

Foreword to 'Serious Survival'

Bruce Parry

1 Oct. 2007

In our modern culture we no longer have a formal rite of passage for young people into adulthood. No way for them to prove themselves to their peers and elders. We have fewer physical challenges for them to complete. We make their lives easier in many ways. We sterilise their environment, wrap them in health and safety bandages and are paranoid about them ever being alone. To me this is a shame.

I have rarely been so impressed with a group of people as I have with the two teams of kids that I took away on the first two Serious expeditions. I also know that my great friend Ben Major, who has led every Serious trip since, feels similarly. In both of my expeditions I put the groups of young people into situations that would have made most adults balk. Yes, we had some tears – plenty at times – and we had numerous problems which often seemed insurmountable, but in every case the young teams overcame immense difficulties and came out the other side shining.

Expeditions aren't so much about learning new skills and processes, but more about learning about yourself and those around you in your team. A great way to do that is to be placed into a situation you've never dealt with before. On the Serious adventures, each expedition member pushed their physical and mental boundaries far beyond what they had ever considered possible. They all found some extra reserve of strength, stamina and fortitude that they never knew they had. And of course, the beauty is that they now know that extra something is there, residing within them, if they ever need it again. They've all been given a great gift.

When all their friends run for cover on the station platform because the storm comes in, they can stand it out if they so desire, because they know it's only rain and nothing could be as bad as the week of solid rain in the jungle when they had to look after themselves, try and light a fire, cook, trek through muddy paths and streams and more, just to go to work for the day. A better understanding of their personal comfort threshold in youth has awarded them a lifetime of self-confidence.

To my mind we are all capable of such achievement. It's known that even the least likely of characters, in a survival situation, can be capable of great feats of bravery, physical prowess and mental agility. This book reflects the philosophy of the series, namely that expeditions can be for everyone. Not just the realm of specialist climbers, macho explorers. I applaud all those great young people who took part in the Serious expeditions. They have inspired innumerable adults and children to get out there and push themselves in some way. I hope this book inspires you to do the same.

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The Library of Unconventional Lives

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<www.harpercollins.co.uk>

The companion book to the hit BBC children series *Serious*. In *Serious Jungle*, *Serious Arctic*, *Serious Desert*, *Serious Amazon*, and *Serious Andes*, groups of twelve to fourteen year old children embarked on extreme Outward Bound-style expeditions encompassing some form of environmental project as an additional challenge. *Serious Jungle* & *Serious Desert* can be found on Bruce's vimeo:

<www.vimeo.com/bruceparry>

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