

SPY + SURVIVAL BRIEFING

LIFESAVING STRATEGIES FROM FORMER CIA AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS PERSONNEL

HOW TO SURVIVE A VIRTUAL KIDNAPPING

Avoid Falling for This Dangerous Call

By Jason Hanson

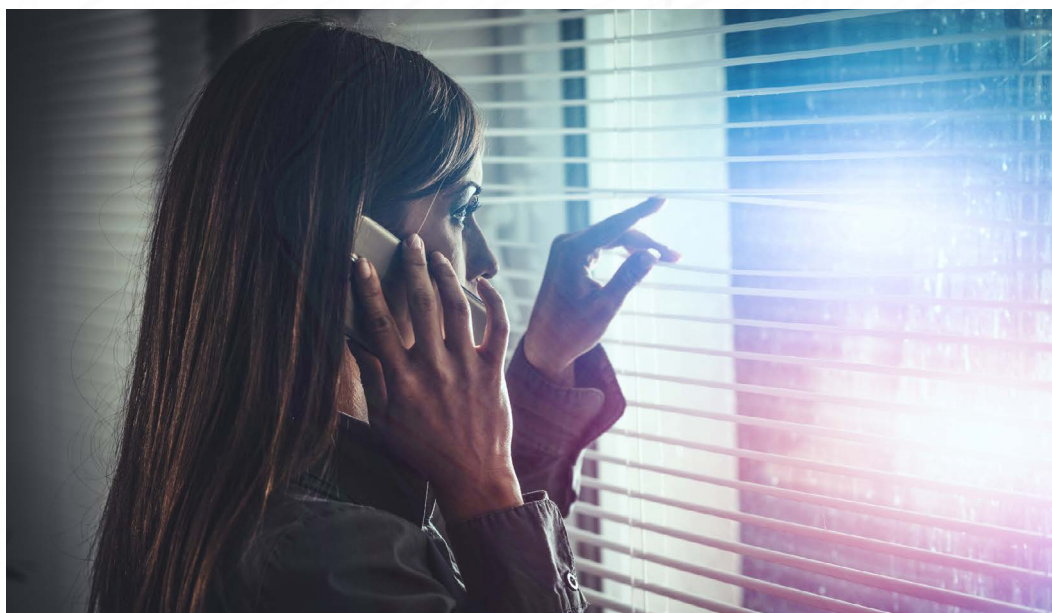
Former CIA Officer

"I will slit your throat from ear to ear if you do not listen to every word I say. Do exactly what I tell you. Do not hang up the phone. Do not go to the window. I know where you are, and if you do not cooperate, I will kill you."

This may sound like the beginning of some action movie, but it's exactly what happened to a Utah man who I'll call Andrew. Andrew was in Chihuahua, Mexico on a business trip when the phone in his hotel room rang. When he answered, the person on the other end said they had a gun. They said they knew what hotel room he was in and threatened to shoot him if he tried to run away.

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The criminal told Andrew they would torture, dismember and kill him unless he listened to every word they said. For the next 18 hours, Andrew spoke with the criminal and followed their instructions to the letter. At one point, they ordered him to leave his room and go purchase a disposable cell-phone from a nearby store.

While he was going to the store, Andrew noticed a man sitting in the park across from the hotel that he believed was one of his captors. Eventually, Andrew was freed by Mexican police and was able to drive to El Paso, Texas, where he flew home. When he was interviewed, he was quoted as saying, "The whole thing could have been a movie."

What Andrew endured is becoming more common throughout the world and especially in Mexico. It's called virtual kidnapping and it's happening far too often. Here's how it works: Criminals attempt to extort a ransom from you without actually taking a hostage or even seeing you face to face.

In Andrew's situation, he never saw his kidnapper, even though he was on the phone with them for around 18 hours. But they had clearly done surveillance on him and knew enough information for Andrew to be concerned and take their threats seriously.

Around the same time this happened to Andrew, a woman in Farmersville, Texas fell victim to a virtual kidnapping and actually paid

the ransom. This woman received a phone call from a man she didn't know, who claimed to have kidnapped her daughter. The woman heard screaming in the background and what she believed was her daughter's voice yelling, "Mom! Please! I've been kidnapped, and they're going to kill me!"

