



[CLICK HERE FOR ADVERTISEMENT RATES](#)



Do Preppers Suffer From Our Own Normalcy Bias?

[0000](#)

[February 5, 2015](#)

[prepper misconception](#)



This article was written by Pat Henry and originally published at [The Prepper Journal](#)

According to [Wikipedia](#), Normalcy bias is a mental state people enter when facing a disaster. It causes people to underestimate both the possibility of a disaster and its possible effects. This may result in situations where people fail to adequately prepare for a disaster, and on a larger scale, the failure of governments to include the populace in its disaster preparations.

I had heard this term myself for what seems like years, being used to describe what we have all seen, dozens if not hundreds of times in the media, whenever some disaster struck. Images of people acting completely shocked that something horrible happened even with a fair amount of advance warning. I don't mean something unexpected like [a tragic shooting incident](#); I mean threats that were publicly discussed. It wouldn't matter how many days the news of the impending hurricane was incessantly broadcast on all forms of media; once it reached land and caused its predictable havoc, shell-shocked looking individuals would always be filmed, sadly walking around in a daze – looking at the destruction around them, picking up a family photo lying in the wreckage and wondering why they were suddenly without power, food, water, shelter or protection. It is if they never thought for a second that everything they were being warned about could happen. It always strikes me as sad that these people are living through a real tragedy but at the same time I wonder why they didn't do anything. Normalcy bias was the answer to that question.

As preppers we need to fight against this normalcy bias ourselves and I believe that for many [practicing preppers](#) we are doing just that. We are [preparing for disaster](#) whatever form it may come in. We do not underestimate threats out there. If anything we are more in-tune with them. We don't look at normal events that cause destruction and say 'that would never happen to me', and we don't downplay the severity of any crisis. We prepare for the worst case scenario even though [we hope for the best](#).

A reader of the [Prepper Journal](#) commented on a post a while back and posed the question: Do preppers have our own normalcy bias? It was a compelling concept and this got me to thinking. Maybe we do have our own mental state that we get into when facing a disaster that could, contrary to all of our collective thoughts on preparation, leave us more vulnerable than we think we are. Could we be missing something in our preparations that could leave us at greater risk in a disaster? Could being a prepper in some cases actually worsen the effects realized, simply because we are already thinking ahead and have made some preparations to help our family? It was an interesting thought.

Overestimating Disaster

It seems counter intuitive at first doesn't it? How can being overly [prepared for a disaster](#) work against you? Wouldn't having food stocked up enable you to eat longer, stay healthier and as a result, come out in better shape than someone who didn't prepare? Wouldn't your water storage make life so much more possible than for someone who didn't have any stored up? How can having [the basics needed to sustain life](#) put you in danger more so than someone who has nothing?

I think it could work against us in a few ways. First, we could be seeing the worst in situations. I have been prepping for over 8 years now and I swear the feeling that something big is "just around the corner" has pretty much stayed with me the entire time. As soon as I "woke up" to the threats I saw around me I have been on guard and have placed myself in a mini race to the end. Like a lot of you I have been preparing as much as possible with the resources I have and [getting ready for SHTF](#) has been a daily thought, regardless of where I have been and what has happened in my life.

Has this caused me to miss out on some of the joys of life? Have I been too consumed to the point of ruining relationships with my spouse or family? I don't think so, but that could happen if we aren't focusing on what is important and listening. Wisdom is one of the many things I pray for and it works in all aspects of my life. I truly believe in my soul that my responsibility as a father and husband is to [take proactive steps to protect my family](#) but if I do so in a way that pushes them away from me I have failed.

It is easy to become consumed in preparing and I would say that sometimes that is perfectly fine – even required, but you have to stick your head up out of the foxhole fairly often to make sure the reason you are prepping doesn't hate you. Your family or the people you are prepping for are the most important thing. Don't let your prepping alienate them or you might be left at the end of the world alone with your beans holding that family photo.

Your disaster is a forgone conclusion

I am guilty of thinking on more days than not, that our world is headed for a crash. I don't know what that is, but my motivation isn't for a hurricane or tornado even though a hurricane, winter storm or loss of a job is many times more likely than an economic collapse or the abuses of a tyrannical government. It is with these thoughts again in the back of my mind that I prepare, but I don't believe that we are powerless to do anything and I am doomed.

I prepare because [I want to live](#). I want my family to live – to survive and thrive so I will not be disappointed if nothing bad happens. Too many preppers get into this lifestyle because of an event like Y2K or the Mayan calendar, Global warming or the Yellowstone volcano. The danger of using these as motivators to start prepping is the let down or fatigue that can set in if nothing happens. How many of you know people who sold all their prepping supplies after Y2K came and it wasn't the end of the world as we know it?

If the economy never tanks, if no winter storm ever happens that wipes out our power for weeks, I am not going to feel bad. I won't throw away my preparations because they aren't only intended for a specific event. They are for any event and it doesn't matter to me if we never face disaster. Actually, I would prefer that. I think as preppers we should focus more on **if** something happens instead of **when** something we think will happen. Stepping back just that small amount will give you breathing room and perspective. Rather than throwing everyone in [the bug out vehicle](#) and heading off into the woods at the first sign of

trouble, you can analyze what is happening and clearly consider the options you have. Instead of selling every piece of food or gear you purchased because some ancient tribe of people didn't accurately predict the end of the world, relax with the knowledge that whatever happens, you will be able to better look after your family. We should be diligent in watching for threats, not disappointed if they don't happen.

I know the predictable effects of any disaster

We have a lot of common themes we talk about when we are prepping like food shortages, power outages, rioting and widespread diseases. All of these things can definitely happen but don't let what you think will happen blind you to reality. One area I think we might be overlooking is [our neighbors when the grid goes down](#). Yes, I imagine that I have thought about prepping and maybe stored up more food and supplies than my neighbor, but I don't know that. I believe that with a few exceptions, we are better situated to handle the medium duration effects of anything horrible, but I don't want those thoughts to cloud my judgment if something does in fact happen. We think usually of hungry survivors [clawing at our doors](#) because we are the only ones with food. You don't know that will happen.

I can easily anticipate the possible bad effects of a disaster and I don't have any illusions that during that same disaster everything will be sunny and rosy, but we shouldn't default to thinking the worst of people in every situation. None of us will be able to go it alone. There will always be people who are good people and some may need your help. Rather than thinking the first thing they will be doing is kicking down your door while you are imagining how you might have to shoot them; think about how you can help someone. It could be that your neighbor, even if they have zero supplies and no skills could be an extremely valuable asset. Use that wisdom I think we should all be asking for. Don't assume you know what every situation will be. Rather than expecting [the zombie horde at your doors](#), you might just find your own survival group. Sure, they won't be bringing all of their own resources, but they could be a great advantage to your family.

Would you kick someone with medical skills to the curb simply because they had no food and couldn't even spell garden? By that same token, what if your neighbor only brought his shared desire to protect his family and home? Conventional wisdom says we should show him the door because we don't have enough for him but is that really smart in the long run? Another reader on our blog said that when it comes to looking at people for a possible survival group, they are "*looking for the mindset more than the inventory*". I think that is very profound.

Instead of thinking of everyone who isn't prepared as a threat, maybe we should be looking for partners. [Any disaster is going to be different](#) than you can plan or expect so I am trying to think of prepping in a different way. I want to make sure my normalcy bias on what could happen doesn't put me in more danger.

What are your thoughts? Do we have our own normalcy bias?

Categories: [All](#), [CPT-Community-Preparedness-Teams](#), [Featured](#)