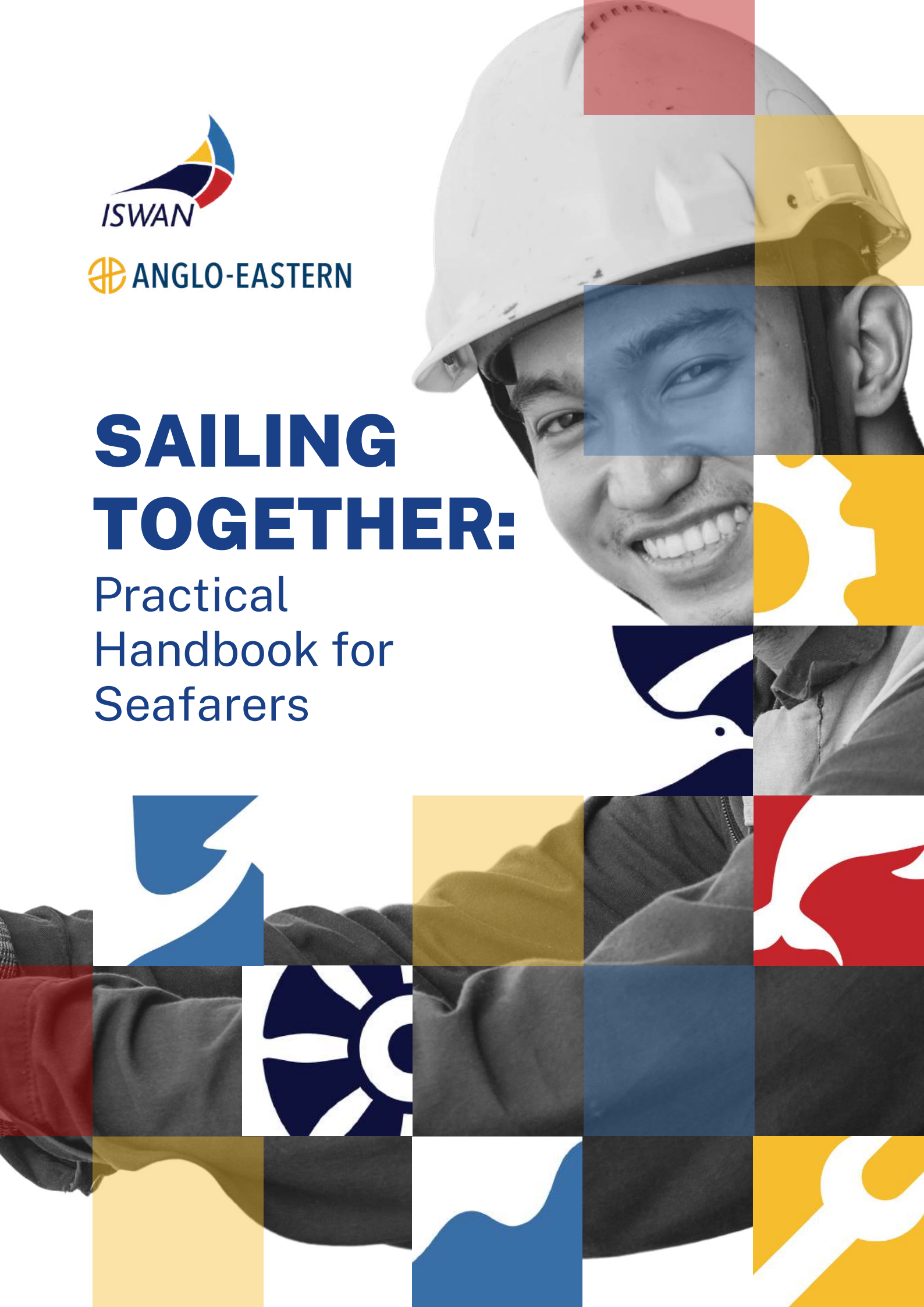
ISWAN

ANGLO-EASTERN

SAILING TOGETHER:

Practical Handbook for Seafarers



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SAILING TOGETHER:

Practical Handbook for Seafarers

ISWAN

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CONTENTS

01 How to Use This Handbook

02 This One is for You - The Seafarer

04 A Collaborative Approach

05 Before You Begin

07 Part 1 - Before Sailing

18 Part 2 - Joining and Settling In

28 Part 3 - Living and Working Onboard

46 Part 4 - When Things Don't Go Well

57 Part 5 - Growing as a Seafarer

65 Part 6 - Going Home

71 Part 7 - My Practical Toolkit

82 Safe Harbour — When and Where to Seek Help

84 Conclusion

85 Terms Used in This Handbook

86 Contributors

87 Special Acknowledgement

88 Annex A - Anglo Eastern's WECare Program

89 Annex B - Anglo Eastern's communication channels

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook follows the arc of a seafarer's journey, from preparing to join the ship to coming back home and planning what is next. You do not need to read it cover to cover. Use it for the stage you are in.

Preparing to join your next vessel
Chapters 1 to 4

First days onboard
Chapters 5 to 8

Living and working through your contract
Chapters 9 to 15

Dealing with a difficult situation onboard
Chapters 16 to 20

Thinking about your career and development
Chapters 21 to 24

Getting ready to sign off and go home
Chapters 25 to 27

Need practical tools
Part 7

Something is wrong right now
Chapter 20 or Safe Harbour



This handbook is a wellbeing companion. It is not a replacement for your ship's Safety Management System, emergency procedures, medical advice, or your employment agreement. If something urgent is happening, act first. You do not need to finish an activity or complete a self-check before asking for help. You can seek support at any point without disclosing private details to your crew.

THIS ONE IS FOR YOU - THE SEAFARER

There is a handbook (https://www.iswan.org.uk/resources/publications/sailing-together-a-family-handbook-to-support-seafarers-at-sea-and-ashore/) that began this conversation. It was written for the families waiting at home — the ones who manage households, raise children, and hold everything together across months of distance. It was written because ISWAN heard, again and again, that families were navigating their side of seafaring life without a map.

This is the next book. And this one is for you.

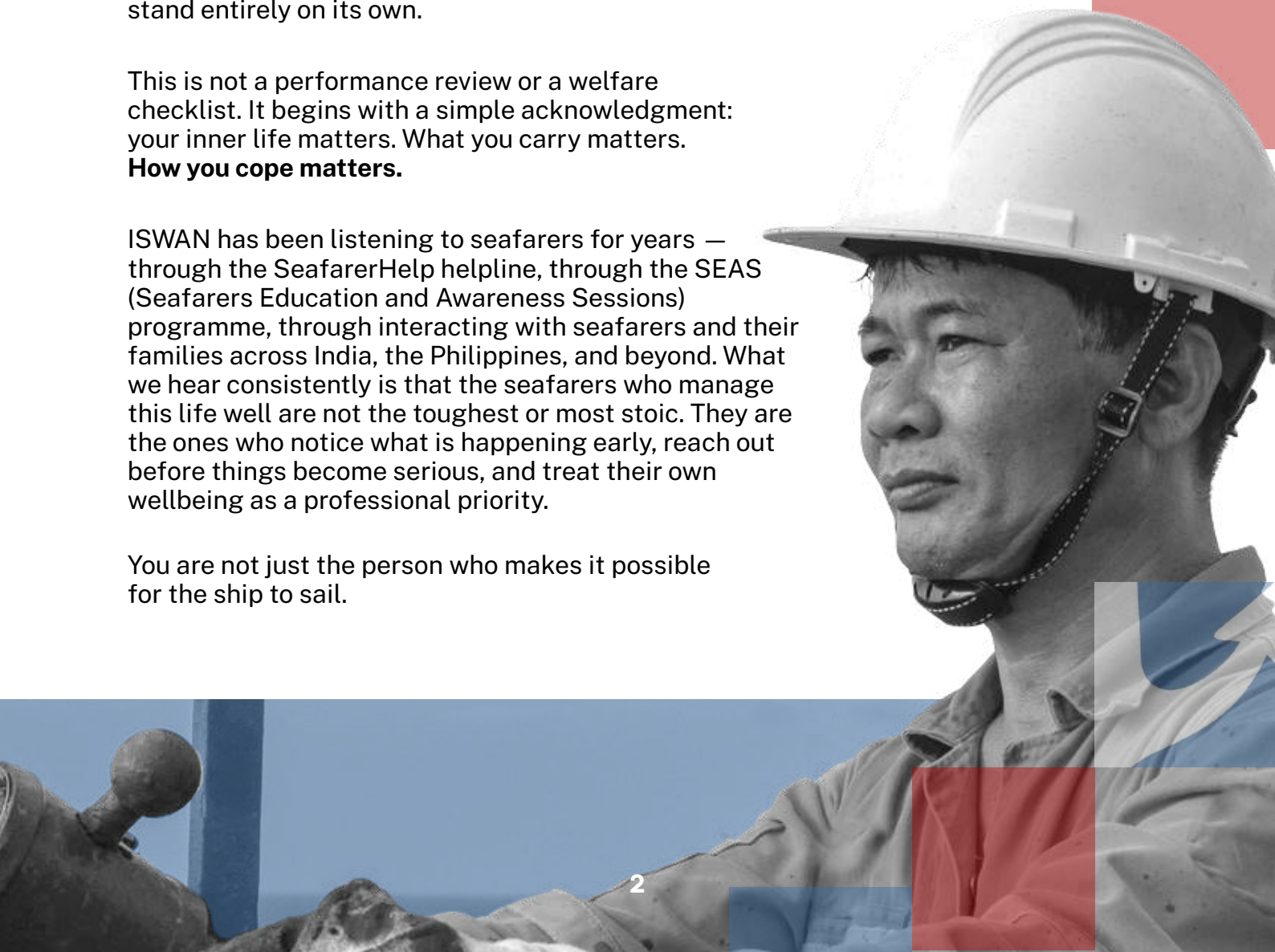
You are the seafarer. The one who leaves, the one who reads the same messages in a two-hour signal window and tries to compress everything you feel into something that fits a slow connection. The one who turns up for every watch, every duty, every handover regardless of what is happening at home, in your head, or in your heart.

This handbook exists because you cannot fully support your loved ones at home if no one is helping you look after yourself. The two books are designed to work alongside each other, but this one stand entirely on its own.

This is not a performance review or a welfare checklist. It begins with a simple acknowledgment: your inner life matters. What you carry matters. **How you cope matters.**

ISWAN has been listening to seafarers for years — through the SeafarerHelp helpline, through the SEAS (Seafarers Education and Awareness Sessions) programme, through interacting with seafarers and their families across India, the Philippines, and beyond. What we hear consistently is that the seafarers who manage this life well are not the toughest or most stoic. They are the ones who notice what is happening early, reach out before things become serious, and treat their own wellbeing as a professional priority.

You are not just the person who makes it possible for the ship to sail.



You matter.

And this
handbook
is yours.

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

With **Anglo-Eastern Ship Management Company**

ANGLO-EASTERN

This handbook was developed in close collaboration with Anglo-Eastern, one of the world's leading ship management companies, responsible for the crewing, operations, and welfare of vessels across every major trade route.

Their wellbeing team brought direct, ground-level knowledge of what seafarers actually need, drawn from years of working closely with crew across contracts, ranks, and cultures. That knowledge shaped this handbook in ways that research alone cannot.

The vision Anglo-Eastern brought to this partnership was clear from the beginning: that seafarer welfare must be embedded in daily life onboard, not delivered as an afterthought or reserved for moments of crisis.

The partnership reflects something both organisations believe without qualification: that a seafarer who feels genuinely supported makes better decisions, builds stronger crews, raises concerns earlier, and contributes to a safety culture that protects everyone onboard. Supporting seafarers is not a cost. It is how the industry honours the people it depends on.

ISWAN extends its sincere gratitude to Anglo-Eastern, to their wellbeing team, their senior leadership, and everyone who gave their time, experience, and honest perspective to this project. This handbook exists because of that generosity.



BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Every day, hundreds of thousands of seafarers show up, do the job, and carry everything else quietly alongside it. This handbook exists because quietly carrying things for too long has a cost.

It is practical, honest, and written for the real version of this life.

A few things worth knowing:

You do not need to be in crisis to reach out. Most seafarers wait too long.

Psychological safety is a safety issue. When people feel safe to speak up, problems get caught earlier.

Fatigue is not a weakness. Reporting it is the professional thing to do.

A short, warm call home does better than a long, stressful one.

Small habits compound across a contract in ways that are hard to see until you look back.



BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What's Inside

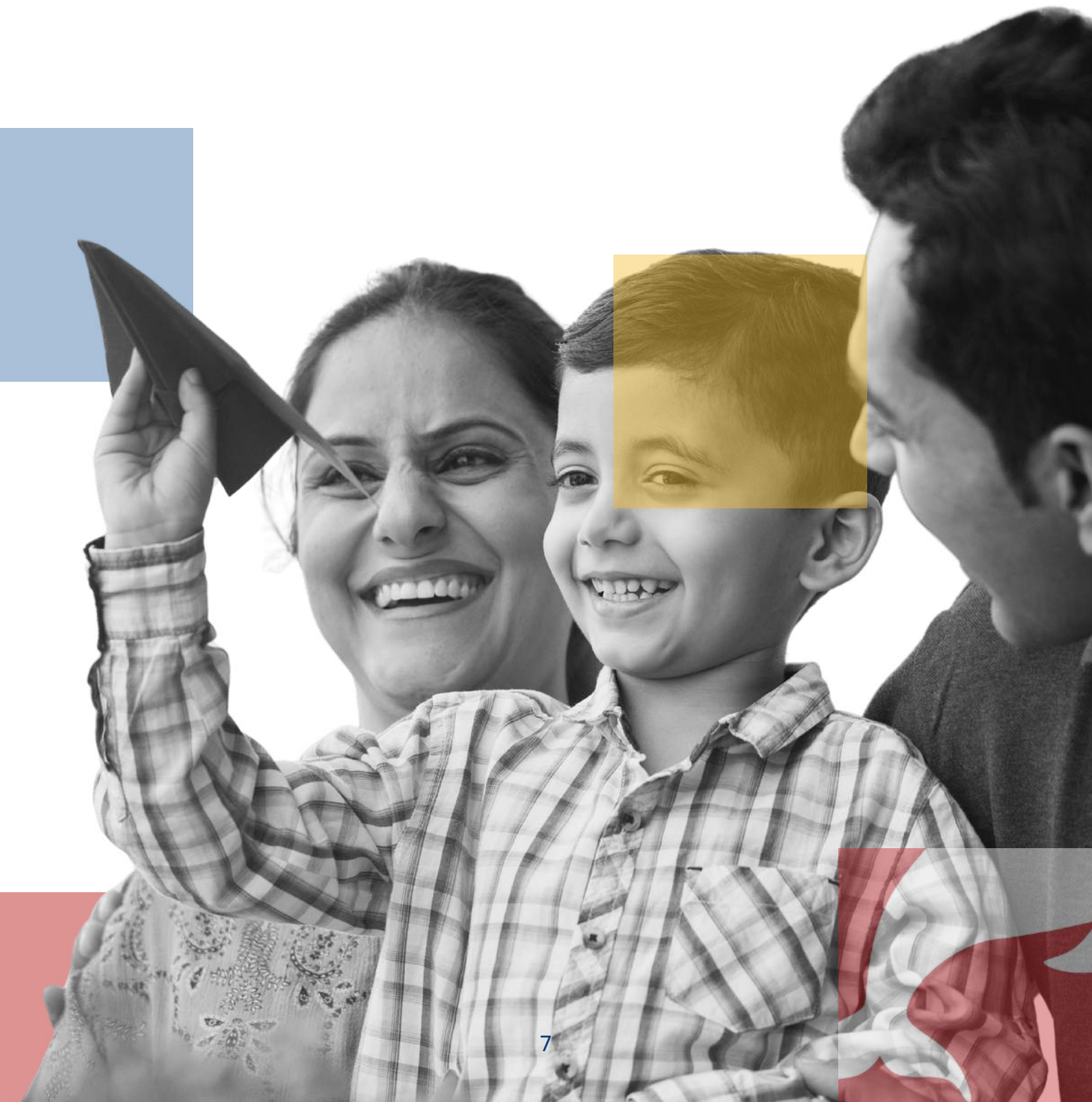
Practical guidance for every stage of the contract and beyond. Honest acknowledgment of the hard parts. Activities that are yours alone. A toolkit with contacts, checklists, and a wellbeing checker.



You will find spaces across this handbook where you are asked to write: your information, your reflections, your answers. **Fill them in honestly.** This handbook works best when it carries your words, not just ours.

Come back to it when things are hard.

Part 1:
BEFORE SAILING



Communication
is the
Foundation.

PART 1: BEFORE SAILING

1. Preparing to Join

The preparation you do before joining a vessel shapes everything that follows. A little time spent before you sail saves a great deal of stress once you are onboard. Most of what goes wrong in the first days of a contract-confusion about duties, anxiety about family, financial worry can be significantly reduced by what you do in the days before you leave.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Check document validity well before travel day and carry both digital and physical copies.
- Confirm all travel arrangements, visa requirements, and joining instructions well in advance.
- Complete a pre-departure health check if your contract is long or your destination is remote.
- Verify the name of the vessel, the port, the agent, and the joining procedures before you travel.
- Test your communication apps and data plan before you leave. Set a data limit to avoid unexpected roaming charges.
- If something about your contract, assignment, or joining details feels unclear, resolve it before you travel, not after.
- Pack essential personal items before you pack anything else medications, toiletries, an extra pair of spectacles or reading glasses if you use them.
- If travelling alone, stay alert to your belongings in transit airports, stations, and ports are high-risk areas for theft.
- Keep one change of clothes and essentials in your hand luggage in case your checked baggage is delayed or lost.
- Take adequate rest before you begin travel, especially if the journey is long or involves multiple connections.
- Know your joining agent's contact number by heart or saved offline you may not have signal when you need it most.
- Carry prescribed medicines in original packaging with your prescription enough for the contract plus delays. Check destination restrictions and refills with your doctor beforehand.
- Keep a brief health summary for emergencies. Discuss any condition or medicine affecting your duties with a medical professional before sailing.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Assuming documents or visa issues will resolve themselves at the port.
- Leaving everything to the last day, stress before a contract begins carries into the first week.
- Paying a recruitment or placement fee to secure a job, no legitimate agency charges one.
- Travelling on unclear or incorrect documentation.
- Forgetting to say a proper goodbye, it matters more than it may seem.

PART 1: **BEFORE SAILING**

1. Preparing to Join



What Would You Do?

You receive your joining instructions two days before sailing and notice the visa arrangement does not match what your agent told you. You have already booked your travel. What should you do?

A. Contact your crewing manager immediately to clarify before travelling
B. Travel as planned and raise it with the Master once onboard
C. Call a fellow seafarer who joined the same vessel recently to check if they had the same arrangement
D. Email the agent and wait for a response, assuming it will be resolved before you land

*The right approach: **A***

A visa discrepancy must be resolved before you travel, not after. Travelling on an unclear or incorrect document arrangement puts your joining at risk and may have legal consequences. An agent or crewing manager should be able to clarify or correct this within hours. Do not assume, and do not wait.

Quick Reflection

- Have all my travel and joining details been confirmed?
- Is there anything unresolved that I should sort before I leave?
- Have I said what I need to say to the people who matter?

PART 1: **BEFORE SAILING**

2. Family Preparation

A seafarer does not leave alone. Every contract affects the family left behind practically, emotionally, and financially. A family that is informed, prepared, and supported can manage your absence with confidence. That peace of mind travels with you.

Communication is the foundation. Agree before you sail: which app, how often, what time, and what to do if contact drops. Expectations spoken before departure are easier to keep than ones negotiated mid-voyage.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Share a copy of contract, vessel name, contract length, expected route, and company contact details with your family before sailing.
- Agree on a communication plan together before you sail, which app, which day, what time, and what to do if contact is lost for an extended period.
- Discuss what decisions can be made without you and which ones to wait on until you can speak.
- Have an honest conversation about how the household will be run, roles, routines, and responsibilities in your absence.
- Leave a letter or voice message for your family, especially children, to open if the separation feels hard.
- Create a small but meaningful goodbye routine. It gives closure and helps both sides settle into separation.
- Ask your family what they need from you emotionally during this contract; the answer may surprise you.
- Ensure your family knows you may not always be reachable, and that silence does not mean something is wrong.
- Talk to your children at an age-appropriate level about where you are going, and when you are back, children cope better with honest, simple explanations than with vagueness.
- Before sailing, share with your family the key contacts they may need, in your absence, of your manning or crewing agency, your company's family welfare or crew liaison representative, and any relevant maritime authority or government body in your country that provides support to seafarers and their families.
- Agree for a family emergency plan: who makes urgent decisions at home, where key documents are kept, and how your family can reach the company if they cannot contact you. Set up bank access through proper authorized arrangements, not shared passwords or codes.



PART 1: BEFORE SAILING

2. Family Preparation

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Leaving without a clear communication plan, the anxiety of not knowing when to expect contact is harder than the gap itself.
- Making promises about call times you cannot realistically keep, manage expectations honestly.
- Leaving financial and household decisions entirely undefined creates pressure for everyone.
- Avoiding the emotional conversation because it feels hard; a difficult goodbye handled with honesty is far better than one left incomplete.
- Assuming your family knows how to manage everything just because they have done it before.

Every country has institutions that support seafarers and their families such as Government maritime authorities, welfare agencies, and overseas workers support bodies. Find out which ones are relevant in your home country before you sail, and make sure your family has those contact details. Your manning agency is usually the first point of contact for any emergency or welfare concern while you are at sea.



Activity: The Before I Go List

Before your next contract, sit down with your family and write a short list together: what you need from them while you are away, and what they need from you. Keep it simple. Even five things each can make a real difference to how separation feels.

Quick Reflection

Does my family know how to reach support if they need it while I am away?
Have I had honest conversations about expectations, not just logistics?
Is there anything I have been putting off saying that should be said before I go?

PART 1: BEFORE SAILING

3. Financial Preparation

Managing money across contracts, time zones, and currency exchanges is something most seafarers figure out on their own. Financial pressure is one of the most common contributors to stress onboard. A little planning before you sail makes a significant difference.

Financial preparation before a contract is not about having a lot of money. It is about having a clear plan before you lose easy access to the people and systems that help you manage it.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Set up automatic payments for all regular bills, EMIs, and any other monthly loan obligations before you sail. Do not rely on memory or family members to remember.
- Agree a clear monthly budget with your family for the contract period: what is available, what is for savings, what is for emergencies.
- Leave all financial documents, account details, and insurance information in an accessible place at home.
- Let your family know if you have lent money to anyone outside the household. Hidden financial obligations create conflict.
- Once you start a family, consider taking adequate term life insurance cover to ensure your spouse and children are financially protected in your absence.
- As a cadet, try to save around 50% of your wages, wherever possible, towards future exams, certifications and professional development.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Sailing without a financial plan, hoping things will work out.
- Leaving a family member to manage finances without a clear conversation first.
- Taking on new financial commitments just before joining a contract.
- Keeping financial worries to yourself. Shared concerns tend to be easier to manage.
- Spending leave income without setting aside what the next gap might need.

*For a full financial planning guide, checklist, and advice on managing money during your contract, see **Chapter 14: Financial and Digital Life at Sea.***

PART 1: **BEFORE SAILING**

3. Financial Preparation



Financial Worksheet - For Cadets and Junior Ranks

Use this at the start of your career. Revisit every few contracts as your income and responsibilities grow.

My current monthly income after deductions: .....

My fixed monthly commitments (rent, EMI, bills, remittances, social security, tax): .....

Amount I will save from this contract: .....

My emergency fund target (3 months of household expenses): .....

Who manages finances at home in my absence: .....

My one financial goal for this contract: .....

Quick Reflection

- Have all regular payments been set to automatic?
- Does my family have a clear picture of our finances?
- Have I built any buffer for the gap between contracts?

PART 1: BEFORE SAILING

4. Know Your Contract and Rights

Your Seafarer Employment Agreement (SEA) is one of the most important documents you will ever sign. It defines what you are owed, what is expected of you, and what protections you have. Yet many seafarers sign their contract quickly, under pressure, without reading it fully. This is one of the most avoidable sources of exploitation and dispute in the industry.

The Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (as amended) sets minimum working and living standards for covered seafarers and ships. Your flag State rules, employment agreement and applicable collective agreement explain how these protections apply to you. Keep copies and ask for advice when terms are unclear.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Read your contract fully before signing every page, not just the summary.
- Know your salary structure: basic pay, overtime rates, leave pay, and any deductions.
- Check your ship's posted work and rest schedule and the applicable flag state rules. Record the hours you actually work and rest.
- Understand your leave entitlement and how and when it is calculated.
- Know what medical care you are entitled to onboard and ashore, and what your company covers.
- Check your entitlement to repatriation and the circumstances covered by your agreement and applicable law. Raise delays or uncertainty with the company and seek independent advice if needed.
- Wages must be paid at least monthly under Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (as amended). Check your monthly account of wages and deductions and query anything you do not recognise. Written consent alone does not make a deduction lawful.
- Keep a signed copy of your contract digital as well as a hard copy and leave a copy with your family.
- If something in your contract is unclear, ask before you sign, not after.
- Know how to raise a grievance formally if something is wrong.
- Verify that your manning agency is a valid license holder from relevant Government authority.



PART 1: **BEFORE SAILING**

4. Know Your Contract and Rights

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Signing a contract without reading it fully.
- Assuming your contract is standard and does not need review.
- Accepting verbal assurances about terms that contradict what is written.
- Paying any recruitment or placement fee to obtain a job. The Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (as amended) permits certain personal document costs, such as a statutory medical certificate, seafarer book and passport; visa costs are for the shipowner. Check applicable national rules and challenge disguised placement charges.
- Staying silent about a contract violation out of fear of losing the job.
- Not keeping a copy of your signed contract.



What Would You Do?

You are asked to sign a new contract onboard that has different terms from what was agreed before you sailed — longer hours, lower pay. What should you do?

A. Sign it to avoid conflict
B. Sign it but plan to raise it later
C. Refuse to sign and contact your union, ITF, or SeafarerHelp for advice
D. Ignore it and continue under your original terms

The right approach: ***C***

Do not sign under pressure. Request time to read the proposed terms, retain a copy or photograph where safe and lawful, and contact your union, ITF or SeafarerHelp for advice. Ask for written clarification before agreeing to a change.

Quick Reflection

- Have I read and understood my current contract?
- Do I know my rights under the MLC 2006 (as amended)?
- Do I know how to raise concerns if something is wrong?

PART 1: **BEFORE SAILING**

4. Know Your Contract and Rights

Rest Hours, Records, and Raising Concerns

- Minimum rest under MLC 2006 (as amended): 10 hours in any 24-hour period and 77 hours in any seven days, in no more than two periods, one of at least six hours. Check flag state rules for authorised exceptions. These figures are the minimum required by law, not a reason to accept unsafe fatigue.
- Keep accurate rest records and request your endorsed copy. If drills interrupt rest, ask for compensatory rest. Do not sign records you know are inaccurate.
- If something is wrong, get the onboard complaint procedure. Record what happened, who was involved, and what remedy you are seeking. Submit through the designated channel, ask for written acknowledgement, and keep your own copy.
- If someone in the reporting chain is involved or you fear retaliation, use an alternative company channel, flag state, or port state authority. Victimisation for raising a complaint is prohibited.
- For immediate safety concerns, alert the officer in charge, the Master, or the Designated Person Ashore.
- If wages stop or abandonment is suspected, keep your contract, wage statements, and correspondence. Check the financial security certificate posted on the ship for provider contact details. Contact your company, union, or ITF for advice.



