

SUB-COMMITTEE ON HUMAN ELEMENT,
TRAINING AND WATCHKEEPING
11th session
Agenda item 6

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COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE 1978 STCW CONVENTION AND CODE

Mental health – Introduction of well-being and stress management education for cadets and future seafarers: Healthy and happy seafarers

Submitted by ITF

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document introduces the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)'s activities that could facilitate the effective implementation of the amendment to table A-VI/1-4 of the STCW Code on the contribution to the prevention of and response to violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault. The document also contains the well-being hand-outs for cadets and students as well as an instructor guide developed and utilized globally by ITF over the years to facilitate improving seafarers' mental health well-being.

*Strategic direction, 6
if applicable:*

Output: 6.17

Action to be taken: Paragraph 12

Related documents: ILO/IMO JTWG-SIHE 2/6 and HTW 11/6

Introduction

1 If one thinks about maritime training around the world, it is primarily focused on seafarers' abilities concerning the practical issues encountered on a ship. Maritime training is about getting ships from point A to point B in the safest, quickest and most efficient way. A fundamental aspect which can have a profound impact on seafarers' lives and ultimately on the shipping world with growing interests is mental health. With a focus on industry-specific training, the human side of what the job as a seafarer requires, is often neglected.

2 Life is extremely challenging for a seafarer, especially on a ship where they work and spend all their time during a voyage. There are multiple issues, such as an extremely demanding work environment, adherence to strict deadlines, different time zones, interdependency in teams and being completely away from home and loved ones. All these factors play a negative influence on the mental health of seafarers leading to stress and

depression. At the same time, working conditions make it harder for seafarers to access information, counselling, medical and related services to decrease their risk of being depressed.

3 The world has recently gone through a "once in a generation pandemic". It is still an unknown territory with some degree of uncertainty around us. In 2019, well before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, ITF and the ITF Seafarers' Trust commissioned Yale University of Medicine, in the United States, to conduct a study on "Mental Health and Risk Factors in Seafarers". A Survey was conducted among 1,600 global seafarers and 36% of them were young seafarers below the age of 35. According to the study, prevalence of depression and anxiety among the surveyed seafarers was 25% and 17%, respectively (<https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/news/mental-stress-levels-sea-dangerously-high-study-finds>).

4 Suicide rates among seafarers have more than tripled since 2014, according to figures from the UK P&I Club. In 2015, suicide was cited as the cause of death in 15.3% of identified mental health cases, having risen from 4.4.% in 2014, according to the Club's internal claims system. Between 2001 and 2005, merchant seafarers scored the second highest level of suicides amongst all professions, after coal miners, according to research published by Swansea University in 2013. Cadets appear to be the most vulnerable. Of the crew suicides notified to the UK P&I Club in 2015, some 40% of those who died were cadets.

5 Although it is very clear that we are not just talking about short periods of feeling lonely or blue but deep despair, but seafarers' mental well-being is still seen as a taboo subject and a poorly discussed issue. Maritime industry urgently needs to respond to this emerging crisis. Some employers have started tele-counselling services for their crews, but confidentiality and trust issues prevent seafarers from seeking help. Many times, they are afraid to talk about their mental health conditions and seek necessary support and care because they are afraid of losing their jobs and being blacklisted. Some of the ITF affiliates have also developed a 24/7 psychological helpline for seafarers to manage stress and depression (<https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/wellbeing-directory>).

6 ITF takes a proactive role in educating cadets on well-being issues during their time in maritime academies. We feel that if we can introduce a short module in the curriculum on "understanding stress, early management and coping with stress" then the cadets will be better off when they join ships.

7 ITF and its affiliates are committed to helping all seafarers and cadets, the future seafarers, so that they are healthy and happy. It is widely acknowledged by experts on behaviour change that if any issues related to behaviour change are introduced at an early age, there is more possibility of long-lasting impact. It is a reality that when cadets will join ships as either deck cadets or junior officers, they will have a challenging life much different from life on shore while they were students. There will be stress due to the working nature and conditions. It is important we prepare cadets/students, and they are aware of the reality and have knowledge and skills to manage work pressure and stress and do not become depressed: develop suicidal tendency.

8 In recent years, ITF has been working with experts to develop modules on "Well-being for seafarers", which includes HIV/AIDS prevention and managing stress so that maritime academies all around the world can educate their students and create awareness on these important topics (<https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/guidance-factsheets>). Through a number of piloting and field testing, we have developed a short module called, "Stress: Understanding, Early Management and Coping".

9 This module could be used for table A-VI/1-4 of the STCW Code "Specification of minimum standard of competence in personal safety and social responsibilities" and new competence requirement amended by resolution MSC.560(108) on *Contribute to the prevention of and response to violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault*.

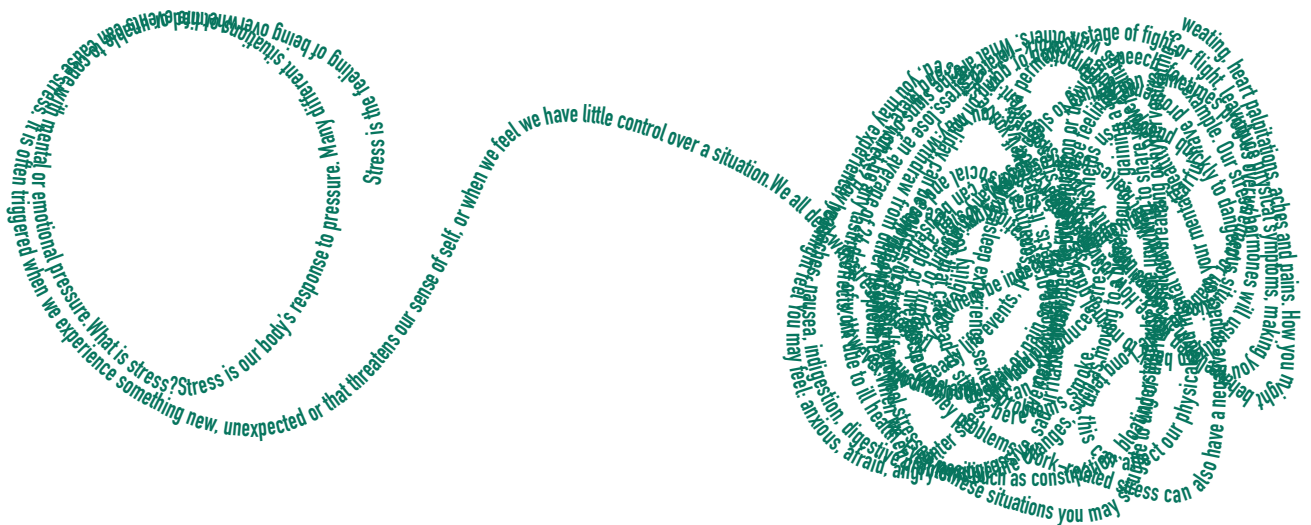
10 ITF and its affiliates have developed collaboration with maritime academies in many countries and have organized a three-day Training of Trainers (TOT) course for their faculty members. Until the second half of 2024, the following countries have been in this journey: Indonesia, the Philippines, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Mexico, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Panama, Thailand, Uruguay, Croatia, South Africa, Malaysia, Romania, Montenegro, Albania, Türkiye, Bulgaria, Algeria, Georgia and Ukraine. In March 2024, an MoU was signed with the Sea Transport division of the Indonesian Ministry of Transportation to provide them with technical support to introduce stress management education in all of their public and private maritime institutions. Through six TOT courses, we have trained 200 faculty members from 50 maritime institutions, and now they have already introduced the stress management module as a co-curricular programme, as set out in the annex.

11 ITF strongly believes that if well-being education is introduced in maritime academies, this will make sure every graduate passing through these academies has proper understanding of stress and has the basic knowledge and capacity to manage it when they start their career on board ships.

