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THE UNTHINKABLE

WHO SURVIVES WHEN
DISASTER STRIKES—
AND WHY

AMANDA RIPLEY

Amanda Ripley

The Unthinkable: Who Survives When Disaster Strikes - and Why



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Discover how humans respond to danger—and what makes the difference between existence and death. Today, nine out of 10 Americans live in locations at significant risk of earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, terrorism, or other disasters. In her quest to solution these questions, award-winning journalist Amanda Ripley traces human being responses to some of recent history's epic disasters, from the explosion of the Mont Blanc munitions ship in 1917— What will it feel just like? Will we end up being heroes or victims? Tomorrow, some of us will have to make split-second choices to save lots of ourselves and our households. How will we react? s ability to carry out much, much better— Most unexpectedly, she discovers the brain' To understand the science behind the tales, Ripley turns to leading brain researchers, trauma psychologists, and additional disaster experts. s fear circuits, and the beautiful inadequacy of many of our evolutionary responses. Ripley comes back with precious wisdom about the surprising humanity of crowds, the beauty of the brain' She also has her own brain examined by military researchers and experiences, through practical simulations, what it could be like to survive a plane crash into the ocean or to get away a raging fire. to the journeys of the 15,000 people who found their way to avoid it of the World Trade Focus on September 11, 2001. one of the primary explosions prior to the invention of the atomic bomb—with slightly help.



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Please Think Lately this book was recommended at a risk management lecture, my company provided." These, quite simply, are the "arrogant. Yes, there are several stories that certainly are a small disjointed, but they are the exception and require careful reading, not only "content scanning" to speed through the book. But the promised self-improvement isn't better business, inner peace or more task effectiveness; All to often fear of scaring people is certainly counterintuitive for survival. Ripley generalizes the study on resilience to "People who have it tend to also have 3 underlying advantages: a belief that they can influence life events; .As a survivor I saw many characteristics listed in this book that offered me known reasons for my own survival. I am hoping others will seriously consider this a book well worth reading. i. Of program, along the way she answers the [frequently more interesting] converse query of who dies and just why? By that I'm specifically discussing those who die while facing the same circumstances as survivors. What separates survivors from those that needlessly perish, and you can become more just like the former Ripley investigates a variety of disasters and tragedies – natural and man-made – with an eyesight toward her sub-titular question of who survives and why.e. Who dies having got the capability to survive? I suppose that means liberals probably die at higher rates in disasters.g. a plane explodes in mid-atmosphere with said person in it), but a surprising quantity die who could have walked to protection if they'd have got moving – and some die because they perform out a mental script that makes no sense contextually, e.g.)Chapter four is approximately the personality traits that link to resilience and the survivor character.During the period of eight chapters, an introduction, a conclusion, and ancillary materials, the author presents cases involving airplane crashes, tsunami, hurricanes, police shootings, hostage situations, fires, stampedes (of humans by humans), and actually touches on the psychology of tragedies of an individual [rather than mass] nature (e.g. As it happens that if a grizzly bear or lioness is normally atop you, freezing isn't a bad technique.) Ripley also attacks those charged with protecting us for insufficient rely upon those protected, which tends to distort (a lot more than is typical for everybody) perceptions of risk, since without adequate info people make poor evaluations of risk, and therefore necessarily poorer decisions. Finally, people with higher IQ are more resilient, though why is unclear, maybe because IQ is usually correlated with success, which is correlated with self-self-confidence.After an introduction that sets the context for the book, the first chapter discusses probably the most salient top features of whether ones lives or dies, delay. The case of the evacuation of the Globe Trade Center on September 11, 2001 can be used to examine why some people loiter about while some are johnny on the spot to hit the road.Finally, an important underlying theme of the book may be the stupidity of most government responses to disasters—never to the disasters themselves, but rather to emergency plans for future disasters made in response to past disasters. However, at the same time, it could have also been vastly worse if one particular didn't have the training they did (famously, an enormous WTC tenant, Morgan Stanley, had a man in charge of emergency methods, Rick Rescoria, whose persistent drills without doubt preserved many lives [though he didn't survive, himself." In the best case scenario, we do something in a reasonably rational, effective style. For example, the writer describes Kahneman and Tversky's Prospect Theory, which demonstrated a person responds to risk much differently if there's a possibility of losing something instead of only of making gains. (Ahead of work of these two social researchers, the prevailing look at was that humans were rational actors, i.e.The last chapter is on heroic acts and just why some people take part in them when a lot of people don't. The physical effect varies by person, but there is always some significant physical effect, especially regarding emotion, sensing ability (e. (This may seem self-evident, but it began the process of