Part 2:

JOINING AND SETTLING IN



Every **ship**
is **different.**

Every **crew**
is **different.**

PART 2: JOINING & SETTLING IN

5. Joining a Vessel - The First 72 Hours

Joining a new vessel is one of the most demanding moments in a seafarer's career. A new ship, a new crew, new systems, and a new culture all at once. The first 72 hours set the tone for the entire contract. Most seafarers feel unsettled at the start. This is not a sign that something is wrong. It is a sign you are paying attention.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Before taking independent duty, confirm your familiarisation, safe handover, and fitness after travel. If the journey has left you too tired to work safely, tell your supervisor.
- Ask who your first contact is, how to report a medical problem, how to reach shore support privately, and where the complaint procedure is kept.
- Check access to drinking water, meals, laundry, communication, and suitable protective equipment.
- If you are a cadet, trainee, or newly promoted seafarer, agree upfront which tasks require supervision. Asking for a demonstration is always safer than assuming you know.
- Introduce yourself to crew members, even briefly. A small effort goes a long way.
- Introduce yourself respectfully to crew from different nationalities and departments, not only those who share your language or culture.
- Find one or two people you feel comfortable approaching with questions.
- Follow the vessel's routine consistently from the start.
- Ask questions early rather than assuming. Clarification on Day 1 costs nothing.
- Keep in touch with home. It stabilises you when everything else is new.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Forming strong opinions about people before you have had time to get to know them.
- Withdrawing socially in the first days. Isolation deepens quickly.
- Relying exclusively on crewmates from your own nationality rather than engaging with the wider crew.
- Staying silent when unsure about a task or instruction.



PART 2: **JOINING & SETTLING IN**



What Would You Do?

During your first few days, you notice that the crew has different routines and ways of communicating than those on your previous vessel. You are finding it difficult to adjust. What should you do?

A. Keep to the routines you are used to and expect others to adapt.
B. Avoid getting involved until you feel more comfortable with the crew.
C. Take time to understand the vessel's routines, ask respectful questions, and communicate openly with your crewmates.
D. Ask to be moved to a vessel where the working style is more familiar.

The right approach: ***C***

Being new to a vessel means there are things you simply have not been shown yet. That is expected. Letting someone know what you do not yet know is not a weakness — it is how you stay safe and get up to speed properly. Most officers would rather spend two minutes orienting you than spend an hour fixing a mistake.





Activity: The First Week Map

On a blank page, draw a rough map of your ship, not a technical diagram, just your version of it. Mark the places you have already been. Mark the places you have not yet visited. Mark one person's name or role next to the area where you are most likely to find them.

At the end of your first week, come back to this page. Fill in what is still blank. The gaps on your map are your next conversations.

PART 2: JOINING & SETTLING IN

6. Understanding Your Ship

Every vessel is different. Understanding how this ship works, its systems, its routines, and its culture, is as important as the technical knowledge you bring with you. Take your familiarisation seriously. Walk every area you are responsible for. Ask about vessel-specific procedures that may differ from previous postings. Learn the reporting structure: who answers to whom, and for what. Observe how meetings, briefings, and handovers are conducted. Pay attention to how mistakes are handled. It tells you a great deal about the culture onboard.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Complete your familiarisation thoroughly, even if it feels like a formality.
- Spend time in areas of the ship beyond your own department. It helps you understand how everything connects.
- Ask experienced crew members about the quirks and specifics of this vessel.
- Know where emergency equipment is located before you need it.
- Note anything about systems or procedures that differs from your training or last vessel.
- Learn the handover process for your role. Understand what the outgoing crew member would want you to know.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Treating familiarisation as a box to tick rather than a genuine learning process.
- Assuming the ship works the same way as your last one.
- Waiting until an emergency to learn where equipment is located.
- Skipping areas of the ship that seem less relevant to your role.
- Letting respect for hierarchy prevent you from asking questions, seeking clarification, or raising safety concerns.

Quick Reflection

- Do I know the emergency procedures and muster stations on this vessel?
- Is there anything about this ship's systems I am not yet comfortable with?
- Have I asked about anything that seems different from what I expected?

PART 2: JOINING & SETTLING IN

7. New Crew and New Culture

Every crew is different. The people you sail with shape the experience of the contract as much as the work itself. Settling into a new crew takes time, curiosity, and a willingness to hold your first impressions lightly. The tone set by senior officers, the mix of nationalities and backgrounds, and the norms that have developed over time all shape how the crew operates. Your job is not to immediately change those norms; it is to understand them first and contribute to them constructively. An important part of settling into any crew is respecting each other's religion, cultural sensitivities, and personal boundaries. Curiosity is welcome, but it should never cross into intrusion or disrespect.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Contribute reliably to shared tasks from the start, reliability builds respect faster than personality.
- Be the first to say hello, offer help, and remember names, small gestures of connection go a long way.
- Ask questions about where people are from and what life is like there, curiosity builds trust, as long as it does not cross into prying or disrespect.
- Accept invitations, even if they feel awkward at first, shared meals, shared humour, and shared moments are how crew bonds form.
- Show up to shared spaces even when you do not feel like it, presence is noticed more than words.
- Give yourself time before judging whether you fit in, it takes a few weeks to find your place.
- Find at least one person you can be honest with early on.
- Match your pace to the crew's rhythm before trying to set your own.
- If you are a senior joining a crew that already has its culture, earn your place in it before trying to shape it.



PART 2: JOINING & SETTLING IN

7. New Crew and New Culture

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Spending time only with familiar faces and shutting out the wider crew. Integration is your responsibility as much as anyone else's.
- Assuming someone is unfriendly or taking their quiet personally. Many crewmates simply take longer to open up.
- Judging the crew against the last one. Every ship is its own thing.
- Bringing tension from previous contracts into this one.
- Oversharing too early. Trust builds gradually and not everyone needs to know everything about you straight away.
- Being loudly present but emotionally absent, showing up physically while keeping everyone at a distance.
- Staying in your cabin during off-hours consistently. Isolation deepens quickly.
- Using your native language exclusively in shared workspaces when it may unintentionally exclude other crew members.

Quick Reflection

Reflect on one cultural practice, tradition, or perspective you learned from another crewmember during the week. What surprised you, and what did you learn from it?



Activity: The Shared Table

Challenge yourself to sit with someone different at every meal
At the end of the week, ask yourself: who was the most unexpected person you spoke with? Who did you assume you had nothing in common with and were wrong?



Team Activity: Getting to Know Each Other

Consider taking the initiative to organize a relaxed informal activity if allowed where crew members can share something about their culture or life back home. It could be a game, a story, a tradition, a celebration, or even a few words in their language. These small moments often make it easier for people to connect, appreciate differences, and feel more at home onboard.

PART 2: JOINING & SETTLING IN

8. Communication and Speaking Up

Clear, respectful communication is essential for safety, teamwork, and wellbeing onboard. Language and cultural misunderstanding are widely reported alongside fatigue and homesickness as among the most common sources of onboard stress. What sounds direct in one culture can sound blunt in another. What looks respectful in one culture can look evasive in another. Curiosity, not assumption, is what closes that gap and turns a collection of strangers into a crew.

A question asked in time can prevent an accident. A question not asked because someone felt embarrassed or afraid can cause one. Feeling safe enough to speak up without fear of being judged or dismissed is called psychological safety. It does not mean the absence of hierarchy or discipline. It means that within the structure, people feel human enough to be honest.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Confirm understanding by repeating instructions back before starting a task. For helm and engine orders, repeat exactly as required by vessel procedures. Use IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases where applicable.
- Speak up early if something feels unclear, before not after.
- Choose the right moment for a hard conversation, not during a busy operation.
- Use standard maritime terminology when common language is limited.
- Correct privately, praise publicly.
- Learn a word or two in a crewmate's language. It signals genuine respect.
- When cultural difference creates friction, name it calmly rather than letting it sit.
- Asking questions and seeking clarification are signs of professionalism, not disrespect, especially when safety is involved.
- Raise concerns regardless of rank. A safety concern matters no matter who identifies it.
- Agree on a communication routine with family before you sail: which days, which app, what to do if contact is lost.



PART 2: JOINING & SETTLING IN

8. Communication and Speaking Up

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Assuming you understood without checking. A quick confirmation takes seconds and saves a lot of trouble.
- Staying silent when something is unclear. Experience and confidence grow with time. Asking questions is not a weakness. It is how good seafarers learn.
- Ignoring a concern raised by a junior because of rank. Good ideas and safety observations can come from anyone on a ship.
- Dismissing a misunderstanding as attitude. Most of the time, it is simply a difference in how people express themselves.
- Saying something in anger during a tense moment. The moment passes, but the words stay.
- Sending a difficult message over text when a proper conversation would work better.
- Going silent with family during a hard time without any word. A short message to say you are okay is enough.



What Would You Do?

A junior seafarer receives an instruction they are not sure about. What should they do?

A. Start the task carefully and ask if something goes wrong — interrupting a senior for every small thing looks unprofessional.
B. Ask a fellow junior who has done the task before, so you do not slow the senior officer down.
C. Ask the senior officer to clarify before starting, even if it feels like a basic question.
D. Do your best with what you know and flag any uncertainty in the task log afterwards.

The right approach: ***C***

Asking for clarification before starting is always the right call, even when it feels awkward. A few seconds of confirmation can prevent an error that takes hours to fix — or worse, creates a safety risk. Good senior officers expect questions from juniors and see it as a sign of professionalism, not weakness.

PART 2: JOINING & SETTLING IN

8. Communication and Speaking Up

Activity: The Shared Table

Think about the last time you witnessed someone yourself or a crewmate stay silent when they should have asked something.

What stopped them? Fear of looking incompetent? Rank? Cultural pressure? Time pressure?

Write down the barrier. Then write down what it would have taken to remove it. That answer tells you something about the culture of the vessel and about what you can do to change it.



Quick Reflection

- Did I ask when I did not understand something?
- Did I stay calm under pressure today?
- Did I make it easy for someone to approach me?
- Have I ever stayed silent because I was worried about how others might perceive my question or concern?

Part 3:

LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD



Cultural awareness is not a soft skill.

It is a **safety skill.**

PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

9. Wellbeing and Fatigue Onboard

Wellbeing onboard covers how you sleep, eat, move, connect, and manage being away. Applying it consistently at sea is harder than knowing it.

Mental wellbeing is less often discussed. The conditions of seafaring isolation, confinement, separation from family, limited autonomy are widely recognised as risk factors for depression, anxiety, and burnout. This does not mean every seafarer will struggle. It means every seafarer deserves to understand these risks and have practical tools to manage them.

Fatigue is widely identified as one of the most significant contributing factors in incidents at sea, affecting concentration, judgement, mood, and decision-making long before a person feels dangerously tired. Irregular watches, noise, and poor cabin conditions worsen it further. People are poor judges of their own tiredness. Flagging fatigue is a professional responsibility.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Establish a daily routine even within a watch system. Consistency in small things builds stability.
- Protect your sleep above almost everything else. It affects judgement, concentration, emotional regulation, and safety.
- Report fatigue before it affects your performance, not after.
- Stay physically active. Even a short walk on deck or stretching has a measurable effect on mood.
- Find one crewmate you can genuinely trust. Peer connection is one of the strongest protective factors against mental health deterioration.
- Know the signs of cumulative fatigue: increased irritability, slowed reaction time, difficulty making decisions, unusual errors on routine tasks. Early recognition means earlier response.
- Name what you are feeling, even if only to yourself. Awareness precedes management.
- Check in on a crewmate who seems off. Connection works both ways.
- Many seafarers find comfort and resilience in spiritual or faith-based practices, whether prayer, quiet reflection, or religious observance. For many, these are an important source of inner strength during long periods away from home.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Pushing through severe fatigue in silence.
- Dismissing your own or a crewmate's fatigue as normal seafaring toughness.
- Working through rest hours to finish a task early.

PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Isolating yourself in your cabin for extended periods.
- Waiting until things become serious before seeking support.
- Treating wellbeing as a weakness rather than a professional priority.
- Dismissing low mood as just tiredness when it has been going on for days.

Physical Health and Access to Care

- Report any illness, injury, or persistent symptoms promptly to the medical officer and Master. Mention when symptoms began, medicines taken, and any effect on your ability to work.
- For a serious medical concern, use the vessel's emergency procedure immediately. Do not wait for a helpline response or use this handbook to assess symptoms.
- Only provide first aid within your training. Ask for telemedical advice or shore care when needed.
- For everyday health, drink water regularly, eat balanced meals, and use safe exercise spaces.
- Raise concerns about food, drinking water, heat, hygiene, or accommodation through the proper channel.
- Sensitive concerns such as ongoing medicines, dental problems, or reproductive health can be raised confidentially. Do not borrow medicines or substitute informal advice for qualified medical care.
- Rest must stay protected. Learning, exercise, and welfare activities should not displace required rest. Tell your supervisor if the workload makes recovery impossible.



Activity: The Daily Check-In

At the end of a shift, take 60 seconds to notice your body, mood and heaviest worry. Use Tool 3 to choose an action; review patterns weekly. You do not need to wait until your weekly review to ask for help.

Quick Reflection

- What is one small thing I can do today to look after my wellbeing?
- How well rested am I right now, honestly?
- Who can I reach out to if I am struggling?

PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

10. Relationships Onboard

Onboard relationships are unlike most working relationships. You do not just work with these people. You eat with them, sleep near them, and share a confined space for months. Good relationships do not happen by accident. They are built through small, consistent actions and basic human decency. Conflict is part of onboard life. What separates functional crews from struggling ones is not the absence of conflict but how early and honestly, it gets addressed.

ISWAN's Social Interaction Matters (SIM) research found that the quality of onboard relationships is one of the strongest factors in crew wellbeing and safety. Crews who spent leisure time together reported lower isolation, better mood, and stronger working relationships. Social interaction does not happen automatically. It needs a culture that supports it, led by senior officers who are visible and willing to participate.

Find out more: ***Social Interaction Matters (SIM) Project - International Seafarers' Welfare & Assistance Network https://share.google/bitGUqyrL2UMcgWCN***

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Invest in the early days of a new contract. First impressions set the tone for months.
- Be reliable in small things. It builds trust faster than any grand gesture.
- Check in on a crewmate who has gone quiet or seems to be having a rough day. A simple word is enough. Isolation worsens when left unaddressed.
- Address tension with a crewmate early, privately, and calmly. Not in front of others.
- Shared meals matter more than they seem. Making the effort to eat with others rather than alone in your cabin consistently makes a difference to mood and belonging.
- Build at least one onboard relationship where you can be honest. It matters more than people expect.
- Maintain your personal boundaries. It is reasonable to define what is and is not comfortable for you in terms of humour, physical space, and personal topics.
- If something a crewmate says or does makes you uncomfortable, name it calmly and directly.
- Playing a sport or game together, even informally, builds connection across ranks faster than almost anything else.
- Small organised activities onboard do not need to be elaborate. A quiz, a short competition, a film together. The content matters less than the act of doing something as a group.
- Senior officers who join in social activities, rather than staying separate, send a signal that the whole crew matters, not just the work.

PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Carrying a grievance silently for weeks and then expecting the other person to understand.
- Allowing small tensions to build without addressing them.
- Allowing small groups to form that leave others out, they slowly divide a crew and are far harder to fix than to prevent.
- Taking personal frustrations out on crewmates who had no part in causing them.
- Dismissing a crewmate's stated boundary as oversensitivity.
- Staying silent when you witness someone being treated inappropriately, being an upstander means saying something, even simply: "That didn't seem right".

Activity: The Crew Audit

Think about the crew you are currently sailing with.

Write down the name or initials of every person you have had a genuine conversation with this week not about work, something real.

Now look at the names that are not on the list.

One of those names is your task for this week.



PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

11. Cultural Awareness

Ships bring together people from different countries, backgrounds, and ways of thinking. Cultural awareness is not a soft skill. It is a safety skill. Research into maritime incidents consistently identifies cultural misunderstanding as a contributing factor. Silence, eye contact, hierarchy, and how disagreement is expressed all carry different meanings across cultures.

Curiosity, not assumption, is what closes the gap. The seafarer who takes a genuine interest in how their crewmates see the world builds stronger crews than the one who assumes everyone works the same way they do.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Take a genuine interest in a crewmate's background, food, language, and home.
- Ask respectful questions about customs, dietary restrictions, and beliefs, approach religious and political subjects with care.
- Be patient with language gaps, someone struggling in their third language may be thinking of something far more nuanced than they can say.
- When cultural difference creates friction, name it calmly rather than letting it fester.
- Recognize that a junior from a high-deference culture may find it difficult to speak up even when it matters, name this dynamic rather than misreading it.
- Adapt your communication style rather than expecting others to always adapt to yours.
- Pay attention to shared spaces, the mess room and recreation areas are where culture is most visible and most sensitive.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Writing off a misunderstanding as someone being difficult when it may simply be cultural.
- Expecting everyone to communicate the same way you do.
- Using cultural background to excuse poor behavior culture explains difference, it does not excuse harm.
- Making assumptions about someone's capability based on their nationality.
- Letting cultural friction go unaddressed because it feels uncomfortable to name.
- Using local slang or idioms that do not translate well.

Quick Reflection

- Have I tried to understand how a crewmate's background shapes the way they communicate?
- Is there a cultural misunderstanding that has been sitting unaddressed?
- What is one thing I can do to show genuine respect for a crewmate's background this week?

PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

12. Gender Inclusion

A respectful and inclusive shipboard environment supports safety, teamwork, and professional relationships. Being a seafarer is defined by professional capability, not gender. Seafaring remains one of the most gender-imbalanced professions in the world. Seafarers of all genders can face pressures that are easy for the rest of the crew to overlook, the need to prove competence that others are not asked to prove, hesitation to raise a concern for fear of being seen as difficult, or the daily weight of exclusion through language and assumption. Building an inclusive crew means noticing those pressures and actively working to ease them.

Allyship means standing alongside colleagues who face exclusion or harassment, speaking up when something is not right, and not waiting for the person affected to handle it alone.

ISWAN's *"Safe at Sea... It Takes All of Us"* campaign, developed with seafarers across the shipping, cruise, and superyacht sectors, offers practical guidance on what allyship looks like onboard

Find out more: ***'Safe at sea...it takes all of us!' campaign - International Seafarers' Welfare & Assistance Network https://share.google/1zmryckSEZXiPXiL8***

Practical Needs for an Inclusive Ship

- Inclusion means suitable equipment and facilities for everyone. Raise concerns about missing PPE sizes, cabin privacy, unsafe locks, or sanitary supplies. Tasks and learning opportunities should be allocated by competence, not assumption.
- Menstrual hygiene is an ordinary health need. Ask for a discreet stock of products and a covered disposal bin. The responsible officer should arrange lawful disposal under the ship's garbage management plan.
- For reproductive health or pregnancy-related concerns, seek confidential medical advice and discuss any necessary work adjustments with the appropriate company contact. Do not share another person's health information.

Scenario

- If a senior crewmate makes a sexual joke and a colleague looks uncomfortable, a safe response is: "Let us keep this professional," followed by a private check-in.
- If direct intervention feels unsafe, use a trusted officer or shore reporting channel.
- The affected person may choose to address the behaviour respectfully if comfortable, but they are not required to laugh it off, explain why it is inappropriate, or confront a senior. "We encourage self-advocacy first, empower seafarers to become speak up which is what makes them resilient."

PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

12. Gender Inclusion

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Treat all crew members fairly and professionally, based on competence, not gender stereotypes.
- Use gender-neutral language, replace "guys" with "team", "crew", or "everyone".
- Address everyone by their rank, name, or professional title.
- Provide equal opportunities to learn, contribute, and take responsibility.
- Include everyone equally in informal moments, meals, breaks, downtime, not just work tasks.
- Speak up when you witness exclusionary behaviour.
- Recognise and acknowledge the contribution of all crew members equally.
- Support colleagues who may feel uncomfortable or excluded.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Stereotypes and assumptions based on gender.
- Gendered jokes or comments, even when intended lightly.
- Excluding colleagues from tasks or discussions based on gender.
- Dismissing concerns raised about inappropriate behaviour.
- Assuming a colleague cannot handle a physically demanding task without asking them first.
- Using language that demeans or marginalizes any crew member.
- Using terms like ‘sweetheart,’ ‘dear,’ or ‘good girl,’ or commenting on a colleague’s appearance or dress.
- Making a colleague a continuous topic of discussion based on their sex, gender, nationality, or other personal characteristics.



PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

12. Gender Inclusion



What Would You Do?

A senior officer makes a joke at the expense of the only woman onboard. A few people laugh. She does not. You can see she is uncomfortable, but she says nothing. What should you do?

A. Say nothing in the moment — she is capable of speaking for herself if it bothered her, and stepping in might embarrass her further
B. Laugh along so the moment passes quickly and does not become a bigger issue
C. Bring it up privately with her afterwards to check if she is okay, and decide from there whether to say something to the officer
D. Challenge the officer directly in front of the group so everyone knows it was not acceptable

The right approach: ***C***

Checking in with her privately first respects her agency and gives you a clearer sense of how she experienced it. If she was uncomfortable, you can then decide together whether to raise it further. Speaking up does not always mean a public confrontation sometimes it means making sure the person most affected feels seen and supported. If the behaviour is repeated or serious, escalating to a senior or through the ship's reporting process is the right next step.



Activity: The Crew Audit

Think back over the last week onboard. Cast your mind over the conversations at meals, during handovers, in the mess room.
Write down one phrase, word, or moment where the language used, however casually, may have made someone feel less included or less professional. It could be something you said, something you heard, or something you let pass.

Now write down: what could have been said instead?

You do not need to share this with anyone. The point is simply to notice. Most exclusion does not happen loudly. It happens in the small moments that no one names.

PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

12. Gender Inclusion

Quick Reflection

- Did I treat everyone with the same level of respect?
- Did I challenge anything that could make someone feel excluded?
- Did I create an inclusive and respectful environment for my crew?

13. Professional Conduct, Leadership, and Safety

Safe and efficient ship operations depend on professionalism and accountability at every level. Leadership onboard is not just the responsibility of officers. Every crew member, at every rank, contributes to the culture of the vessel. Trust is built through consistency, in how you show up, how you respond when things go wrong, and whether you step in for a struggling crewmate.

Long exposure to poor practices can make them feel normal. A ship where people are afraid to speak up carries more risk than its paperwork shows.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Show up on time and ready for duty. Be honest if you are not fit for duty.
- Follow protocol, especially when a shortcut looks tempting.
- Speak up the moment something feels unsafe. You have the right and responsibility to stop unsafe work before it happens.
- Own your mistakes early. It is easier to fix what is out in the open.
- Ask when you are unsure, every single time.
- Report near misses, even small ones. They are free lessons.
- Communicate your workload honestly. If you are overloaded, say so before quality or safety is compromised.
- Set the tone through your own behaviour before expecting it from others.
- Make space for everyone to feel heard, especially quieter or junior crew members.
- Celebrate wins as a crew, not just individual performance.

PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

13. Professional Conduct, Leadership, and Safety

When You Lead Others

- At briefings, ask what is unclear and what could make the job unsafe. Thank people who raise concerns, explain the next step, and close the loop.
- Correct performance with specific examples, not humiliation.
- Check actual workload, rest, and the needs of new or newly promoted crew. If resources are insufficient, escalate.
- Resilience activities cannot compensate for unsafe staffing or persistent overload.
- When someone comes to you for help, protect their privacy. Share information only through appropriate channels.
- Explain any safety-related limits to confidentiality and watch for exclusion or retaliation after a concern is raised.



What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Staying quiet about a doubt.
- Cutting corners under time pressure.
- Hiding an error out of fear.
- Using "we have always done it this way" as a reason to skip a check.
- Working through required rest hours to finish a task early.
- Using rank to dismiss concerns or ideas from junior crew.
- Correcting someone in front of others unnecessarily.
- Leading only through authority rather than through example.
- Playing favourites among crew members.

PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

13. Professional Conduct, Leadership, and Safety



What Would You Do?

You notice a colleague skipping a safety procedure. What is the appropriate response?

A. Mention it quietly to the colleague in the moment, but do not push it if they brush you off
B. Log it in the safety register and let the system handle it
C. Ignore it this once everyone cuts corners occasionally and it is probably fine
D. Say nothing now but bring it up at the next safety briefing when others are present

*The right approach: **A***

Raising it directly and respectfully with the colleague in the moment is usually the most effective first step. It gives them a chance to correct the mistake without embarrassment, keeps the working relationship intact, and addresses the risk before it becomes an incident. If the behaviour continues or the risk is serious, escalating to a senior officer is the right next step.

Quick Reflection

- Did I follow all safety procedures during my last shift?
- Did I set a positive example for those around me?
- What is one thing I can learn or improve in this contract?

PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

14. Financial and Digital Life at Sea

Managing money well and staying safe online are practical skills that make a real difference to life at sea and at home. Financial pressure is one of the most common contributors to stress on ISWAN's SeafarerHelp helpline. Seafarers are also frequently and specifically targeted by recruitment fraud, fake job offers, upfront fees for guaranteed placements, and increasingly convincing scams run through WhatsApp, social media, and AI-generated voice calls. Awareness and a clear plan make an enormous difference.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Build a contract-gap buffer. Treat your active earnings with the next gap in mind.
- Be cautious with public or ship Wi-Fi when accessing banking or personal accounts.
- Never share passwords, PINs, or one-time verification codes with anyone.
- Verify your recruitment or manning agency independently before signing anything or sending any money.
- Report a suspected scam rather than quietly absorbing the loss. It helps protect the next seafarer.
- Keep banking apps updated.
- Think carefully before posting vessel details or location on social media. It creates security risks.
- Ensure you and your family have appropriate life and health insurance cover before you sail. Also check what social security programmes are available in your country, some may provide additional cover or benefits for seafarers and their families during the contract period.
- If investing, take independent professional advice and understand the risks before committing.
- Update your next of kin details in your contract and share a copy with your family before each voyage.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Responding to urgent messages asking for money transfers without verification.
- Sharing personal financial or vessel information on social media.
- Making investment decisions under pressure or without consulting family.
- Paying any fee to secure a job before verifying the agency is legitimate.
- Taking loans from informal or unverified sources while onboard.
- Mixing your emergency fund with daily expenditures.

PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

14. Financial and Digital Life at Sea

Quick Reflection

- Are there any financial commitments I need to review?
- Am I careful enough about my personal data and online security?
- Does my family have everything they need to manage financially while I am away?



