

# 27 BAD SURVIVAL TIPS FOR ARTISTS

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Show the tips below to your therapist and they will tell you it is an alarmingly unhealthy list of suggestions that shouldn't be followed. You will reply yes, you agree; it's by a young artist woman who applied her DIY ethos to maintaining her mental health when she should have just seen a therapist herself. So by no means is the advice below Correct with a capital C, in truth it's quite incorrect with a capital NOT PC, and it's not even very practical. But if you are a strong-willed artist girl as I, or if you've always seemed to get into trouble as I, or if you've often found yourself love-sick for no one in particular as I, then perhaps the following will help you cope with the loneliness of being who you are, or alternately encourage you to bask in that loneliness and then laugh in its stupid face.

1. Retire from being someone's idol. Get hurt, get ugly, fuck up in front of everyone. Fight to be seen as a real person.
2. In fact, get into fights while you are still young and malleable. It makes you less nervous of getting beaten in the future, less nervous of pissing people off, more willing to take a chance. Again, I don't give healthy advice.



3. Also, every teenager should party. It's important to know sad empty feelings before you go out into the world.
4. Sometimes, obviously, getting into fights is dangerous. There are people who are used to the sound of bones breaking, and when you witness them, for example, swing a wooden bat at someone with such lack of restraint, you think they must either be dangerously stupid, or have survived real pain themselves, enough to be prepared to inflict it in return. It will be important to witness this because you will realize that this is a world in which you don't belong, which goes deeper than you had imagined, and you will leave it behind.
5. This is also when you will decide to become gentle and stop fighting. By this time you will have learned more than you may have wanted about how your words and your body can be weapons, and what is left of you will simply want to live gently. This is when you will become a real adult.
6. But in the meantime you're still a kid. Now, when you started having sex you started to forget that you're a kid, or rather you started to forget how to think like a kid, maybe because kids aren't supposed to have sex, so you thought okay I'm having sex now so I must be an adult. But don't let sex, or boys you love, make you forget your childish cunning. Kids are smaller and weaker, so they get crafty instead - they've always been cheaters, they've always played dirty. Defending yourself as a girl in a world built for men requires the same kind of cleverness of a dirt-faced kid. Stop trying to fight by men's rules. Most rules in our world were made by the people who were/are already in power, so they often do not work in your favor if you are not in power.
7. Men who slowly take a sip of their drink or puff of their smoke mid-sentence are enjoying their privilege too much. Interrupt them mid-sip or puff, or walk away entirely. Don't give them that time.
8. Men turn to pouting boys when they discover the word "love" and find they cannot use it, and a pouting boy who can't get what he wants is straight up dangerous when he is in the body of a man. I know this whole time I've been encouraging you to fight, but if you encounter a man who is a boy with man-strength, forget what I said. Run.
9. For a woman, to love a man usually means to wait. I won't tell you to love as men do instead, because men can love horribly, but don't fucking wait.
10. And you can love women. I've loved women. Maybe you've always identified as straight, but that doesn't mean you're "not allowed" to love women, like if you did you'd have to declare something permanently. You can't choose your sexual orientation, but your sexuality can be fluid. I guess this is straying from the topic of "survival for women artists," and you might be confidently straight, or openly gay, or many of the other things you can be, so this tip might not even apply to you. But it's fucked me up before, so I'm just putting it out there in case it's fucking you up right now.
11. On the topic of other women - don't be so hard on freshman girls. You too once dressed up and put makeup on for a day that fucking ends after one 10:30am class.



12. My mother is going to cry if and when she reads this, but sometimes you have to do things that will make your mother cry.

13. Children can only fundamentally get the attention of adults by laughing or crying. America functions in a similar way, where it only wants to see fun things, or exciting things, or otherwise some kind of shocking event - in social media, in art, in the news, in real life. So why not be a Real American and cry in front of everyone, in the middle of the classroom. Make them watch you fucking cry.

