

Lost in a Blizzard

A teen survives a deadly storm by using tips he learned on TV.

By Nicole Tocco



Nicholas, who was lost for two days, is escorted to safety by rescue workers.

Just past noon on Sunday, March 3, 2013, Nicholas Joy swooshed down a ski slope at Sugarloaf Mountain in Maine. After that run, Nicholas, then 17, was planning to meet his father to go home, but he never made it to the meeting place.

Suddenly, a fierce blizzard had swept into the area. Icy winds whipped blinding snow across the

mountain, obstructing Nicholas's view. As visibility got worse, he accidentally turned off the trail.

Before he knew it, Nicholas was lost—and all alone. He didn't have food, water, a phone, or supplies, and he was getting colder by the minute.

Stranded Skier

Nicholas had no idea where he was, and he had to make a real effort not to panic. So he started to think about all of the survival shows he had watched on TV, and that's when he understood that it was time to put the tips he had learned to use.

First, he stopped skiing because he knew that there was a better chance of someone finding him if he stayed put. Next, he had to find shelter from the freezing wind and snow because if he didn't, hypothermia could quickly kill him. So Nicholas decided to build a snow cave: he used his skis to gather a huge mound of snow, dug out a hole in the middle, and then piled branches on top of himself like a blanket to stay as warm as he could.

By that evening, Nicholas was really hungry, but he had no food. However, he managed to stay hydrated by eating snow and drinking water from a nearby stream.

Not knowing how much longer he could last, Nicholas did the only thing he could—he huddled in his cave and slept.

Rescued!

The next day, Nicholas heard snowmobiles. They belonged to rescue crews who were searching for him. Nicholas went out to look for them, but he was unable to find anyone. He realized that if he went too far, he might not be able to find his way back to the cave. Without shelter, Nicholas would be in peril of dying that night, so he turned back, followed his tracks, and returned to the snow cave.

On Tuesday, Nicholas went out again to find help. He had walked for about a mile when Joseph Paul, a volunteer searcher, found him. After two days stranded in the snow, Nicholas had finally been saved.

“I’m glad to see somebody,” Nicholas told Paul. “I’m OK—I’m just tired.”



Bear Grylls was impressed with Nicholas's survival skills.

All the Right Moves

Nicholas might not have survived his ordeal had it not been for TV. He had often watched survival shows, and that's where he learned the tips that saved his life.

News of Nicholas's amazing survival quickly spread—even Bear Grylls, the creator of a survival show, heard about it. "I'm super impressed that he made it out," Grylls said.

In each episode of his show, Grylls is stranded in a remote wilderness area and has to find his way out—so he knows better than anyone how hard Nicholas had to work to stay alive. Grylls says that most people would probably make big mistakes if they found themselves in Nicholas's situation.

"People underestimate how demanding it is being out in the wild, especially in a cold environment," Grylls explained. "But he did everything right."

Secrets of Survival

"If you ever get stuck in a blizzard, the first thing to do is find protection," says Grylls. Without the snow cave, Nicholas might have lasted only three hours: that's about how long humans can survive without shelter in extreme weather. And

although a person can live without food for three weeks, you can survive without water for only three days; drinking from the stream and eating snow helped save Nicholas's life.

Grylls was impressed with Nicholas's survival skills, but he did have one piece of advice for the teen: "Next time, don't get lost!" joked Grylls.