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## THEME:

Seafaring and family

Daily, caring contact is crucial fuel in a long-distance relationship **12**

HR Marine specialist: Good communication is everything **08**



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– Health and well-being –

# TWO VERSIONS OF FAMILY LIFE

The Muff Kofoed Family is used to navigating in big waves of longing, and even though they still have difficulty finding common ground, it's still worth it – even after 13 years as a seafaring family. For in exchange for long periods of separation, the family gets a dad and husband who is fully present half of the year – where he can invest all his time in his family.

By Kirstine Thye Skovhøj, journalist



She can feel it in her body several days before he has to sign on to the ship. The feeling that once again she must climb an insurmountable mountain.

When he walks out the door, she will once again be left with the responsibility of making everyday life work with three kids, all by herself.

The second he steps out onto the pavement outside their terrace house in the city of Odense in Denmark, as he is once again heading off for eight weeks at sea, he can feel the longing gnawing inside his body. It will follow him closely and insistently for the following weeks, finally becoming almost unbearable. But it is all still worth it. The couple, 44-year-old Hanne Muff Kofoed and 43-year-old Jonas Muff Kofoed, agree on this.

For 13 years, the couple and their three kids who today are 8, 12 and 13-years-old, have had two types of family life: One version where Jonas Muff Kofoed is at sea as Chief Engineer on the Maersk Tanker BRO NISSUM while life at home is juggled with calm and well-organised hands by Hanne Muff Kofoed and their kids. And the other type of family life is when the Chief Engineer is stay-at-home dad with oceans of time for spontaneity, homemade sausage rolls, and just to be there.

"Every Sunday, whether Jonas is here or not, we always make a plan for the following week. The kids fill in their spare-time activities, and we plan what we should eat, what groceries we should buy, and what the kid's chores are in the house. We are very structured about that. When Jonas is at home, then he is the facilitator and I get a break from being the one with the responsibility of having everything under control", Hanne Muff Kofoed says.

### DIFFICULT TO FIND A SHARED RHYTHM

The family have total control of their everyday life: From an early age, the kids have learned to take responsibility and they must sort out how they get to their spare-time activities by themselves. "Maybe our kids have been given more responsibility compared to other kids at the



Every Sunday is time for planning next week's schedule.

same age, because that is necessary in order to get our everyday life to work. We have a great network; we often have guests for dinner, or we go out. That is a part of the life we are living. Life must also go on when Jonas is not here," Hanne Muff Kofoed explains.

On top of always being accompanied by an ever-present longing, the most difficult thing about having a family life where one person is a seafarer is to get their family life and their relationship working in the periods of transition. It can be very hard to reconnect with each other and recreate a shared family rhythm.

*"I totally lose track of what is going on at home when I'm away. Even though we stay in touch, I can't follow it all. Frictions between Hanne and me always appear, and then we need to clear the air and find each other again. It's the same with the kids – it always takes them a bit of time until they have rediscovered that they can ask me and use me, and that I'm not just a spectator but that I'm there to take part,"* Jonas Muff Kofoed says.

In these periods of transitioning into another type of family, it's very important to have an eye for the needs of the children and of the adults. And it's very important to match all

of the family members' expectations, Hanne Muff Kofoed believes.

"I see it as Jonas is entering our family show, and he becomes the leading act without knowing what is going on. We look forward to him coming home and long for him, and we all have great expectations to how he will give himself. We don't just need an extra in our show. But the transitional period is always very difficult, because Jonas needs time to dig out his emotional language, which he hasn't been using on the ship. And it always takes the kids some time before they are used to having him home again; that he is there, that they can use him, and that I'm not the primary adult in the house anymore," Hanne Muff Kofoed says and elaborates:

"A lot of things can happen with kids in eight weeks, and if Jonas has had a shift that has been characterised by one thing then he will return home full of that. Another scenario can be that one of the kids has the need to be with him more than the others do".

