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# Hug-A-Tree and Survive Presenter Information Manual

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Program Syllabus.....	2
Contents of Presentation Kit.....	3
Program History.....	3
Frequently Asked Questions.....	4
Helpful Hints for Presenters.....	6
Personal Appearance.....	6
Dealing with Children in General.....	6
Problem Children.....	7
Demonstrations.....	7
Trash Bag Demonstration.....	7
Footprint Demonstration.....	8
Yelling for Help / Whistle Demonstration.....	8
Reflector Demonstration.....	8
Other Points to Cover.....	9
Strangers.....	9
Clothing Colors.....	9
How Big is “Big?”.....	9
Friendly Trees.....	9
Search Dogs.....	9
Early Program Success Stories.....	10

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## Introduction

The National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) is committed to reducing the number of children who become lost each year and to teaching children basic techniques to aid in their survival if they do become lost. Many people become disoriented and lose their way each year while hiking and camping in parks, forests, and wilderness areas. Sadly, many are children who are at great risk of dying before rescuers can reach them.

Since the program's inception in 1981, many thousands of children have been exposed to the principles of Hug-A-Tree, and countless lives have been saved as a result. The program was conceived by renowned tracker and teacher, Ab Taylor, whose career with the U.S. Border Patrol was portrayed in the 1980 movie, "Borderline," starring Charles Bronson.

## Program Syllabus

The program should last no longer than 25 to 40 minutes (shorter for younger children) because this is about as long as a child can pay attention to, and learn from, anything presented. The following is the suggested order of the presentation including how long each should take.

<b>Time in Minutes</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	Set up room and select "volunteers" for demonstrations before program begins	Speak with teacher or group leader to select children
0:05	Brief introduction of presenter and program including history/story of Jimmy Beveridge.	Establish rapport, smile, careful body language (sit, kneel)
0:17	DVD video	Watch children during video for concerns or lack of understanding
0:03	Yell/whistle demonstration	Choose two appropriate children, give them gift of whistles if possible
0:03	Footprint demonstration	Choose appropriate child
0:04	Trash bag demonstration	Choose two appropriate children, retrieve bags when done
0:03	Reflector demonstration (if time allows)	Choose appropriate child
0:02	Q&A	Keep this brief and redirect all questions back to Hug-a-Tree principles
0:01	Conclusion and Thank You.	Smile and leave with a friendly "thank you."
	After program, leave handouts for children/adults	Return classroom to normal, thank teacher/group leader

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## Contents of Presentation Kit

\* = optional

Large plastic trash bags (2)	Signal mirror, compact disk
Box of bags to hand out*	Uniform or Hug-a-Tree t-shirt to wear
For tracking demo:	Whistle with lanyard
Large, soft towel	Second whistle to give away*
Aluminum foil	Program handouts (if used)*
Marker to put name on foil*	Syllabus or outline of program
DVD player	
Hug-a-Tree DVD	
TV monitor or projector	
Cords and connectors for the above	

## Program History

On a Saturday in February 1981, three brothers were together on Palomar Mountain approximately 60 miles north east of San Diego, California. 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.

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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. The program is dedicated to the memory of Jimmy Beveridge.

In the decades that followed, the original developers of the program—along with a number of committed others including Lillian Taylor, Ab's wife—trained hundreds of individuals to present the program. Up to this point, the program had enjoyed a significant level of success in the United States. But, in 1999, the program's concepts were translated into Swedish and the program began to be presented by volunteers in Sweden. In 2001, the right to develop a Canadian version was granted to the RCMP and an explosion in the number of children receiving the program in North America occurred.

In 2005, Ab Taylor donated the rights to the Hug-a-Tree program and materials to the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR). The intent was that NASAR would modernize the program and continue to get the important Hug-a-Tree message out to children. In 2007—after two years of development and using only private donations of time and money—a new video was distributed for use in the program. In 2008, a new presenter trainer video was released that shows anyone how to present the program, and numerous new supporting documents were developed and distributed for use with the program (e.g., activity/coloring book, program handout, presenter manual, etc).

It is the sincere hope of those who have contributed to this project that all children will someday be exposed to the lifesaving principles of the Hug-a-Tree program.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

A very important part of the Hug-a-Tree curriculum is reinforcing the vital information presented through a question and answer session, discussion and demonstrations. Every question that can possibly be asked by a child about survival can be answered—or resolved—by bringing the discussion back to the fundamental principles of Hug-a-Tree.

These are among the most common questions asked by children to which the Hug-a-Tree program is presented. The answers provided are intended to serve as guides for responses

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from the presenter to the children. Going into more depth than described is NOT recommended and may be confusing, or even harmful, to a child.

Q: What if I have no food?