Financial and Digital Safety Checklist - Before Every Contract

Go through this before you sail. Tick each one honestly

Financial Discipline

- [ ] My regular bills and loan repayments are set to automatic payment for the contract period.
- [ ] My family has access to at least one bank account and knows how to use it.
- [ ] I have a contract-gap buffer, enough to cover household expenses for at least two months.
- [ ] My emergency fund is separate from my everyday spending account.
- [ ] My family knows where all financial documents and insurance policies are kept.
- [ ] I have not taken on any new loans or financial commitments that I have not told my family about.
- [ ] I have checked what mandatory social security schemes or provident fund contributions apply to me as a seafarer and ensured my contributions are up to date.
- [ ] I have explored optional retirement, or pension plans available to seafarers and made a decision about whether to enrol.

PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

14. Financial and Digital Life at Sea



Financial and Digital Safety Checklist - Before Every Contract

Go through this before you sail. Tick each one honestly

Digital Safety

- [ ] My banking and financial apps are up to date.
- [ ] I have not saved my banking passwords in any shared or public device.
- [ ] I am cautious about using public or shared Wi-Fi for banking or accessing personal accounts.

Scam Awareness

- [ ] My manning agency is verified and registered, I have not paid any placement fee.
- [ ] I know that no legitimate bank, company, or authority will ever ask for my password, PIN, or one-time verification code.
- [ ] If I receive an urgent money request, even from a known number, I will verify by calling back directly before acting.
- [ ] I am aware that recruitment fraud, fake job offers, and financial scams specifically target seafarers, and I know how to report a suspected scam.
- [ ] I know that AI-generated voice calls and messages can convincingly impersonate people I know urgency and pressure are warning signs, not reasons to act immediately.

PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

15. Family Relationships - Staying Connected Across the Distance

Seafaring puts pressure on every kind of family relationship: partnerships, parenthood, friendships, and extended family. The separation is long, the communication is limited, and life on both sides moves forward in ways that are hard to keep up with from the other side of an ocean.

The relationships that survive and strengthen through seafaring careers are not necessarily the ones with the least difficulty. They are the ones where communication is honest, expectations are managed, and both sides are making active effort. Distance does not break relationships. Neglect, silence, and unmanaged expectations do.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Have an honest, regular conversation with your partner about how separation is affecting both of you, not just the logistics.
- Share what is going well onboard, not just what is hard. Your family wants to feel part of your life, not just a destination.
- Acknowledge the effort your family makes during the contract: running a household alone, raising children, managing uncertainty. This deserves genuine recognition.
- Stay emotionally present even when physically absent. A short, warm message matters more than a long, distracted call.
- If the timing of a call is difficult, say so and agree on a better time rather than letting contact drift.
- Children need consistent, age-appropriate communication about when you are coming back. Vagueness creates more anxiety than honest timelines.
- If a relationship is struggling, do not wait until you are home to address it. A difficult conversation through a call is better than months of silent distance.



PART 3: LIVING AND WORKING ONBOARD

15. Family Relationships - Staying Connected Across the Distance

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Checking in only with logistics: school fees, bills, household decisions, and missing the emotional conversation.
- Performing happiness on calls when you are struggling. Families sense the gap and worry
- Dismissing your partner's difficulties with the phrase "you knew what this life was." It closes conversations rather than opening them.
- Letting guilt about being away translate into either over-generosity or avoidance. Both create problems.
- Staying out of family decisions entirely while away, then trying to take them back when you return.

Quick Reflection

- Have I had a genuinely honest conversation with my family recently, not just a logistical one?
- What does my partner or family need from me that I have not been offering?
- How present have I been, emotionally, during this contract?



Part 4:
WHEN THINGS DON'T GO WELL

Getting **help** is **not giving up.**

PART 4: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO WELL

16. Making and Learning from Mistakes

Anyone can make mistakes at sea. What separates a safe crew from an unsafe one is not the absence of error, it is what happens next. Most errors have more than one cause: fatigue, unclear instructions, workload, or unfamiliar systems alongside a person's decision. A ship where people are afraid to admit mistakes is a ship where mistakes are built quietly until they cannot be ignored. A culture that treats honest errors as learning opportunities is a safer culture than one that blames individuals. If you want to build on this further as part of your ongoing professional growth, see Chapter 21: Learning, Feedback, and Professional Growth.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Acknowledge mistakes immediately to yourself and, where relevant, to your supervisor.
- Correct what can be corrected without delay.
- Understand what went wrong before moving on, the same mistake in a different context may be more serious.
- Report mistakes and near misses through the appropriate channel.
- Accept feedback constructively rather than defensively.
- Use a mistake as a learning moment, not a source of prolonged self-criticism.
- If unclear instructions contributed to a mistake, raise that it protects the whole crew.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Hiding an error out of fear of consequences.
- Giving yourself a prolonged amount of self-criticism; the practice is: acknowledge, understand, correct, and move on.
- Blaming others when the cause was shared.
- Repeating the same mistake without reflecting on why it happened.
- Treating a near miss as not worth mentioning because nothing bad happened.

Quick Reflection

- If I made a mistake recently, did I address it honestly?
- Is there something I have been doing that I have not yet raised?
- Am I in an environment where I feel safe reporting an error?

PART 4: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO WELL

17. Conflict

Conflict is part of life onboard. In a confined space with the same people for months, tension is not a sign something has gone wrong. It is a sign you are human. Fatigue, cultural differences, and hierarchy all make friction more likely. Small irritations compound across a long contract.

Disagreement, conflict, and bullying are three different things. Disagreement is two people seeing things differently. This is healthy and normal. Conflict is when disagreement becomes personal or disruptive. It needs addressing. Bullying is a repeated pattern of intentional harm. It is never acceptable.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Pause before reacting, your first response under pressure is rarely your best.
- Address tension privately and early, not in front of others.
- Focus on the issue, not the person.
- Try to understand the other person's position before defending your own.
- Know when to involve a senior officer, some situations need more than two people to resolve.
- Seek support from SeafarerHelp helpline if a conflict involves senior crew and you feel unsafe raising it internally.
- Pick the right moment, not during a busy operation or in front of others.
- Say what you need, not just what bothered you, it moves the conversation forward.
- Give the other person time to respond without interrupting.
- Acknowledge your own part in the tension, even if small.
- Check in after a difficult conversation, a short nod or word goes a long way.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Letting resentment build silently for weeks.
- Raising grievances publicly or in front of the crew.
- Involving more people than necessary in a personal conflict.
- Confusing a genuine disagreement with bullying.
- Waiting until sign-off to address something that could have been resolved earlier.
- Bringing up old grievances in a new argument.
- Using silence as a weapon, it prolongs tension without resolving anything.
- Expecting a senior officer to take sides rather than mediate.
- Venting to multiple crewmates before speaking to the person directly.
- Assuming the other person knows they have upset you, often they do not.

PART 4: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO WELL

17. Conflict



What Would You Do?

You have had an ongoing tension with a fellow crew member for two weeks. It is affecting your work and your mood. What should you do?

A. Keep your distance and stay professional on the job; you only have a few more weeks on contract and it will sort itself out.
B. Speak to your senior officer and ask them to step in, so you do not risk making things worse by approaching the person directly.
C. Find a quiet moment to speak to the person privately and calmly, without an audience.
D. Write down everything that has happened, so you have a record, then decide what to do closer to sign-off.

The right approach: ***C***

Raising it directly, privately, and without an audience gives the other person a fair chance to respond and keeps the situation from escalating. Waiting it out or involving others too early often makes things harder to resolve. If a calm conversation does not help, then involving a senior officer is the right next step.



Activity: The 48-Hour Test

For a minor everyday irritation with no safety or welfare risk, pause before reacting. You may use the 48-hour reflection below if appropriate.

Wait 48 hours.

At the end of 48 hours, ask yourself: does this still need addressing? If yes, address it directly and privately. If no, let it go completely. No lingering, no mentioning it sideways.

This test is only for minor everyday irritations. Do not delay action on unsafe work, threats, abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination or medical concern. You do not have to confront the person directly when that feels unsafe.

PART 4: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO WELL

18. Bullying, Harassment, and SASH

Every seafarer has the right to work in an environment that is safe, respectful, and free from abuse. Bullying and harassment are not a normal part of seafaring life. Bullying often involves a pattern of repeated, intentional behaviour meant to harm, humiliate, or undermine someone. That said, any serious or inappropriate incident can be reported and assessed, even if it has only happened once. Bullying is not the same as constructive feedback, being asked to redo a task, or a firm instruction given under pressure.

Sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH) include unwanted sexual conduct in person or online. A single serious incident can require action. The person affected is never to blame and can seek support, discuss reporting options, and ask for protection without being pressured to confront anyone.

Consent, Immediate Protection, and Safe Reporting

- Consent must be freely given. Silence, rank, or a previous relationship is not consent. Neither is someone who is asleep, unconscious, or intoxicated.
- Do not touch intimately or photograph someone who cannot consent. Seek medical help and preserve their dignity.
- If an incident has occurred, move to a safer place. Seek urgent medical help if needed.
- If the person concerned is in the reporting chain, use a shore channel. Ask about safe accommodation and protection from retaliation.
- Keep notes and any evidence securely. Do not circulate intimate images or investigate yourself. Support is available even if evidence is missing.
- If a colleague discloses, listen without blame or interrogation. Ask what they need, explain your reporting responsibilities, and help them reach a trained contact.
- Do not promise secrecy when someone's safety requires escalation.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Speak up if you witness bullying or harassment, even if it is not directed at you.
- Document incidents as they happen. Note dates, times, what was said, and any witnesses.
- Support a colleague who comes to you with a concern. Listen without judgment and help them access support.
- Know your company's reporting procedures before you need them. Reporting is always an option available to you. It protects the next person, not just yourself.
- Trust your instincts. If something feels wrong, it usually is, even if you cannot immediately name it.

PART 4: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO WELL

18. Bullying, Harassment, and SASH

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- If something that happened onboard is still weighing on you after signing off, it is not too late to talk to someone. Support is available between contracts too.
- A good onboard culture starts with small moments. Calling out a joke that went too far. Checking on someone who seems off.
- **If you are struggling, SeafarerHelp helpline is available 24/7 and is confidential. What you share will not be passed on without your consent.**

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Dismissing someone's concern as oversensitivity. What feels small to one person can be deeply affecting to another.
- Staying silent out of fear. It is understandable, and support is available to help you decide what to do.
- Assuming things will get better on their own. They rarely do without someone taking a small step.
- Confusing strict management with bullying. One is professional, the other causes harm.
- Using rank as a reason not to take a concern seriously. Everyone deserves to be heard.
- Treating informal spaces as places where different standards apply. Kindness and respect belong everywhere onboard.
- Pressuring someone who has raised a concern to withdraw or downplay it. They took courage to speak. That deserves support, not pressure.
- Gossiping about a reported incident. It makes it harder for others to come forward.
- Accepting something simply because it has always been tolerated. Tolerance is not the same as it being right.



Activity: What Would You Do If It Was Your Crewmate?

1. Think of a crewmate you respect
2. Imagine they describe what you have been experiencing
3. Write down what you would tell them
4. Read it back as advice for yourself

Quick Reflection

- Do I know how to report a concern onboard or externally?
- Have I witnessed behaviour I should have challenged?
- Is there anyone around me who may need support?

PART 4: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO WELL

19. Substance Use Awareness

Life at sea involves periods of stress, isolation, and long stretches of routine. People find different ways to cope. This section is not here to judge any of those ways. It is here to offer some information and reflection.

Alcohol and other substances are part of life for many people, onboard and ashore. Onboard, there are also specific rules around their use because impairment in a working environment at sea carries serious consequences for everyone. Knowing those rules and knowing where to turn if you or someone around you is struggling, is what this section is about.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Know your company's drug and alcohol policy and your rights under it.
- If you have questions or concerns about your own use, confidential support is available. You do not need to be in a crisis to reach out.
- If you are concerned about a colleague, approach the conversation privately and without judgment. You do not have to manage it alone. Referring them to available support is enough.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Dismissing a concern about a colleague's wellbeing as not their business.
- Hiding something they are struggling with from people who could help.
- Making decisions that affect others onboard when not in a fit state to do so.

If you are concerned about a colleague, approach the conversation with care and without judgment. Refer them to available support rather than managing it alone.

Quick Reflection

- Am I using anything to cope that might be worth reflecting on?
- Is there someone around me who might need support?
- Do I know what confidential support is available to me?

PART 4: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO WELL

20. Stress, Speaking Up, and Getting Help

Stress at sea rarely arrives alone. A financial worry sits alongside a relationship strain. A difficult incident onboard sits alongside something that happened at home. Recognising stress early, in yourself and in those around you, and responding before it compounds is one of the most practical skills a seafarer can develop.

Emergencies, whether medical, safety, or geopolitical, are part of seafaring life. Remaining calm is a skill that can be practised. Speaking up before an emergency occurs is how most of them are prevented.

Knowing when to get help is a skill, and one many seafarers develop late. The barriers are well known: stigma, pride, fear of consequences. But early support leads to better outcomes in almost every area of difficulty. Getting help is not giving up. It is what self-aware professionals do when they reach the limit of what they can manage alone.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Recognise the early signs of stress in yourself and others: broken sleep, irritability, difficulty concentrating, withdrawal, declining performance, or inability to carry out duties.
- Name what you are feeling. Write it down if you cannot yet say it to someone. Both help reduce the weight until you can speak.
- Address difficult situations early and privately rather than letting them build.
- Know your emergency procedures before you need them. Stress and unfamiliar procedures are a dangerous combination.
- In an emergency, focus on the next practical step, not the worst-case outcome.
- Speak up about a safety concern before it becomes an incident.
- Debrief after a difficult or stressful incident, even informally with a trusted crewmate.
- If you receive difficult news from home, speak to the Master and crewing office about support and available options, which may include compassionate leave depending on circumstances, your agreement and applicable rules.
- Know your support options onboard and ashore. Onboard: senior officer, welfare officer if your ship has one, Master. Ashore: SeafarerHelp helpline.
- If someone tells you they are struggling, listen fully before responding. Do not try to fix it immediately.
- Encourage professional support without dismissing peer support. Both matter.
- If someone mentions thoughts of self-harm or suicide, take it seriously and help them access immediate support.
- Follow up after a difficult conversation. One check-in is rarely enough.

