

Common Sense – The Most Important Essential

“**Common Sense**” – One of those abstract concepts that we use when talking to employees, students, and children, with the assumption that everyone understands what it means, when in fact, most don't. Well, here's what it means:

Common-Sense Glossary: (from the *Oxford Modern English Dictionary*):

- **Sense:** (n)**4.a/** quick or accurate appreciation, understanding, or instinct regarding a specific matter....**b/** the habit of basing one's conduct on such instinct. **5/** practical wisdom or judgment, common sense; conformity to these....
- **Common Sense:** (n) sound practical sense, esp. in everyday matters.
- **Practical:** (adj) **1/** concerned with practice rather than theory. **2/** suited to use or action....**5/** concerned with what is actually possible.
- **Pragmatism:** (n)**2/** a philosophy that evaluates assertions solely by their practical consequences and bearing on human interests.
- **Intuition:** (n) **1/** immediate apprehension by the mind or by a sense. **2/** immediate insight.
- **Instinct:** (n) **b/**....propensity in human beings to act without conscious intention; innate impulsion. **2/** unconscious skill; intuition.
- **Sixth Sense:** (n)facility giving intuitive or extrasensory knowledge.
- The exercise of common-sense is a requirement for the entire "backcountry-experience life-cycle", from initial thoughts, thru actual planning, transportation to, execution of backcountry trip, and return trip home.

Plan Carefully. Plan your backcountry trips, thoroughly, before you leave home. Be as knowledgeable about what lies ahead as physically possible, and you will be much better positioned to achieve and maintain a healthy attitude, perceived and actual security, as well as a darn good time.

Communicate Your Plans to Friends & Family. Make a hardcopy of the destination and time table for your trip and give it to friends or family. Draw on a topographical map where you will be, how long you will be there, and when you should be back home. This may be your link to survival should you run into trouble in an isolated area.

Know When to Turn Around & Go Back. Follow your knowledge, training, and gut instincts (the "sixth sense"). If you are unsure about a traverse, a climb, a trail, exposure to weather--whatever--back off, live another day, and contemplate your alternatives. Select a different route; Pitch your tent and layover until the storm passes; Wait until morning when the river's water level is lower, before crossing, etc. Keep in mind, ignoring your "sixth sense" and pushing forward into a questionable situation might be challenging and macho, but it can also be called stupid and have deadly consequences. Remember, many of the climbers who've been killed on Everest were the victims of their own inability to turn around when their guts were telling them to do so.

Listen to Your Body--Undress before you overheat, dress before your body chills, drink often and eat regularly. The point here is that it is critical to replace the fluids that are gushing out of your body, as you exercise, as well as a steady supply of nutrition, via snacks and meals, in order to maintain health and energy.

Carry Gear That You Perceive Will Maintain Your High Level of Security: Determine the gear that YOU NEED to maintain your personal level of security and then seek out the smallest, lightest, highest-quality manifestation of that gear. Don't be overly influenced by "lightweight gear freaks", but, also, for your own safety, avoid the "everything but the kitchen sink syndrome". Decide what makes you feel safe and comfortable, and then start out with that as a baseline. As you become more experienced, you will discover that your gear configurations will evolve toward more efficiency and, hopefully, lighter weight. Remember, though, as you determine your gear needs, a too-large pack makes a person more vulnerable to falling down as well as to back, leg, knee, and foot injuries, and a too-small pack may compromise your personal security, due to lack of necessary gear.