A: You can last a very, very long time without eating. If you hug your tree and make yourself big, we will find you well before you need food. We'll bring you food and water. You don't need to look for it.

Q: Can I eat some plants or berries if I get hungry?

A: No! They could make you very sick. You can last a very, very long time without eating. If you hug your tree and make yourself big, we will find you well before you need food. We'll bring you food and water. You don't need to look for it.

Q: What if I want water? Should or could I drink from a stream?

A: Again, if you hug your tree and make yourself big, we will find you well before you need water. You should stay away from streams, ponds, and lakes because you might fall in if you try to drink from them. [For older kids: If the stream is clear, moving very slowly, and the edge is easily accessible, you may drink. But, be very careful to stay dry and not fall in.]

Q: Should I carry matches to start a fire so I can keep warm?

A: No! It is dangerous to start a fire. It could turn into a forest fire that could hurt you and the searchers coming to find you. Your trash bag will keep you warm. Besides, if you do everything the program teaches, you won't be lost long enough to need a fire.

Q: Should I use a bright colored bag?

A: If you have a bright colored bag that's great! Use it. But if you don't, the kind you have in your garage or kitchen will work just fine.

Q: What about the large, heavy, orange bags they use along the highway?

A: Many of these types of bags are very large and very thick. They are too big to fit in your pocket. But, if you do use one of these, make sure you prepare a hole for your nose and eyes before you go camping. It's almost impossible to poke a hole in them with your finger.

Q: Should I climb a tree so I can see better?

A: No! You might fall and get hurt. Also, it will be much easier for the searchers to find you on the ground, not up in a tree. Remember to make yourself big.

Q: What if I hear a scary sound?

A: A sound that you don't recognize could be either someone searching for you or an animal. Either way, you should blow your whistle or yell at it. If it's a searcher, he or she will hear you and you'll be found. If it's an animal, your whistle or yell will scare it away.

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Q: What if a bear comes to eat me?

A: Animals will not come to you; even hunters have trouble finding them! If you think you hear an animal, blow your whistle or yell at it. If it's an animal, your whistle or yell will scare it away. If it's a searcher, he or she will hear you and you'll be found.

Q: What if I see a snake?

A: If you see it some distance away, back away and stay away. If you suddenly see it and it's quite close, stop and hold still until it goes away. Never play with a snake or try to poke it with anything.

Q: What about lightning?

A: The tall trees are "papa" trees, the short ones are "baby" trees, and the middle ones are "mama" trees. Lightning usually strikes the tallest object. So, when choosing your tree, choose a mama or baby tree (to avoid all tall trees). Don't pick the tallest or papa tree to hug, and make sure to choose a tree in a family (grove) of many trees.

Q: Does it cost my parents money to have searchers find me?

A: Searchers are mainly volunteers who work with other professionals and do not charge for their services. They search for you because they care about you very much, and they want to help.

## **Helpful Hints for Presenters**

### ***Personal Appearance***

If you are affiliated with a search and rescue team, law enforcement, fire department, or other agency, wear your uniform. However, do not wear your duty leather or weapons as they distract the children and limit their concentration. If you are not affiliated with an agency, wear a brightly colored shirt or a Hug-A-Tree shirt. Blue jeans are acceptable if they are in good condition. Do not underestimate the importance of looking professional during a presentation. A professional appearance is important and will leave an impression on the children who will remember you.

Do not smoke where any child can see you.

### ***Dealing with Children in General***

It is essential to establish a rapport with the children as they arrive for the presentation. Make sure to smile and kindly greet any child that looks you in the eye. Children will be intimidated by, and may dislike, any adult who does not smile and treat them kindly. When children are intimidated or do not like you, they may not learn.

Children are not just adults in small packages. They require a different approach than would be taken with an adult. Don't speak down to them; get down on their level (kneel or sit) when addressing children. Towering over them while telling them what to do can be intimidating and should be avoided. Avoid negative words such as "don't" and use positive words such as "always." Speak slowly, enunciate your words, and avoid large

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words, jargon, and technical terms. Say please and thank you and praise the children often, especially those who participate and respond in a positive way, and especially those who participate in the demonstrations.

If it is necessary to touch a child during the demonstrations, do so only in a non-threatening area (e.g., arm or shoulder) and only briefly.

### ***Problem Children***

Let the teacher or group leader be in charge of discipline. You want to be their friend so they will hear the Hug-a-Tree message. As a last resort say, “I can’t talk if you are talking.” But, do not raise your voice or discipline any child during a presentation.

You may wish to select “volunteers” for the demonstrations before the program begins. The teacher or group leader can usually help with this. Make your selections with an eye toward diversity. Also, make sure to choose outgoing children as they will have to demonstrate in front of the entire group.