Action requested of the Sub-Committee

12 The Sub-Committee is invited to note the information provided in this document.

INSTRUCTOR MANUAL



STRESS: UNDERSTANDING, EARLY MANAGEMENT AND COPING

INSTRUCTOR MANUAL



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INTRODUCTION

If one thinks about maritime training around the world, it is primarily focused on seafarers' abilities concerning the practical issues encountered on a ship. Maritime training is about getting ships from point A to point B in the quickest, safest way. However, maritime training seems to have missed a fundamental aspect which can have a profound impact on seafarers' lives and ultimately on the shipping world. With a focus on industry specific training, the human side of what the job as a seafarer requires, is often neglected.

Life is extremely challenging for a seafarer, especially on board, where they work and spend all their time during a voyage. There are multiple issues such as demanding work environment, adherence to strict deadlines, different time zones, interdependency in teams and completely away from home and loved one. All these factors play a negative influence on the mental health of seafarers which can lead to stress and depression. At the same time, working conditions make it harder for seafarers to access information, counselling, medical and related services to decrease their risk of being depressed.

In 2019, well before the start of the COVID 19 pandemic, the ITF commissioned Yale University of medicine to conduct a study on, "Mental Health and Risk Factors in Seafarers". According to the study, prevalence of depression and anxiety among the surveyed seafarers was 25% and 17%, respectively. The Covid pandemic and the sudden halting of normal life has caused financial instability and uncertainty for seafarers and, because of the crew change crisis, feelings of guilt or helplessness for not being present to support their families. There is also fear and sadness. Together, these have triggered a mental health pandemic that can likely outlive the virus itself, with potentially devastating results. Although it is very clear that we are not just talking about short periods feeling lonely or blue but deep despair, but seafarers' mental wellbeing is still seen as a taboo and a poorly discussed issue. Maritime industry is responding slowly to this emerging crisis.

Although it is very clear that we are not just talking about short periods feeling lonely or blue but deep despair, but seafarers' mental wellbeing is still seen as a taboo and a poorly discussed issue. Maritime industry is responding slowly to this emerging crisis.

ITF wants to take a pro-active role to educate young seafarers on wellbeing issues during their time in maritime institutions/academies. We feel that if we can introduce a short module in the curriculum on “Stress: Understanding, Early Management and Coping” then the young seafarers will be better off when they will join ships. It is widely acknowledged by behaviour change experts that if any issues related to behaviour change is introduced at early age, there is more possibility of long-lasting impact. It is important, we prepare future seafarers, and they are aware of the reality and have knowledge and skill to manage work pressure and stress and do not become depressed; develop suicidal tendency.

The ITF Well-being program in collaboration with some of its affiliates and number of reputed maritime academies have developed a model module on, “Stress: Understanding, Early Management and Coping”. We hope maritime academies and institutions from different parts of the world will find this module useful to introduce mental health education in their curriculum.

Let us all work together to make sure all seafarers are healthy and happy.

Dr. Syed Asif Altaf

ITF Global Wellbeing Program Coordinator

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1 **UNDERSTANDING STRESS AND EARLY MANAGEMENT OF STRESS AMONG CADETS AND SEAFARERS**

Imagine a person holding a glass of water in his hand. Initially, it would be quite easy for him to hold it as the weight of the glass may still not be felt. A few minutes later, the person may begin to experience some heaviness and pain in his forearm, but will still keep holding the glass. This will continue for a few more minutes where the pain is likely to increase, and his hand might start shaking. A few minutes later, he might have to drop the glass, because his hand will just not allow him to keep holding the glass. The individual will have to take a break and get back to holding the glass again.

Stress is similar to the experience of the person in the scenario above. We all experience stress as human beings on a daily basis and a healthy dose of stress helps us stay motivated and achieve our targets and goals. However, when the demands from our environment around us and from within us become greater than the resources we have to meet those demands, we experience negative stress which can be harmful to us in the long run. When our glasses are half full or nearing empty, it is difficult for us to fill other people's glasses as our resources have begun to deplete. Our glasses need to be full or near full in order for us to meet internal and external demands. When our glasses run on empty for a long period of time, it can bring about harmful health consequences and also problems in relationships, work, and social situations.

A model that we can use to understand stress and its impact is the Psychological well-being model developed by Carol Ryff. It consists of six elements that make up adequate well-being in an individual. Appropriate levels of these elements help us manage stress adaptively and they also act as a preventative mechanism for stress related consequences.

The six dimensions are as follows.

Self- Acceptance

The individual has a positive attitude towards himself and accepts all the varied aspects of self, including both strengths and weaknesses.

Personal Growth

A person's feelings of continued development and effectiveness, and an openness to experience and challenges. This can increase resilience in an individual and therefore help him/her manage stress in a positive manner.

Purpose in life

An individual has goals and beliefs that give direction to their life. Life has meaning and purpose, perhaps because of satisfying work, religious beliefs, or devotion to a cause or needs of others.

Environmental mastery

A feeling of competence and the ability to manage the complex environment of today's fast-paced life. Mastery is reflected in a person's ability to create a personally suitable living situation, including successful management of work, finances, family, housing, health etc

Autonomy

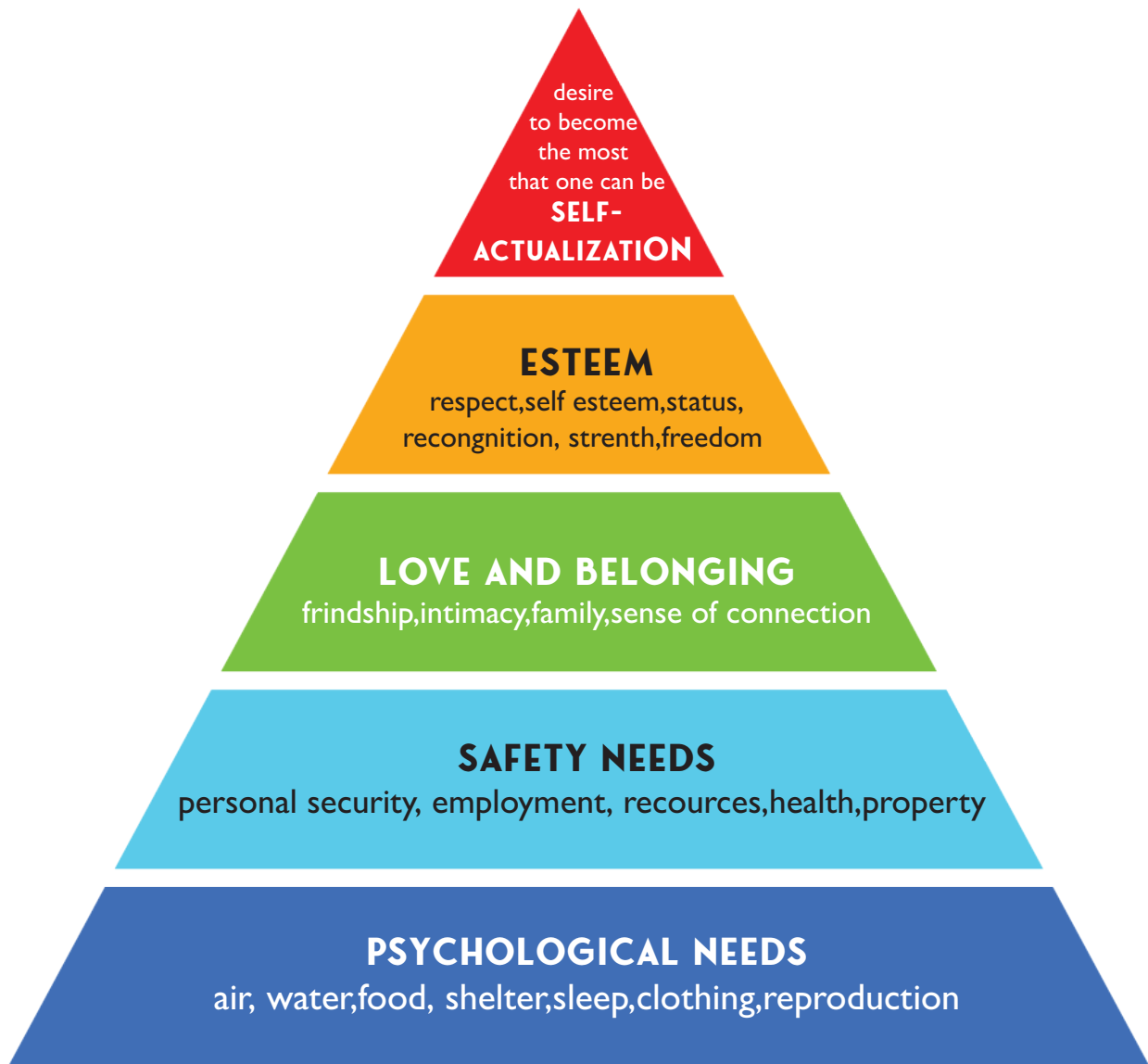
Autonomous people are comfortable with self-direction, taking initiative, and working independently. Such people possess internal standards that guide their actions and allow them to resist negative social pressures from others.

