

**A True Story: How I Left My Family for 5 Days...  
And How They Survived  
by Lisa Marie Lindenschmidt**

I always do everything. I plan the meals, buy the food, prepare the dishes. I also do all the cleaning, all the bills, and generally just keep the family running. I do it all. My family could not survive without me.

Well, o.k. They help a bit. ... But I do most of it.

So, when I decided to go to the Raw Spirit Fest in DC for 5 days, I came up with a plan of action to ensure that my husband and 12-year-old daughter could make it through this rough spot.

**Step 1. Panic**

Panicking is an important tool in every mother's toolbox. If you start with panicking at the outset, then it doesn't need to be done later. Just get it out of the way right at the beginning. Make sure to envision every possible thing that could go wrong, every accident, every poorly-combined meal, every dish left uncleaned. Fill your mind with visions of returning home to 3 inches of dust and dirt, with family members crawling helplessly around the floor, calling your name in desperation and sadness. Imagine the dog emaciated and dehydrated and the gerbils clawing at the walls of their cage. ... OK. Got that in your mind? Good. Now let's move onto Step 2.

**Step 2. Emergency Preparedness**

Does your family have enough Band-Aids, toilet paper, fruits, veggies, and other consumables? Do they have raw food recipe websites bookmarked? Are all the emergency numbers posted in the appropriate places? Are family members familiar with dish soap and toothpaste? Think through each crisis and make sure that resources are in place to avert any and all disasters. Talk often with each family member about your what-if fears and make sure that your fears become their fears. Wonder why your family is talking about you in hushed tones when you're out of the room. Go to Step 3.

**Step 3. Travel... with Multiple Daily Check-Ins**

After completing Step 2, you can feel good that your family is well-prepared for any emergency that may arise. Try to breathe and enjoy your travels. Check-ins morning, noon, and night are recommended. Notice their voice inflections during each check-in: Are they trying to hide their sadness? Are they telling you everything? How are the gerbils and dog? How will you truly know if they're doing well? Building in little surprise questions throughout the conversations help to test their survival and coping skills. Some examples could include: "So, what did you end up having for breakfast?... Uh-hungh. Hmm... And did the GERBILS enjoy their breakfast, too?" ... or... "So, did you have that spinach with your dinner last night?... What?! You DIDN'T eat any GREENS?!?" Little reminders like these will be much appreciated throughout your time away from home. Proceed to Step 4.

#### **Step 4. The Return Home**

When you return home, brace yourself for all the chaos envisioned in Step 1, but act cool and casual as you walk through the door, reminding yourself that your family's fragile self-esteem is in your hands. As you set down your bags, nonchalantly inspect each and every corner of the house, the weight and demeanor of the dog, the liveliness of the gerbils, and the contents of the fridge. Thank your family for their willingness to accept this trial by fire with open minds and hearts and... wonder how they learned to survive without you.

**Author's Note:** When I got home, I did indeed follow Step 4 and have to tell you honestly that what I was greeted with was an enthusiastic dog, a father and daughter that got some good bonding time in, and a fridge that was empty of all the raw vegan food I purchased. The house was surprisingly clean and nothing was ruined or out of order. The author is now looking into a 3-week trip to India... by herself.

*Lisa Marie Lindenschmidt is a raw foods chef and teacher and owner of Rite Food and Company ([www.ritefoodandcompany.com](http://www.ritefoodandcompany.com)), which offers workshops on intentional and joyful eating. Lisa Marie and her homeschooled daughter, Mo, record a weekly podcast – called Sweet Peas Podcast – chronicling their raw foods journey together.*