

SHORTEN SAIL

Experienced sailors often shorten sail before they need to.

As a young sailor I was out with an old salt. He saw thunder clouds in the distance and suggested we shorten sail. I was the captain, it was my boat, and I said we don't need to.

Within five minutes the thunderstorm was almost on us. He strongly urged me and we did shorten sail. The storm was short but wild. The boat was turned from one side to the other, the rain driving with such force it felt like sleet, and the visibility zero. We knew other boats were around but could not see them nor could we control the direction of our boat. We still had a little sail up and I sure wished I had taken it all down.

The storm was over. It felt like it lasted a long time, but it was less than five minutes. The lesson will last my entire lifetime. Shorten sail before you need to, before it's too late.

Life produces its own thunderstorms. In reality, we actually produce them for ourselves, by what we do and what we don't do. They come upon us and, if we are paying attention, we can see them coming, we can see what is going to happen. We can, and should adjust as needed in advance. Life shows us what the results of our actions today will be.

We have a chance to shorten sail and to change course in advance. We only need to be aware of what we are doing and the storm that it is bringing. Changing, shortening sail, will reduce or eliminate the storm.

Look around. You can see the storm clouds in your life. What are you doing, or not doing, that is bringing a storm to you? What actions can you take to avoid or eliminate the storm? Or, is the storm one that is needed to clear the air and move forward? Sometimes, we need the storm. But, we have to shorten sail as needed in advance to manage the storm.

Storms are part of life itself. It's knowing how to best handle the storm that we are to learn. Some storms we can avoid, some avoid us, and some we

just have to shorten sail for, ride them out, and take advantage of their lesson for us.

Be smart, be prepared, shorten sail before you wish you had.