



### By Silver Rose

As the East Coast of the United States prepares for the huge storm known as Hurricane Sandy (a wonderfully non-gender-based name), a few words about focus and its role in how we can weather *any* of the storms of life.

**If you are in the path of any storm, it is crucial to pay attention to what you feed your mind.** There are people who always want you to focus on the worst. Sometimes they are relatives or well-meaning friends; often they are part of the news media. It is your responsibility to manage your focus. The Law of Attraction says that you get more of what you focus on. You get to choose.

I can promise you that the news media will make Hurricane Sandy look at least 100 times worse than it is. Whether you are in the path of the storm or you have loved ones who are you can either submit to mass hysteria or you can deal in data. In this case you would do well to get your info from The National Weather Center [www.nhc.noaa.gov/](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/) rather than the news media whose members sensationalize everything. In anticipation of being cut off from the Internet, find a radio station—it's better to hear news without frightening imagery. I recommend NPR or a local station that normally plays music but that will interrupt for breaking news. At any rate, TV or Internet-based news will not serve you or your nerves well.

**One of the best methods to feed your mind positive images is to ask yourself, "What's working right now?"** The answers to this question will serve to keep you calmer. You see, most stress is based on what *might* happen versus what is.

When we were sailing in the Mediterranean last month, we were in several thunderstorms. Normally I LOVE thunder and lightning but when your mast is the highest point in a giant tub of water, it can cause some anxiety. It took a lot of thought management to not freak out. Focusing on what was working in each moment got me through.

**Take inventory of how you could survive the worst-case scenario.** What assets do you have that will help? What can you do right now to improve your comfort level while the storm rages?

**Action cancels fear—every time.** Rather than worry about what could happen, make a plan for what you will do if your fears come true and then put into action as much of that plan as possible.

There has never been a better example of using action to manage fear than the story of the Shackleton expedition. Its lessons on leadership are still used in graduate schools.

## Facing Life's Storms

On December 5, 1914, Sir Ernest H. Shackleton and 27 men under his command sailed from South Georgia Island aboard the ship *Endurance*. Their goal was to land on the Antarctic continent and become the first to cross it.

Shackleton and his men failed completely. They never set foot on Antarctica. Yet their courage and determination have become legendary.

In January 1915, before they could reach the Antarctic coast, their ship became trapped in the pack ice of the Weddell Sea and their situation became increasingly desperate as they made numerous attempts to reach land.

Shackleton recognized that they must remain optimistic in order to survive. He accomplished this by keeping the men so busy they would have little opportunity to brood over their predicament. He encouraged and took part in a variety of pastimes, such as card games and sing-alongs. Seeking to keep his men fit as well, he encouraged soccer matches and dogsled races on the ice. When he sensed that the mood of the men was darkening, he would use a holiday observance or some other pretense to justify extra rations of food to boost morale.

*Amazingly, after almost two years of danger and deprivation every one of the expedition's 28 members survived.*

**Find ways to distract yourself.** Once you've done everything possible to prepare for the storm, find ways to distract yourself in the midst of it just as Shackleton encouraged his men to do. A good book or movie, meaningful conversation with a loved one, making plans for the future or diving into a project are all great distractions.

I grew up in a suburb of Boston, Mass. Whenever we were hit with a big storm (which was often), Mom would make sure candles and matches were readily available along with puzzles and games we could play. It turns out that all the tricks parents and teachers use to keep children calm also work well with adults.

Remember, you get more of what you focus on and your focus is a choice. I wish you well in whatever storms you may face.