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# Teach children hug-a-tree survival if lost

The "Hug-a-Tree and Survive" program is designed to teach children ages 5-12 how to keep from getting lost, what to do if they become lost, how to stay warm and dry, and how they can help searchers to find them.

The program originated in San Diego County, Calif., following the tragic death of a nine-year-old boy who had become lost in the woods. The Hug-a-Tree and Survive program teaches children and their parents the following principles:

Parents — Tell your children to:

- Hug a tree. Once you know you are lost, hug a tree. One of the greatest fears many of us have is being alone. Hugging a tree or other stationary object and even talking to it can help calm you down, and prevent panic. And most important, a tree can provide you with valuable shelter.

By staying in one place, you will be found far more quickly, and won't be injured in a fall.

- Always carry a whistle and a trash bag. Whenever you go on a picnic, hiking or camping you should carry a whistle on a lanyard around your neck and a trash bag in your pocket.

By making a hole in the side of the bag (so you don't suffocate!) for your face, and putting it over your head, it will keep you dry and warm. The whistle can be heard from farther away than your voice, even when you are yelling very loudly — and it takes less energy to use.

- Your parents won't be angry with you. Time and again, children have avoided searchers because they were ashamed of getting lost, and afraid of punishment. Anyone can become lost, even adults.

So don't be ashamed. Just admit it, accept it and take actions to be comfortable while you wait for the searchers to

arrive. Your parents will be so happy to see you again, and to know that you are safe. There's no need to be frightened or worried about that. And they will be so proud of you for using your head since it is your best survival tool.

- Make yourself big. From a helicopter or airplane, people are hard to see when they are standing up, when they are in a group of trees, or wearing dark clothing. Find your tree to hug near a small clearing if possible. Wear a brightly colored jacket (red and orange are easy to see from far away) when you go into the woods or the desert. Lie down when the helicop-

ter flies over. If it is cold and you are rested, make a large cross (X) or an "SOS" using broken twigs, branches, or rocks, or by dragging your foot in the dirt.

- Animals are afraid of humans. If you hear a noise at night, yell at it or blow your whistle. If it is an animal it will run away to protect itself; if it is a searcher, you will be found.

- You have hundreds of friends looking for you. Many children who are lost don't realize that if they will just sit down and stay put, one of the many searchers will find them.

The searchers will be yelling your name, but they are not angry. They are just worried about you and want to find you as quickly as possible. Don't be afraid to let them know where you are.

For Parents —

- Footprinting your child is a five-minute exercise that cuts down the time of a search by several hours. In the shoes they'll be wearing, have the child walk across a piece of aluminum foil on a soft surface, such as carpeting or a folded towel. Mark the foil with the child's name.

With this print, trackers can separate your child's track from the hundreds of others in the area, and quickly determine the direction of travel.

- Try to keep your child from getting lost in the first place — which is nearly impossible.

Children are easily distracted off the trail, so teach them to stay on the trail. Never let your child walk trails alone, even for short distances — keep them in sight.

- Admit to yourself when you and your child become lost. It can and does happen to anyone, yet to some it is a source of shame. When you become lost, admit it, accept it and take actions to be comfortable in the area until the searchers arrive.

Pick out a landmark (e.g. a prominent hill or the direction of the sun); this prevents disorientation. Use your head since it is your best survival tool; you can't lose it.

- Call the Sheriff immediately, if your child is lost. The search area expands so quickly due to the victim's movements that rapid response is critically important. A delayed response is dangerous, especially with our coastal weather that can increase the risk of exposure.

Bad weather and the activity of good-intentioned family/friends, before searchers arrive, can wipe out the track and scent at the point where the child was last seen. A call to the Sheriff which gets canceled before searchers arrive is okay, what is important is your child's safety.

- Be available for interviewing. Clues which lead to finding the child usually come from family and friends who remain on the scene and talk openly and accurately with the search leader or his/her representative.

A child's clothing and footwear descriptions are vital to trackers. Uncontaminated scent articles from the child are used by search dog handlers. At the command post you'll be updated with the search's progress and available when your child is found.

Any personal information will be kept confidential.

For more information on the Hug-a-Tree and Survive Program, including downloadable program materials such as the coloring book and a parent's guide to the program, visit the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) Hug-a-Tree and Survive Program web site at [www.nasar.org/nasar/hug\\_a\\_tree\\_program.php](http://www.nasar.org/nasar/hug_a_tree_program.php)

— Lincoln County Sheriff's Office

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**ATHLETE OF THE WEEK**

**Brad Snow**

Siuslaw H.S. Vikings Baseball

The senior right-hander threw a two-hit complete game for a victory last week against the Douglas Trojans. He also helped himself offensively. With the score tied in the bottom of the final inning he beat out an infield hit, advanced to third base and eventually scored on an RBI walkoff single.

**Honorable Mention Taylor Dotson**

The junior hit three home runs in a Viking Softball game against the Douglas Trojans. Two of the homers were in the second inning. Dotson ended the game with seven Runs Batted In.

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