

When I was a little kid, I got lost in the mountains. In retrospect, we were not that far off the beaten path, but at the time it was terrifying. Me and a friend decided to run away, and climbed up in the hills all by ourselves. By the time anyone knew that we were missing, it was the middle of the night, and my parents were in a panic. Meanwhile, we had no idea where we were, and we were wandering further and further off the beaten path alone.

By the time that search and rescue found us, I was so scared of being lost in that mountain forever that I was not even worrying about the trouble I would get in with my parents. To me, the search and rescue brigade were heroes. At that moment, I knew that was what I wanted to spend my life doing. It was such a glorious job to be able to rescue people and return them safe and sound to their homes and families.

It was not until years later that I understood the fact that search & rescue is not all glory. Not every mission, after all, ends in success. With all of the recent, high profile cases that ended in disaster, it is important to keep a sense of perspective if it is a field you want to go in to. You see, search and rescue jobs are really not for the faint of heart. You can do a lot of good in this line of work if you have what it takes, but not everyone does. You have to be able to deal with tragedy and distance yourself enough to keep a sense of perspective. This is easier said than done.

Everyone has a hard first year in search and rescue. It is a lot of fun to train, even though it is hard work, and it is interesting to learn how to use all of the different search and rescue equipment. Sooner or later, however, you will meet with your first failure, and this will lead you to question yourself more deeply than you ever have before. In my cohort, a lot of find search rescue professionals were forced to drop out in the very first year. It was too much for them to take. It does get better, however, and if you can stay with it, you can have a career to be proud of.