The man on the phone told her that unless she did exactly what he said, they would kill her daughter. While she stayed on the phone with the kidnappers, the woman drove to an ATM and withdrew some cash. Then she drove to a Western Union and wired the money to a Mexican address.

After she paid the ransom, she was told to wait in the parking lot of a Daylight Doughnuts until her daughter arrived. While she was waiting in the parking lot, the woman called her daughter's cellphone and realized the kidnapping was fake.

Each of these instances shows a common method of executing a virtual kidnapping scam: Calling someone and claiming to have kidnapped a loved one. The victim is then often instructed to make a ransom payment immediately by wire transfer. The criminals will use threats to keep you on the phone with them until the payment has been made so you don't contact the person who was supposedly kidnapped and expose the scam.

Clearly, criminals who attempt these types of kidnappings are intelligent enough to research their victims and to use surveillance like they did on Andrew. In the case of the woman, she believes the criminals knew about her and her daughter because she had recently been involved in

a car accident and shared personal details with the other driver.

If you ever receive a phone call like the one the folks above received, here are a few things to keep in mind. First, is the call coming from a strange area code? Many of these phone calls come from numbers in Mexico, Puerto Rico and foreign countries. Second, does the caller insist on keeping you on the line? If so, try to find another phone and call the loved one whom they claim to have kidnapped.

Third, and one of the most important things you should do, is tell the kidnapper you want to speak to your loved one. Demand proof of life or you will not pay the ransom. I know this sounds like something straight out of a Hollywood movie, but if your loved one were actually kidnapped, wouldn't you want to know they were still alive before paying a ransom?

If the criminals allow you to speak to the kidnappee, ask them questions only your loved one would know. For example, you could ask the name of the last movie you saw together or what present you gave them last Christmas. Don't ask anything a third party could easily find out from social media or a quick Google search.

Unfortunately, criminals are always coming up with new scams and new ways to steal from us. They know that using the people close to us is an easy way to fool us into making an emotional decision. If you ever find yourself in a virtual kidnapping, stay calm, pay close attention to the voice on the phone and take the steps discussed above to verify if it's an actual kidnapping or just a scam.

Minuteman Ammo Can Stove

It's always a good idea to have multiple stoves to cook food in a crisis. This includes propane stoves, butane stoves and good ole' fashioned stoves that take wood and other tinder.

One of these stoves that takes wood and other things is the Minuteman Ammo Can Rocket Stove. It's built from a .50 caliber ammo can and is a perfect rocket stove for camping. All of the contents of the stove pack into the ammo can so it's rather compact. It has solid steel construction and the stove weighs about 14 pounds.

One of the best features of the Minuteman stove is that it is low profile, which means there is very little smoke. The intense heat from the stove helps reduce the amount of smoke.

The can is lined with ceramic insulation, so there is minimal energy and heat loss. And the stove can reach operating temperatures above 1,000 degrees, so even large cast-iron cookware and full stew pots can be cooked on it.

When you're done cooking, you pour out the ashes, reattach the lid, and you are ready to go. The lid has a rubber seal so you don't have to smell the contents of the ammo can. The Minuteman Rocket Stove is made in America and sells for \$200 new.

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Spy & Survival Briefing is published monthly by Spy Briefing LLC, 124 S. Main Street #4090, Cedar City, UT 84720. www.SpyBriefing.com.

Spy Briefing President: Jason Hanson; Managing Editor: Robert Conroy; Graphic Design: Mena Sugg

PUT UP A FALSE FRONT TO SAVE FACE

A Practical Guide to Disguising and Protecting Your Identity

By JAVELIN
Former CIA Officer

Through a chance encounter with a member of the Japanese Triad, I found an opportunity to gain intel on government telecommunications. So, with plenty of support from Uncle Sam, I set out to recruit this Triad member. To ensure a favorable outcome and to protect us both in the developmental stage of the operation, I chose to wear what I call my “Colombian drug lord” disguise, which included a long, light-brown wig tied into a ponytail at the base of my neck and reaching the small of my back.

