

DOWN TO THE BARE BOARDS

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

The whole of the USA has been seriously shaken by the affects of the recent hurricane “Sandy.” We had some warning of its arrival, but no one could have imagined the amount of devastation this storm had on communities on the East Coast and inland. We have seen many sad images on the news over the last few days. With no power and transport immobilized, Manhattan looked like a ghost town. Not even the stock exchange was running. Rows and rows of yellow cabs sat in 3ft of water. People stood in shock at the loss of their homes and whole communities. Even over here in Nashville, TN we felt the effects of “Frankenstorm” with the stronger than normal winds gusting through the tall trees on our property.

On the way home today I was listening to our local DJ on talk back radio. Some woman had tweeted in to say that as she was waiting for gas at a New Jersey service station. Two guys nearby were absolutely hammering each other, fighting over a gas hose. Frustration and despair certainly brings out the worst in many people under extreme circumstances.

The DJ went on to make some very good points about how ‘useless’ we have allowed ourselves to become once the things we rely on – especially technology, are taken away. It is like cutting off our arms and legs. We need our arms to tweet, call our friends and use computers. We need our legs to drive our cars or run for a cab.

No we don’t! Have we forgotten that our fore-parents had no electricity, no transport other than horses and carts, and had no way to communicate except to talk face to face or send smoke signals! What have we become? Totally reliant on commodities to make our lives easier, that’s what!

Sure the world has changed and we live in a more modern society, but too much reliance on things makes survival so much harder. So where am I leading with this? It is vitally important that families learn to do without modern conveniences occasionally so that, if the time does come, we can make do with what we have rather than complain about what we don’t have!

How can we teach our kids that they can live with very little if they have to? Here are some suggestions. Cut down on the use of phones and computers. I suggest once a week for several hours we turn our cell phones off, turn our TVs off and bring out some games. There is nothing more fun than doing things together with the least possible conveniences available ... including power.

Camping is a great example. Taking your kids on outdoor excursions creates an opportunity for them to learn many important lessons about survival. Not only that, but they also learn to appreciate the value of the basics of life. Take away the clutter of all their technology stuff and suddenly they hear the birds and the crickets. They appreciate the taste of unadulterated foods and most importantly they learn to listen to each other and keep one another safe. They stop thinking about themselves!

How do we prepare our kids for a crisis? We need to teach them what to do in case of fire, flood, if someone collapses or if they see someone choking. They need to know escape routes, their home address, your phone numbers and emergency ones in case they need to call the police. If you are preparing for an upcoming storm like “Sandy” show your children how you are preparing for it – such things as storage of food, buying a generator for power, getting a supply of candles, shifting valuables to a safe place, possibly away from the house, or moving away to higher ground.

Until it happens to you, you can't conceive of the incredible fear, anguish and disruption storms, tornadoes, earthquakes and hurricanes cause families and businesses. Only two and a half years ago Nashville was besieged by floodwaters and along with the shock of it came heartwarming scenes of people from all over our city offering assistance to families, enabling them to quickly get back on their feet again.

All the stuff we collect for our own entertainment causes us to think about 'me'. Bare bone living creates in us a sense of priorities. What really matters in any given circumstance? How can I help another person?

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.