Positive relations with others

Positive relations refer to quality rather than the quantity of our relationships. Having good friends, a satisfying marriage and supportive relations with co-workers all express this dimension.

There are situations or events that put pressure on us, for example times where we have lots to do and think about and don't have much control over what happens. Healthy levels of the dimensions given above would facilitate how we cope with stress. Our reactions to being placed under pressure and the feelings we get when we have demands placed on us would be better managed.

Another model used to understand stress is the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Stress often is prevalent when our needs are not met as human beings. These needs can be our basic physiological needs or more higher order needs like love and belongingness.



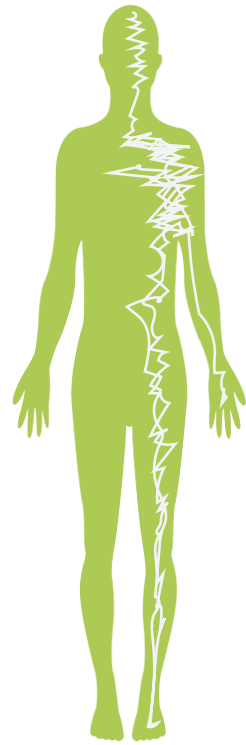
Mcleod, S. (2019). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. [online] Simply Psychology. Available at: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html> [Accessed 14 Feb. 2019].

Needs lower down in the hierarchy must be satisfied before one can attend to needs higher up. When basic needs like sleep, food, water etc are not met, it places our mind and body under stress. For example, if you are hungry, and you are listening to a lecture on stress, the chances are that you will not absorb much of what is being said in the lecture. Needs such as personal safety, employment etc also are very important in our discussion of stress management. In the shipping industry, inadequate pay, late salary payments, unsafe and unseaworthy vessels, the lack of rest etc can lead to low motivation and high level of stress.

1.1 STRESS AND THE BODY

Severe and chronic stress affects both the brain and the body in different ways causing negative health consequences. Hormones such as cortisol and adrenalin are released during stressful situations preparing the body to FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE.

Exposure to stress causes the body to release adrenalin which constricts blood vessels and increases the heart rate. Cortisol is also released which causes an increase in blood glucose levels. It is released in order to provide energy for over active cells allowing for the FIGHT FLIGHT OR FREEZE response to take place. If cortisol and adrenalin are released consistently it can result in hypertension and cardiovascular disease. Other conditions like anxiety, depression, sleep problems, weight gain and memory problems can also come about as a result of excessive hormonal release.



1.2 LIFE ONBOARD SHIPS

People chose to work onboard ships for varying reasons. For some it is the novelty and the excitement. The sense of adventure it brings with it and the opportunity to experience new countries and cultures. However, for some it is about escaping painful situations in their lives and creating distance from problematic relationships. For some others, it is just a means of earning a living, minus the passion.

Life onboard ships can be both exciting and very challenging. The ability to learn about different cultures, learn new skills, and to climb up the ladder to higher positions are positive aspects of seafaring that many active seafarers talk about. However, there is also the less positive side to the shipping industry. Long hours of work with little rest, lack of consistent sleep, pressure and demands from superiors, long periods away from home and loved ones and the difficulty to adjust to new environments and relationships can cause a great deal of stress, emotional pain and sometimes mental health problems. Another important factor to consider is chronic fatigue. Continuous work without adequate nutrition, and rest can cause severe fatigue resulting in muscle weakness, dehydration, lack of coordination etc. This can also result in fatal consequences when working onboard a ship. It can also result in the unsafe operation of machinery etc. Fatigue can be both physical and psychological.

1.3 SIGNS THAT A SEAFARER IS EXPERIENCING STRESS

PHYSICAL

Fatigue	Increased heart rate
Headaches	Dehydration
Sleep difficulties	Blurred eyesight/sore eyes
Muscle aches	Grinding teeth
Gastritis	Chest pain
Increased/decreased appetite	Constipation, diarrhoea
High blood pressure	Feeling sick, dizzy or fainting

PSYCHOLOGICAL

Irritable/aggressive	Uninterested in life
Over-burdened	Confusion
Nervous/afraid	Memory problems
Racing thoughts	Difficulty concentrating
Depressed	Anxious
Neglected/lonely	

BEHAVIOURAL

- Difficulty making decisions
- Avoiding situations that are troubling
- Snapping at people
- Biting nails
- Picking at skin
- Smoking or drinking alcohol more than usual
- Tearful/crying
- Procrastination
- Withdrawal

1.4 STRESS AND COPING- INDIVIDUAL COPING STYLES

EMOTION FOCUSED COPING

Involves trying to reduce the unhelpful emotional responses associated with stress. Some emotion focused coping methods include distraction, talking about your emotions, counselling, prayer, meditation, etc.

ACTIVE COPING

Focus on trying to control the problem or to function despite the problem.

AVOIDANCE COPING

Engaging efforts away from the problem.

PROBLEM FOCUSED COPING

Targets the causes of stress in practical ways which tackles the problem or stressful situation.

Problem focused coping methods include time management, problem solving, conflict resolution etc.

PASSIVE COPING

Withdrawing and surrendering control over problem.

APPROACH COPING

Engaging with the problem and its causes.



2 STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

2.1 TIME MANAGEMENT

Appropriate time management is a key component of effective stress management. Time or the lack of it is often directly linked to increased levels of stress due to the feelings of anxiety and distress that it brings with it. Poor management of time often leads to an overload of work, and most importantly a backlog of responsibilities and duties that pile up, causing not just stress, but also poor health outcomes overall. Efficient allocation of time is essential in a marine environment in order for responsibilities to be met and to achieve a balance between activity and rest.

2.2 TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

I. EISENHOWER'S URGENT/IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE
LOREM IPSUM



It is important that one understands the distinction between important and urgent in order to be effective and efficient in time management. This in the long run can help minimize stress levels and also reduce the burden of tight deadlines.

IMPORTANT

These activities have an outcome that leads us to achieving our personal and professional goals.

URGENT

These tasks or activities call for our immediate attention. These tasks are usually linked with achieving someone else's goals. The consequences of not dealing with these tasks are immediate and it often requires our urgent attention. This means that we direct our fullest attention and concentration towards these activities.

IMPORTANT AND URGENT:

These activities could be one's you haven't foreseen and others that have been left till the last minute. It is important to leave some time in your daily schedule for the unexpected. This could be a crisis or a sudden unplanned responsibility or duty.