I also had a thick walrus mustache to match, a tailor-made Italian suit and thick, gaudy glasses. In the beginning stages, our PMs (personal meetings) were set up on his turf, in a very dangerous part of Tokyo where he felt more comfortable.



SAVINT YOUR MONTHLY SAVINGS INTELLIGENCE

Germany banned a survival book that I want to get into your hands as soon as possible. The book was written by a Swiss war hero named H. Von Dach. This book is a real eye-opener and will get you thinking about how to better prepare your family for a true crisis situation. You can get a free copy of the book by visiting
www.SpyFighting.com.

If there was a deal to be made, this is where it would all go down. Blending in was critical to the success of the mission and the slightest mistake could prove deadly for me. The average citizen might think wearing a disguise is easy, but there are many challenges to executing a successful disguise.

First, you need to ask yourself: For whom are you wearing the disguise? What is the weather like? How do the locals dress? How long are you expecting to remain in disguise? Is this a long or short-term situation?

"Our PMs (personal meetings) were set up on his turf, in a very dangerous part of Tokyo."

Next, when choosing a disguise, select one that is opposite from your typical appearance and completely own your new persona. You must be meticulous. In this case, my disguise had to be absolutely perfect, because my life was on the line.

Here's a list of the items I carry in my disguise kit and that I used during this operation:

1. **Mascara in several shades** for quick root touch ups to match my natural hair to the color of my wig.
2. **Alcohol wipes** to remove makeup quickly and effectively.
3. **Good facial adhesive** to apply facial hair in a different color. Keep in mind this is difficult and dangerous to work with when heat and perspiration come into play.
4. **Wigs in a variety of colors and lengths.** If you have long hair, using a wig might be too much trouble. If this is the case, consider cutting your hair short.
5. **Makeup** that can be used for minor to major changes.

6. **Several sets of glasses.** Glasses help to break up your face drastically. This application works better when you don't normally wear glasses.

7. **A small mirror** to aid in quick changes when a full-length mirror is not accessible. Catching a flaw in your disguise before the enemy does will protect your cover and can save your life.

For quick disguises when the threat of discovery isn't as severe, you can use coverings like hats and coats that can be slapped on and quickly removed.

The simplicity of changing colors by adding or removing articles of clothing can do wonders in helping you lose a surveillance tail.

If you find yourself trying to shake off a tail, take it to the next level by changing your shoes. This simple change is notorious for being the hardest to affect with any disguise, but can easily throw off even trained surveillance. The key is to change your gait as well.

It's imperative to be comfortable in your disguise and adept at applying it. The purpose of a disguise is to take on another persona to protect your true identity, family, friends, etc. Immerse yourself in the persona to avoid blowing your own cover. Grow your confidence and comfortability and practice, practice, practice.

The good news is, you probably won't be meeting with a Triad gang member in Tokyo, so you don't have to put as much effort into a disguise as I did. But a quick change of a hat and jacket will do a great job of helping you escape a dangerous situation when you want to ensure you're not noticed.

HAPPY TRAILS

How to Stay Alive When a Hike Goes Horribly Wrong

By EJ Snyder

Former Army Ranger and Extreme Survivalist

As you're reading this, many hikers have already hit the Appalachian Trail (AT) to complete its 2,181-mile trek. I've had many first-timers contact me about how to be better prepared for their hike in terms of survival, safety, and preparations.

You may not be hiking the AT, but whether you're on a long weekend backpack, an overnighter, or even just a day hike, being ready for a stressful and unexpected event can make all the difference and may even save your life.

So aside from your medical kit and survival kit, let me share some simple things here to think about no matter how long you aim to go hiking.

First, always have a well thought out plan no matter the length of time you're heading out. Let family or friends know where you are going and leave a possible map or planned route with them. This will help if something goes wrong and someone needs to come looking for you, as it will give the authorities a place to start. Then make a back-up plan (with contingency instructions) just in case something goes wrong.