Hanne Muff Kofoed has only moved her work life outside the family's home within the last year, where she had been running a private day-care taking care of the couples own kids when they were smaller, along with ►

### FACTS:

Hanne Muff Kofoed, 44-years-old, holds a master's degree and is a qualified family therapist. Hanne works as a private family therapist and a family counsellor. Formerly worked as a private day-carer.

Jonas Muff Kofoed, 43-years-old, educated as a marine engineer in 2006, promoted to Chief Engineer in 2013. Since April 2019, he has been sailing with BRO NISSUM. Board member, Sømandsmissionen. Board member, Svendborg Søfartsskole.

Married since 2005, with three children, Emilie, 13, Isak, 12 and Charlie Storm, 8.

▶ other children. Today, she is trained as a family therapist and working as a family counsellor.

"It has been very important to us that I have been completely accessible to our children while they were younger. That is also why we chose that I should work as a private day-carer. When Jonas came home, he just became a natural part of that job – taking care of our own and other children. In that way we got much more time together," Hanne Muff Kofoed says.

### NO DISCUSSION

When Jonas Muff Kofoed began his work life as a marine engineer 13 years ago, it wasn't possible to stay in touch with his family as it is today. These days, they get in touch almost daily if the Internet connection allows it. The couple has a set routine where they chat before bedtime. They have found that it is very important to weigh up what is suitable to share with the other.

"I have learned that if Hanne has had a day where she's been running around to make everything work out the best way, has finally got the kids into bed and then has to sort out lots of practical chores, then it's not a good time for me to share that I'm relaxing in my cabin and reading a book or watching a film," Jonas Muff Kofoed says.

The couple has agreed that they no longer have discussions by emails or text chats, because it is so easy to misunderstand or misinterpret what is written. It can escalate a discussion if the connection is unstable

or one party thinks that the other is deliberately ignoring the other.

But there are some types of discussions that are difficult to postpone until they are physically together again.

"I'm so dopey at buying birthday presents for Hanne in advance. That means it always ends up with me getting one of the kids to go out and buy something from me. That makes Hanne feel invisible, and she can get grumpy and disappointed – and then a conflict is started. If she is expecting a ring, then it is just not good enough that she gets a kitchen appliance! I think we have the same issues as other couples, but often we have to postpone our discussions," Jonas Muff Kofoed says, and elaborates:

"Sometimes it's a good thing, because maybe the problem solves itself or we realize that maybe it wasn't so important that it was worth having a conflict about it".

The couple agrees that it's essential to their relationship that they are open and respectful of each other, even though they are physically separated and can each lose their awareness of the other.

Because of this it is very important to agree that no feelings are wrong, Hanne Muff Kofoed believes:

"It is crucial that we have some very clear rules that tell us how we communicate. We focus on sharing the things that makes sense to share. That goes both ways. We need to understand that the lives we are living are very different when we are apart.

If we are out for a special family event when Jonas is deployed, then Jonas might need me to share photos directly from the event. But I just want to be there and experience it. That can turn into Jonas feeling left out. Another situation can be that I have the need to share when I've had a difficult and stressful day, knowing that Jonas can't do anything about it".

### THE LONGING IS A FELLOW TRAVELLER

Longing is a fundamental part of the family, whose members all miss each other in their own ways and express it differently.

"Our teenage girl experiences that her longing for her dad increases if there are smaller problems in her everyday life. Our youngest boy can put into words that he is missing his dad. It can be getting a hug from his dad or doing a certain activity with him," Hanne Muff Kofoed says.

Each day the signing off date gets closer, their inner "longing-clocks" tick louder and louder, until by the end, it's almost unbearable. To Jonas Muff Kofoed, longing is a private matter that he doesn't share with his colleagues at sea.