IMPORTANT BUT NOT URGENT:

These activities would help you get closer to achieving your goals, both personal and professional. It is vital that you have a considerable amount of time to complete these activities in an appropriate manner. Therefore, you prevent them from becoming urgent. This would then help you avoid the stress of your work becoming more last minute and urgent.

NOT IMPORTANT BUT URGENT:

These activities often restrict you from achieving your goals as it mostly involves other people. You can make a decision whether to reschedule these activities or to delegate them. Politely refusing to engage in certain tasks by saying 'No' is also another effective way of not being interrupted in your journey of achieving your goals.

NOT IMPORTANT AND NOT URGENT:

These tasks and activities are most often distractions and are best avoided. It is advisable to ignore or cancel these activities and be clear about your boundaries with others.

Eisenhower's Urgent/Important Principle Matrix



2. TO- DO LISTS

To- do lists are another effective way of managing one's time as this would allow prioritization of tasks and responsibilities in an order that is meaningful. To-do lists can be written on a daily basis or on a weekly basis depending on an individual's workload and other commitments. It is important that these lists are written down in an accessible manner and it is best to use paper instead of electronic devices to do the same.

3. COMBATING PROCRASTINATION

Procrastination is a common trap that we fall into at different stages of our lives, be it at work or in our personal lives. It affects performance, and also contributes to stress and anxiety. It is crucial that the distinction between laziness and procrastination is made clear. Laziness is closely associated with inactivity, apathy and a lack of motivation to act whereas procrastination is an active choice one makes to do something else instead of the task at hand.

For example, the third mate on a ship is responsible for inspecting safety equipment. However, the individual might find it more comforting and interesting to do something completely different leaving the equipment check for later. This is an active choice the third mate made, and it could potentially have serious consequences in the event of an emergency.



COMMON REASONS FOR PROCRASTINATION

1. **Perfectionism:** Avoiding starting a task that one believes not to have the necessary skills to do, rather than do it imperfectly.
2. **Fear of failure:** Doubts about one's ability and a lack of confidence can result in putting off tasks because one might find comfort in doing something else that they feel more capable of completing.
3. **Poor organization:** A lack of a proper schedule and task list can lead to procrastination.
4. **Poor decision making:** The inability to make sound decisions can cause one to put off taking action in case one does the wrong thing

TIPS TO COMBAT PROCRASTINATION

1. **Commit to the task:** focus on doing and not avoiding. Expose yourself to what makes you uncomfortable and anxious and you will notice the discomfort gradually beginning to reduce. Avoiding tasks that make us uncomfortable will only perpetuate the anxiety and stress that we feel.
2. **Be accountable to someone:** Have someone check on your progress. Positive peer pressure is an effective tool in beating procrastination.
3. **Act as you go:** Deal with day to day tasks when they arise rather than letting them pile up over time.
4. **Reduce distractions:** Set up your electronic devices in a way that they do not disturb you when engaging in a task and tune out the noise around you.

5. Tackle the hardest tasks at your peak times: Reflect on whether you work best at a certain time of day in certain conditions and do the tasks that are most daunting at that time.

6. Set yourself **SMART** Goals

S- Specific (well- defined and clear)

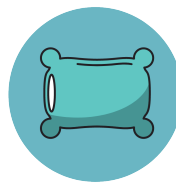
M- Measurable (Know if the goal is attainable and how far away completion is)

A-Achievable (acceptable and action oriented)

R- Realistic (within the availability of resources and time)

T- Time bound (enough time to achieve the goal)

2.3 SLEEP HYGIENE



Sleep is a basic human need which is universal. It's an important function that allows the human brain to function at its optimal capacity. It allows for adequate decision-making ability and also enables efficient problem solving. The lack of adequate sleep causes gradual physical and cognitive impairment that in serious cases can lead to death.

Environmental and lifestyle changes can be made to improve the quality of sleep in an individual. In a marine environment, adequate sleep is essential in order to make quick decisions, manage critical situations and to stay alert, especially when performing crucial tasks like navigation etc. Sleep deprivation can lead to errors that can prove to be fatal, especially when handling machinery onboard a ship. The lack of sleep also leads to irritability, frequent mood fluctuations, and unhealthy dietary habits.

SLEEP HYGIENE TIPS

1. Maintain regular hours of bedtime and arising.
2. Avoid heavy meals before bedtime.
3. Maintain a regular exercise schedule and avoid exercising close to bedtime.
4. If you are pre-occupied with thoughts and feelings while trying to go to bed, write them down and revisit them in the morning.
5. Keep the cabin quiet and dark as much as possible.
6. Avoid watching television in bed or using electronic devices in bed when you cannot fall asleep.
7. Consume caffeinated products in the evening.
8. Avoid using alcohol or other substances to help you sleep.
9. Get out of bed and engage in something boring if you cannot fall asleep after being in bed for 20 minutes. Get back to bed only when you feel sleepy.
10. Avoid talking on the phone in bed.

2.4 PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS

Problem solving is an essential skill that is required onboard a vessel and also in general day to day life. Our ability to actively solve problems reduces our stress levels and also improves productivity. Learning problem solving skills helps one understand that problems are an unavoidable part of daily life and it also helps one develop self-efficacy in dealing with daily hassles and challenges.

Problem solving skills are directed at changing the nature of a situation such that it no longer represents a problem (i.e. a financial crisis has come up in your family while you are at sea and problem-solving skills can be applied here in order for the crisis to be resolved and for you to not feel stressed due to the problem). Problem solving abilities also alter unhelpful reactions to problems which are mostly emotional in nature. This enhances the ability to accept that problems are a normal part of life. The reduction of negative emotional reactions would help one look rationally and factually at the given situation. This would enable better judgment and decision making.

I. STEPS IN PROBLEM SOLVING

i. Identifying the problem and define it

- a.** *Seek available facts*
- b.** *Describe facts in clear language*
- c.** *Separate facts from assumptions*
- d.** *Set realistic goals*
- e.** *Identify obstacles that must be overcome*

Obstacles can be barriers that hinder one's achievement of their goals and there sometimes can be conflicting goals which can act as an impediment to problem solving. The lack of adequate resources is also another obstacle. It is also important to consider emotional difficulties and reactions that hinders effective problem solving.

2. PRIORITIZING PROBLEMS

Problems need to be realistic and solvable in order to be prioritized and they need to be relatively easily solved and the ability to see outcomes and change is important.

- ii. Brainstorm-** consider as many alternatives and ideas as you can. Quantity creates quality. Be creative.
- iii. Consider** pros and cons for each possible solution
- iv. Chose** a solution that is likely to work after weighing advantages and disadvantages.
- v. Plan** step by step, when you need to do solve the problem. What? When? With whom? Where? How? How would you get around any blocks?
- vi. Do It!** Implement your action plan.
- vii. Review** for successes and obstacles
- viii. Tackle** the next problem



Activity

Using the guidelines to reflect on your experiences

Think of a recent problem that you faced while onboard a ship.

Define the problem clearly using the guidelines given above and apply the 8-step problem solving method. Share your plan of action with a colleague or your instructor for feedback.



TEACHING TIP

Motivate students to be creative in generating solutions by avoiding early judgment in step two, brainstorming. Encourage them to come up with the wildest ideas.



GAME: HUMAN KNOT

INSTRUCTIONS:

Ideal group size is approximately 10. If there are two or more groups doing the task simultaneously, have the groups reasonably spaced out, so they don't feel distracted by a sense of competition. Ask participants to form a circle, shoulder to shoulder. Ask participants to each place a hand in the middle of the circle and to grasp another hand. Then, ask participants to put their other hand in the middle and grasp a different person's hand. Don't let participants let go of hands. Explain to the participants that you would like them to untangle themselves without letting go of hands, into a circle.

Reflect together on how the group generated solutions together to solve the problem at hand.