Also, have some alternate scenario plans rehearsed in your mind for the "what ifs" that could and may go wrong – like getting lost, running out of water, suffering an injury, wild animal encounter, etc. If you are hiking in a truly remote place you may wish to get a satellite phone. (One I have is the Inmarsat IsatPhone Pro.)

Next, is gear. You should have quality gear for the activities you plan. Start with well-fitting and broken-in footwear. In the Army we used to say, "You live and die by your feet." You also need to have a good pack. Size depends on how long you are heading out for, but it needs to be comfortable, properly sized, and able to hold all your needed gear.

Finally, address your clothing. Out in the wild we always say, "Cotton Kills!" because there are so many better performing materials to help keep your core body temp in check while enduring environmental, weather, and climate factors.

You need good base layers with tops, bottoms, and undergarments. A good raincoat or windbreaker that's waterproof just in case the weather goes south. And wear a hat for protection against the elements, along with some good sunglasses for protection against the sun. This is the bare minimum. You can add gloves,

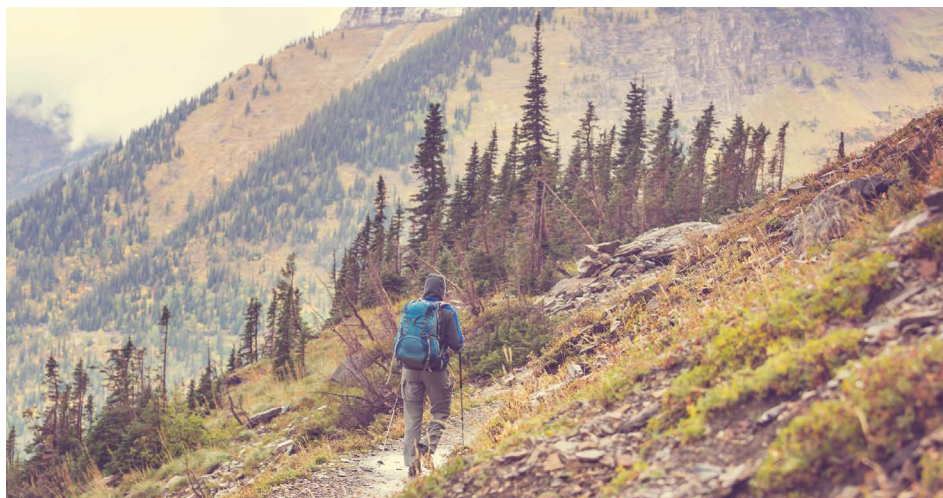
neck gaiters, shemagh's, a good knife or machete, trekking poles, etc.

Third, is navigation and signaling. A compass is a great tool to have when the battery on your phone or GPS dies. I also always have a mini button compass on my wristwatch. Also, have a good light source in case you wind up being out longer than you thought. I also carry a headlamp so I can have my hands free.

Pack some extra batteries for all your devices and a power charger pack for things like cell phones and other electronic devices. I even pack a small foldable solar panel charge system. A good whistle can alert others to where you're at and so can a small signal mirror to flash for help. You can also carry a small air horn with you to alert for help. I always carry a bright orange XXL t-shirt on me for wearing if I wander into a hunting area by accident or to use as a signaling flag.

Fourth, is protection. Again, a good knife or machete can go a long way for protection, along with crafting things like a spear or club. A good walking staff provides some stand off from wildlife or hooligans, and if you cut your own, a nice "V" notch on one end can help with handling snakes. (Tip: treat all snakes as venomous, whether they are or not.) If you are in an area where there is bear activity, carry some bear spray with you. And, if allowed in your area, by all means carry a firearm for your safety.

Following these tips, you'll have all your bases covered and you'll be ready for the great outdoors and to enjoy a planned stroll with nature. Whether it is a day hike, an over-night or long backpack trip, you'll be prepared. Now grab a smile and get to stepping. Breathe in the fresh air, unplug, and find peace and tranquility in nature.



This Marked Man Had 72 Hours to Live

Former Clandestine Officer, CIA,
DIA, NSA

I know and understand the genuine sensitivity and critical nature of highly volatile intelligence. I'm also well aware of the political usefulness of the ruse of elusive and indeterminate "*protecting sources and methods*" in today's intelligence domain, and that of the captive media outlets.