PART 4: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO WELL

20. Stress, Speaking Up, and Getting Help

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Suppressing stress until it reaches a crisis point.
- Taking work frustration out on family during calls.
- Overthinking things you cannot currently change from sea.
- Suffering in silence. Reaching out is a sign of strength, not weakness.
- Spreading panic or unverified information during an emergency.
- Carrying guilt about things at home that you cannot influence from sea.
- Withdrawing from others when things feel heavy; it tends to make the pressure worse, not better.
- Waiting until things are desperate before reaching out.
- Dismissing someone's distress as exaggerating.
- Trying to manage someone else's serious mental health difficulty alone without professional involvement.
- Keeping confidences that put someone at serious risk; some situations require escalation.

Difficult News from Home: The First Hour

- If on duty, arrange a safe handover before anything else.
- Confirm the news through a trusted person.
- Tell the Master you need support. Ask for a private call and discussion of your options.
- Agree one family contact and a next update time.

If You or a Crewmate May Be at Risk of Suicide

- Ask directly and calmly if the person is thinking about suicide.
- Listen. Take the answer seriously.
- Do not promise to keep a life-threatening risk secret.
- If there is immediate danger, stay with them and call the Master and medical support.
- If these are your own thoughts, tell someone now and ask for help reaching medical support.

High-Risk Voyages and Recovery After Frightening Incidents

- Before a high-risk area, ask about the briefing, security instructions, and your contract provisions.
- During an incident, follow security instructions. Do not share locations or images.
- Afterwards, ask about medical assessment and counselling.
- Seek professional help if distress continues or affects your ability to work.

PART 4: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO WELL

20. Stress, Speaking Up, and Getting Help



Activity: The Sorting Box

Draw three columns on a page.

Label them:

- ***I can act on this***
- ***I can influence this***
- ***I cannot control this***

Write every worry, concern, or stressor currently on your mind one per line into whichever column it honestly belongs in.

For worries you cannot control from sea, acknowledge why they matter, choose who can help at home and decide when you will next check in.

You do not need to stop caring; give yourself permission to return attention to the next safe, manageable task.

Most people find their third column is the longest. That is also where most of their energy has been going.

Quick Reflection

- Is there something weighing on me right now that I have not spoken to anyone about?
- Do I know who to contact onboard or externally if I need support?
- Have I followed up after a difficult conversation with a crewmate recently?

Part 5:

GROWING AS A SEAFARER



The time at sea is yours.

It deserves to be used well.

PART 5: GROWING AS A SEAFARER

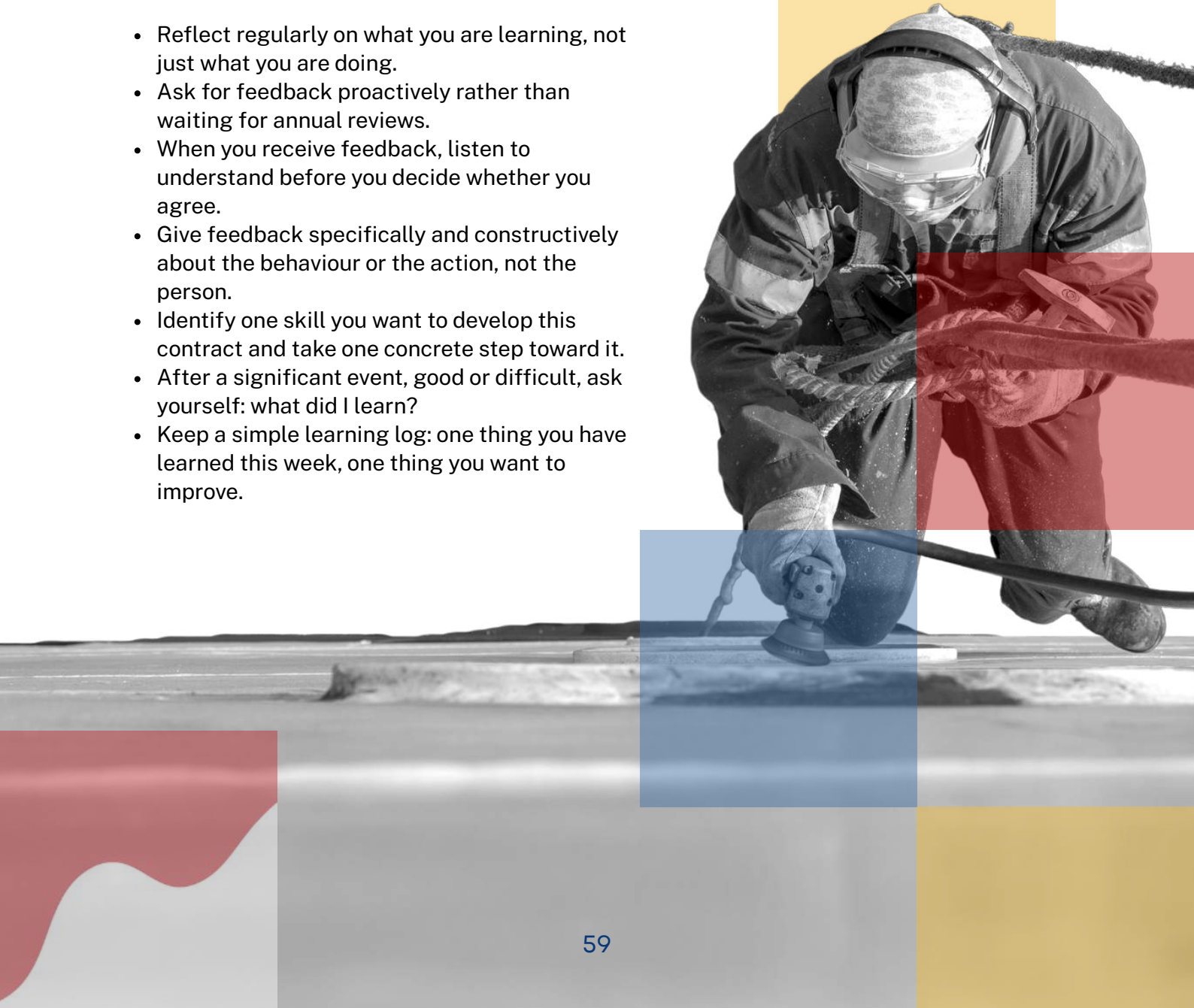
21. Learning, Feedback, and Professional Growth

Professional growth does not happen automatically with years at sea. It requires intention. Every contract is an opportunity to learn something new, deepen an existing skill, or unlearn a habit that is no longer useful. Long exposure to poor practices can make them feel normal. Continuous learning is the antidote.

Feedback is one of the most powerful development tools available and one of the most underused. Most seafarers receive feedback only when something goes wrong. Seeking feedback proactively, and receiving it with genuine openness, accelerates development in a way that experience alone does not.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Reflect regularly on what you are learning, not just what you are doing.
- Ask for feedback proactively rather than waiting for annual reviews.
- When you receive feedback, listen to understand before you decide whether you agree.
- Give feedback specifically and constructively about the behaviour or the action, not the person.
- Identify one skill you want to develop this contract and take one concrete step toward it.
- After a significant event, good or difficult, ask yourself: what did I learn?
- Keep a simple learning log: one thing you have learned this week, one thing you want to improve.



PART 5: GROWING AS A SEAFARER

21. Learning, Feedback, and Professional Growth

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Dismissing feedback as unfair without genuinely considering what might be true in it.
- Taking feedback personally rather than professionally.
- Assuming experience alone makes you better. Reflection on experience is what creates growth.
- Treating sea service as time serving rather than time learning.
- Waiting to be noticed rather than taking steps to develop yourself.



Activity: The Weekly Learning Note

At the end of each week at sea, write one sentence: "This week I learned..." and one sentence: "Next week I want to improve..." Keep these somewhere you can read them back. Over a contract, they become a picture of your growth.

Quick Reflection

- What is one thing I have learned this week?
- Have I sought feedback, or have I just waited for it?
- Is there a habit I have been carrying that no longer serves me?

PART 5: GROWING AS A SEAFARER

22. Mentoring and Being Mentored

Mentoring is one of the most powerful and underused resources in seafaring. A mentor is not a manager. They are someone whose experience you respect and who takes a genuine interest in your development. Mentoring works both ways: supporting a junior crew member deepens your own understanding of the profession.

You do not need a formal programme to find a mentor. Identify someone whose career you admire and ask if you can seek occasional guidance. Most experienced seafarers are willing, and often honoured, to be asked.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Identify someone whose career and approach you respect and ask if they would be willing to offer occasional guidance.
- Preparing specific questions for any mentoring conversation makes it valuable for both of you.
- Be honest about where you are struggling, a mentor cannot help with what they cannot see.
- Take notes and act on what you learn, showing that guidance is being applied is the greatest compliment to a mentor.
- If you are a senior crew member, making yourself available to junior crew who are trying to learn your experience is genuinely valuable.
- Mentoring does not require formal meetings, it can happen in the mess room, on watch handover, or in any informal conversation.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Waiting for a formal programme when informal relationships are available now.
- Treating a mentor as someone who has all the answers.
- Coming to mentoring conversations without your own thinking already started, not just a list of questions. The more you bring, the more useful the exchange.
- Ignoring junior crew who look to you for guidance.
- Being too proud to ask for help from a more experienced colleague.

Quick Reflection

- Is there someone onboard or in my career whose experience I could learn from?
- Have I been a useful resource to a junior crew member recently?
- What is one question I would ask a mentor today if I had one?

PART 5: GROWING AS A SEAFARER

23. Career Progression and Promotion

Career progression in seafaring is built on rank, certification, and sea service. But those who progress most effectively combine technical competence with self-awareness, leadership, and the ability to manage people as well as systems.

Promotion is not just an administrative event. It is a change in responsibility, expectation, and relationship with those around you. Preparing for promotion means preparing for that change, not just the examination.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Understand the specific requirements for your next rank: sea service hours, required certificates, competency assessments.
- Plan your certificate renewals well in advance do not let them lapse.
- Ask a senior you trust what they see as your strengths and where you need to grow.
- Seek experience in areas where you are less comfortable. Promotion readiness is about breadth as well as depth.
- Keep records of your sea service, training, and professional development updated.
- Ask your company about training and development opportunities, they exist but are not always advertised.
- When promoted, be deliberate about how you step into the new role your relationship with the crew changes, and that transition requires awareness.
- Know that promotion readiness is about leadership, communication, and judgement as much as technical competence.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Assuming that time at sea automatically leads to promotion.
- Waiting to be noticed rather than making your development goals known.
- Letting certificates lapse because renewals were not planned ahead.
- Treating promotion as only a technical challenge rather than a leadership one.
- Assuming promotion readiness is someone else's job to assess.

Planning Your Next Step Without Losing Your Wellbeing

- Confirm the exact requirements for your next rank: certificates, sea service, task records, assessments, and vessel-specific experience. Keep verified evidence. Time alone does not guarantee progression.
- Before your first contract in a new rank, ask for a mentor, supervised practice, a clear handover, and an early review.

PART 5: GROWING AS A SEAFARER

23. Career Progression and Promotion

Planning Your Next Step Without Losing Your Wellbeing

- Discuss any gaps honestly. Agree support rather than accepting responsibilities you are not ready to carry safely.
- If considering a shore role or a break from sailing, ask about transferable skills, training, references, and the financial transition. A planned change of direction is a valid career choice.

Quick Reflection

- What do I need to do to be ready for the next step in my career?
- Have I asked for honest feedback about my readiness?
- Is there a gap in my experience or skills that I need to address?

24. Personal Development

Time at sea can feel like time away from your real life. Many seafarers find it is also one of the few times they genuinely invest in themselves, not because they planned to, but because the space was there.

Personal development does not have to mean a structured programme. It can be a book you have been meaning to read, a skill you are curious about, or simply getting to know yourself a little better. Understanding what energises you, what drains you, and how you respond under pressure is some of the most useful knowledge you will ever carry.

The time at sea is yours. Some of it deserves to be used well.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Use the time at sea that would otherwise be idle for something that builds you learning a language, reading, developing a creative skill, studying for a qualification.
- Building a reading habit even 20 minutes a day across a contract adds up to something significant.
- Reflect regularly on who you are becoming, not just what you are doing.
- Invest in relationships at home during time ashore they sustain you during the contract.
- Knowing your emotional patterns under stress this self-knowledge is one of the most valuable professional assets you can develop.
- Set one personal intention for each contract that has nothing to do with performance targets.

PART 5: GROWING AS A SEAFARER

24. Personal Development

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Spending all discretionary time on screens, sleeping, and simply waiting for the contract to end.
- Treating personal development as something that happens after you retire.
- Ignoring your emotional life because it does not feel professional.
- Losing touch with interests and relationships that matter to you outside the ship.



Activity: Personal Intention

Before your next contract, write one sentence: "By the end of this contract, I want to be someone who..." It does not have to be grand. It might be someone who asks for help more readily. Someone who reads more. Someone who stays calmer under pressure. Keep it somewhere visible. Read it back at the end.

Quick Reflection

- Is there something I have wanted to learn or develop that I have been putting off?
- What kind of person do I want to become by the end of this contract?
- Am I investing in the relationships and interests that matter to me?

Part 6:
GOING HOME



Reconnect with **people** who **matter**.