2.5 ASSERTIVENESS

Assertiveness is a healthy form of communication where you stand up for yourself in a calm and positive manner. This is the middle ground between being aggressive and passively accepting what is not right for you. Assertiveness is a skill that can be learnt and developed through practice and an effective tool for communication to reduce stress and to increase resilience.

An assertive individual is able to hold his/her ground and put across ideas and opinions without causing hurt or discomfort to another person. It is a mixture of respecting our own thoughts, feelings and beliefs while respecting and acknowledging those of others. This involves being open in expressing wishes, thoughts and feelings and listening to the views of others and responding appropriately without being unduly critical.

1. "Why can't you just do what you are told, and see that the food is served for sailors on time?"

"I would really appreciate it if you could put in more effort to serve food for sailors on time."

2. "What time do you call this? You're nearly half an hour late. I am fed up with you letting me down all the time."

"Yes, I am later than I hoped to be and I can see this has annoyed you."

In both the sample dialogues given above, there is an assertive response to an aggressive approach. An assertive response could also help deescalate situations that otherwise can be conflictual.

Body language and its effective use is also vital in assertive communication. Maintaining appropriate eye contact, a confident, non-threatening posture and using a firm, yet kind tone can help get your point across.



Activity

Assertive circle

Instructions: Call for 6 volunteers from your training group and ask them to form a circle. Next, ask for one extra volunteer from the audience and send him/her outside the training hall with another instructor.

Instruct the 6 volunteers to form a tight circle by binding arms together, shoulder to shoulder where there is no space left for anyone to join in. Now, call in the extra volunteer who was initially sent out and instruct him/her to somehow get into the closed circle. You will notice that the individual will initially try physical means to get into the circle like pushing, shoving, etc but the group of 6 volunteers will not let the individual enter the space. Let this go on for a few minutes and then move in and out of the space while asking the individual to think outside the box. Encourage the individual to think about alternative methods.

The group will only let the person into the circle if he/she requests '*can I please enter?*'



REFLECTION

Lead a discussion with your class about their observations and also ask both the group of 6 volunteers and the individual who was tasked with entering the circle about how they felt, and what their learning's were.

2.6 DEVELOP RESILIENCE

Resilience refers to humans' amazing ability to bounce back and even thrive in the face of serious life challenges. There can be multiple challenges a seafarer might face while at sea or onshore. Loneliness, feeling homesick, conflicts with fellow crew members, and even illness can be significant adversities that can crop up.

The following factors can enable dealing with such challenges in a resilient manner.

1. Good intellectual and problem-solving skills
2. A positive self-image and personal effectiveness
3. An optimistic outlook
4. Ability to regulate and control emotions and impulses
5. A healthy sense of humour.
6. Close relationships with family and fellow crew members.
7. A structured and organized environment
8. Feeling safe
9. Easy access to health services
10. Individual talents and skills

Resilience often acts as a buffer to stress and reduces long-term consequences of severe stress.



Activity

Resilient Noodles

Instructions:

Divide your class into groups of 4/5 and hand each group a bunch of spaghetti sticks and a piece of twine. Instruct the groups to create a structure out of the spaghetti sticks and it is imperative that the structure stands on its own. Then, go around the teaching space and destroy each structure that your students have built rather aggressively. Once each structure is destroyed, instruct your students to rebuild another structure from scratch from what they have left, and this structure also needs to stand on its own. Encourage your students positively and provide a great deal of positive feedback.



REFLECTION

- a)** How did it feel when what you build with so much care and attention was destroyed in front of your eyes?
- b).** How did it feel to start building from scratch again?
- c).** What did you feel when you completed your new structure?

2.7 FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

Managing relationships with a seafarer's family is a key source of concern and sometimes stress when onboard a ship. Limited access to communication facilities and time constraints make it challenging for families to keep in touch with their loved ones at sea. This creates patterns of loneliness, frustration and can cause discord within the family as well. Communication breakdown in a marriage or in a wider family plays a major role in there being conflict and disharmony. This is a stressor that the seafarer has to deal with when away from home for a long period of time.

There are some simple strategies that one can use to minimize communication breakdown and frustration within the family system while at sea.

1.CREATE A SCHEDULE: Set a schedule that suits both parties so that you can plan your duties and responsibilities around it, enabling better communication with your partner/other family. It is acknowledged that schedules can change due to work pressures. However, it is important that the other party is notified as much as possible. This communicates respect and care.

2.TALK TO OTHER PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR FAMILY: This can help maintain a strong bond by sharing the things you enjoy most about your family back home.

3. HAVE ACCESS TO A GOOD COMMUNICATION SYSTEM: If there is internet connectivity onboard, make use of services like skype to keep in touch.

Five minutes of communication can have a great impact on both the seafarer and their family.

4. SHARE THE GOOD AND THE BAD: Talk to loved ones about the good times but also about feelings of loneliness, despair and sadness. It is important that the seafarer expresses vulnerability as well. This creates authentic communication and also enables the seafarer to receive support and hope from people at home. Sharing difficult emotions helps one unburden and feel less distressed.

2.8 MULTI-CULTURAL COMPETENCE AT SEA



Multi-cultural environments are common onboard ships around the world where there are crew members and senior officers from different nationalities, ethnic backgrounds and religions. Multiple languages are spoken, and people from different cultures have different habits and practices. This can be stressful for some people because of communication difficulties especially when there are accents that one cannot comprehend and when there are certain practices that may seem alien.

It is important that respect is demonstrated towards people from different backgrounds in order for respect to be reciprocated. Attempting to learn the basics of different languages, and also about other cultures is a powerful way of showing respect and also reducing stress associated with working with crew from other nationalities. Establishing friendships with different kinds of people is a positive way of developing interpersonal relationships and skills. It also acts as a support system for the seafarer, to have a network of people they associate with. It is also important to be open to working with diverse sexual orientations and gender identity. Discrimination onboard a ship can prove to be extremely isolating and stressful. It is also important that visible and invisible disabilities are considered when striving towards multi-cultural competence. An inclusive culture onboard a ship can be a strong buffer against stress and other mental health problems.

There are also talents, skills, strengths and abilities that come with people from different cultures. It is important that these positive aspects of a person are drawn out, and used together with the ability of other crew members.

2.9 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Exercise is an important health behaviour that both impacts the body and the brain positively. It contributes positively to mental health and also helps regulate blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar etc. It also has a relationship with a seafarer's self-esteem and confidence.

Exercise releases a chemical called endorphins in the brain which creates positive feelings in our mind and body, leaving us feeling energized and motivated. It also works muscle groups that otherwise might not be used in the work environment of a seafarer.

30-45 minutes of exercise with medium intensity is recommended for all seafarers on a daily basis in order to maintain mental and physical health. This does not have to be at a gym or be anything too complex. It could involve a jog, a swim, if the ship contains a pool, or it could even involve doing jumping jacks in your cabin. The options are many, and the important point is that there is consistency in the seafarer's exercise routine. Activities like yoga can also be very effective in preventing exacerbated stress and also in maintaining physical health.

2.10 RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Practicing relaxation techniques as a part of a daily routine can help manage stress levels and increase productivity and performance. Relaxation affects both the body and the mind positively and causes fatigue to reduce and therefore also contributes to safe working conditions. There is a variety of relaxation techniques that one can use and most of them do not require a large amount of time. The key is to not just practice these techniques when stressed or fatigued, but to include it in a daily schedule. It can contribute to better sleep as well.

