The Seven Steps to Survival will help improve your survival skills and positive thinking. These seven steps came from people who survived emergencies.

1. **Recognition**  "Oh no—I'm in trouble!"

The most important step is recognizing that you are in an emergency. If you don't recognize when you're in an emergency, you can die.

Most people don't admit they are in trouble until they are in the middle of an emergency. Here are some situations that could be emergencies:

- If you are out berry picking with your brother and you separate from each other, are you in danger? What if it is getting dark and you're not sure where you are or how to get back home?
- If you are out boating and your outboard starts sputtering, are you in an emergency? What if your engine dies and you start drifting toward a big rock?

If you're not sure that you are lost or in trouble, assume you are. Many people fail to recognize that they are in trouble. Many have died because they were too "tough" to accept this fact.

2. **Inventory**  "What do I have with me? What should I do?"

You must think about what you have going for you and what you have going against you.

S - Sit
T - Think
O - Observe
P - Plan

An inventory has three parts:

1. First, treat anyone who is seriously injured or has hypothermia.

   If you are with someone who is hypothermic, you can warm him or her with your own body heat inside jackets or sleeping bags.
Second, find a nearby spot that is protected from cold, wind, and rain.

If you are along the shore, you should go into the woods to protect yourself from the rain and wind.

The third part of inventory is to find what you can use that will help you stay alive.

See what you have on you (such as a knife or a mirror) and what you can use from the land (such as driftwood or plastic jugs) to improve your situation. It is very important to have a survival kit on your body—NOT left on a boat or somewhere else.

3. Shelter  "I need to stay warm."

People who die in survival situations generally die from one of two causes—drowning or hypothermia.

Hypothermia happens when the body's temperature gets lower. The symptoms are shivering, feeling depressed, slurred speech, and lack of coordination.

Protect yourself from hypothermia by staying dry and warm.
Clothing is your primary shelter. When you get ready to go on an outing, dress for the worst weather.

Always dress for an emergency or take warm clothes along. Always take a hat. 50% to 75% of the body's heat can be lost from the head.

The best way to dress for an outing is in layers. Wool and polypropylene are better than cotton because they are warmer and they insulate even when they are wet.
You can build an emergency shelter to protect yourself from the wet and cold.

A good shelter must be:
- Small
- Insulative
- Windproof and rainproof

A shelter traps heat next to your body. The shelter must be small, since your body will be the only heater. The insulation helps keep the heat in, and plastic or branches help keep it dry.

When selecting a place to build your shelter, look for a place out of the wind and rain. Be sure your site has good drainage.

You could build three kinds of emergency shelters:
- Garbage sleeping bag
- Debris bed
- Debris hut

You can make a garbage sleeping bag or a debris bed in a hurry, in an emergency situation:
- If someone is hypothermic and needs help right away
- If it's getting dark and you need to build something fast
- If you don't have the equipment or energy to build something better

It will take more time to build the debris hut shelter. If you have the time to build it, the debris hut shelter will last longer and will do a much better job of protecting you.
Garbage Sleeping Bag

The garbage sleeping bag is just the right size for small kids (five or six years old).

Start with one garbage bag and fill it with moss, leaves, grass, or twigs.

Then hollow out the center and put another garbage bag in it. Now you have a garbage sleeping bag. Is it small, insulative, and windproof and rainproof? Yes, but the insulation is not the best.

When you are inside a garbage sleeping bag, you should wear a wool hat. Your head should stick out of the bag. Why? If you breathe in the bag, water from your breath will get inside the bag. Will the garbage sleeping bag fit a big person? No.

Put the garbage sleeping bag next to a log or tree, to help keep you out of the wind or rain.