up-ending the complete and predictable rational actor model from classical economics.) Chapter three is entitled "fear" and it discusses that emotion and the many behaviors (and lack of behavior) that goes hand-in-hands with it, including: distortion of the knowledge of time, tunnel eyesight, and self-talk. (Panic and paralysis behaviors are each provided their own chapter later in the book.) This chapter presented a fascinating discussion with a man who may have been involved in even more shoot outs than any additional police officer (the officer, no doubt, having a valuable perspective on how to react in fearful situations. looking to get a carry-on out of the overhead compartment as if one reaches the gate at Heathrow Airport when in fact one is sinking into the ocean while the crashed airliner one can be in is being buffeted by sea waves. The anarchist, the solipsist, the sociopath—they live. It must be remarked that while most of us admire such people when they save the day, the personality characteristics they screen aren't necessarily ones that we find desirable in lifestyle. And, twin studies also show resilience is usually a biological reality, mainly set from birth—although, once again, Ripley attempts to soften this required and un-PC summary with some shiny but empty terms about the theoretical impacts of "nurture. They focus intensely on the immediate surroundings, yet may not notice crucial data correct around them (even occasionally getting temporarily blind or deaf), plus they may believe thoughts that produce no feeling, trying to explain what's occurring or what caused the issues they face. Ultimately, this tends to create fatal inertia. if a more resilient stranger hadn't taken them by the hand or shouted within their face." Denial is over (though for a few deliberation under no circumstances happens, and denial morphs into paralysis, a feasible outcome of the third, decisive, stage). Chapter six discusses panic behavior. . Personality does play a role. Just as some people have personality traits that make them more resilient, others have traits that make them much more likely to panic. However, experts also found that there are features – e. But no matter what you do, some individuals will not follow—they may still be in denial, or they may be frozen (more on which below). A lot more un-Personal computer, Ripley notes that the most resilient group, by significantly, can be a subset of white males. "The decisive second arrive, and they do nothing.] The chapter also offers some useful insights into how crowds destroy people that may be useful for those who find themselves in massive crowds like those noticed during pilgrimages or at a variety of festivals in India (where human stampede deaths are disturbingly common.) Chapter seven is about "paralysis" behavior. Readers may be familiar that there's been a tendency of experts to include each one or two new "F's" to the phrase "fight or air travel" – such as "freeze" or "fright" – to spell it out other incredibly common responses to serious sympathetic nervous system engagement. It's common to dismiss such behavior as that of cowardly or milquetoast people, but the reality is more complex. On the evolutionary timescale, there is one tragedy that counted for an overwhelming percentage of such dire occasions -- becoming in the jaws of an apex predator. sexual assault. You aren't going to pop-up and out run a tiger or defeat it in unarmed fight, your only hope may be to create it think you are a diseased carcass – i.e. shit yourself and lie limply. One has to teach alternative behaviors; otherwise, your body does what's evolutionarily programmed into its genetic code. a \$100 is certainly a \$100. (Consider the people in the Titanic lifeboats who listened to people struggle and drown for dread that their [nearly empty] boat would be swamped with clawing victims. Or, the case of Catherine Genovese who was simply screaming bloody murder for half-an-hour while getting raped and stabbed to loss of life while none of the 40-ish witnesses so much as called the cops. Here, again, those with high self-confidence, those that "believe they shape their own destinies," are more likely to take action and more likely to end up being heroes. While we tend to idolize people who take part in heroic actions, the data suggests that the

