Many of us may have been a boy or girl scout at some point in our lives. Although some differences exist between the two groups, as apparent by the badges one could earn, they both have in common the idea of being prepared.

During this past year, we have seen major hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and nature-originated fires. First responders were all over the map—literally. First in the Gulf cities in Texas, then in the Atlantic islands, Florida, and then the middle of Mexico; other similar events occurred elsewhere too! Just as one natural disaster subsided, a new one seemingly emerged. Millions of people were affected, and the long-term impact on health remains to be seen.

Each of those events brought out the true character of each of us. Most people opened their hearts, homes, and wallets. Meanwhile, others hiked up prices (to the point of true gouging), and others ransacked and looted. In a crisis, our true being emerges.

Each year, thousands of people are affected by these disasters—some directly, others indirectly. We have seen, heard, and been reminded of the plights of many. What many are unaware of is the psychological trauma of those who had family and friends in these situations or who became connected to the tragedies in a way that they felt as if they had been directly involved.

We know how to evacuate our workplace. Do we know that information about the other places we might be? We know where emergency supplies are at work—what value is that if we are somewhere else? Further, if people know we are nurses, they will look to us for answers. After all, providing answers is part of what we do.

What do we have with ourselves that we can use to care for others when we are not near the crash cart or the pharmacy? We have ourselves—that’s it!

How creative can we be? That is our challenge! A colleague of mine once responded to the question, “Where do you work?” by saying “Wherever I am!” That is how prepared we need to be—wherever we are with whatever we have with whatever we can do. Just like the Scouts say: Be prepared!

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