I. BREATHING EXERCISES

a.) Slow breathing 4-2-4

Breathe in through your nose slowly for four counts and fill your abdomen with air. Breathe from your stomach and not your chest. Hold your breath for two counts and then exhale slowly for four counts through your mouth. Repeat this cycle five times or more till you notice yourself beginning to feel relaxed and less stressed.

b.) Alternative nostril breathing



- The left-hand rests on the lap, palm facing up.
- Take a deep breath in and, closing the right nostril with your thumb, breathe out through the left nostril.
- Then take a deep breath in through the left nostril, close the left nostril with your ring finger and pinky at the end of the inhale, and exhale through the right nostril.
- Repeat.
- Do this with your eyes closed for about five minutes.
- Notice the effects on your body and mind.

c.) Progressive muscular relaxation

- Sit comfortably so that both your feet are flat on the floor and place your hands on your thighs.
- Close your eyes and keep your spine erect.
- Take five deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Focus on your feet, take a deep breath, curl your toes inwards and hold for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your toes.
- Take a deep breath and point your toes upwards as high as possible and hold for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your toes.

- Focus on your knees, take a deep breath and tense the muscles around your knees and hold for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your knees.
- Focus on your thighs, take a deep breath, bring your thighs together and hold tightly for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your thighs.
- Focus on your buttocks, take a deep breath, clench your buttocks together and hold for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your buttocks.
- Focus on your lower abdomen, take a deep breath and pull in your lower abdomen and hold for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your abdomen.
- Focus on your chest, take a deep breath and tighten your chest muscles, hold for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your chest muscles.
- Focus on your shoulders, take a deep breath and lift your shoulders up to your ears and hold for five seconds. Breathe out and drop your shoulders completely.
- Focus on your arms, take a deep breath and bend your arms at your elbows and hold tightly for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your arms.
- Focus on your fingers, take a breath and clench your fists as tightly as possible and hold for five seconds. Breathe out and unclench your fists.
- Focus on your neck, take a breath and bring your chin down to your chest and hold for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your neck.
- Focus on your jaw, take a breath, open your mouth wide and tense your jaw, hold for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your jaw.
- Focus on your cheeks, take a breath, scrunch up your nose and tense your cheek muscles, hold for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your cheeks.
- Focus on your eyes, take a breath and shut your eyelids as tightly as possible and hold for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your eyes.
- Focus on your forehead, take a breath and lift your eyebrows as high as possible, hold for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your forehead.
- Focus on your scalp, take a breath, tense your scalp and hold for five seconds. Breathe out and relax your scalp.
- Take five deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth. Open your eyes.

2. PLEASE MASTER: AN ACRONYM TO HELP REDUCE ONE'S EMOTIONAL VULNERABILITY DURING STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

P.L- TREAT PHYSICAL ILLNESS

Be sure to make your physical well-being a priority. When you feel ill, it is important that you seek treatment and care. When you are feeling well, you are less likely to succumb to stress related difficulties.

E- BALANCED EATING

What we eat and drink can have an effect on mood, energy and overall well-being. Eating regularly throughout the day with a balance of different nutrients will keep your brain and body well energized and will help you effectively deal with stressors that come your way.

A - AVOID MOOD ALTERING DRUGS

When we are under the influence of substances, our ability to resist various urges and emotions is compromised. Alcohol and substance use can exacerbate stress reactions. Selecting a more appropriate outlet would be more suitable for support.

S- BALANCED SLEEP

It is important that one plans to get ample and sufficient sleep to prevent feelings of stress, irritability and agitation during work. When we are well rested, we are more aware, alert, resilient and capable of handling stress better.

E- EXERCISE

Exercise is an important part of maintaining optimal health. Regular exercise can have physical and psychological benefits.

3. BUILD MASTERY

Try to engage in activities each and every day that bring a sense of accomplishment, and confidence. By doing things we are good at, we promote stress busting mechanisms. When we feel self-confident and strong, facing stressors becomes more effective.

3 SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 IDENTIFYING DEPRESSION

Depression is a mental illness which affects our body, mood and thoughts. It is often associated with persistent feelings of sadness and a loss of interest in daily activities. Approximately 350 million people live with depression globally and it is now the world's leading cause of disability. Untreated depression has a strong link to suicide.

The causes of depression are known to be a mixture of life events, genetics and biological influences, alcohol/substance use, childhood experiences etc. It is a combination of these factors that would make someone vulnerable to develop depression.

Depression can be treated and people who have experienced this mental health problem go on to lead productive lives.

It is important that depression is identified early and treatment is accessed early for better outcomes. A crew member who notices signs and symptoms of depression in a fellow crew member can take steps to support him/her and also to signpost towards support.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- a). Loss of interest and pleasure in daily activities
- b). Loss of energy and constant fatigue
- c). General slowness
- d). Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- e). Unexplained weight loss or gain
- f). Feeling empty and numb
- g). Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness and guilt
- h). Difficulties with sleep and appetite

3.2 COPING WITH DEPRESSION

- a). Go easy on yourself- depression is an illness and it is not your fault.
- b). Educate yourself about the illness
- c). Avoid isolating yourself
- d). Talk about your feelings
- e). Exercise regularly
- f). Maintain personal hygiene
- g). Minimize use of alcohol and other substances
- h). Watch the caffeine- it can worsen anxiety and prevent quality sleep
- i). Try out yoga
- j). Engage in hobbies
- k). Practice relaxation techniques
- l). Use Smartphone applications like WOEBOT and WYSA to cope with depressive thoughts.
- m). Seek professional help

3.3 IDENTIFYING ANXIETY

Trembling before an important exam, sweaty palms before a job interview or feeling nervous before embarking on a new journey onboard a ship are natural ways for our body to prepare itself for an important event. However, once the event has commenced, we calm down and are able to breathe easier.

But, if we experience this feeling of worry and anxiety for no apparent reason, struggle to control the incessant thoughts and worries, and if these constant feelings of anxiety impact our daily life activities, then we need to pay attention to it, and seek support. Anxiety is closely related with depression.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- a). Worrying constantly and excessively for no reason
- b). Obsessing over irrational things leading to compulsive behaviour.
- c). Tightening sensation in the chest
- d). Increased heart rate and heavy breathing
- e). Sleep problems and inability to rest
- f). Increased muscle tension
- g). Pins and needles
- h). Churning of the stomach
- i). Sweating or hot flushes
- j). Restlessness
- k). Headaches
- l). Needing the toilet more or less often
- m). Panic attacks

3.4 COPING WITH ANXIETY

- a). Talk to someone you trust
- b). Try to manage your worries
- c.) Look after your physical health
- d). Try relaxation techniques
- e). Keep a diary
- f). Challenge anxious thoughts
- g). Engage in yoga
- h). Exercise
- i). Manage your caffeine intake
- j). Seek professional help

3.5 BURN-OUT

Burn-out is a state of complete exhaustion physically, psychologically and emotionally. Long term stress, without appropriate management can very quickly lead to burn-out which often leaves someone feeling exhausted and unable to perform basic tasks. There is also a loss of motivation in many aspects of life.

Burn-out can be caused by feeling like you have little control over your work. The lack of recognition or reward for good work and unclear and overly demanding job expectations can also cause burn-out. Doing work that is monotonous and unchallenging and working in a chaotic, high pressure environment are also risk factors. The lack of work-life balance is also a crucial factor. Perfectionist tendencies, and the need to be in control all the time can also lead to burn-out.

Other signs include feeling unable to focus or concentrate on tasks, feeling empty or lacking in emotion, losing passion and drive, experiencing conflict in your relationships with co-workers and withdrawing emotionally from friends and family. Cynicism towards work and life, depression and lethargy are also important signs of burn-out. People who experience burn-out also take their frustrations out on others, use food, alcohol and drugs to cope, procrastinate and also tend to skip work.