PART 6: GOING HOME

25. Preparing to Sign Off

The end of a contract deserves as much attention as the start. A proper sign-off protects your rights, prepares the incoming crew, and sets you up for a smoother transition home. Most seafarers are so focused on getting off the ship that the practical and emotional work of sign-off gets rushed. This matters more than it seems like an incomplete handover, unchecked documentation, or unresolved tensions can have consequences that follow you into the next contract.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Complete handover notes that you would want to receive yourself; detailed, honest, and practically useful.
- Confirm your travel and repatriation arrangements well in advance.
- Keep the contact details of your travel agent or your company's emergency travel desk with you throughout your transit home, not just saved on your phone.
- Ensure all your sea service documentation is correctly recorded and signed before you leave.
- Settle any outstanding matters before you go, financial (portage receipts, documentation) or interpersonal.
- Save important contact details from the vessel before connectivity changes.
- Take a moment to say proper goodbyes to the crew you sailed with. It matters, however the voyage went.
- Speak to someone if you are carrying something heavy into your time ashore before you leave, not after.
- Check your sea service records are accurate; errors are much harder to correct once you have left.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Leaving without completing documentation because you are eager to go.
- Leaving unresolved conflicts that could affect the incoming crew or your own future on that vessel.
- Assuming mental or emotional difficulties will automatically resolve on arrival home.
- Leaving without confirming your sea service records are accurate.

Quick Reflection

- Have I completed everything needed before leaving the vessel?
- Is there anyone I should speak to before I go?
- Am I carrying anything from this contract that I should address before I get home?

PART 6: **GOING HOME**

26. Coming Home - Reintegration and Family

Returning home is often joyful, but full re-entry to the daily rhythms of family life takes time and patience for everyone.

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Give yourself a full day or two before making any commitments or plans.
- Ask your family what their week has looked like, rather than filling in the gaps yourself.
- Let your children set the pace. Do not force closeness before they are ready.
- Listen more than you talk in the first few days. Your family has been living what you missed.
- Tell your family what you need: rest, quiet, time. Do not expect them to guess.
- Acknowledge what your partner managed in your absence. Say it out loud, not just in your head.
- Find one small thing you can do for the household in the first week. It signals you are back, not just visiting.
- Stay off your phone during family time. Presence matters more than updates.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Expecting everyone to reorganise around your return.
- Raising unresolved conflicts in the first few days back.
- Making major decisions in the first few days that could easily wait.
- Taking over routines, your partner has built. Observe first, then integrate.
- Filling every day with social plans before you have rested.
- Dismissing your own need for decompression. Coming home is also a transition.
- Expecting the relationship to pick up exactly where it left off. It needs time to find its rhythm again.

PART 6: **GOING HOME**

26. Coming Home - Reintegration and Family



Activity: The First Week Agreement

Before you arrive home or in the first day back sit down with your partner for ten minutes and agree on three things:

What I need this week:
Write one thing you genuinely need rest, quiet, time with the children, space to decompress. Just one.

What you need this week:
Ask your partner the same question. Listen to the answer without solving it.

One thing we will do together:
Agree on one small thing a meal, a walk, an evening with no phones. Nothing grand. Just one shared moment.

Keep it short. Keep it honest. It takes ten minutes and replaces a week of unspoken expectations.

Quick Reflection

- What do I need most in the first few days at home?
- What does my family need from me?
- Have I made space for what my family has been through while I was away?

27. Recovery and Preparing for the Next Contract

Time between contracts is not empty time. It is recovery time, and the way you use it shapes how you enter the next voyage. Rest properly in the first week. Do not rush straight into obligations. Reconnect with people who matter. Address anything that has been carried over from the contract: health checks, financial reviews, unspoken conversations. Do something you genuinely enjoy that is not available at sea. And if the last contract was difficult, take the time to understand why before repeating the same situation.

PART 6: GOING HOME

27. Recovery and Preparing for the Next Contract

What Many Seafarers Have Found Helpful

- Build in genuine rest before resuming full responsibilities.
- Address health, financial, or emotional matters while you have the time and the access to support.
- Set one intention for the next contract. Something specific you want to do or do differently.
- Review your certificates and training before the next contract begins.
- Reflect on what you want to be different in the next voyage.
- Discuss the next contract openly with your family before signing. Their input matters.

What Many Seafarers Choose to Avoid

- Treating time at home between contracts as pure holiday with no recovery built in.
- Ignoring health or emotional concerns with the plan to deal with them later.
- Accepting the next contract before you are genuinely ready, simply because the offer came in.
- Carrying unaddressed difficulties from one contract into the next.

Quick Reflection

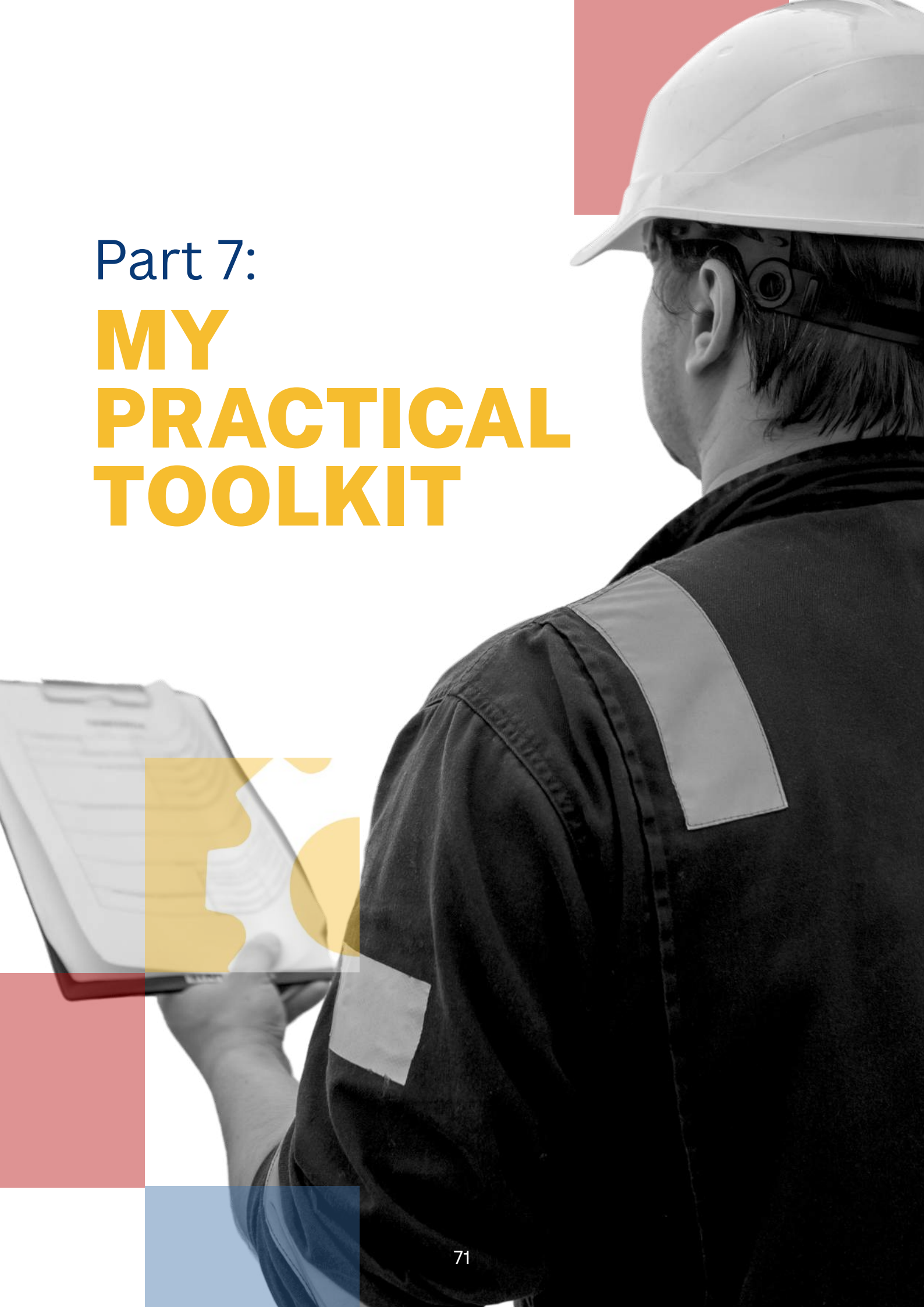
- Have I genuinely rested during this time ashore?
- Is there something from the last contract I need to address before the next one?
- What do I want to be different in the next voyage?

When Relief or Return Home is Delayed

- Ask the Master and crewing office for the reason, a revised plan, and a next update date.
- Explain any effect on your health, fatigue, family, or certificates. Record all requests and responses.
- Seek advice if the delay may breach your agreement or rights.
- Before leaving, collect your wage account, sea service records, and contacts for any open medical or welfare matters.
- A complaint does not have to be withdrawn because you are signing off.
- For continuing symptoms after sign-off, arrange clinical follow-up and discuss any medical or insurance process with the company. Confirm fitness before returning to sea.

Part 7:

MY PRACTICAL TOOLKIT



You are **never without support.**

PART 7: MY PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

This section is yours to use, complete, and carry. It brings together the most practical elements from across the handbook in one place your contacts, your checklists, your plan, and your tools for checking in with yourself.

Tool 1. Support Map - Who to Contact and When

You are never without support. Use this map whenever you are unsure who to turn to.

Welfare concern or personal difficulty onboard	Speak to your senior officer or the Master. If the concern involves a senior officer, contact company confidentially, or contact SeafarerHelp helpline.
Bullying, harassment, or SASH	Speak to the Master, your company's designated official ashore, or contact SeafarerHelp helpline. You do not need to manage this alone.
Medical or physical health concern	Speak to the Master or your line manager. If serious and onshore, seek port medical services.
Mental health or emotional difficulty	Contact your Master, reach out to your company or SeafarerHelp helpline. You do not need to be in crisis to call.
Financial difficulty or contract concern	Contact your crewing or HR department. For disputes or rights violations, contact the ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation).
Family emergency	Reach out to Master and contact your crewing office immediately.
Contract violation or seafarer rights issue	Contact the ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) or nearest port welfare mission if available.

PART 7: MY PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Tool 2. Emergency Contacts - Complete Before Every Sailing

Fill this in before you join your next vessel. Keep it somewhere accessible, not just on your phone.

Company Emergency / Duty Number:	
Crew Liaison Officer (CLO):	
Manning Agent Contact:	
Master (current vessel):	

Additional contacts to complete:

Designated Person Ashore and safety contact:	Confidential company Wellbeing or harassment reporting contact:	Flag State complaint contact:
Radio Medical Advice assistance route through the ship:	ITF — International Transport Workers' Federation ***https://www.itfseafarers.org/***	Local emergency number and seafarer centre for the next port
Family Emergency Contact (name and number):	Doctor / Hospital contact at home port:	My insurance provider and policy number:

Confirm each number and contact route before sailing. Keep a paper copy where you can reach it if your phone or internet fails.

Your Wellbeing Department contact:

SeafarerHelp Helpline:
Call on: +44 20 7323 2737
Chat on WhatsApp:
+44 7909 470732
Email: help@seafarerhelp.org
Live Chat:
iswan.org.uk/seafarerhelp/

YachtCrewHelp - ISWAN
For yacht crew seeking emotional, wellbeing, and practical support. Free, confidential, available 24/7.
Call us: +44 (0)20 3713 7273
Chat on WhatsApp: +44 (0)7514 5000153
Email: help@yachtcrewhelp.org
Live Chat: iswan.org.uk/yachtcrewhelp

PART 7: MY PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Tool 3. Wellbeing Checker: How Are You Today?

Use these five areas for a short daily check-in. At the end of each week, look back at your answers and notice any patterns. If the same area keeps coming up, that is worth paying attention to. This is a reflection aid, not a diagnostic test or fitness certificate. You can seek help for one concern at any time do not wait for a minimum score or number of days.

BODY



Am I rested ? Do I have any physical tension or pain? Have I eaten and hydrated adequately today? Is there anything physical I have been ignoring?

MIND



Is there anything weighing on me today? Am I able to concentrate on what I need to do? What is sitting at the back of my mind?

MOOD



How am I feeling right now honestly? Have I felt low, flat, irritable, or disconnected for more than a few days? Is this normal for me or is something different?

WORK



Am I coping with my workload? Is there anything at work I have been avoiding, putting off, or unsure how to handle? Do I feel fit for duty today?

SOCIAL INTERACTION



Have I had a real conversation with someone today, not just work talk? Do I feel connected to the people around me? Is there someone I should check in on?

Choose an action rather than a score

Green: I feel broadly able to cope. Continue with the routines and relationships that support me.

Amber: Something has changed, is recurring or is affecting sleep, connection or work. Speak to a trusted person and arrange appropriate support; a single concern is enough.

Red: I feel unsafe, cannot work safely, have thoughts of self-harm or notice a serious medical concern. Seek prompt medical support today; for immediate danger activate the emergency response now.

Today's concern: .....

My next action: .....

Who I will contact and how: .....

When I will follow up: .....

You can ask for help for one concern at any time. For immediate danger, activate the emergency response now; do not wait for a pattern or a score.

PART 7: MY PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Tool 4. Career Plan

Update this at the end of every contract. Use it to track where you are, where you are going, and what you need to do to get there.

MY CAREER NOW

My current rank: _____

Vessel type I am sailing on: _____

Total sea service to date (months): _____

Certificates I currently hold: _____

Certificates due for renewal (and when): _____

MY NEXT STEP

My target rank or role: _____

Sea service hours or months still required: _____

Certificates I need before my next promotion: _____

Competencies or experience I need to develop: _____

The mentor or senior I will approach for guidance: _____

MY LONGER-TERM DIRECTION

Where I want to be in my career in 5 years: _____

What kind of seafarer I want to be known as: _____

One thing I want to do differently in my next contract: _____

One thing I am proud of from my last contract: _____

PART 7: MY PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Tool 5. Personal Support Plan

Complete this before your next contract. Keep it somewhere you can find it when things are hard. Update it when your circumstances change.

