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Disaster management

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Out in the open Anoop Madhavan during the training of a group in wilderness survival skills
Anoop Madhavan, founder of Survival Instincts, raises awareness on how to stay safe during calamities and in the wilderness

When he felt mild tremors, as many other city residents did, on April 11, 2012, Anoop Madhavan took evasive action. “In simple terms, I slipped under a table and stayed there,” he says. Stepping out of his temporary shelter, he looked around for his colleagues in vain. They had joined the sea of panic-stricken humanity that had poured on to the street.

Having worked for eight years as a logistics scientist, in the field of disaster relief, for the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Anoop has learnt what to do when caught in the eye of a natural calamity and he knew making a dash for the exit during an earthquake was a dangerous thing to do. “Invariably, the danger lurks at the exit because the greatest damage happens midway through an earthquake. In the majority of earthquakes, the possibility of building collapse is slim to none. Danger comes in the form of falling objects — such as wall-mounted AC units — and by running, instead of taking shelter under a table, you are not helping yourself,” says Anoop.

Following the panic of April 11, Anoop conducted surveys on Facebook to find out how well-informed city residents were about natural disasters. “The results were shocking. About 98 per cent of those surveyed had no clue as to what to do in fire, quake and other emergencies. I decided to do my bit to fill this huge knowledge gap.”

True to his decision, Anoop founded Survival Instincts (SI) a month later. Through a dedicated team and a set of student volunteers, this 36-year-old CEO of a software firm now reaches educational institutions and corporate groups with a three-level programme for safety in multiple environments and situations. As an emergency medical responder with the certification of the American Red Cross (U.S.) and a wilderness first responder certified by the Center for Wilderness Safety (U.S.), Anoop took on the challenge of framing the practical courses.

The three levels of training fit into two broad categories — dealing with dangers in the urban environment and those in the wilderness. The skill set includes first-aid, evacuation and rescue techniques, disaster-preparedness, making distress signals, fire and shelter building, navigating with a lensatic compass (which can prove handy when GPS systems fail), wilderness rescue techniques and hydration and nutrition skills.

The complete training for survival in the wilderness — which marks the third level — requires participants to rough it out. “They are taken to Nagalapuram or Tada for this experience. Cut off from civilisation, they find out what it takes to be on their own and survive.” Beyond the three levels lie specialised programmes, including one on self-defence that is broken up into seven three-hour classes.

“Every advanced course comes with a fee. The aim is not to make profits, but just to cover the costs,” says Anoop.

While his dedicated team works through the week, Anoop spares his weekends for SI programmes, which, in his own words, “help me contribute to society”. *For details, log on to survivalinstincts.org*

Keywords: [Anoop Madhavan](#), [Survival Instincts](#), [disaster management](#), [Chennai](#)



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