DEALING WITH BURN-OUT

RECOGNIZE - watch for warning signs

REVERSE - Undo the damage by seeking support and managing stress

RESILIENCE - Build resilience by caring for yourself

PREVENTING BURN-OUT

1. Take micro-breaks (5 minutes) during your work day
2. Exercise daily
3. Talk to your supervisor/coworkers about what you are feeling
4. Request for breaks and make use of any breaks you have to relax.
5. Pay attention to your sleep
6. Learn to say 'No' and maintain your boundaries with other people.
7. Be more sociable
8. Find new friends

3.6 IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING SUICIDE RISK ONBOARD SHIPS

Suicide is a major public health problem around the globe with approximately 800,000 deaths per year according to the World Health Organization. It is the second leading cause of death for young people between 15-29.

Seafarers can be vulnerable to suicide risk due to various reasons. Some people can already be vulnerable due to the presence of mental health problems, excessive stress and fatigue, loneliness, alcohol/substance related problems, relationship difficulties etc. Others are at risk of developing suicidal thoughts due to a sudden crisis that may occur while onboard a ship.

Suicide can be prevented if warning signs and risk factors are identified early and the individual is signposted for support after receiving basic suicide first aid.

RISK FACTORS

- a) Isolation and loneliness
- b). Recent divorce/unemployment/loss
- c). Financial difficulties
- d). Mental health problems
- e). Chronic pain
- f). Chronic physical illness
- g). Alcohol/substance use problems
- h). History of suicide in the family
- i). Previous suicide attempt/s
- j). Easy access to means
- k). Lack of access to support
- l). Relationship breakdown
- m). Bereavement
- n). Adult sexual assault
- o). Childhood sexual abuse
- p). Acute emotional distress

SPECIAL POPULATIONS AT RISK:

- a) People who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Questioning+ (LGBTIQ+)
- b). People living with HIV and other terminal illness
- c). Persons belonging to other minority populations
- d). Victims of war, torture, and discrimination

WARNING SIGNS- WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

- a.). Acts of self-harm with signs of poisoning/intoxication, bleeding, loss of consciousness and lethargy.
- b). Changes in sleep and appetite
- c). Fluctuations in mood
- d). Agitation/anxiety
- e). Loss of interest in daily activities
- f). Extreme signs of hopelessness and despair.
- g). Isolation/withdrawal
- h). Apathy/emptiness
- i). Talking/writing about death and dying
- j). Misuse of alcohol and other substances
- k). Giving away possessions
- l). Sudden positive mood- things are better?

WHAT ELSE TO LOOK FOR:

- a). Anxious/frightened facial expression
- b). Unwashed clothes
- c). Lengthening fingernails
- d). Unkempt hair
- e). Bad smell emanating from the person

WHAT SOMEONE SUICIDAL MIGHT SAY:

- a). Stopping it
- b). Too tired
- c). There's nothing keeping me here
- d). Stuck
- e). Empty and dead
- f). Just too much
- g). What's the point?
- h). I want to kill myself
- i). Too heavy to manage
- j). Don't exist

KEY PRINCIPLES OF SUICIDE PREVENTION

1. Take all talk of suicide seriously
2. Reduce access to means
3. Get involved and use a caring approach
4. Recognize warning signs of depression
5. Do not leave a suicidal individual alone
6. Inform a senior officer

PRINCIPLES OF SUICIDE FIRST AID

1. Engage the person in a serious conversation

- a). Connect in a personal way
- b). Ask if they are experiencing a crisis in their lives
- c). Are they feeling hopeless?
- d). Have they withdrawn from their daily activities?

Let them describe how they are feeling and why they are feeling this way. Be sensitive to any fears the person may have about stigma and shame.

2. Ask about suicide

'I can see that you are going through a difficult time. Some people in your situation might feel like life is not worth living anymore. Have you ever felt this way?'

'Are you having thoughts about suicide?'

'Do you have thoughts about ending your life?'

'How would you harm yourself? What would you do?'

3. Explore risk

- a). Ask if they a plan for suicide
- b). Ask about prior suicidal behaviour
- c). Reasons for living and dying
- d). Ask about their supports

4. Engage the person in a plan for safety

- a). Do not leave the person alone
- b). Provide accessible contact information of crisis services
- c). Try to ensure that they do not use alcohol or drugs
- d). Be prepared to listen non-judgmentally
- e). Do not promise confidentiality

3.7 ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE USE

Alcohol and other substances are used commonly around the globe and it is very much prevalent in the shipping industry. There are different reasons as to why people chose to use substances. Some people begin to use substances due to peer pressure or as an act of rebellion. Other people deal with loneliness and feelings of sadness by using different substances. Some people are content with an occasional drink or an occasional cigarette, but when someone repeatedly consumes the substance to an extent where they feel compelled to use the substance again and again, and without which they think they are unable to function normally, they may be affected by alcohol and substance use problems or in other words dependence.

When a person uses substances, dopamine, a neurotransmitter in the brain that triggers feelings of pleasure is activated. This makes the person want to use the substance repeatedly in order to experience the same feeling of pleasure. For some people, this could lead to very harmful health and social consequences. In the life of a seafarer, it could also contribute to dangerous situations onboard like accidents while using machinery, falls, loss of coordination and balance etc. Our judgment, reasoning ability, decision making and memory are affected by repeated substance use. All substances impair the central nervous system and the circulatory systems in the body. Chronic use of substances can also lead to the development of mental illnesses like depression and anxiety.

Stages of Substance Use

- **NON-USE:** The use of no substances
- **EXPERIMENTAL USE:** Trying a substance a few times
- **OCCASIONAL USE:** Once in a while, not regularly done
- **REGULAR USE:** Routine, part of a pattern
- **ABUSE:** Use interferes with functioning, loss of control over amount one uses, loss of control over behaviour
- **DEPENDENCY:** Addiction, compulsion, extreme changes in attitudes, behaviours and feelings.

Substances can be classed into different categories based on their effects for better understanding.

I. DEPRESSANTS

a) Alcohol

Alcohol is a depressant of the central nervous system even though it is commonly believed to be a stimulant that makes one feel high. The initial high that one feels after using alcohol wears off resulting in feelings of irritability, low motivation etc. Different levels of alcohol in the blood cause different levels of impairment and this is especially relevant when working on a ship.

Level	Likely Impairment
20-30 mg/dL	Slowed motor performance and decreased thinking ability
30-80 mg/dL	Increases in motor and thinking problems
80-200 mg/dL	Increases in incoordination and judgment errors
200-300 mg/dL	Slurring of speech, alcoholic blackouts
>300 mg/dL	Impaired vital signs and possible death

dL= deciliter of blood

Alcohol dependence is a chronic illness of the brain and it not only impacts the person physically, but it also affects interpersonal relationships, and their ability to lead a healthy social life.

Alcohol withdrawal

Withdrawal occurs after stopping or reducing the amount of alcohol that has been regularly over a prolonged period. Withdrawal is characterized by physiological signs and symptoms in addition to psychological changes such as disturbances in thinking, feeling and behaviour.

Alcohol withdrawal can be serious and can include seizures and other dangerous occurrences. Signs of alcohol withdrawal includes tremors (the jitters), general irritability, nausea and vomiting, anxiety, arousal, sweating and a mild increase in blood pressure. It is important to note that the sudden stopping of alcohol without medical advice after a prolonged period of continuous use can lead to fatal consequences. It is always recommended that alcohol use is stopped under medical supervision.

2. STIMULANTS

a). Amphetamines

Amphetamines generally increase energy and enhance self-confidence. It also suppresses appetite. It is not uncommon for amphetamines to be sometimes used in demanding working conditions in order to remain alert, energized and awake. However, when the drug starts to wear off, most people experience a 'crash' where there can be extreme fatigue and depression. There is also irritability, disorientation and agitated motor activity. These effects are countered by using the substance again, which is a pattern that could ultimately lead to dependence. Long term use of amphetamines is linked with disrupted thinking, severe depression, suicidal tendencies, and brain damage.

b). Cocaine

Cocaine is a powerful central nervous system stimulant and its effects are similar to those of amphetamines. However, they tend to last for only 15-30 minutes. The user usually experiences a state of euphoria, deadening of pain, increased self-confidence, energy and attention. Long work hours, physically demanding tasks, and difficult emotions can lead some people to use substances like cocaine to counter these effects.

