Survival Skills Practice (Does it make perfect?) by Craig Caudill

Categories : Wilderness Survival

Starting a fire with a firesteel looks easy, it's not, unless you practice doing it...Survival training involves a lot of hands-on practice. Just like any other skill that involves some kind of physical exertion, the more you practice the better you become, but will you become perfect? The old adage, “practice makes perfect” is a bit of a lie as is the commonly used term, “muscle memory,” and I am going to explain why. Practice Does Not Make Perfect

While it is a great thought, it is not entirely accurate. What happens if you are practicing a skill the wrong way? Take this scenario for example, you practice and practice a particular survival skill with your favorite knife. You never deviate from using that same knife. What are you going to do when you find yourself in a survival situation without that trusty knife? Don’t get me wrong, it is imperative you practice, but you must practice perfectly in typical and stressed situations.

Here is another scenario to help you understand the need for practicing under stress. During a recent fire starting training exercise, it began raining. Talk about making things difficult, but I know it could have been much worse. What if it had been a freezing cold day and I was trying to get a fire started to keep my kids warm? Definitely stressful. These are the kinds of training exercises we need to have in order to really hone our skills. If you only practice making a fire on a beautiful sunny day, what happens when you must try and start a fire in the rain for the first time ever?
Brainless Muscles

Muscle memory is a cute phrase, but do muscles actually have brains to remember a particular act? Exactly. However, that is not to say your muscles don’t benefit from repetitive motion. Basketball stars repeatedly practice their free throw shot to become better. The same line of thinking can be applied to bow drill fire making. Repeating a particular motion is helpful, but mistakes are inevitable. A good teacher will help you correct those mistakes and hopefully, avoid making them again. Keep this in mind when you are looking for a survival instructor.

Lastly, it is extremely important for you to practice your skills with the tools you will likely have on hand during an emergency. When choosing gear for your survival pack, choose wisely. You want items that can be reused over and over again during your practice sessions. Don’t waste your money on tools that are not designed for repetitive use.

Craig Caudill practices survival skills with gear, including his outdoor survival kit, from www.dansdepot.com. He shares his outdoor knowledge with students at the Nature Reliance School.