Wellness at Sea
FROM SAILORS' SOCIETY

WELCOME TO WELLNESS AT SEA CYCLE 2: WEEKS 4-6

SIMON'S TOWN SCHOOL
LAWHILL MARITIME CENTRE
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Dear Friend,

I hope you are keeping well? The world we currently live in is a very strange place. As a family member of a seafarer, you have been going through a lot. In recent times, you were not only faced with a pandemic which saw some of your loved ones being stuck on vessels, but in some cases, also with the challenge of your partner struggling to get a contract in a world with closed borders. It's understandable that fears over their health and safety are ever mounting and constantly playing on your mind.

But, it's also about YOU! At home, you have been coping with the tremendous stresses of living within a pandemic. Your responsibilities towards those who are left behind when your husband, wife, partner, son, daughter, mom or dad goes off to sea is significant and can be very stressful.

This section introduces you to Sailors' Society's Crisis Response Network (CRN) and how it can help you when you are experiencing a crisis. Whether it is a traumatic event, a concern over your emotional health or if you just need a listening ear – we want you to know you are not alone! **Our crisis response services are also available to the families of seafarers.**

What happens when life spirals out of control? From time to time an event or series of events can leave us feeling depleted and overwhelmed. Whether something happens to a loved-one or yourself - a sudden illness, an accident, living within a pandemic, or natural disaster - these are all traumatic experiences which can provoke powerful and disturbing emotions in us which generally settle in time, without needing professional help.

But we all need a helping hand from time to time. Events like this can turn into a scenario where you feel helpless and anxious and where there is a risk of harm or danger to the self or others. **This is the time to reach out for support.**

Immediately after such an event it is common for people to feel shocked, or numb, or unable to accept what has happened. You may also be in denial – acting as if the event never occurred. Because you are so unique, you will react in a unique way. You will go through your own process to get to grips with what has happened. In this time, it is normal to experience mixed feelings. Being **scared**, feeling **powerless**, **angry**, **guilty**, **sad** or even **ashamed and embarrassed** - these are all normal. Physically you may struggle to sleep, have night terrors, headaches, changes in appetite, fatigue and more.

Remember, it is not you that are abnormal – it is the situation you were exposed to that is abnormal.

We want to invite you to **reach out**! We want to assure you, **you are not alone!**

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If you or a family member are affected by a traumatic event, there are a few things that you must keep in mind:

It takes time
To get to grips with such an event can take weeks or months. Learning to live with the new reality after such an event is an ongoing process.

Connect with others who know what you're going through
Sharing your feelings and story with someone who truly understands because of your shared experience can make your load lighter. Learning from how they are handling the aftermath of the event can be very helpful.

Ask for support
Asking for support in not always easy. Trust friends and family to help where needed - you are important to them. Make use of resources like Sailors' Society's CRN Network.

You are important
Being strong for others is important but to play that role and to heal your own wounds, you need to take time for yourself. Focus on you! You are as important as those you support.

Small steps
Do things bit by bit. Set small objectives and celebrate achieving them.

If you feel it can help, find out what happened
Facts can help us heal. If you have uncertainty about the events that occurred, try to clarify it. Be aware that exploring the facts can bring about powerful emotions. Ask someone you trust to do this with you.

Routine helps
Eating, sleeping and exercising are key building blocks of how we feel. Make sure you get into a routine as soon as possible and do these basics right.

Challenge yourself to do 'normal'
Sometimes getting back to the things you did as part of your everyday life is a challenge. Try to identify 'normal' things that you are not doing anymore. Challenge yourself to do these one at a time until you get back in the swing of things.

What is expected of you?
As explained before, every cycle will ask you to take a practical action. Remember that this journey will only be as valuable and exciting as you allow it to be. It will only be as rich an experience as the work you put into it. This campaign provides you with ample resources to improve your wellbeing, but ultimately, you are the master of your own ship - responsible for your own wellbeing.

In cycle one we asked you to join the conversation and join us on social media. If you have not done this, make time to do this now.

What is the action for this cycle?
We want to ask you two things:

Firstly, sign a pledge. This may seem a futile exercise but getting to a point where you pledge to yourself to take care of your wellbeing is extremely important. There is something powerful in taking an action, in putting pen to paper.

If you want to share this with us on social media, go for it, but ultimately this is for you. It represents, in the simplest of ways, a choice for a mind-set saying that you take responsibility for the life you live. Part of taking responsibility is to commit to reach out and seek help when needed. Part of this obligation is to pro-actively learn about places you can reach out to when things get tough. You are not alone! We are all in this together.

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Secondly, save our CRN number on your phone. It's good to know a helping hand is just a phone call away.

I hope that taking another small step on the journey will be a positive experience for you and that it will contribute to a better understanding of yourself and the maritime world. I hope that it will have some impact on your day-to-day journey – even if it's small, but even better if it is profound.

Kind regards,

Johan Smith
Wellness at Sea programme manager, Sailors' Society

Do you need someone to talk to?
Call our 24/7 helpline on **+1-856-330-3888** for free, confidential advice and support or visit **www.sailors-society.org/wellness-seaspan** or email **crisis@sailors-society.org** visit **www.facebook.com/SailorsSocietyCRN**

MY PERSONAL WELLNESS PLEDGE

I, _____
make this pledge to myself and the people I care for. I will actively participate in my personal wellness because I realise that life is mine to live.

Where I fall short, I commit to making changes to grow as a person.

Where I am strong, I undertake to celebrate this strength to the benefit of myself and others as I endeavour to be the best person I can be.

I am open to new ideas that can enhance my Wellness and committed to:

1) honestly look at my relationships, on board and at home
2) investigate my emotions and recognise how my emotions affect my day-to-day life
3) care for my body
4) keep on learning
5) be true to myself and to the values and beliefs that guide me

When things get too much, I will reach out and seek support.

When I do not succeed, I will try again, and again!

Sign : _____ Date: _____

REACH OUT TO US TODAY, EVEN IF IT IS JUST TO HAVE A LISTENING EAR:

Sailors' Society's Crisis Response Network provides a rapid response trauma care and counselling service for survivors of piracy attacks, natural disasters and crises at sea.

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CRN
CRISIS RESPONSE NETWORK
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