picture of real beneficence – lacking all self-interest – may be mythical. I found this book to end up being fascinating. Every few web pages, a direct line is normally drawn between some human being behavior plus some behavior of the pet kingdom.” Working-class males are more likely to end up being heroes than guys with high-status jobs. One of the most important lessons to try heart is the author's assertion that basic safety people often protect us from risk - by refusing to "scare" us with the truth. rather it really is increased odds of living through a tragedy. After that people panic, which is mostly a type of overreaction. As the problem deteriorates, individuals tend to “dissociate. Some are simply just extremely difficult to change and in practice immutable for the individual, such as tradition and education.) Those that survive are those who are independent and don't care what others believe. You can boil down the survival advice in this book to three principles. First, by default, ignore anything those in charge say throughout a disaster, specifically any instructions they give you.!” Third, maximizing your self-confidence and perceiving yourself as the captain of your fate, if you can, hugely increase your chances of survival. All of these accord with common sense, but the publication switches into the whys and wherefores in an interesting and beneficial manner. Concerning heroes, a large proportion are men, most likely, relating to Ripley, because they “believe they are not only with the capacity of heroics but that such behavior can be expected of them.” That is buttressed by peer pressure—we “risk sociable embarrassment by overreacting. Ripley ascribes this to normalcy bias—the fact that, in essence, since we search for patterns to understand our live, and a disaster is not part of our usual pattern, “this can't be happening to me—things such as this happen to other people. Ripley begins with “Denial.” Using many examples, including September 11th, she shows how instead of panicking as you observe in the movies, the usual instant response to a disaster is neither panic nor freezing, but cool lethargy. People ignore the problem or delay addressing it in any way with strategies such as laughter, or collecting their wholly needless belongings. She divides all responses into three sequential broad reactions, what she phone calls “the survival arc”: “Denial,” “Deliberation,” and “The Decisive Second,” and arranges her publication appropriately (though noting that the dividing lines between stages are not always crisp). These add the Halifax explosion of 1917 through the modern day. several are religious. So when they live, and others also live, the arrogant are much better adjusted than additional survivors. We ignore alarms and instructions, if any, and turn to one another to talk—what Ripley calls the “milling ritual.” Most of these behaviors, of course, imply that people of an unbiased cast of mind are more likely to pass through the denial stage quickly (or ideally skip it entirely), which is essential for survival. Many of these are innate and wholly unchangeable, such as sex, intelligence and capability to absorb stress, each which is a critical element in survival.” They behave mechanically, and usually in an orderly, however, not insightful or thoughtful, fashion. Some survivors are individuals who would've perished if left to their own devices – i. Again, moving past that is necessary for the given individual to survive. This has some benefits—people are incredibly polite and helpful to others in the vast majority of disasters. The last three chapters discuss three relatively common behaviors that occur in the decisive moment of a tragedy. Good read Very good book about what must be done to survive a catastrophic event Excellent information In these troubling times, it is important to be aware of your environment, possible dangers and have thought through how you might respond in a crisis situation. Ripley's reserve includes examples of research generated to grade emotional factors involved with peoples' responses to disasters.g.) Prospect theory verified that stress mattered, and people didn't just make use of their clockwork frontal cortex to calculate and compare expected values. Everyone's first reaction after realizing, or admitting, that there is a Big Issue, is fear., tunnel eyesight, time perception), and fine motor function.

