

Focusing on Seafarer Wellbeing – Mental Wellbeing

Seafarer wellbeing has been a focal topic for The Standard Club's Loss Prevention team, particularly in recent years. Seafarer wellbeing is a holistic concept combining physical, mental, and social wellbeing. People often forget how mental and physical wellbeing are linked. You can only be as happy as you are healthy, in body and mind!

This article focuses on mental wellbeing.

The Standard Club's 'people claims' statistics indicate a clear upward trend of mental health related illnesses.

Working at sea exposes you to a number of factors that can push you towards mental health problems. It is important to be aware of these and make sure you are speaking to your mental champion onboard or a professional organisation if you need emotional support.

1. **Social isolation:** Long periods of time spent alone in cabins allows seafarers to think about problems and build them up to seem worse.
2. **Long voyages:** Being a seafarer is hard work, especially over a long trip without a holiday.
3. **Fatigue due to the watch system:** Lack of rest can cause physical/emotional problems.
4. **Separation from family and friends:** Lack of contact with loved ones who can provide a sympathetic ear in times of stress and missing out on moments at home.
5. **Increased pressure:** Lower crewing levels places the burden of onboard tasks on the shoulders of fewer seafarers.
6. **Lack of crew cohesion:** Crews often do not mix socially; problems concerning language and culture may make this problem worse.
7. **Lack of shore leave:** Shorter turnaround times can mean seafarers do not get to spend time ashore.
8. **Harassment and bullying:** Seafarers subjected to bullying and harassment live in close proximity to those who are bullying and harassing them.
9. **Uncertain employment:** many seafarers experience anxiety when their current contracts come to an end as they do not know if they will get another contract.

Help is available

Other seafarers on your ship are probably worrying about the same things – talk to your fellow crew, or the mental wellbeing champion onboard. If you want to keep your concerns private, a professional organisation can provide support, or you could call your loved ones.



Exercise is also a simple yet effective way of improving your mental wellbeing. When you exercise, there is a release of the 'happy hormones' serotonin and endorphins, promoting a sense of happiness, well-being and contentment.

Formal organisations

You are never alone; support is only one call away.

International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network:

The International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) is a membership organisation which works to promote and support the welfare of seafarers all over the world.

ISWAN delivers support via a helpline called 'SeafarerHelp', which operates 24 hours per day, 365 days per year for seafarers and their families. It is available to any seafarer, or their family, globally. SeafarerHelp will try to assist with any kind of a problem and can be contacted by email, Facebook, LiveChat, telephone, Skype, WhatsApp, Viber, SMS text and vk.com. They speak 12 different languages including Filipino, Hindi, Russian, Chinese, Spanish and Arabic. Operatives have been trained by the Samaritans, counsellors and a clinical psychologist to further enhance their skills in these areas.

ISWAN can also help with relief funds for seafarers and their family members in need and a range of health information resources.

SeafarerHelp is available 24/7:

Web: <https://www.seafarerswelfare.org/>

Email: help@seafarerhelp.org

Live chat: <https://www.seafarerhelp.org/>

Tel: [+442073232737](tel:+442073232737) (free call back)

Whatsapp: [+447909470732](tel:+447909470732)

Facebook: facebook.com/seafarerhelp

SMS: +44 (0)7860 018538

Skype: info-seafarerhelp.org

ВКонтакте: vk.com/seafarerhelpclub

Mission to Seafarers

The Mission to Seafarers is one of the largest port-based welfare services in the world, operating in over 200 ports across 50 countries. It has a team of professional chaplains who can offer pastoral support, counselling, financial assistance and crisis support. In addition, it operates an email referral service providing seafarers with up-to-date advice on mental health, labour rights and other vital support services.

Web: www.missiontoseafarers.org

Email: crewhelp@mtsmail.org

Tel: +44 20 7248 5202 (will redirect to an on-call number if out of hours)

Seafarers Hospital Society

Web: <https://seahospital.org.uk/mental-health-and-wellbeing-2/>

Sailors' Society

International maritime charity Sailors' Society has been transforming the lives of seafarers and their families for more than 200 years through the delivery of chaplaincy, education and the relief of poverty and distress.



The charity works internationally to provide practical, emotional and spiritual welfare support to the world's 1.6m seafarers, regardless of background or faith. Sailors' Society chaplains and ship visitors have a presence in more than 90 global ports, with wider projects and services covering 30 countries. Sailors' Society's Crisis Response Network provides a rapid response trauma care and counselling service for survivors of piracy attacks, natural disasters and crises at sea.

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Web: www.sailors-society.org

Email: crisis@sailors-society.org

Tel: Call the emergency contact in your region:

Africa - Rev J.D. van Schalkwyk – Tel: [+27 31 266 0695](tel:+27312660695)

Asia - Gavin Lim – Tel: [+65 9222 4600](tel:+6592224600)

Europe - Alexander Dimitrevitch – Tel: [+380 503 366 790](tel:+380503366790)

India - Manoj Joy – Tel: [+91 9884 140 950](tel:+919884140950)

The Philippines - Iris Picardal – Tel: [+63 9175 782 118](tel:+639175782118)

With thanks to Ray Barker Head of Operations, ISWAN

Keep a look out for the other poster sets covering physical wellbeing: healthy diet and lifestyle, fitness and exercise, and socialisation. To find out more information about these elements of seafarer wellbeing, you can view the full articles on each, here: <https://www.standard-club.com/risk-management/knowledge-centre/news-and-commentary/2019/11/news-seafarer-wellbeing-poster-campaign.aspx>

To access further information, and guidance particularly for shipowners and crew, read our special edition of Standard Safety: Seafarer Wellbeing, here: <https://www.standard-club.com/media/2767887/standard-safety-seafarer-wellbeing-october-2018.pdf>