

Hug a tree

Survival Tips for Children

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1. **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. By staying in one place, you will be found far more quickly, and won't be injured in a fall.
2. **Always carry a whistle and a trash bag** – Whenever you go hiking, you should carry a whistle on a lanyard around your neck and a trash bag. 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.
3. **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. So 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.
4. **Make yourself big** – From a helicopter, 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 helicopter flies over. If it is cold and you are rested, make crosses or an "SOS" using broken twigs, branches, rocks or by dragging your foot in the dirt.
5. **Animals are afraid of humans** -- If you hear a noise at night, yell at it! If it is an animal it will run away to protect itself. If it is a searcher, you will be found.
6. **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.

Introduction

On a Saturday in February 1981, three brothers were together on Palomar Mountain approximately 60 miles north east of San Diego, CA. They were walking on a popular nature trail a half-mile from the camping site where their parents were preparing lunch. Two of the brothers believed that 9-year-old Jimmy Beveridge was racing them back to camp, but he never arrived.

The family spent one hour searching on their own, then contacted a Park Ranger who contacted the Sheriff's Department. By late afternoon, the sheriff's helicopter arrived and area search and rescue volunteers began to assemble. The official search had begun and quickly rolled into high gear as the afternoon turned into night.

As often happens during February in southern California, the weather was unpredictable. The day had been clear and beautiful. It was warm in the sun and cool enough for a jacket in the shade. There were still patches of snow in the areas the sun didn't reach. As night fell, clouds and fog moved in and the temperature steadily dropped.

By Monday, it was raining almost continuously and fog continued to shroud the mountain top. One by one, the fine tools of the search and rescue specialist lost effectiveness. The helicopters could fly only when the cloud ceiling retreated enough to permit a safe take off. The wind and rain had neutralized Jimmy's scent, so tracking dogs were of no use. The only hope was to systematically search the entire area, and pray for a visible sign of the boy.

Tuesday morning the weather broke and the sun came out. There were about 400 searchers on the scene including about 200 Marines. The search was the largest in the history of San Diego County.

That afternoon the boy's jacket and one shoe were recovered and his direction of travel was finally established. Wednesday morning Jimmy's body was found, curled up next to a tree in a ravine, about two miles from the campground. He had died from hypothermia.

A great anguish overcame many of the searchers, for this lost boy and his family. It was a deep and personal feeling that you could see in many faces, on the mountain and for months afterward. There was grief in it, for a young boy who had lost his life, and also a feeling of great wrong that had occurred, with nobody to blame.

Many people were affected by this tragedy and had a desire to prevent it from occurring again. The tragedy gnawed at Ab Taylor, a Border Patrol agent and renowned tracker, and Tom Jacobs, a free-lance writer and photographer. Both had been members of the search team looking for Jimmy. It was the first time in Mr. Taylor's thirty-one years as a tracker that he had failed to find a missing child alive. The experience prompted him to collaborate with Jacobs, Jackie Heet, and Dorothy Taylor in the development of an educational program designed to teach children, ages 5-12, very basic principles for staying safe in the wilderness. The program derives its name from its primary message: If you are lost, stay put – hug a tree – until help arrives.