Furthermore, those in the grasp of fear have a tendency to focus too very much on one thing, sometimes unimportant, to the exclusion of other things, sometimes a lot more important, as when a plane with a caution light crashes because nobody taken notice of the dropping altitude. But "we can learn from experience"; Excellent information on how wise prepared and practiced people survive. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. Therefore the emphasis nowadays put into the military and martial arts on realistic schooling exercises, aswell as on surprisingly effective simple exercises such as controlled breathing. What determines survival and passing successfully through in this second stage is also the individual's resilience—who may overcome the fear and take relevant action. Who'll be resilient isn't easy to predict (though fat folks are generally not resilient, relating to Ripley, making sense since fats people by definition frequently lack self-discipline, which seems related to resilience, though Ripley ascribes it even more to physical limitations). people sense trapped but as if there's a glimmer of hope of escape. Not because of any racial factor (though there exists a sex factor—ladies react radically unique of guys both in the quantity of dread and resilience, worse on both elements), but rather that this subset "liked the globe of position, hierarchy and power. (In this, of course, federal government planning for disasters is no unique of other modern government planning. Working in the airline industry I saw many truths in the reserve about safety. a inclination to discover meaningful purpose in lifestyle's turmoil [i. Many a hero is really as much responding with a combination of subconscious mind and genetic development as is the person that burns to death 100 ft from an unlocked exit – just to vastly greater adoration., spiritual people]; and a conviction that they can find out from both positive and negative experiences. . Since it happens, there are several types of tragedies in which panic is almost unusual and others in which it is almost ubiquitous. I also saw the hard facts about survivors - these were often the uncommon person who listened to the protection briefing, paid attention to the trip attendant briefing and didn't try to save their carry-on bag, at the expense of their and others lives. Dangers seem even more manageable to these people, and they perform better consequently. Ripley adds these component to the publication to maintain interest, but she'd have already been better served by adding less of it. Obviously, some people neglect to survive because they encounter a fundamentally unsurvivable event (e. That would be an interesting study." More broadly, the programs made by authorities or others in charge tend to assume that regular people are helpless and panic-prone, and must be guided by their betters and superiors. I have to admit some of the one star ratings put me off a bit - i quickly really read the publication." They live." Consequently, while we are in denial, we seek information to fit what's happening into a pattern. Along the way, the reader hears from survivors, heroes, and a wide-range of experts on topics such as gunfights, risk perception, evacuation dynamics, the physics of crowds, evolutionary psychology, and psychological resilience. Yes, you can train yourself to a certain degree. But mostly, these things are innate, or at least fixed, in adults. Special Forces soldiers generally have higher degrees of "neuropeptide Y," which evidently helps focus under stress, and they tend to dissociate much less than other people. Not because of schooling—you can tell beforehand which soldiers will pass the Unique Forces tests, using bloodstream and psychological lab tests for dissociation. Chapter five is normally entitled "groupthink" and it discusses the role that interpersonal dynamics play in survival, which is often considerable." Finally, deliberation could be strongly negatively suffering from the human tendency toward groupthink—prioritizing group harmony. Following Ripley turns to "Deliberation. But they do nothing at all except what they normally perform, and they actually keep hierarchies that no more have any relevance and could be actually pernicious.e. (Again, guys are less

inclined to this impact than women—for example, women hesitate much longer than men to leap onto airplane get away slides. Few are easy to modification—but any bit helps, I suppose. That which was it they did or thought and acted on or in some cases do nothing and survive unharmed or with minimal harm. There is a fascinating conversation with an undercover agent in Israel, a man who faced a number of situations in which he had to coolly make a life-or-death decision in the manner that most of us only encounter in Hollywood films. And if indeed they choose, they are able to make others follow, since the herd-like group will imitate anyone regarded as a confident, resilient leader. Eye opening insight in to the answer to the query why? Its a paradigm shifting book!g.Finally Ripley addresses “The Decisive Moment.” Here, we do something (or freeze). “What happens after we have accepted the actual fact that something awful is normally upon us and deliberated our options?])Chapter two discusses risk, and the weird manner in which humans perceive and react to uncertainty. Making a plan is quite valuable, so those with plan-based training, typically armed service people, do better. At the extreme of those who take action are heroes, who consider highly dangerous actions to save others.) Much like the question of why is a survivor, the answer to what makes a hero is certainly a mixed bag.The author, Amanda Ripley, examines the responses of people (and groups, as collections of individuals) through the prism of numerous modern disasters, both organic and man-made. A Worthwhile Investment To Increase Your Chances “The Unthinkable” is actually a self-improvement manual. There are no very clear answers, as there are too many factors to consider, unrepeatable elements for scientific study. So we err privately of underreacting.If we fail to take action, we panic or freeze. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. And that’s probably an investment worth making. they experience totally helpless; and they feel isolated (actually if in a group). Even though the publication accomplishes the purpose of self-help for the attentive reader, a lot more it implies that who lives and who dies mostly results from features of the individual. For instance, numerous examples can be found of experienced scuba divers ripping out their atmosphere source deep underwater—an overreaction, a fatal one, to feeling unable to breathe. And, generally, people that have higher “trait anxiety,” an increased general inclination to see issues as stressful, will panic. Much like soldiers, you can predict with high accuracy beforehand, based on biology, which people will panic.But panic is the exception. A far more common counterproductive response is normally paralysis. [People who know they are unequivocally doomed are often surprisingly relaxed. The lesson, of program, is normally to by default ignore anything those in charge say during a disaster. Self-control is usually everything. (Although she doesn’t, Ripley could have quoted and suggested the chant of Paul Atreides in Frank Herbert’s “Dune,” qualified to do it again to himself: “I must not fear. Fear may be the mind-killer. Rarely (amazingly rarely), people panic. I'll face my dread. Any planning, like memorizing where the emergency exits are when you enter a location, can help reduce the bad impacts of the fear response.”) To bring oneself out of paralysis, or to be brought out, the easiest way is through loud sound (which is, again, why flight attendants are actually trained to yell at passengers during evacuations).My only real criticism of “The Unthinkable” is that's contains entirely an excessive amount of evolutionary psychology. There are plenty of books upon this topic, but I believe the author did an excellent job of choosing situations and experts to produce an interesting and informative read -- even for a reader for whom this literature isn't new. These may be accurate, nonetheless it seems a stretch, for instance, to analogize human paralysis to chicken paralysis, suggesting that going limp is an excellent strategy for all animals because predators lose interest. That’s not true for many predators, and even though it’s certainly feasible that’s why humans have the response, like all evolutionary psychology, it’s merely a

