

Inspired by the search for nine year old Jimmy Beveridge in 1981 in southern California, and initiated by the caring heart of Ab Taylor (left), the Hug-a-Tree and Survive program teaches children how to survive in the woods should they become lost.

The program was developed to educate children in a select few of the most basic and vital survival principles. It was specifically designed for children between the ages of 7 and 11 but can be effective with slightly younger and older children. The program consists of a trained presenter—usually a search and rescue volunteer, police officer, park ranger, or similar uniformed individual—following a tightly scripted presentation that has three primary parts: (1) an introduction (of the presenter and program), (2) a slide or video presentation, and (3) a few practical suggestions and demonstrations.

Many children are alive today because of their experience with the Hug-a-Tree and Survive program, which is dedicated to the memory of Jimmy Beveridge.



Insert presenter's contact information here before printing

This document is not intended to serve as a complete program on survival and is not meant to replace practical training by competent instructors. This document is intended only to be used as part of a complete Hug-a-Tree and Survive presentation provided by a competent presenter. NASAR and everyone affiliated with the production of this document take no responsibility for its use or any information contained herein and cannot be held liable, in any way, for statements made by presenters who use this document.

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HUG-A-TREE and Survive

The Hug-A-Tree and Survive Program was first conceived in the mountains near San Diego, California, after a search for a nine-year-old boy that ended in his tragic death. Afterwards, a small group of those who searched for him developed a program that teaches children what to do should they get lost in a wilderness setting. This same group sincerely hopes that no child ever needs the information. But, if the contents of this program and handout are discussed with every child possible, it may help him or her to remember one or more facts that could make the search short and successful. Here is a summary of the program:

Hug a tree

Once you think you are lost, hug a tree! One of the greatest fears a person can have is being alone. Hugging a tree or other stationary object and even talking to it can help calm you down and prevent panic. By staying in one place, you are also easier to find and won't be injured in a fall.

Always carry a trash bag and whistle

Whenever you go hiking, you should always carry both a folded trash bag in your pocket and a whistle on a lanyard around your neck. By sitting down and pulling the trash bag over your entire body, after making a hole in the top front of it for your face (so you can breathe), you will stay dry and warm. The whistle can be heard from farther away than your voice, even when you are yelling very loudly, and it takes far less energy than yelling.

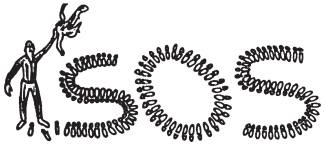
Your family will not be angry with you

Sometimes children have avoided searchers because they were ashamed of getting lost, afraid of punishment, or both. Anyone can become lost, even adults; so, don't be ashamed. Just admit it, accept it and make yourself comfortable while you wait for rescuers to arrive. Your family will be so happy to see you again and to know that you are safe. So, there's no need to be frightened or worried about what your family will say. They will be proud of you for using your head—your best survival tool.



Make yourself big

From a helicopter, people are hard to see when they are standing up, in a group of trees, or wearing dark clothing. Find your tree to hug near a small clearing (area of no trees), if possible. Wear brightly colored clothes when you go into the woods or the desert (red and orange are easy to see from far away). Lie down in your clearing when the helicopter flies over and wave your arms. If you are not too hot and you are rested, make a big X or an "SOS" using broken twigs, branches, rocks, by dragging your foot or a stick in the dirt, or by walking it out in the snow.



Animals are afraid of humans

If you hear a noise at night, yell at it! If it is an animal, it will run away to protect itself. If it is a searcher, you will be found.

You have hundreds of friends looking for you

If you stay in one place, finding you is much easier. This is one reason why hugging a tree is such a great idea: it keeps you in one place. Searchers will be yelling your name, but they are not angry. They are just worried about you and want to find you as quickly as possible. Don't be afraid to let them know where you are.

FOR PARENTS

Try to keep your child from getting lost

Children are easily distracted and will wander off a trail, so it is important to teach them early to stay ON the trail at all times. Never let a child walk a trail alone. Teach your child to pick out a visible landmark such as a prominent hill, or note the direction of the sun, to stay oriented to direction.



Footprint your child

It only takes a few minutes but it can cut down search time by several hours. Place a piece of aluminum foil on a soft folded towel, have the child step on it with both feet, and mark the foil with the child's name. With these prints, trackers can differentiate one child's track from others in the area and quickly determine the direction of travel.

Call for help right away

If your child is lost, it is important to act quickly. Because the child is likely moving, the search area becomes larger and larger the longer you wait to bring in expert assistance. A delay in calling for help is also very dangerous when the weather is bad. It can wipe out the child's tracks and increase the danger of exposure. Don't worry about calling too early and having to cancel the request for assistance. Searchers won't mind the practice and it helps them stay alert.



Be available for interviewing

Clues that lead to finding a lost child early usually come from family and friends who remain on the scene and talk openly and accurately with those managing the search. Keep in mind that any and all information provided can mean the difference between success and tragedy, and it will be kept confidential.