

12. UNPLUGGED

Living without electricity for a period of time

WHY ACT?

By far the best way to understand your energy dependency in a hurry is just to unplug. Your perspective will shift; you'll instantly notice all the ways you count on energy to warm you, cook your food, and light your home. More important, you'll come up with creative ways to live with energy disruptions more quickly if you make a list of all the things energy does for you. To increase the benefit of this program, do one or more of these simple rehearsals. By taking it a step at a time you'll speed your adaptability.

PREPAREDNESS ACTION

○ Getting Ready:

Step 1: Get a notebook and pen or pencil.

Step 2: In low-light conditions (for the sake of convenience, a weekend morning or afternoon is probably best), turn off the lights for a while. Take a tour of your apartment or house long enough to let the unplugged experience sink in.

Step 3: Write down the little things you notice, including your feelings. Make a list of all the things you'd need to comfortably extend this rehearsal period to three hours.

Step 4: Gather those supplies. Remember to set aside enough water for drinking, washing up, etc.

Step 5: Schedule your three-hour rehearsal. If you want to have a friend over to rehearse with you, great! If you have kids, be sure to get their input and include them in the practice. To get young children in the mood, read them an inspiring story.

○ Beginning Practice – 3 hours

Step 1: At the appointed time, unplug for three hours.

Step 2: Make a note of your experience in your notebook. What supplies did you forget to set aside that you needed? (Don't cheat! You'll learn more by going without.) Is your clothing warm enough? If you're doing this with a friend, put your heads together and compare notes. Are you adequately entertained? Are the kids?

○ Intermediate Practice – 6 hours

Step 1: If you wish to expand your preparation further, schedule a six-hour rehearsal and make a list of the supplies you'll need.

It might include preparing a meal with alternative cooking means, plus using a cooler if you need to keep anything refrigerated.

Remember, you'll need more water, including enough to do dishes.

Step 2: You know the drill now. Pull the plug, savor the experience, take plenty of notes.

○ Advanced Practice – 24 hours

Step 1: If you wish to get more extensive knowledge of the energy preparedness issues you might face, consider a 24-hour rehearsal. Schedule the date and assemble the necessary supplies for a day and a night camping at home off the grid.

Step 2: Take full advantage of this time by making a list of what you'd need to do to extend the time even longer.

NOTE: When your electricity goes out, here are some dos and don'ts:

- Call one of these 24-hour hotlines to report it:

Con Edison

800-75-CONED (800-752-6633); TTY: 800-642-2308

Keyspan Energy Delivery

Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island

800-698-2110; TTY: 718-237-2857

Rockaway Peninsula

800-930-5003; TTY: 631-755-6660

Long Island Power Authority

800-490-0025; TTY: 631-755-6660

- Turn off appliances that turn on automatically when service is restored. Your electrical circuits may overload if several appliances start up at the same time.
- Help your fridge keep its cool. To prevent food spoilage, keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- If you go outside, stay away from downed and dangling power lines. Treat all downed lines as if they are dangerous.
- Do not use generators or burn charcoal indoors. Without proper ventilation they can create carbon monoxide, a dangerous, colorless, odorless gas.
- Do not use your kitchen gas range, oven, or open fires to heat a room.

MATERIALS

Adequate clothing, water storage containers, alternative means of cooking, easy-prep, non-perishable food, cooler (if desired), flashlights, batteries, battery-powered radio, etc.

TIME

A few hours for planning, gathering supplies. Several hours or a day to practice.

RESILIENCY GAIN

The knowledge that you'll be prepared to handle disruptions is a great stress reliever. Rehearsing with friends and family may enrich the relationships you value most. You can also discover ways to save money by living more efficiently.