sexy-sounding guess. This pop technology reaches its nadir when Ripley approvingly estimates an "animal behavior expert" about human heroism, and he responds that since lions hardly ever sacrifice themselves for the good of the group, he is skeptical about individual heroism, which is certainly "overblown." OK, then." Put simply, those who view themselves as victims, and so are atheists, are the least resilient. The World Trade Focus on 9/11 makes a fascinating case because there were certainly people who died who could possess survived if they'd had better knowledge or training. This book is labeled as self-help, probably to boost product sales, but it is really a well-rounded research task. Furthermore, confidence helps reduce dread—actually, "people who are unrealistically self-confident have a tendency to fare spectacularly well in disasters." Put simply, they found themselves as in charge, and acted like it, rather than getting victims of circumstance, they bore up in the face of danger.) A specific emphasis is directed at events that the reader will likely be familiar such as for example 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, but the book also opens up the reader to events they could have scarcely heard of from the countless crushing deaths in Mecca during recent Hajj pilgrimages to the Halifax harbor incident of 1917." In most cases, the less fear a person experiences, the less likely he is to freeze. Regardless, if you go through this book and consider it for a while, you will likely increase your likelihood of not really dying in a disaster. Usually, this only occurs when three circumstances are met: people feel trapped; Not a HOW-TO book but a PERHAPS-WHY book THE UNTHINKABLE fascinated me personally, a person who's wondered for a long time what it is which allows some individuals to survive horrible situations and others not, particularly people brutalized during WWII in European countries. Highly recommend! Unsurprisingly, those with a solid sense of duty to help others and a desire never to observe themselves as cowards will become heroes;" And our ability to deliberate is both enhanced and crippled by the problem. I liked what sort of author took aside the different aspects as to the reasons some people work as they carry out in circumstances of extremes and for individuals who survive the unthinkable why. As she notes, particularly with respect to the 2007 London Tube bombings, "crisis plans have been designed to meet the needs of crisis officials, not anyone else. Right here, "we know something is certainly terribly wrong, but we don't know what to do about any of it. There are studies on what people respond and how they are able to train their brains to operate better in an emergency. Ms Ripley has come up with a fantastic and thoughtful book to greatly help with that. Soooo good!! Excellent information on how wise prepared and practiced people survive This is a must read on your own survival. Ripley tries to soften this bottom line by throwing up chaff about the consequences of money variations and physical strength variations, but the conclusion is clear. I want to understand if there's something in someone's psychological makeup that helps or hurts them. Second, and related, "Above all, it is essential to consider the initiative—to keep in mind that you and your neighbors must save yourselves.! Outstanding! Chock full of useful information that could 1 day save your life! Apparently that is now what airline flight attendants are qualified to do (without the obscenities), rather than gently guiding people. Read it! If you would like others to live, you yell orders at them, preferably well-laced with obscenities. That is fascinating. In the event that you follow others, as most tend to do, you die. Great book Should be mandatory reading for all emergency planners. STAY ALIVE WHEN CONFRONTED WITH AN ACTIVE SHOOTER! This book provides an excellent understanding as to why people FREEZE SET UP WHEN THERE CAN BE AN ACTIVE SHOOTER. I highly recommend all should browse and give a duplicate to those they like!! we can train our subconscious, to an extent.



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