

System of Survival

On a recent trip to Chicago, I went to a jazz club where I listened to a very good band. One particular song caught my attention. It was called **System of Survival**. Besides getting my dancing feet going, the song really got me thinking.

Do we each have a System of Survival?

Is it intuitive or learned?

Can we put it in place before we need it?

I believe that we each have our own System of Survival. We use it intuitively and we learn new ways to survive each time life presents us with a new use for it. From experience, I know you can put your system in place before you need it and that it's worth the effort to do so.

Survival – I don't usually use that term. While to survive emotionally is a positive experience, "just" surviving doesn't seem good enough to me. Realistically though, I know that there are times when all we can do is survive the moment.

We each have our own unique system to do so. Depending upon our life circumstances, many of us have used it often. At some point, we all will have a use for one. Wouldn't it make sense to take some time now to examine your own System of Survival? After doing so you could decide whether you have the necessary means to put it in place when it is needed and ascertain whether you need to develop it further?

I'll give you a few examples from my "system" (in no particular order) to get you thinking about yours:

Friends and Family

I've learned through the many crises I've experienced that friends and family are imperative to survival. My first husband died after six years of illness. You can be sure there were many crises during that period. I don't know what I would have done had I not had several "best" friends, many "good" friends, and my extended family to count on.

As I examine the shape of my present System of Survival, I realize that this area needs some work. I remarried and moved to another city several years ago. While the friends of my past are still in my life, because of other things I have done, I've yet to develop the Kansas City friendships necessary for my system to work. This is something that needs my attention.

Faith

Each of us has our own spiritual and/or religious beliefs. What works for me may not even make sense to someone else. It is important to me to have a clear understanding of my beliefs so that I can take comfort in them when necessary. There is nothing like a crisis to shake the very foundation your beliefs are built upon. The more you have knowledge of them, the easier they are to rely on.

There have been times in my life when I've been in the "questioning mode." I've learned that for me that is good and that even the questioning keeps me in touch with my spiritual self. The more I'm in touch, the more my faith is there for me when I need it.

Appreciation

My life motto is "Make the moment count." I take it very seriously (in a fun kind of way!) My System of Survival requires me to "store up" a backlog of magical moments because I know there are times when life isn't so magical. During those hard times, I can feel confident that not only did I appreciate the good times in the past, but I can also use those memories to get me through the bad.

The way I make the moment count is I make a conscious effort to put myself in situations that have the best possible chance of providing one of those magical moments. When I do experience one, I purposely choose to not only acknowledge my gratitude but to build a memory.

A quick example: While in Chicago I had my first opportunity to go on a sailboat. It was some sailboat too! It looked like a modern day "tall ship." The captain used an engine to get us out into the lake. When he and his crew unfurled the sails, he turned off the motor. That first moment when the wind filled the sails was magical! Without getting too poetic, I can tell you that the sun, cloudless blue sky, cool breeze, silence, and floating sensation of sailing brought tears to my eyes. It also gave me another magical moment to savor and save.

Stress Management

My System of Survival is dependent on stress management techniques that work for me. I've learned through the years which ones I can depend on and how to push myself to use them. I know that listening to music can change my mood, talking out loud to myself keeps away the scary "mind talk," moving around gives me an outlet for the extra adrenalin, and crying releases my tension.

There are plenty more things in my System of Survival. What about yours? I encourage you to set aside some time to take an inventory of your own survival techniques. By taking my inventory, I now know that there are things I must put in place to be ready for the next crisis. Even in my busy everyday life, I know I must make my system a priority. I can't imagine how I would function in crisis without it.

When I returned from Chicago I did a little research and found that the song **System of Survival** is by Earth, Wind and Fire. I located the lyrics. The chorus is:

Everybody get up
Do your dance
Keep survivin'
Everybody get up
Do your dance
Stay alive!

Sounds like good advice!