In the early 1990's, I was sent on a mission to make contact with a world-class scientist who had the highest credentials and the most prominent reputation amongst his peers. His niche was the world of "polynomial factoring of a special class of prime numbers in a modified number universe," and he'd discovered new methods and applications in the field of public key cryptography.

To make matters worse, this individual had a very high profile in his field. And unlike most of the mathematicians and scientists of the genius-class who I had been assigned to “work” previous to this

Little did he know at that point that I was neither brilliant nor an interloper. I was just a spy trying to make contact with him long enough to pass on critical information that was recently developed through one of the highest and most protected active “sources and methods” providing grave, time-sensitive intelligence to our national leaders.

This man was in imminent danger of losing his liberty and his life and probably within the next 72 hours.

Those not familiar with the world of international espionage would ask “Why didn’t the U.S. Government just contact his government and warn them about his situation?” I can explain it with three powerful words in the spy business: sources and methods. If we had gone through his government, they would have demanded proof, and would expect us to reveal how we got our information and why we were absolutely confident in its validity. In other words, they would have wanted to know our sources and methods. In espionage, Sources and Methods are everything.

You really have to embrace the fact that no operation, with the possible exception of saving the President’s life, outweighs the continuity of high value, unique sources and methods.

So, we had to make sure that no other government was clued in to the fact that our source had tipped us off to one of the highest-level operations, sanctioned directly by the leader of another government. We had to move fast and make sure the notion of sources, methods, validation, etc. never even emerged.

If we had sent a known U.S. Embassy officer to tip him off, all of the other spies in the room would have figured out what was going on. They might have decided to advance their timeline and snatch him that very evening.

But worse, the hostile agents intent on the abduction would have been able to deduce that we had a source at the top of their government. That would have sent them on a mole hunt that could have deprived us of that high value collection and reporting.

So, the plan was for me to cordially

approach him, establish that I was an American Intelligence Officer, and make it clear that his safety depended on him listening to me and doing exactly as I instructed him. And I had to do that extremely quickly for this to work — no time for him to get curious, use his superior intellect, or even object.

That is exactly what I did. I walked up directly in front of him, so close I could smell the brandy on his breath, and introduced myself in under three seconds, then waited for his reaction.

He paused, looking at me with an expression of disbelief, so I simply said, “I am walking out of here right now. Listen to your instincts and come with me if you want to see the sunrise tomorrow.” He followed me out into the hall.

When we were alone, I grabbed him by his shoulders and told him to look at me and nod as soon as he was ready to listen. I explained that someone was going to try to kidnap him tonight. (Honestly, I did not know if it was that night or one of the coming nights), and I told him that I could not interfere nor protect him. I added that unless we made this look perfectly natural, they would forcefully grab him if they thought he was on to them.

He was in emotional shock, so I told him to bend over like he was sick and start making vomiting noises. As he was bending over, I put my arm around his shoulder and said, “Let’s get you to the bathroom down this way so that no one makes a big deal about your drinking.”

I heard the door to the banquet room opening and footsteps in the corridor. I didn’t look back to see who it was — it didn’t matter. All that mattered was that they would see a guy helping a sick partier to a bathroom. I knew that no one

would follow us in there. It’s simple rules of social etiquette for people who use big words and wear suits that cost half of my annual salary.

I told him to use this cover story: That he became very ill at tonight’s party and had to fly home immediately — that night, in fact. He had

to see his doctor for a very serious existing condition that required urgent treatment.

At this point, he was beginning to ask for credentials and proof of my claims. I simply told him the truth: That men and women had given their lives to develop the source for this information and that I cared far more about them, about protecting our sources and methods, and about my own safety than I did about his safety.

Frankly, if he did not heed my warning, it would not change my life really at all. I asked him to consider any possible downsides of going to his home country that night, even if it meant nothing more than his peace of mind for the next several days. And it was true. He was not more valuable than our sacred sources and methods.

Those experiences taught me to examine my personal life and discover what my sacrosanct sources and methods are. In the context of civilian life, those most highly regarded and most precious protected things can be our virtue, our family, our liberties, or perhaps something else.