## **Demonstrations**

### ***Trash Bag Demonstration***

Two extroverts should be selected for the trash bag demonstration because the other children will probably laugh. Bring two bags to use. One should be prepared ahead of time by tearing/cutting the face hole and decorating the bag (e.g., put your name on it with tape, etc). The second bag should be new and can be neatly folded right out of its box.

Have one child hold the prepared bag and explain that he or she will do something special with it in a couple of minutes. Direct the other child to unfold the new bag. Ask the audience, “What must you always remember to do before using the bag for shelter?” They should answer, “Poke a hole in it.” Repeat their answer and re-affirm it by saying something like, “That’s right, you should always, always (!) poke a hole in your bag for your face so you can breathe.”

Have the child turn the open side of the unfolded bag down and hold the bottom of the bag at the same level as the top of his or her head. In this position, have them pinch the bag to their nose to measure the location of the hole. Then, have them reach into the bag—while holding the spot where their nose was—and push a finger through the bag where they are pinching. The corners of the bag should be over the shoulders and any cap they might be wearing should be worn inside the bag. Once their finger is pushed through the bag, have them stretch the hole a bit larger for their face, but not too large. Now the bag is ready to be pulled over their head and body.

Explain that the bag will best cover their entire body if the child sits downwind (the side away from the wind) next to their tree. But, sitting on the cold, wet ground could make them cold, too. So, encourage them to pile leaves or tree boughs to sit on to insulate them

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from the ground. A pack can also serve as a comfortable seat. When the bag is pulled over the child's entire body and he or she sits down, the bag should be adjusted so it completely covers their legs and feet. In the classroom demonstration, have the child sit on the floor, completely cover their body with the bag, and have their face peek through the opening. The opening may be made larger if necessary to allow for the face to fit, but it should not be made too large or water may get in and heat will get out.

While you are guiding the child through the demonstration, have the other child open the prepared bag and pull it into place. Mention the decorations and suggest that the children can work with their parents or guardians to prepare their own personal bag.

Ask the children now covered in the bags if they are warmer than they were (they will answer yes) and mention this to the class.

Retrieve the bags from the children when they are finished.

### ***Footprint Demonstration***

Identify a confident child who is wearing shoes with an interesting sole pattern for the footprint demonstration. The teacher or group leader may be able to help you identify this child before the presentation. Have the child join you at the front of the class. While he or she is walking to the front, lay a folded, soft towel on the floor and place a piece of aluminum foil over it. Ask the child to walk onto the foil so that both feet leave good prints then hold the foil up for everyone to see. While you are showing the foil to those in the room explain that specially trained trackers can use the footprints to find you faster should you become lost. You can also have them mark the foil with their name using a permanent marker.

### ***Yelling for Help / Whistle Demonstration***

A child with a loud voice is needed for the yelling help demonstration. A second child is also needed to blow the whistle. A quiet child that does not have a loud voice is often a good choice for the whistle blower. The teacher or group leader may be able to help you identify these children before the presentation.

Ask the loud-voiced child to yell for help as loudly as possible three times. You may want to ask them to do this while standing just outside of the room if the room is small. Talk to the class about how much energy it takes to do this and how hard it would be to do this for an hour or more. Then, ask the second child to blow the whistle loudly three times (also may be best done from outside the room if it is small). Suggest to the class that this would be easier than yelling and could be heard from much farther away.

### ***Reflector Demonstration***

“Make yourself big” is what we teach children about signaling. Blowing a whistle can make a child sound big, and motion (e.g., waving arms, waving coat over head,





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lying on the ground and waving arms and legs, etc), bright colors, and reflected sunlight can make a child look big to searchers. For this demonstration, start with pointing out children in the room with bright colored clothing that looks “big” to searchers. Follow this by showing them a signal mirror and how it can be used to reflect the sun and look very big to searchers. You can also show how the shiny side of a music compact disk (CD) can be used in the same way.

## **Other Points to Cover**

### ***Strangers***

Children have been taught to avoid strangers, and searchers will most likely qualify as strangers to the child. Presenters should be sensitive to this fact. Some children have been given a code word that parents or guardians will give only to those authorized to pick up the child. Children can be taught that it is okay not to go with the searchers/strangers. Searchers can have a parent or guardian speak to the child via cell phone or radio, or the word can be given to searchers when the child is found (via radio, cell phone, or courier).

### ***Clothing Colors***

Ask the children for examples of bright colors to “make yourself big.” Show examples such as some of those worn by individuals in the audience or on your bright uniform or shirt. Emphasize the use of neon colors, bright orange, red and yellows. Generally, the best colors to wear are those that contrast the most with the environment.

