WeCare

Wellbeing programmes from
The Mission to Seafarers

Managing Distressing Events whilst at Sea

Are you feeling under stress due to recent events?
Are you worried about events at home?
Do you struggle to sleep or to concentrate?
Are you feeling anxious, irritable or sad?

You're not alone.
Help is here.

THE MISSION TO SEAFARERS

Caring for seafarers
around the world

Distressing Events whilst at Sea

When distressing events happen that are out of our control, most people feel upset, shocked and at times overwhelmed.

Whilst at sea, such events might include injuries, operational incidents, bullying, or problems at home. In recent times, wider world crises and conflict may impact our lives.

No matter your age, rank, gender or job, it is natural to feel worried or distressed during such uncertain and often traumatic times.

As humans, our bodies and minds are designed to react in some common ways at times of stress, as we try and make sense of what has happened

It can help to know what those common stress reactions are, so that you can recognise them in yourself and in others around you.

Do any of the following reactions seem familiar to you?

See overleaf

Human reactions to stressful situations and events

1

Thoughts

Unpleasant images and thoughts; bad dreams; mind racing; hard to concentrate

2

Behaviour

Making mistakes
Arguing with and shouting at people
Avoiding the company of others
Watching and reading the news much of the time

3

Emotions

Tearful, sad, anxious, angry, frustrated, irritable, numb, unmotivated.

4

Physical changes

Feeling sick, aches and pains; diarrhoea; headaches; changes in appetite; sleeplessness; fatigue

No matter your age, rank, gender or job, it is natural to feel worried or distressed during such uncertain and often traumatic times.

You may experience some of these reactions, all or none of them. There is no one "correct" way to be in response to stressful events.

For many people, when a stressful event is over, these reactions will settle down steadily over the following days or weeks.

Sometimes these reactions can remain, or come and go, particularly when a situation is ongoing.

Coping with the impact of stressful events

What would help me?

Whilst uncertainties continue, it is important to find ways that might help you manage any natural changes in feelings, thoughts and behaviours. Here are some ideas:

Get help for practical concerns

Use the support systems through your company, maritime charities, your professional body or union for advice and input on any practical issues.

Talk it through

Talking through your thoughts and feelings may help release some of the pressure.

Speak to someone onboard or contact a seafarers' helpline.

Maybe keep a diary about your experiences.

Connect

Spend social time with others onboard and support one another.

Meditate – pray – listen to music - make time to connect to what is important to you.

If possible, connect to family and friends ashore

Take regular breaks from news

News is of course very important.

Try to avoid long periods of scrolling through media as this can increase stress.

Have a structured routine

Shift patterns can help give a rhythm to your day.

Eat regularly and stay hydrated.

Reduce caffeine.

Exercise for ten minutes every day.

Make sure you rest when you can.

What would help others?

When events onboard or in the wider world are difficult, anxieties will understandably arise for all crew members, with some feeling more troubled than others. This can be expressed as irritability and unfair hostility towards colleagues, increasing overall tension and friction within a crew.

However, challenging events can also be a time for crew members to pull together.

Honour, respect and support your fellow crew members

S **Stop:** Take a moment to pause, collect your thoughts and try a 'calming' coping method.

T **Think:** Consider what you are worried about. Try a 'regain control' coping method.

A **Act:** The smallest of actions can make a meaningful difference. Check in on one another, it's good to talk, and equally good to listen. Include senior officers and crew, nobody is immune to the impact of events. And it can be lonely up top.

R **Reach Out:** Contact The Mission to Seafarers, we're here to listen and support.

And remember

Take a stand against any behaviour that leads to a person feeling bullied or isolated – this is never acceptable. Follow your company policies and see our Reach Out for support if ever you need it.

Do you have any other ideas? How could you be a part of improving shipboard life?

Reach Out

If you are concerned about a crew member, or would like to speak with someone not onboard, The Mission to Seafarers is here for you.

SeafarerHelp:

Tel: +44 2073 232737
WhatsApp: +44 7909 470732
Text: +44 7860 018538
Facebook: @SeafarerHelp
Live chat: seafarerhelp.org
Email: help@seafarerhelp.org

The Marine Transport Workers Trade Union of Ukraine:
Tel: +380482 42 99 01
Email: office@mtwtu.org.ua
Facebook: @MTWTU

The Mission to Seafarers:
Online: Chat to ª Chaplain – 24/7 support service.

Click
Chat

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Email: Crewhelp@mtsmail.org
Telephone: +44(0)20 7248 5202
Visit: We operate 121 Flying Angel centres around the world and visit 70,000 ships a year. Visit **www.missiontoseafarers.org/our-ports** to find your nearest centre.

Feeling in despair and thinking of harming yourself in some way?

Do not delay. Tell someone straight away – a senior crew member or another trusted colleague. Remember, you are not alone.

Feeling upset by difficult events is an *ordinary* reaction to an *extraordinary* experience.

The Mission to Seafarers is here to listen and support you.

@FlyingAngelNews The Mission to Seafarers

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