If I am feeling low or overwhelmed onboard, the first thing I will do is:	
The person onboard I feel most comfortable talking to is:	
The person at home I can call when things are hard is:	
Three things that help me when I am struggling (however small):	1. 2. 3.
The early warning signs tell me I need to reach out for help:	
If things feel serious and I cannot manage, I will reach out for help:	
If things feel serious, the person or service I will contact is:	
Their number or contact method is:	
One thing I have learned about looking after myself at sea:	

If there is immediate danger, I will activate the ship's emergency response or local emergency services ashore.

PART 7: MY PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Tool 6. Quick-Reference Checklists

Use these at every stage of every contract.

BEFORE YOU SAIL

- Have read contract fully, next of kin updated, signed, and copy kept digital and paper.
- All certificates valid and accessible.
- Travel, visa, and joining instructions confirmed.
- Family briefed vessel name, contract length, communication plan, and what to do if contact is lost.
- Financial arrangements agreed, automatic payments set up, family has access to bank accounts.
- Insurance details shared with family.
- Emergency contacts saved to phone and kept as a paper copy somewhere accessible.
- Manning agency verified as legitimate.
- Financial Worksheet reviewed.
- Career Plan updated.
- Personal Support Plan completed.
- Wellbeing Checker understood and ready to use.

FIRST 72 HOURS ONBOARD

- Familiarisation completed thoroughly.
- Emergency procedures, muster stations, and equipment locations confirmed.
- Senior officers and department heads introduced.
- Vessel-specific procedures and differences noted.
- Any concerns about contract, vessel, or crew noted and raised if necessary.
- Communication plan with home confirmed.

PART 7: MY PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Tool 6. Quick-Reference Checklists

Use these at every stage of every contract.

DURING THE CONTRACT

- Use a short daily wellbeing check and review patterns weekly with Tool 3; seek help sooner whenever needed.
- Financial plan reviewed at the midpoint of the contract.
- Any safety or welfare concerns raised promptly do not sit on them.
- Certificate renewals checked plan ahead.
- Learning log updated one thing learned, one thing to improve.
- Family contact is maintained with honesty and warmth.

BEFORE SIGN-OFF

- Sea service documentation completed, accurate, and signed.
- Handover notes prepared for incoming crew the notes you would have wanted on arrival.
- Travel and repatriation arrangements confirmed.
- Outstanding interpersonal or professional matters resolved before leaving.
- Sea service records verified as accurate before departing the vessel.
- Personal Support Plan reviewed and updated for next contract.
- Career Plan updated with this contract's experience and progress.

PART 7: MY PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Tool 7: A short record for raising a concern

Date and approximate time:	
Ship or location:	
What happened and the immediate safety concern:	
People or witnesses and existing evidence:	
Support or remedy requested:	
Reported to and contact method:	
Acknowledgement received and next response date:	
Follow-up or escalation:	

Keep this record private and factual. Missing dates or witnesses should not prevent you from requesting help; do not put yourself at risk to obtain evidence.

The **voyage** is **never** faced **alone**.

SAFE HARBOUR - WHEN AND WHERE TO SEEK HELP

No handbook replaces the human beings who are trained and ready to help. This section is here so you always know where to turn before things feel serious, and when they do.

When to Reach Out

You do not need to be in crisis. Reach out when you notice any of the following in yourself or in someone around you:

- Persistent low mood, flatness, or loss of interest in things that normally matter.
- Sleep that is consistently disrupted too little, too much, or broken without obvious reason.
- Withdrawal from the crew eating alone, staying in your cabin, declining conversation.
- Irritability or short temper that feels out of proportion to what is happening.
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions that are usually straightforward.
- Physical symptoms that keep returning headaches, appetite changes, constant tiredness without a clear medical cause.
- Worry about home that is following you through every shift.
- Carrying something you cannot name but cannot put down.
- A crewmate who has gone quiet in a way that does not feel like their usual self.
- Any thought of harming yourself, however fleeting, take that seriously and talk to someone today.

You do not have to have all of these. One, consistently, is enough.



Who to Reach Out To

Onboard

Speak to a senior officer, your welfare officer, or the Master. If the concern involves a senior member of the crew, go directly to an external channel.

Your Company Crew Liaison Officer (CLO)

Your first point of contact for welfare concerns, communication issues, and connecting to company support. Their number should be saved before you sail.

SAFE HARBOUR - WHEN AND WHERE TO SEEK HELP

Who to Reach Out To

SeafarerHelp — ISWAN

Free. Confidential. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in multiple languages. For seafarers and their families. You do not need to be in a crisis to call. You just need to be carrying something too heavy to carry alone.
Call on: +44 20 7323 2737
Chat on WhatsApp: +44 7909 470732
Email: help@seafarerhelp.org
Live Chat: iswan.org.uk/seafarerhelp/

YachtCrewHelp - ISWAN

For yacht crew seeking emotional, wellbeing, and practical support. Free, confidential, available 24/7.
Call us: +44 (0)20 3713 7273
Chat on WhatsApp: +44 (0)7514 5000153
Email: help@yachtcrewhelp.org
Live Chat: iswan.org.uk/yachtcrewhelp

ITF — International Transport Workers' Federation

For contract disputes, rights violations, unpaid wages, and seafarer labour concerns.
www.itfseafarers.org

What to Remember

Asking for help is not a sign that you cannot handle the job. It is a sign that you understand yourself well enough to know when you need support and professional enough to act on it.

The seafarers who manage this life well are not the ones who never struggle. They are the ones who do not carry it alone.

Privacy when asking for support

Ask the support service how it handles personal information and what limits apply to confidentiality, especially where life or safety is at risk. Share only necessary details through trusted channels. Keep private reflections and health information separate from routine crew reports unless you choose to share or a safety obligation applies.

CONCLUSION

The ocean does not care about your rank. It does not adjust its weather for your contract length or your personal circumstances. It simply is vast, demanding, indifferent, and at times extraordinarily beautiful. You go out to meet it anyway. Every contract. Every watch. Every mile.

What sustains a seafarer through years of this life is not invulnerability. It is something quieter and harder to name a combination of practical skill, genuine connection, self-awareness, and the willingness to keep asking for what you need rather than simply enduring what you are given.

This handbook has tried to put language around all of that. To name the things that are rarely named. To offer practical guidance for the moments that catch you off guard, the difficult news from home, the tension with a crewmate that has been building for weeks, the midnight watch when the weight of everything feels heavier than usual.

We hope something in these pages has felt true to your experience. We hope an activity made you see something differently. We hope a reflection question prompted a conversation you had been putting off. And we hope that the simple act of reading a handbook written for you not for your company, not for a welfare report, but for you has been a reminder that your inner life is worth attending to.

The first handbook ended with a note to families: *the voyage is never faced alone.* This one ends with the same message, sent in the other direction.

You are surrounded by the people you sail with, the family waiting for you, and an organisation that has been answering the phone for seafarers at any time around the clock, even at 3am, for years. You are not as alone in this as it sometimes feels.

Take care of the vessel. Take care of the crew. And take care of yourself.

The sea needs you, and so do the people who love and care for you.



ISWAN
International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network
iswan.org.uk | SeafarerHelp:
+44 20 7323 2737 | help@seafarerhelp.org

TERMS USED IN THIS HANDBOOK

Employment and Legal

SEA means Seafarer Employment Agreement. MLC means Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (as amended). ITF means International Transport Workers' Federation. STCW means the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers. PSC means Port State Control, the inspection of foreign ships in national ports to verify compliance with international standards. A flag state is the country where the ship is registered. Port State authorities oversee ships visiting their ports.

Onboard Roles and Systems

DPA means Designated Person Ashore. CLO means Crew Liaison Officer where the company uses that role. SMS means Safety Management System. PPE means personal protective equipment.

Welfare and Support

ISWAN means International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network. SASH means sexual assault and sexual harassment. SIM means Social Interaction Matters, ISWAN's research project on onboard social life and crew wellbeing. SEAS refers to ISWAN's Seafarers awareness and education sessions

Financial

EMI means equated monthly instalment, a regular loan repayment. OTP means one-time password.

Environmental

MARPOL is the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships.

SEAS

Seafarers Education and Awareness Session.

Sources for the Added Guidance

Reviewed on 11 October 2026. Check contact details, company procedures and applicable flag state rules again before publication. These references support the added guidance; they do not substantiate every research claim in the original draft.

- *ILO Maritime Labour Convention 2006 as amended: Standards A1.4, A2.2, A2.3, A2.5 and A5.1.5 for recruitment, wages, rest, repatriation and complaints.*
- *IMO MARPOL overview and shipboard incineration Regulation 16 for garbage and incineration controls. and*
- *ISWAN Social Interaction Matters (SIM) project on onboard social interaction and crew wellbeing.*
- *ISWAN Safe at Sea: Allyship at Sea campaign on gender inclusion and safety onboard.*
- *WHO Suicide questions and answers for helping a person at risk.*

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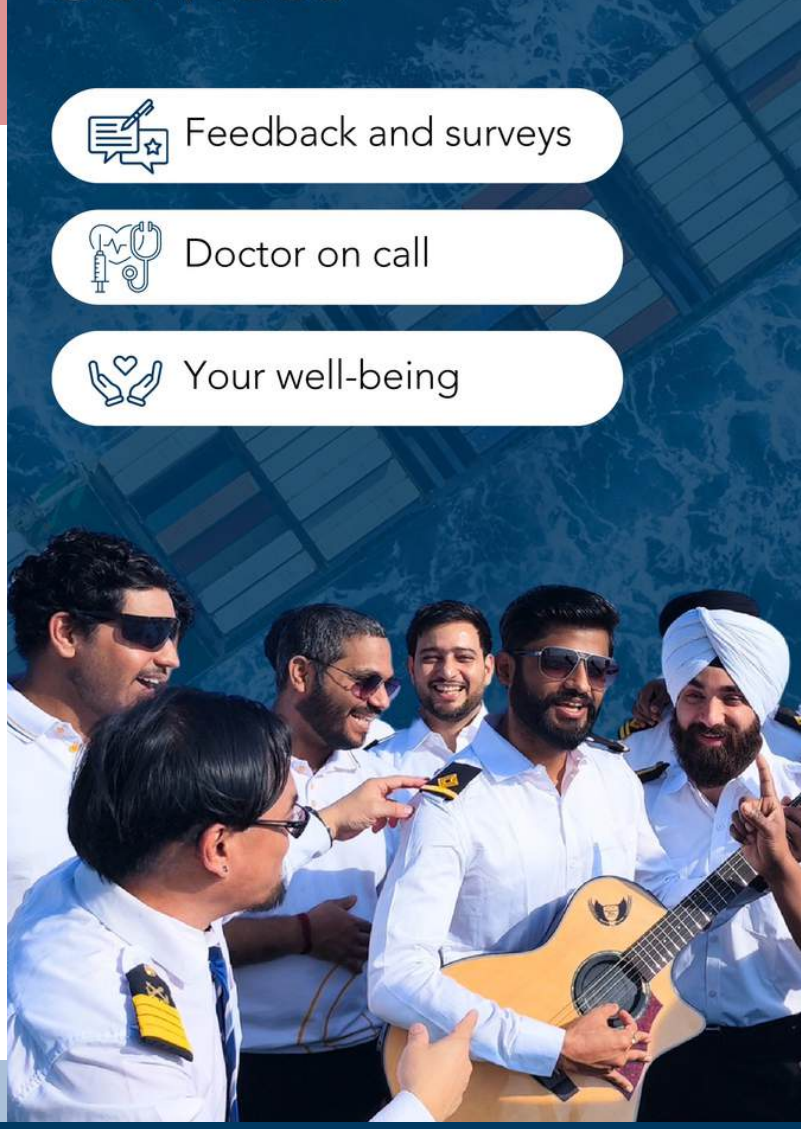


ROWENA BRIZUELA
Operations Coordinator ISWAN

ANNEX A | WECARE SERVICES

ANGLO-EASTERN

WECare



About us

39,000+
Seafarers

50+ Years
Maritime Experience

WE Care App
Most of the WE Care services are available on the dedicated WE Care mobile application

Field Experts
Besides inhouse resources, many third-party platforms are used under a single umbrella to provide a comprehensive service.

60+ Well-being Initiatives
"WE Care" offers an extensive range of services designed to support the holistic well-being of seafarers, to foster a positive mental frame and productive workplace culture at sea.



WeCare

Well-being and Engagement - WE Care

More than 60 well-being initiatives

WE Care is a dedicated programme to enhance the well-being of our valued seafarers



*-external vendors

Dedicated team with diverse background in HR, Psychology, Sociology, Legal, Social work & Analytics

ANNEX B | COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

ANGLO-EASTERN

For overall wellbeing concerns reach out to **WeCare App** – go to **WeCare Connect** to reach out to teams directly.

You can also write to:
wellbeing@angloeastern.com

For grievances and redressal:
wellbeing@angloeastern.com

Any contract related queries or assistance:
relationshipscell.bom@angloeastern.com

Mental wellbeing concerns:
wellbeing@angloeastern.com

Anglo-Eastern Reach Program (ARP):
reach@3cubemedicare.com

You can also write your any concerns at:
https://whistleblowersoftware.com/secure/auth/login
Whistleblower Software



How you
cope
matters.



ISWAN

ISWAN is a Registered Charity, Number 1102946 and a Registered Company Limited by Guarantee, Number 3171109

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ANGLO-EASTERN

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www.angloeastern.com