

A coastal scene with waves crashing onto a sandy beach under a dark, overcast sky. The foreground shows a sandy beach with some rocks. The water is turbulent with white foam from the waves. The sky is a deep, dark grey, suggesting an approaching storm or late evening light.

How To Be Prepared: Do What You Can Beforehand

by Regina Cates

When I was in first grade, a category-four hurricane, *Carla*, plowed into my hometown of Victoria, Texas. At the time, my family was living on Mistletoe Street in a small, two-bedroom frame house with a large backyard. It was a beautiful day, and I did not understand why I had to remain inside. My parents told me there was a storm coming. They had to get ready. My sister and I promised to stay indoors.

My father went outside to nail plywood sheets over the windows and tie his boat to a telephone pole. Mom stayed indoors to fill pitchers and bottles with water. She moved things around in the refrigerator, gathered flashlights, extra batteries, pillows and blankets from our beds, and set up an old cot in the living room.

My sister and I followed her as she checked that the windows were locked and the drapes closed. She took several family photos off the wall and put them under her bed. After moving a few pieces of furniture away from traffic areas, she unplugged the television set and other appliances.

When dad returned from outside, he was carrying a transistor radio, camp stove, and large ice chest. It was strange to see him close and lock the door in the middle of the day.

Our parents took us to their bedroom. My sister and I got into their bed and waited. Soon the rain began. We were terrified at the sounds of things crashing into the house. The wind was deafening. Each time the storm changed direction, our parents moved us to the opposite end of the house, away from the onslaught.

After about four hours, the eye of the storm passed over and we went outdoors into an eerie, gray stillness. My dad circled the house, making certain it was holding up. He checked his boat and lashed the cover down more tightly. Mom picked up a neighbor's trash can lid and lawn chair that had blown into our yard. While she put them in the house, I searched the branches of the Huisache tree in our yard looking for the little owl who was a regular visitor. That day it was missing. When I asked mother if she thought the bird was all right, she assured me it was and hurriedly ushered us back inside.



From the first drop of rain to the last, it took almost twelve hours for the hurricane to pass through Victoria. When it was finally over, we went back outside for mom and dad to survey the damage to our house and the neighborhood. They were pleased with how well the house stood up.

Like my parents, many of the neighbors had also done what they could before the storm arrived. Their houses suffered little or no damage. Some of the homes did sustain damage, even though their owners had prepared. The houses heavily impacted were those where the occupants did nothing to plan for the storm.

Benjamin Franklin wisely said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." A few days after the storm that little owl returned to our backyard on Mistletoe Street, just as my mother predicted. The owl knew to protect itself, to seek adequate shelter and food during the storm. It was a lesson. A fundamental part of living a heart-centered life is doing our best to prepare ourselves to take advantage of life's opportunities and to overcome its challenges.

Many of us first learn the benefits of taking consistent, planned actions by being given responsibility for a pet. To be a thoughtful, loving, respectful pet owner, we appreciate that love involves commitment. To develop a mutually positive relationship with another form of life requires an investment of time, patience, money, attention, consistency, a level of physical activity, and forgiveness.

To be accepted into a good college we must prepare by achieving academic and social excellence in high school. Likewise to land a great job, we must be set academically, socially, and civically, and have proven, real-world experience, as well as the necessary references that show potential employers our value.

To find a wonderful life-partner, we make the daily goal of being the best person possible, in order to attract another "best" person. Then we establish the foundation for a lasting, deep relationship by taking adequate time to become familiar with one another. We take time to be certain we share common interests, have similar views on spirituality, uphold the same values, and have complimentary positions on equality, neatness, financial culpability, open communication, fidelity, and raising children.

To be the best parent possible, we invest time in healing our emotional wounds. We work out issues such as abandonment, anger, fear, codependency, abuse, or shame to lessen the chances of passing unresolved emotional pain onto our children. Our goal becomes creating solid relationships based on respect, honesty, trust, and openness.

We realistically fathom the emotional, financial, and physical outlay necessary to raise a child. We become equipped to invest the indispensable patience, attention, emotional connectedness, supervision, and stability. We understand that teaching by using positive examples is essential to nurture children into responsible adults.

To make it through a period of unemployment or an extended illness, we accumulate enough savings to meet our financial obligations for six months to a year. We make establishing an emergency fund a higher priority than buying the items on our wish list.

The best way to deal with the expected loss of loved ones is to treat each moment as if it were the last. We take charge of our behavior, apologize, resolve things quickly, be honest, and make certain we do not allow ourselves to part company with them in anger.

To leave our family in the best possible way, we openly discuss our final wishes with them. We put in order a Will and make certain our Power of Attorney, medical directives, organ or body donation forms, insurance, burial or cremation, and financial plans are in order.

One thing for certain is that life is full of storms and the unexpected. It pays to do what you can beforehand by developing a plan to be prepared. As Thomas Jefferson said, “Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.”

Take time to determine what areas of your life need attention. On the following page is a checklist of items necessary to prepare for a natural disaster and to be financially and legally ready for the unexpected.

In addition, make a list of other areas of your life that need attention (i.e. self-care, childrearing, pet adoption, career transition or advancement, new business venture, dating, etc.). Then one-by-one get prepared. You’ll sleep better at night and have a deep sense of peace and security from doing what you can beforehand.



Are Your Prepared for a Natural Disaster?

	Yes	No	To-Do	Resources to Get Started
Do you have a basic survival kit with water, medical supplies, flash lights, money, batteries, clothing, tools, bleach, blankets, etc.				Basic Disaster Supplies Kit
Do you have a survival kit with items for your infants and children such as diapers, moist towelettes, powder, formula, bottles, clothing, etc.				Basic Disaster Supplies Kit
Do you have a basic survival kit for your pets with leash, collar, identification tags, pets are micro-chipped, toys, bed, food, water, bowls, etc.				Caring for Animals
Do you have enough non-perishable food for you and your family to eat for two weeks or more? Items such as canned fruits, vegetables, and tuna, along with peanut-butter, honey, etc.				Food Supplies
Do you have a plan to evacuate your home?				Make a Plan
Does every member of the family know the plan and escape route and have you practiced to be ready for a real emergency?				Family Communication Plan for Parents and Kids
Do you have a plan for who is in charge of what task, such as making sure children, older people and pets are out and accounted for, turning off the gas, locking the doors, etc.?				Make a Plan
Are you and your family prepared against biological hazards with current immunizations such as tetanus, flu and pneumonia shots?				Biological Threats
Are you financially prepared for a disaster?				Emergency Financial First Aid Kit
What about special preparation for people with disabilities?				Individuals with Disabilities
Are you familiar with your community's preparedness?				Community and Other Plans

Are You Prepared Financially and Legally for the Unexpected?

	Yes	No	To-Do	Resources to Get Started
Do you know your FICO score and how creditors use the score to evaluate you for credit?				What Does FICO Stand for?
Do you have enough money saved to successfully get through a six month period of unemployment?				How much of your pay should you save?
Do you have a Will? And does someone you trust know where it is kept?				The Importance of Having a Will
Have you assigned someone Power of Attorney over your wellbeing? Do you have medical directives documents?				What Is Power of Attorney?
Do you have term life insurance?				What is term life insurance?
Are you an organ and tissue donor?				Why Organ, Eye, and Tissue Donation?
Is your plan for burial, cremation, or donation of your body to science in writing?				Burial vs. Cremation Ten uses for your body after you die