
are running about 18 months. The reason for such an early potty training age is unsurprising – diapers are not available in most third world countries. In America, we have everything, and therefore it’s not uncommon to see even 4 year old children still on some form of diapers because disposable diapers are abundant. As preppers, however, your goal is to reduce your child’s dependence on anything specifically meant for children, and that means diapers. Eliminating diapers as soon as you can means one less thing you have to stockpile, and potentially, one less thing you have to carry on your back.

**Mobility:** Toddlers will go from being not very mobile to far too mobile almost overnight. As with early walking infants, they represent a serious challenge when you have to move quickly, and so a baby carrier is still advisable to keep and use. From a prepping standpoint, don’t even bother with strollers, as they require pavement and you might not find any where you are going.

**Bug in or Bug Out:** It’s still far too early to plan for a full on bug out excursion for a toddler, unless the circumstances are totally dire. Unlike infants, toddlers need to be mobile and expend their energy. They need to make noise and explore, and none of these behaviors are compatible with a plan to bug out. Your toddler is safest at home where he or she can exist within a safe, controlled environment.
Other things to purchase and plan for:

- As with infants, you need to think lanyards, especially if you must bug out. Again, *never* leave a toddler unattended with a lanyard on.
- For a bug out situation, consider purchasing a toddler helmet. You don’t need a head injury from the many falls your toddler will inevitably have during the day.
- It’s easy for a toddler to become dehydrated and potentially suffer heatstroke. Make sure that they have access to lots of water and especially juices, which of course you must add to your stockpile.
PRESCHOOL TO PRE ADOLESCENCE – FROM AGE THREE TO TEN

This period is one of tremendous progress from a developmental standpoint and makes your life a lot easier when it comes to prepping. At this point, no special foods are required, and the kids will comfortably eat what you eat barring a medical condition. We don’t really have too many special considerations in this age group except for the fact that kids on the younger end of this span might still need the use of a baby carrier if you have to move rapidly. While kids in this group are not really capable of meaningful physical work (although in many cultures they are most certainly working at the upper end of this range), now is the time to introduce them to their prepper and survival training. You must do this in a slow and methodical manner that’s commensurate with their ability and aptitude. Starting at age three and up, begin by:

- Teaching the child about the hazards in his or her world. This includes pools and ponds, stinging or biting insects, snakes, potentials for burning or electrocution, and other such hazards. A survival situation will plunge your child into a world that is markedly unsafe, so get them ready for it by teaching them what to avoid. Consider that children in Burma and Vietnam play in close proximity to deadly venomous snakes, but most are taught from a very early age to avoid them and thus the death rate from envenomation is far less than you would think. Do not shelter your children in this regard!
• Around five years old, start teaching the child about firearms safety. This doesn’t mean teaching the child to shoot, this means teaching the child what guns are, and how to safely handle them. It means teaching a child to not touch a gun unless you are right there beside him, and it means teaching him to immediately report to you if he sees or finds a gun.

• Towards the end of this range, start teaching the child everything you know. You will be surprised at what they absorb. 7-10 years old is not too young to learn how to tie knots, make a fire, look through binoculars, use a radio, or read a map. Make these activities fun and challenging.
PRE ADOLESCENCE – FROM AGE TEN TO TWELVE

This is the age where your child can now function as a full fledged member of the team and pull his or her weight in most aspects. From a prepper and survival standpoint, you want your pre-teen to be able to function independently more often than not. Remember, back in the day ten, eleven and twelve year olds were out hunting and doing hard labor. It may not have been ideal, but little is ideal about a survival situation. Here’s what to do:

- Although some adept kids may be taught sooner, ten years old is the right age to start teaching your kids how to shoot, realizing that by doing so, you are adding another gun to the fight. The natural weapon to start on is a .22 rifle, and most ten year olds will quickly warm to it, becoming deadly accurate in no time at all. Towards the twelve year range, introduce a .22 pistol or perhaps even a .38 revolver if the child seems ready for it.

- Independence needs to be firmly established here, but it needs to be tempered with accountability. The child must have boundaries within which to roam, but he or she must never exceed these boundaries. You need to trust your child to be able to function autonomously within this world. If you have done a good job of training them from age three to ten, they should be ready for this.

- Assign tasks and responsibilities to your child where it pertains to the retreat, bug in, or bug out. Accountability and working as a team is of utmost importance here.
Regardless of legality, at about age twelve (depending on stature), you need to teach your child the basics of driving a car. The simple fact is, in the event of an emergency or disaster, the child needs to have at least a rudimentary idea as well as some practice in moving a motor vehicle. Clearly, this needs to be practiced on an open piece of private property. At the very least, introduce them to a scooter or small displacement dirt bike.
TEENAGER – FROM 13 TO 19 YEARS OF AGE

From a prepping and survival standpoint, treat teenagers as fully functioning adults as far as manpower needs are concerned, but realize that from an emotional standpoint teenagers are not adults – and that’s okay.

- Starting from the age of thirteen, start introducing full power rifles, handguns, and shotguns to the child. By about age 15, your teen should be able to shoot anything you can shoot with a comparable – or better – degree of accuracy.
- Now is the time to introduce tactical training such as fire team movements. You don’t just want them to be able to shoot from a firing line, you want them to be able to shoot on the move.
- Independence from a tactical standpoint must be demanded. You need to be able to comfortably send your 15 or 16 year old into the bush and have them find their way back within a reasonable time frame. In theory, they should have had approximately ten years to learn this skill at this point in their lives.
- Watch out for obesity in this age range as this is when it can take root and never let go. Obesity breeds all sorts of other conditions that will be a hindrance during a survival situation.
- Your teen should be able to drive a car or light truck, with either a manual or automatic transmission before he or she reaches 18 years of age. Again, this is not so that they can legally drive, this is so they can drive if they have to during a survival situation.
- As the teen reaches manhood or womanhood, he or she should have a laundry list of responsibilities that they must accomplish on a daily basis. Accountability is very important at this stage.
- Watch out for too much recreation. Childhood should be fun, but remember, you are developing a member of your survival team here, not someone that you need to support. American kids today have far less capability than they did even 50 years ago; keep in mind that many of the soldiers who died on the beaches of Normandy and Iwo Jima were seventeen years of age or younger.

CONCLUSION

Prepping with kids is different than just dealing with adults, but if you work hard at it and train them up right, they will ease your burden during a survival situation instead of making your life harder. Start educating your kids young!