But whatever you substitute for the value of your own “sources and methods,” whatever it is that is worth your life and the lives of others, be ready to protect and defend them at all costs. Remember, they are irreplaceable, and you will be of no use to anyone without them.

"He was in emotional shock, so I told him to bend over like he was sick."

NEVER TAKE A “WAIT AND SEE APPROACH” WITH THIS

The Causes and Care of Your Shortness of Breath

By Dr. Omar Hamada
Special Operations Physician

Shortness of breath (SOB) is a very common complaint in the world of Emergency Medicine. The challenge is figuring out the cause so we can treat it appropriately. Let me just say at the start, if you have shortness of breath (SOB), you need to see a physician immediately. This is not something you should take a “wait and see” attitude with.

Essentially, shortness of breath (SOB), or dyspnea as we call it, is either a ventilation problem (gas exchange at the alveolar/air sac level in the lungs) or a perfusion problem (blood flow through the lungs).

Ventilation Problems: Though congestive heart failure (CHF) could also be a perfusion (blood flow) problem, it primarily causes SOB by filling the lungs with fluid, limiting gas exchange. When the heart isn't pumping properly, the backpressure increases and fills the lungs with fluid.

Those with CHF sometimes have a wet cough and sound like they're gurgling. SOB worsens with exertion and can get so bad that some can barely walk across the room. Treatments include diuresis (ridding the body of excess fluid with medication) and improving heart function. Though there is no cure, this can usually be managed to allow a fairly normal life in most cases.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) breaks down into two primary progressive diseases — emphysema and chronic bronchitis. They differ slightly, but the end result is essentially the same and stems from long term abuses

of lung tissue by smoking or other mechanisms. As lung damage increases, the lung tissue gets tougher, the airways get plugged up with mucus, and the terminal air sacs are destroyed.

There is no cure, but we can use oxygen, inhalers, steroids, antibiotics, and other medicines to help

slow progression and temporarily reverse acute complications. Those with COPD can have a dry productive cough, shallow rapid breathing, and audible lung sounds. When it worsens acutely, we can often improve the sudden attack with meds and positive pressure ventilation like CPAP.

Asthma is an inflammatory disease where the breathing tubes become inflamed and tight. During an asthma attack, people often wheeze. However, as asthma worsens and air flow decreases because of tightening of the lungs, wheezing can disappear.

Asthma is usually treated with inhalers, steroids, antihistamines, and other medicines. It can worsen with age, but sometimes improves and even disappears altogether. If a severe acute attack is not treated quickly and correctly, it can result in death.

Restrictive lung diseases reduce the internal compliance of the lungs and limit air intake. This tends to be chronic and progressive. The progression of fibrosis, coal miner's lung, asbestosis, and other conditions can be slowed with steroids and other interventions.

Constrictive problems limit how much the lungs can expand because of pressures outside the

lungs. Pericardial (fluid around the heart causing perfusion problems) and pleural effusions (fluid around — not in — the lungs causing ventilation problems) are examples.

These are addressed by removing the fluid with a tube or a needle to allow for full expansion and function of the heart and lungs.

"It's nearly always a good idea to immediately take aspirin and a nitro-glycerine tablet."

Finally, there are obstructive lung diseases that limit air entry by blocking the airways. Things like aspiration, choking, inflammation, mucous, masses, or foreign bodies can obstruct an airway and cause SOB. Treatment is based on cause and ranges from surgical intervention to medicines, steroids, and inhalers.

Perfusion Problems: Pulmonary emboli, or blood clots in the lungs, significantly decrease blood flow, limiting the lungs' ability to feed the body oxygen and remove carbon dioxide. We can target clots with a catheter and clot busting medicine or treat with oxygen and blood thinners.

Heart attacks that reduce heart function can leave one with a feeling of SOB on top of chest pain and tightness, sweating, and nausea/vomiting. It is important to see a physician right away if you think that you are having a heart attack. It's nearly always a good idea to immediately take aspirin and a nitro-glycerine tablet if you think you are having a heart attack.

