Let me begin by saying that I have a compulsive desire to have control over situations. I don’t like it when grocery stores or oil prices dictate the price I’m supposed to pay for groceries, I struggle when the military tells my family where we’re going to live, heck, I’ll admit I don’t even like it when my sweet husband does the laundry because I’m afraid he’s going to bleach my favorite shirt or shrink my daughter’s pants. “Hi, I’m Joanie Demer and I’m a control freak.” Despite my self-diagnosed ‘handicap’, I will say that I’m learning not to dwell over things outside of my control: the weather, traffic, people who wish me ill. . .

In the wake of the tragic stories coming from Japan, and the doomsday earthquake predictions being made regarding the west coast of North America (aka home, for me), I’d be lying if I said I hadn’t lost some sleep the last few nights thinking about what my family would do in the event of an big earthquake or Tsunami. Now, I live on the coast in Tsunami-central, so I hope that my fear is not yours, but the truth is we might all do well to create a plan for how we would cope and provide for our families immediately following such a disaster.

I’m inviting you in to see my latest attempt at take back control over something as out-of-my-control as an earthquake! After reading much (but not all) of FEMA’s Are You Ready? it is very clear that the government is telling the public that in the case of a major disaster, government aide will not be available to a mass group for approximately 3-days. Logistically, it’s going to take at least that long; remember FEMA and the military are run by the same clowns elected officials that operate the DMV and Post Office [think long-lines]. If you or a loved one has a life-threatening injury, then hopefully you can be attended to by a professional, but for everyone else, who is displaced from homes or isolated for whatever reason, having emergency food, water, light, warmth and a few comforts will go a long way!
I put together a 72 hour kit for each member of my family, each stored in a backpack and kept in an easy place, in case there is ever a need to grab quickly and go! The best part is, (and the reason I hoped the topic appropriate for KCL), I only spent about $20 per kit! All of the foods we stockpile and get for free every week, are the perfect supplies you’ll want to create this sort of kit! In case you’re interested in doing something similar, let me share some of what I included in each of my kits:

- Flashlight and spare batteries
- Rain Poncho
- Emergency blanket
- First Aid kits
- lighters
- glow-sticks (dollar store)
- hand-warmers (check Hunting supplies, on clearance at Kmart, others)
- lightweight umbrellas
- toilet paper (take the cardboard tube out and squish the roll flat in a ziploc bag)
- complete change of clothes for each family member
- Granola Bars, energy bars
- Protein: jerky, tuna salad/crackers, tuna pouches (super-light, really long-shelf life!)
- crackers, cookies, candy, gum
- pudding cups
- fruit cups, fruit leather
- trail mix
- raisins
- juice boxes
- instant oatmeal
- tooth brushes, deodorant, lip balm, hair rubber bands (the real disaster would be you being all smelly and ugly with your hair in your face, right?)
- 6-8 half liters of water (FEMA suggests at least 1 gallon per person per day, but that would be way too heavy to carry in a regular day-pack, so I’m going with the “something is better than nothing” on emergency water storage.)
- We also have one wind-up radio for our family.

I’m also storing more water in my home (I use empty bleach containers. Once the Clorox is all gone, you don’t even need to rinse the container, just fill it with water!) Even though I have no control over natural disasters, I can feel a little bit more “in-control” when I get prepared. I really see these emergency kits as being an extension of my extreme couponing. I coupon-shop to stay debt-free and create savings: not only of money, but a savings or stockpile of food to sustain my home. As many of you know, when my husband lost his job a few years ago, my stockpile sustained my family for 3 months!