



Resilience and Life Storms

By Kathy Marshall Emerson,
Executive Director, National Resilience Resource Center LLC

Recently I was awakened in my lakeside bedroom by what seemed like strobe lights. Was there a problem in our small town? Had a transformer malfunctioned? Was a faraway building on fire? Gradually it dawned on me I was seeing something I had only experienced during my childhood on the farm. The early morning dark sky was soundlessly pulsating with rarely seen heat lightning. At 4 a.m. I made my way to the dark main room's massive window framing my view of the lake, trees and the flashing ominous sky. I pulled a chair close to the window and simply sat observing nature's special forces. The storm was building; the sky was lighting up and then darkening over and over again. For seconds I could see huge looming clouds, then nothing. I felt each coming round. I settled in and just watched. A part of me knew the raindrops would follow but I could not do a thing to bring the calming change. As the rain came, relief washed over me; the rain became steady and substantial but it was not damaging, just cleansing and enriching the earth. I wondered back to bed and slept peacefully. By morning we had nearly two inches of rain.

During all that watching the reoccurring insight was that this storm was very much like what most people experience when the "big stuff" in life happens. When we first receive a very difficult health diagnosis or prognosis, for example, it can catch us off guard, be out of the blue and a total surprise. Life is literally filled with these kinds of all too ordinary bombshells. The stories are endless.

As I watched the lightning storm I was reminded of the wonderful gift we have in understanding the principles of how we operate from the inside out. When we receive big, bad news we do have a choice. We can try to process it in our intellect and end up in a very distressed state, or we can fall back into our natural, innate wisdom. From that place of knowing we have the ability to see that we are more than the shocking personal news. In a sense we can claim this one moment and be in our mental health despite the new event in our life. And we have the opportunity of choice in each and every moment that lies ahead.

The metaphor of the Minnesota storm for me is helpful. It reminds me there is a force greater than me and that the rain of peace will follow even in my personal situation. I am more than my body, more than my possessions, more than what I presently do, more than what I wish or hope for. The part of me that is never in danger is spiritual and when I learn to live in that place, I am secure in the moment. This truth belongs to every human being.

If we have learned and lived the principles, simple words can be enough to remind us of what we do know during the "big stuff" moments when we temporarily lose our bearings. Syd Banks said, "*Thought*, like the rudder of a ship, steers us to the safety of open waters or to the doom of rocky shores." (*The Missing Link*, p. 56) Given this, it is necessary to remind ourselves to trust the unknown to deliver up the thought that will guide us to hope and peace moment by moment. Surrender to the unknown is utterly essential if we wish to face the heat lightning in our own lives in a peaceful way.

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Kathy Marshall Emerson is Executive Director of the private National Resilience Resources Center LLC and may be reached at marsh008@umn.edu. NRRC provides training and technical assistance. She retired from the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities after 20 years and also continues to teach CSpH 5201, Spirituality and Resilience, as adjunct faculty spring and summer terms annually. The NRRC website is nationalresilienceresource.com.

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