Finally, the most common cause of shortness of breath is a lack of physical fitness — especially with semi-prolonged exertion. However, severe SOB is never normal and should always be addressed as soon as possible.

HOW TO FIND PURPOSE IN THE PAIN

Two Months in an RV With 4 females, 2 Dogs and 2 Cats

By Forest Hamilton

Universal Coin & Bullion

For nearly a decade, I have dreamed of packing up my wife and 3 daughters in an RV and hitting the road for a year of visiting National Parks, seeing the natural beauty of America, and experiencing the amazing variety of cultures and people in our great country.

But life seemed to consistently get in the way. Work, school, money, coaching and playing sports, serving on multiple community boards, and the deadly “if, then” principle seemed to push my dream further from reality.

Over the years, I have had the honor of co-authoring 2 books with Brian Tracy, the author of over 60 New York Times Bestselling books on time management and personal growth. He says that the “if, then” principle destroys more dreams than anything in life. We tend to say things like, “If I retire, then I’ll go on that trip with my family.” Or “If I get some spare time, then I’ll learn how to play that instrument.” Or “If I get some extra money, then I’ll put money into my retirement.”

The problem with the “if, then” principle is that the “if” never seems to happen, making the “then” impossible. For the past few summers, my family has rented an RV for a week and traveled around the beautiful Northwest. Last year, we decided to spread our wings and rent an RV for 2 weeks and visit Yellowstone National Park, but COVID cut our trip short.

A few weeks ago, I realized that I was falling into the “if, then” spiral. With a teenage daughter and another about to become a teenager, I was running out of time for my dream. So, I went for it. I told my team at Universal Coin and Bullion

that I was renting an RV and hitting the road with my family for 2 months, 14 states, and 8,000 miles.

The looks on their faces were of disbelief, doubt, and maybe a little jealousy. That jealousy turned to horror when I told them that I would have 4 women, 2 dogs and 2 cats in that RV for 2 months. A few of my co-workers questioned my sanity and offered professional counseling, but I was not to be deterred.

So, I set about preparing for this trip of a lifetime with only a few weeks before our departure date. Here is what I learned (and am still learning) about undertaking this and how you can apply it to your everyday life.

Make time to prepare: While I enjoy the adrenaline rush of pressurized deadlines, I highly recommend making the time to intentionally prepare for the important things in life. The more time you have to prepare, the better. I know this is obvious but most people don’t do it. I’m sure you’ve heard it said that most people spend more time planning a vacation than they do money management for their retirement.

Take time to enjoy the process: It is easy to get overwhelmed when planning. You may even think of just cancelling the whole thing. There were many times I questioned everything and considered calling it off. But once I changed my mindset from making things perfect to enjoying the planning process, I started to enjoy myself, which in turn sped up the progress exponentially.

Involve your loved ones: I often want to do everything myself, but this rarely works out well. Once I started to involve my family in the planning, we all became more

excited and it went from being my trip to being our trip. Many hands really do make a light load. Everybody pitched in, which allowed me more time to sort out the details. The same goes for planning for college or retirement. Make sure to involve those close to you and align your dreams and goals so that you arrive there together.

Understand that things are going to happen along the way and don’t get trapped in “destination happiness.” Probably the most important lesson I am learning is to consciously enjoy the journey, not just the destination.

If we set specific expectations on how our lives should go, anything less may leave us feeling empty. We’ve had our share of bumps and bruises in the first 2 weeks of this journey, but once we learned to find purpose in the pain, we’ve been having the time of our lives.

We turned a broken awning into lifelong friendships and a clogged toilet into hilarious memories we will cherish forever. I look forward to filling you in on more adventures and lessons learned from the road in next month’s article. And even though I am on the road, I am still working and still fielding calls. So, if you need anything don’t hesitate to give me a ring. I am still selling gold like crazy and will help you find what makes the most sense for your situation.

[Publisher’s Note: For questions about buying gold and silver coins you can contact Forest Hamilton directly at foresthilton@universalcoin.com or call 800-822-4653. Please know, if you purchase any coins from Forest, we don’t receive any compensation from him. We simply know he’s one of the good guys in the business that can be trusted.]