Cocaine is known to produce a surge in blood pressure when used and there is a known risk of cardiac arrest and death due to its stimulating effects. It can also cause psychological problems like depression, anxiety and psychosis.

3. OPIATES

a). Heroin

Heroin when used can make you feel a rush of pleasure, a dreamy like state and make you drowsy. It creates overwhelming sensations of pleasure overriding any thoughts of food or sex.

Long term use can cause aggressive behaviour, and social isolation. Opiates like heroin also damages the immune system in the body causing increased risk of infections. The impurity of heroin, the user's lack of adequate diet and the risks from contaminated needles and other paraphernalia can increase health risks. Heroin overdoses are not uncommon and they can be fatal.

Withdrawal symptoms of heroin includes flu like symptoms, tremors, stomach cramps, and alternating chills and sweats. Rapid pulse, high blood pressure, insomnia and stomach problems also occur.

4. CANNABIS/MARIJUANA

Cannabis is a popularly used substance second only to alcohol around the world. People often take cannabis as a way of relaxing and getting high. The effects one experiences will depend on whether one is used to taking the drug, how much one takes, one's genes and other psychological factors. There can be negative effects if one is already experiencing mental health problems like depression and anxiety.

High doses of cannabis/Marijuana can cause distorted perceptions, forgetfulness, distress and confusion and abnormal perceptual experiences like hallucinations. Cannabis withdrawals usually include restlessness, irritability and insomnia.

People including seafarers often use alcohol and other substances as a means of coping with stress, difficult feelings like loneliness, depression etc. Most substances temporarily produce feelings of well-being initially but they do not solve problems that one faces and neither do they eliminate stress adaptively. Therefore, it can be said that substance use is a unhealthy form of coping with stress and other difficulties.

3.8 PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST-AID

SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN THE AFTERMATH OF CRISIS EVENTS

There can be different crisis events that seafarers might experience onboard ships. These can range from accidents and death to hearing difficult news from home. Crisis events can often destabilize a person/team causing poor performance, increased emotional distress and other health consequences. Therefore, Psychological First Aid can be used to prevent issues from exacerbating into complex psychological problems.

Psychological First Aid is the humane, supportive and practical assistance provided to fellow human beings who recently suffered exposure to serious stressors. It involves non-intrusive practical care and support, addressing needs and concerns, helping people address basic needs, listening but not pressuring people to talk, comforting people and helping them feel calm and connecting people to information, services and supports.

It is important that one understands that this is not professional counselling and neither is it something only 'professionals' can do. It is not asking people to analyze what happened or put time and events in order.

ACTION PRINCIPLES

Prepare - Look - Listen - Link

<i>Prepare</i>	<p>Learn about the crisis event.</p> <p>Learn about available services and supports.</p> <p>Learn about safety and security concerns.</p>
<i>Look</i>	<p>Observe for safety</p> <p>Observe for people with obvious urgent basic needs.</p> <p>Listen to people and help them feel calm.</p>
<i>Listen</i>	<p>Make contact with people who may need support.</p> <p>Ask about people's needs and concerns.</p> <p>Listen to people and help them feel calm.</p>
<i>Link</i>	<p>Help people address basic needs and access help.</p> <p>Help people cope with problems.</p> <p>Give information.</p> <p>Connect people with loved ones and social support.</p>

DISTRESS REACTIONS TO CRISIS

- Physical symptoms (shaking, headaches, fatigue, loss of appetite)
- Anxiety, fear
- Weeping, grief and sadness
- Guilt and shame
- Being on guard, jumpy
- Anger/irritability
- Immobile/ withdrawn
- Disoriented
- Not responding to others
- Feeling confused
- Unable to care for oneself.

HELPING PEOPLE FEEL CALM

- Keep your tone of voice soft and calm
- Maintain some eye contact
- Reassure them they are safe and that you are there to help
- Listen using your eyes, ears and heart.

COMMUNICATION- THINGS TO SAY AND DO

- Try to find a quiet place to talk and minimize distractions
- Stay near the person but keep an appropriate distance
- Let them know you hear them, for example, nod your head and say ...'hmm'.
- Be patient and calm
- Provide factual information IF you have it.
- Give information in a way the person can understand.
- Acknowledge how they are feeling.
- Respect privacy.
- Acknowledge the persons strengths and how they have helped themselves.

COMMUNICATION: THINGS NOT TO SAY AND DO

- Don't pressure someone to tell their story
- Don't interrupt or rush someone's story
- Don't give your opinions of the person's situation. Just listen.
- Don't touch the person if you are not sure if it's appropriate to do so.
- Don't judge what they have or have not done.
- Don't make up things you don't know
- Don't tell them someone else's story
- Don't talk about your own troubles
- Don't give false promises



TEACHING TIP

Role-play can be used to practice the action principles of Psychological First Aid. It is important to give participants scenarios that are not directly linked with their work environment as this could cause distress within the classrooms.

3.9 REMOTE WELL-BEING FIRST RESPONSE OVER THE PHONE

I. KEY PRINCIPLES OF PROVIDING REMOTE SUPPORT OVER THE PHONE

- Begin the conversation
- Listen actively for concerns and needs
- Arrive at a consensus over the duration of the call based on the caller's needs
- Explore worries and concerns
- In case of extreme distress refer to calming and grounding techniques

(Please note that these techniques can be carried out over the phone with clear instructions from the well-being first responder)

- Link the individual with other services, information and social support the person may need.
- End the call wishing them well.

II. ACTION STEPS IN RESPONDING TO CALLS

a. Begin the conversation

- Introduce yourself by saying your name and the organization/service you work for.
- Ask how you may help and respectfully ask for the name of the caller. If the caller does not wish to divulge their name, do not pressure them into doing so.

b. Listen actively to concerns, emotions and needs

- Ask 'how can I help you today?'
- Ask 'what are the most important issues you want to talk about?'
- Acknowledge the emotions they are feeling (sounds like you are very worried right now)
- Display interest in what their concerns/worries are (tell me more about what is worrying you)
- Normalize what they are experiencing

(it is not uncommon to feel this way when.... is happening in your life)

- Acknowledge their courage in being able to pick up the phone and call you (Thank you for making the decision to call me today. It takes a lot of courage to do so)

c. Link the individual with other services, information and social support

- Introduce yourself by saying your name and the organization/service you work for.
- Ask how you may help and respectfully ask for the name of the caller. If the caller does not wish to divulge their name, do not pressure them into doing so.

d. Listen actively to concerns, emotions and needs

- Refer to further psychosocial support if the caller is experiencing mental health problems, thoughts about self-harm and suicide, feels out of control, using drugs and alcohol excessively, experiencing violence/abuse. (thank you for telling me about what's going on for you. It is a great first step that you took to talk to me today, and I am going to now give you some information about where you can seek more help for what you are going through)
- Refer caller to self-help APP's mentioned in section 2.4 of this manual.
- Provide links to credible websites for more information about mental health and well-being (www.mind.org.uk, www.beyondblue.org.au, www.samaritans.org, www.whiteswanfoundation.org, www.headspace.org.au)
- Encourage links with family, friends and co-workers.
- Encourage spiritual and religious involvement when appropriate.
- Finally, invite them to get in touch with you again if the need arises.

e. Ending the call

- Summarize the call by restating key issues discussed and any action points agreed on (we have talked about...and agreed to get in touch with... I am happy you have made a choice to get further help. I will now say good-bye and I hope you have a good day)
- Invite the person for a follow-up call if required and agree on a suitable time (you are welcome to call again if you want to talk...)
- **Wait** for the caller to hang-up before you hang-up.

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