

Girl's Own Survival Guide:

How to deal with the unexpected - from the urban jungle to the great outdoors

AUTHOR: KY FURNEAUX

Extract

Introduction

Allow me to introduce myself and explain why I think I may be able to help you survive in this crazy world of ours should disaster strike. My name is Ky Furneaux, and I have worked as an outdoor survival expert and Hollywood stuntwoman for more than twenty years.

In many ways my journey started when I was involved in a car crash as a teenager. The doctors told me that it was more than likely I would never fully recover physically. At first I was devastated, but then became determined to get better – completely. It was a long process, but I succeeded, and it was during that painful year that I came to realise the importance of a person's individual attitude to a situation. Just as important as my physical recovery was my state of mind.

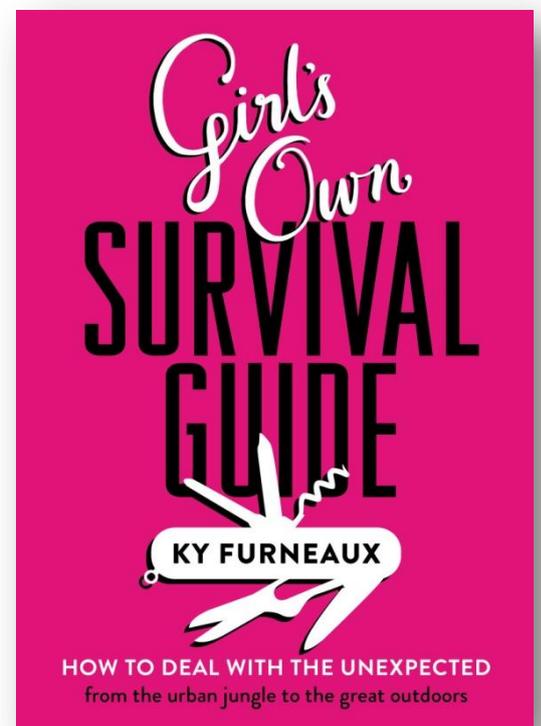
Coming through something like that, I felt that life was too short not to follow my dreams and I set about becoming an outdoor survival guide. I loved the combination of challenging myself and helping others gain knowledge, all within the glories of nature.

The skills, attitude and love of a challenge that this work fostered in me led to the pursuit of another dream – working as a stuntwoman. In 2002 I moved to North America to try and break into stunt work. It was tough at first, but I was determined and when I finally got a break I grabbed it with both hands. Since then I've worked as a stunt performer on films such as *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *X-Men*, *Thor* and *The Avengers*. In 2012 I was privileged to be voted best stuntwoman in the world at the stunt industry's equivalent of the Oscars.

A stunt performer puts herself into some crazy situations, such as falling out of a building backwards or allowing flames to consume her clothing. I heard the voice in my head that said 'Run away' but ignored it as I threw myself down a flight of stairs. I had to be able to get up and do it all over again if the director felt like the camera angle just wasn't right. After doing this for a while, I realised just how far the human body can be pushed and still go on. Too often in the past, I had given up on something that I could have achieved by pushing a little harder.

Although I have trained in many different areas for my stunt career, the ability to face down my fears is one of the most useful skills I have. A good stunt performer is not necessarily the one who has the fanciest backflip, but the person who can tame her fight-or-flight response. Likewise, I'm a firm believer that the person who will survive in the wilderness will not be the person who has brought enough bottled water to last a week or two, but rather the person who can source water from the environment around them.

In both my career and my experiences in the wilderness, I learned early on that all actions have an equal and opposite reaction. The outdoors can be a very unforgiving place. And mistakes often result in sudden consequences. I found that spending time in nature was a fabulous way of learning life lessons. I also saw that you couldn't pretend to be someone you aren't in the outdoors (well, not for long anyway).



I also face my own fears and limitations out there on a regular basis. The outdoors can be scary. It's extremely unpredictable. There are things out there that can kill you or physically harm you. I had the mindset that I never wanted to be scared of anything, so if something scared me I confronted it until I wasn't scared any more. I found that most of my fears were based on false beliefs or ignorance. Once I realised this, I worked to help alleviate those fears in others.

I have spent a lot of time in situations where my life and the lives of those around me depend on the decisions I am making and, ultimately, my mental state. I have learned the hard way what works and what doesn't. I'd like to share my experiences with you so that you and your loved ones don't have to step into the flames to find out what burns.