### ***How Big is “Big?”***

An easy way to “make yourself big” is to make a big X on the ground by dragging a stick, piling boughs or stones. But what is big to a child? A good way to explain how big this should be is to suggest it be made as big as two cars or a bus. All kids can relate to this.

### ***Friendly Trees***

Emphasize to a child that a tree is alive just like their pet(s)—and just like them. Their tree can be a good friend, can help protect them from wind and rain, and can be very soothing if they are nervous or afraid. Encourage the children to name their trees just like a pet, and even to talk to it, if they like. Just like a friend, the tree they choose will stand by them and help them for as long as needed.

### ***Search Dogs***

Some children are afraid of dogs. If this is suspected in the audience, children should be reminded that search dogs are highly trained to lead searchers to them and will not hurt them. They are truly their friends. However, dogs should not be used in, or present for, a Hug-a-Tree presentation. They significantly distract from the Hug-a-Tree message. If a search dog—or any working dog—will be demonstrated for children, it should be done completely outside of the Hug-a-Tree presentation.

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## Early Program Success Stories

Over the years, local search and rescue agencies utilizing the Hug-A-Tree Program have reported a significant decrease in the number of searches for lost children. Hug-A-Tree and Survive saves lives!

1983 – Mt. Rainier, WA -- 13-year-old Lesea became lost while hiking. She was found after a 12-hour search. She had seen Hug-a-Tree two months earlier at school.

1984 – Nevada County, CA -- 4-year-old Eli became lost while on a walk with his mother. He was found after a 23-hour search. He had seen Hug-a-Tree four months earlier at his brother's Cub Scout pack meeting. His first words to his rescuers were, "What took you so long?"

1984 – Shenandoah National Park, VA -- 10-year-old Shawn stayed put as soon as he realized he was lost and was found a short time later by members of his hiking party. He told searchers that as soon as he realized he was lost, he decided to stop walking so he "wouldn't get more lost." He had seen the Hug-A-Tree Program at his school.

1984 – Port Angeles, WA -- Ty, a 9-year-old out playing with his 11-year-old brother Jay and their 14-year-old friend, had seen Hug-a-Tree a year earlier at school. When the boys became disoriented after dark, it was Ty who took charge and said they should all stay put. They were found by rescuers at approximately 8:30 the next morning. Ty told searchers he wished he would have brought a trash bag with him, but he didn't know they'd be staying overnight.

1985 – Michigan -- Andy, age 3, became separated from his mother at a shopping mall. When found by the store manager, he insisted on hugging a tree just outside the store. His brother, a first grader, had told him to hug a tree if he ever got lost.

1985 – Yakima County, WA -- Jeff, age 9, became lost during a family camping trip. He had seen Hug-a-Tree at school and remembered he should stay calm and look for familiar landmarks. Shortly after dark he heard vehicles on a nearby logging road. He walked to the road and was found by a searcher. The very next day, a 14-year-old boy was lost near the same area. He had also seen the Hug-a-Tree program and remembered to stay in one place. He built a fire (which is against the teaching of Hug-a-Tree) and blew a whistle until friends found him.

1987 – Coeur d' Alene, ID -- 10-year-old Robert ran ahead of his family on a hike. A search was organized when the family couldn't find him. The boy was found three hours later. The searchers stated that Robert, who had seen Hug-a-Tree at school did a good job of staying in one place.

1988 – Chesterfield County, VA -- Timothy and Patrick, brothers ages 7 and 3 respectively, were collecting aluminum cans for a Cub Scout project that their older brother, Robert was doing. Their mother, who searched for an hour on her own at the playground where she thought they were, called local law enforcement. When Timothy

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realized that they were lost, he told Patrick to take off his coat and lie down on it. He reassured his little brother that they could wait by this tree and searchers would come and find them. Timothy was not a Cub Scout, but he had attended many meetings with his brother Robert. He knew to “hug a tree.” The boys were found safe at around 5:00 the next morning about 10 hours after they became lost.

1988 – Seattle, WA -- Two boys on a field trip with their classmates became separated from the larger group. When they realized they were lost, they sat down. One of the boys had a whistle with him. He kept blowing it until the teacher found them. They had completed the Hug-a-Tree program at their school just two weeks before.

1990 – San Diego County, CA – a nine-year-old named Michael was playing with his brothers just a short distance from their parents at Mt. Laguna. Michael became separated from his brothers when he stopped to rest for a moment. Upon realizing he was lost, he used skills he had learned during a Hug-a-Tree presentation and stayed in one place. He burrowed himself into a soft pile of pine needles and leaves to keep warm during the night when the temperature dropped to 36 degrees. He was found 16 hours after his disappearance.