**How to Stay Calm and Act Fast in An Emergency**

This article is written by Allison Lee at My Medic.

If you don’t know where everything is located in your FAK (First Aid Kit), or it’s disorganized and missing items, it only increases your stress level in what is likely already a stressful situation.

* You need to understand the importance of Organization, Accessibility, and Efficiency.

You should organize your FAK in whatever way works best for you.

**TIPS FOR FAKs:**

1. Know exactly WHAT is in your kit. Regardless of the injury or ailment, you don’t want to be that person flinging things out of their kit hoping, “Hang on, gee, I think I might have something in here for that…”
2. Be familiar with your kit & know where everything is. Whether you choose to reorganize your FAK or leave it as is, make sure you know exactly where everything is. It can be incredibly stressful when you’re fumbling through your kit thinking, “Um, ehh, uggh, I know it’s in here somewhere.”
3. Have everything you may need. Have a comprehensive FAK that covers everything from boo-boos to life-threatening injuries.
4. Replace used/missing items ASAP. You don’t want to reach for something you need and find it missing - only to then remember that you used it on Jim last week. “Whoops.”
5. Organize your FAK where the most crucial items are the quickest and easiest to access. (Consider using Billy-Bands to secure things like tourniques to the outside of your FAK). Next in line would be the most commonly used items, such as simple bandages, ointments, and over the counter medication.
6. Keep your FAK in a place that is easily accessible. For example, inside the vehicle itself vs. in the trunk or the bed of a truck. It is especially critical to avoid keeping your kit in the trunk as a simple fender bender can mean being unable to open your trunk.
7. Make sure to have it when you need it. Don’t you hate it when you ask your buddy if they have something and they say, “I do, but it’s at home.” Don’t let that be you!
8. I’m a huge fan of labels. I use a piece of tape and a sharpie to label where everything is on the outside of my kits. Additionally, take advantage of our color-coded system! If you know what each color corresponds to, you’ll be able to find whatever you need quickly.

Having a kit, the items you need, and knowing where everything is allows you to simply open your kit, get what you need, and get to work. In turn, it dramatically reduces your stress levels at a time when staying cool and collected is critical. This also decreased your response time.

**Skills & Training**

So you have all the gear, and you know where it is, great! But do you know how to use it? Having the best quality equipment in the world doesn’t do you any good if you don’t know how to use it.

TIPS:

1. Familiarize yourself with how to use your gear.

I highly recommend getting to the point where it’s muscle memory, but at a minimum, have the ability, skills, and knowledge to at least properly utilize everything in your FAK.

Knowing how and when to use the items in your FAK decreases both stress and response time. Additionally, being equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary will save a tremendous amount of time vs. “Hang on, lemme Google this real quick,” or, “Hey, how do I use this thing?”

Training and practicing is critical to being prepared. Train with the actual items and practice with specific situations and events in mind so you aren’t caught off guard in an emergency.

Once you are familiar with your kit and are confident in your ability to use everything inside, practice putting it all together. Let’s be real, I don’t expect you to set up training exercises or run first aid drills, but simply “practicing in your head,” so to speak, will result in remaining much more cool and collected in an emergency - and the calmer you are, the faster you’ll be.

Imagine yourself in situations and how you would react. Of course, anything can happen, but just focus on the basics - if X happened, I would need XYZ items, and I’d apply them like this. A basic, generic plan is better than no plan.

Key Language: Competent, Confident, Prepared.

**General Tips:**

1. Avoid getting flustered. Take a deep breath. Take a brief pause and assess the situation.
2. Take a second to collect yourself if needed. It’s better to take it easy, be methodical, and perform well than to get all panicky trying to do everything at once. We have a saying, “Slow is smooth, and smooth is fast.” Think ripping through your FAK as fast as possible vs. focusing on what you need and what you’re doing. One is frantic while the other is methodical.
3. Remember to call for help (911). Knowing the professionals are on the way is comforting and relieves some of that anxiety in addition to making sure the patient gets to the next echelon of care.
4. Ask for assistance. Enlisting help takes some of the stress and burden off your shoulders, resulting in you being more quick and calm. Teamwork goes a long way in an emergency situation.
5. Anticipate the stress. Recognize & accept that emergency situations can be stressful. It’s a mindset thing. It’s kind of like any challenge in life. Simply acknowledging the fact that this is going to suck, but it’s ok, because you can handle it.
6. Flip the script on stress. Anxiety is the evil twin of excitement. All the feelings, emotions, and physical elements are there. Instead of reading those things as, “Oh God, Oh crap, Oh no…”, flip it around and use them as fuel, “It’s go time!”
7. Anticipate but don’t be paranoid. Sometimes we find ourselves in situations or places that can be inherently dangerous. Sometimes this is intentional (recreation, riding motorbikes, etc.) and sometimes not. Just be aware and be alert. “Ok, I can see how this could get sketchy or go sideways.
8. Pull yourself together, man! Remind yourself that being quick and calm vs. the opposite can not only make the difference between providing subpar or even poor care and quality care - It can be the difference between life and death.

Key Language: Mindset, Slow is Smooth, Smooth is Fast

Simply being prepared in these ways will pay big dividends at a time when reacting quickly & remaining calm are crucial. Prepare now so you can stay alive later!