14. Remember how you used to play when you were younger and dumber, how all the games were simple and had no real meaning. Now remember that time you blasted fireworks with your friends, how the loud noises excited you, and how once you heard them you wanted to hear them again and again. Your friends who were scared of the loudness ran away from it, but you stayed there transfixed, standing too close to it, and you saw it through until it was over. If anyone tells you what you're about to do is risky or scary, tell them "then be scared and run away," and see it through.

15. (Also, have you ever listened to music so loud that you smelled blood? Don't do that again. Protect your ears with earplugs.)

16. I am contradicting myself now, but if you were one of the friends who were afraid and ran, that's alright too. Actually, that's better. Being afraid means you care.

17. I was never afraid until I was about nineteen and found I could make music. Until then, I wasn't afraid of adults, of walking streets alone in foreign countries (I lived abroad as a kid), of terrorists and kidnap, of guns, of drugs, of people. When I lost my virginity to rape by a drug dealer, I didn't become afraid - I became his girlfriend. When I left school for a year after 10th grade and worked as a waitress, I lied about my age, stole groceries and clothes for that whole year, and overall broke many laws and got caught several times, but it never made me afraid. I am not glorifying any of this, in fact it's all very sad, because now that I am afraid of all of the above, I realize it's because I finally have things I care about, including myself, that I fear of hurting or losing. It is important and good to be afraid, it means you care, and people who say or act like they don't care are sad.

18. Being afraid is also the essence of survival. When you're always around people you tend to forget, but separate yourself for a while and remember how much being alone is scary, and feel how that fear sharpens you. Fear makes you stronger, and perhaps more dangerous, as with dogs. Use that.

19. By the way, have you been alone lately? Hanging out with people is fun and comforting, but do you remember how to be on your own?

20. If you don't feel an urge to move, to go out and grab something, it may be because everything is within your reach. When I was fourteen or fifteen I starved myself until I was skin and

bone, and though I still haven't quite figured out why, I think it's because I needed to remember hunger, to awaken that drive.

21. But I'm not telling you to fucking starve yourself. Eat. You need the strength to do what you're here to do. If you don't have the strength to hold onto it, they will take it away from you, and then you'll have to keep living but without that thing you're living for.

22. And you don't want to die, dummy. That's why you get stronger and smarter, that's why you endure.

23. In those moments when you think about actually dying, today, and think about your body being dead tomorrow morning, it's really scary. It's scary because if you think about it enough, you start thinking "no I don't want that!" and desperately look around for something to stop you from going there, from dying, but there's nothing of the sort. That's the scariest part; when you realize there is nothing really stopping you.

24. They say that corpses with their eyes open died in pain. Doesn't that feel like it means something?

25. When I said "hold onto it" earlier, I didn't mean hold onto that brilliant piece you made a few years ago, or last month, or yesterday. Sure you can make something really nice, and you can be proud of it, but once it's done you have to let it go. People have been making nice things way before you were born, they're making nice things as you read this, and they'll continue to make nice things long after you die, so don't hold onto your one or two nice things and feel contented. That's not the point. The point is not to make something that people think is good, or to make something that people think is so good that it makes you famous, or even to make something that makes you so famous that people remember you after you die. It's not about making a shitload of money and living comfortably, nor is it about the "glory" of dying poor and sick for the sake of your art. It is, in my opinion, about the work. Being an artist is about putting your head down and doing the work, not because it'll bear fruit to any rewards, and maybe not even because it fulfills you in any way, but because that is simply what you do as an artist - you keep making things. That's what I think anyway, and if any of you find me straying from my own rules, slap me and tell me to get back to work.

26. Last thing on the topic of eating. Learn to listen your body's signals. Sometimes you may think you're hungry, when in fact you just need to masturbate.

27. Now, if you have a bra on, take it off for a moment and listen to me. Sing, or shout or scream or simply speak, but do it from the bottom of your stomach. Vomit out your voice before you have time to think. This is what they really mean by "sing from your belly." You will die one day, sooner than you imagine, and it is incredibly sad. So scream about it.