

# Building Resilience: One Step at a Time

## Encouraging Hearts as a Team

In 1914, Ernest Shackleton and his team of 26 scientists, sailors, and explorers - and a stowaway - embarked on a dangerous mission to dogsled across Antarctica. In the days before radio, even if everything went as planned, this would be risky, stretching the limits of human endurance.

Everything did not go as planned. Their ship was crushed in the ice, and the team was cast adrift on the ice flows. They were presumed lost when they did not show up at the pick-up site. No one would come to look for them. The men survived 634 days in the Antarctic, living in tents for a while on the damaged ship, and when it sank. Yes, even in the Antarctic winter. They self-rescued, itself an epic that took months. All remained in good health emotionally and physically. And half of the group signed up to try it with Shackleton again.

Research shows that high-performing teams are aligned and committed to shared values and vision, working together towards common objectives. Shackleton instilled in his team that *no matter what came their way, they would survive if they worked together*. Shackleton's team believed each other. They shared values and vision and worked together. They practiced positive affirmations and acted daily as if they would get through it all. As a result, they all not only survived, they thrived.

**They remained available and accessible to others on the team.** From the top down, Shackleton's team stayed open and engaged with each other, even in times of great danger and open conflict. With Shackleton the leading example, the crew reached out to engage, encourage, listen to, and assist others on the team. Prosocial action on our part promotes strength and joy in us.

**They frequently engaged others in meaningful conversation about the good and the difficult.** Following the boss's example, the Shackleton team was open and honest with each other. Concerns were listened to, acknowledged, and addressed daily. As a result, people felt heard, and often that hearing was not something "official" but was the informal yet appropriate outcome of people taking care of those around them. This is an essential step in encouraging the heart of the entire team. As such, it is important that it be done often and appropriately. We can inspire others to share their concerns, but all sharing must remain professional and ethical. Sharing should be balanced between negative concerns and positive celebrations.

**They encourage hearts by sharing loads.** Shackleton's team was, by design, not siloed. Everyone helped everyone else and pitched in on hard work. Officers worked alongside crewmen. The scientists scrubbed floors with deckhands. Everyone helped with camp chores on the ice. And all helped row the boats as they escaped the ice. These practices quickly dissipated hierarchies and divisions.

Few things encourage us in tough times, like honest caring and sharing within the team. We gain as much or more than we give when we do this. And this can be fostered from the bottom up in the team.