How to survive

*A Survival Guide for Life* was published in 2012 by Bantam Press in London. Bear Grylls, the book’s author, is a well-known British media personality. On his website, Grylls portrays himself as an outdoorsman, adventurer and survivalist:

Bear Grylls has become known around the world as one of the most recognized faces of survival and outdoor adventure. His journey to this acclaim started in the UK on the Isle of Wight, where his late father taught him to climb and sail. Trained from a young age in martial arts, Bear went on to spend three years as a soldier in the British Special Forces, serving with 21 SAS. It was here that he perfected many of the skills that his fans all over the world enjoy watching him pit against mother-nature. (Grylls, no date-c)

Along these lines, the story continues. A biographical sketch tells readers of free-fall parachuting accidents in Africa, journeys to remote regions – from Antarctica to the Arctic – and mountaineering expeditions to Mount Everest. It also highlights his high-profile media work for Channel 4 and Discovery Channel, claiming that the ‘Discovery Channel’s Emmy nominated TV show *Man Vs. Wild* and *Born Survivor* [...] has become one of the most watched shows on the planet, reaching an estimated 1.2 billion viewers’ (Grylls, no date-c). Bear Grylls maintains his media presence through numerous channels. All of these highlight his credentials as a tough-as-nails survivalist. His Facebook page (Grylls, no date-a) shows him on what looks like a mountain top in an advertisement for the NBC television show *Running Wild with Bear Grylls*. 
YouTube carries videos with titles such as *Bear Grylls eats raw snake* (Grylls, 2012a). His online shop, *The Official Bear Grylls Store* (Grylls, no date-b), shows an image of the adventurer with raised arms, holding what looks like an alligator jaw. This online shop sells a broad range of clothing and hiking gear. Similarly, online shopping malls like amazon.com offer numerous Bear Grylls-themed items, such as the *Bear Grylls Ultimate Knife*, the *Bear Grylls Survival Hatchet*, and the *Ultimate Bear Grylls Survival Pack with Multitool, Flashlight, and Fire Starter*. Grylls' books, moreover, span a variety of genres. There are, for example, his autobiography, *Mud, Sweat and Tears* (Grylls, 2011), *True Grit* (Grylls, 2013), a collection of real-life adventure stories, the exercise manual *Your Life: Train for It* (Grylls, 2014), and *Mission Survival: Gold of the Gods* (Grylls and Madden, 2008), the first part of a series of adventure novels for young adults.

Much of Grylls' work explores survivalism in terms of the skills needed to overcome extreme and hazardous environmental conditions. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that, in September 2014, online bookseller amazon.co.uk listed *A Survival Guide for Life* (Grylls, 2012b) as the number two bestseller in the rubric ‘outdoor survival skills’. *A Survival Guide for Life*, however, marks a noteworthy shift in Grylls' work, in that it sets out survival strategies for ‘dangerous’ and difficult everyday situations. The book offers readers a pathway to a successful life, loosely defined through the metaphor of the dream. The book's opening paragraphs set out the case for dreams:

> Dreams are powerful. They are among those precious few intangibles that have inspired men and women to get up, go to hell and back, and change the world. [...] Our job is to be the dangerous type. The one who dreams day by day and acts to make those dreams come alive and actually happen. So take some time to get this right. Go for a long walk. Think big. Think about what really makes you smile. Ask yourself what you would do if you didn’t need the money. Ask yourself what really excites you. Ask what would inspire you to keep going long after most people would quit. (Grylls, 2012b: 1)

Grylls here offers a notably individualistic vision of dreams and their pursuit. Dreams, in the sense of overarching goals and ambitions that define and motivate one's life, appear as the outcome of introspection, and Grylls characterises them as the source of true personal fulfilment – what really makes you smile, what really excites you, and so forth. Throughout the book, Grylls then portrays the pursuit and achievement