

STAYING STEADY WHEN EVENTS AROUND YOU ARE UNCERTAIN

GUIDANCE FOR FOR ALL SEAFARERS, AT ALL RANKS AND IN ALL DEPARTMENTS





A message to seafarers

With first-hand experience of operating in areas of conflict, we at CHIRP have seen the strain uncertainty places not just on ships, but on people. Some spoke about it. Many did not. But it was there, all the same.

What you may be feeling now is not unusual.

Uncertainty. Frustration. Anger. Worry about family. Concern about what comes next. Messages and news from ashore can distract you during tasks.

For some, this may mean extended time on board, delayed relief, or not leaving the vessel as planned. That loss of control can increase the strain.

At the same time, you are expected to continue your duties. To stand your watch. To make safe decisions. To look out for others.

That is not always easy.

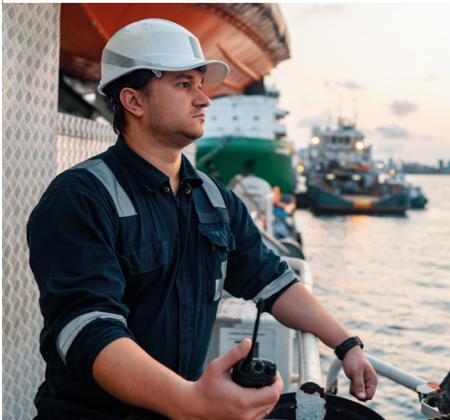
This guidance is not about telling you how to feel. It is about helping you stay in control of what matters: your actions, your decisions, and your shipmates.

Recognise what is happening to you. Pressure does not always show itself clearly.

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Stay in control of what matters: your actions, your decisions, and your shipmates.

”



Know yourself

Look inwards, and be aware if you notice any changes such as:

- Losing patience more quickly than usual
- Difficulty concentrating on routine tasks
- Wanting to withdraw from others
- Rushing jobs or skipping steps

These are early signs. They matter.

Small changes in thinking and behaviour can lead to bigger problems if they are not addressed.

Focus on what you can control. There is a lot you cannot influence:

- The wider situation outside the ship
- Decisions made ashore
- The vessel's route
- Opinions and arguments around you

Spending energy on these will increase frustration.

Instead, stay in control of what you can control

- How you carry out your duties
- How you respond to pressure
- How you treat others
- Your attention to safety-critical tasks
- Rely on verified shipboard information- avoid speculation and unconfirmed reports

This is not avoidance – it is professional judgement.



Staying focused under pressure

Keep your thinking steady

When things feel uncertain, simple actions can help.

- Pause before important tasks
- Slow your breathing
- Ask: What is the next safe step?
- If something feels rushed, pause – do not let pressure set the pace

Stick to routines

- Use checklists properly
- Follow procedures as written
- Doublecheck when something does not feel right

Routine is not just habit. It helps protect you.

Look after others at sea; your crew is your support network

- You do not need to fix problems, but you can make a difference.
- Ask: “Are you okay?”
- Listen without judgement
- Keep conversations respectful

If someone seems distracted

- Bring them back to the task calmly
- Offer help if the workload increases
- If in doubt, stay on the task together until focus returns

Small actions prevent bigger problems.

Manage conversations on board

Events outside the ship can create strong personal opinions. This can affect focus and teamwork.

- Avoid heated discussions in operational areas (bridge, engine room, mooring stations)
- Step away if a conversation becomes tense
- Respect different opinions

Simple rule: If it affects safety or teamwork, pause the discussion.

If you are in a leadership role, people will follow your example

- Stay calm and consistent
- Acknowledge concerns without increasing anxiety
- Keep focus on safe operation
- Watch for changes in behaviour

Avoid:

- Dismissing concerns
- Taking sides in political discussions
- Ignoring signs someone is struggling

Good leadership is calm, visible, and fair.

“
If something feels
rushed, pause
”





Knowing when to speak up

Know when to speak up. Do not deal with everything alone.

- Speak to a senior officer if you notice:
- Ongoing difficulty concentrating
- Someone is becoming withdrawn or overwhelmed
- Tension affecting teamwork
- Fatigue or poor sleep affecting alertness

If stress or fatigue affects safe watchkeeping or decision-making, it must be reported – like any other safety risk.

Asking for help

It takes a brave person to admit that they are struggling. That is not weakness – it is strength.

Use company or welfare support if available. Asking for support is part of managing risk.

Why this matters

- Emotional strain affects performance.
- Reduced concentration leads to mistakes.
- Mistakes lead to incidents.

Looking after yourself and others with kindness and compassion is part of safe operations.

“

You do not have to do this alone

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Final thought

You may not be able to change the situation around you. But you can control how you respond. Staying calm, focused, and supportive of others is not just good seamanship, it is professionalism under pressure, and it is how crews get through tough times.



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