"We are all there on the same ship, missing our loved ones, but nobody is talking about it. My theory is that we don't want to talk about it, because we don't want to remind each other about how much we miss our families. Then it's easier to deal with it alone. If there is illness in my family or something else critical going on at home, then I sometimes share it and warn my colleagues that my fuse might be a bit shorter than normal. But that is all I'm saying".

His wife is trying to challenge that approach.

"I think that Jonas and his colleagues have a very rational way of looking at missing their loved ones: They can't change it, so why talk about it? I think they talk a bit about their families but



When Jonas is home there is plenty of time for baking sausage rolls and having all the friends over.



Jonas says goodbye to Emilie, Isak and Charlie Storm before signing on.

it's not my impression that they share if something is affecting them. I think it would strengthen their job satisfaction and the community on board if they had the courage to be more open with each other about how they feel".

The chief engineer has found his own way of dealing with the great longing.

"It's too hard to think about how much I miss my family all of the time. Counting days is not a good idea because then you focus on the longing a lot. What gets me through is that I can put it away. That is why it suits me fine that we don't talk much about how we miss our families when we are out at sea. I miss everything at home, and when I'm bragging about how Emilie has just won a skating competition, then it tears open the longing for my family".

It is not only at sea that it can be difficult to talk about missing and longing. Hanne Muff Kofoed often feels she must justify the way the family has chosen to live, which also prevents her speaking openly about how much missing and longing she and the kids must bear.

"The attitude that I meet can be that since we have chosen this lifestyle ourselves, we don't really have the right to miss each other. I must practise saying that it's our choice, but of course the kids can miss their dad – they don't have to pretend to be tough. They have to be allowed to express their feelings – including longing – and the adults around them must be able to deal with that".

#### IT'S WORTH IT

Even though the family has to endure strong feelings of longing when they are separated, and must accept that intimacy, communication, and sustaining a sense of togetherness is difficult, it is still worth it. "When Jonas is at home, he's really here. Our children benefit from that and it gives great comfort that he can do things like making freshly baked sausage rolls for them and their friends. And that he has time, loads of time. Time to just be together is in short supply for many families today, but we have almost never-ending amounts during the periods when Jonas is at home".

#### SUPPORTING FAMILY LIFE

A few months ago, Jonas Muff Kofoed had to rush home immediately from a shift because his mother-in-law died after a short period of illness. The family experienced great support from the shipping company, and a colleague offered to take over Jonas' shift so he could go home and attend the funeral and support his family.

"We were met with a huge amount of help from the HR department, both for Jonas and us at home. A family life like we have is extra vulnerable in situations like that," Hanne Muff Kofoed says.

Because of this, Hanne Muff Kofoed would like the shipping companies to focus even

more on seeing the family as a complete unit.

"There is no doubt that our life gets very affected by Jonas' job. So why not try to equip us as a family to live in the special way it requires? What type of seafarer do they get out at sea if he knows that his family at home is not thriving? Or if he is about to break down because he misses them so much?" Hanne Muff Kofoed asks.

It is very important to the couple that the shipping companies recognize that there is a family behind the seafarer. Because of this outlook, the couple was very grateful on one occasion when the shipping company sent a bouquet of flowers to Hanne and apologised that they couldn't get Jonas home as planned.

The family also participates when Maersk invites seafarers and their families to a Christmas party once a year.

"I would like that our children got to know other children who are living the same way as we are. I think that would help them feel more normal, and let them experience that they are not the only children living with a great longing for their dad; that we are not the only family living like we are," Hanne Muff Kofoed says.

#### GET HANNE AND JONAS' ADVICE ON MAKING COUPLE AND FAMILY LIFE WORK:

- Be open to each other, show mutual respect. No feelings are wrong.
- Agree on how you communicate and about what. Some subjects are not suitable for long-distance communication
- Try to understand your partner's situation, but still be clear about what you need.
- Let your children feel that their feelings of longing are never wrong.
- Ask others for help – you don't have to do it all by yourself.



Marine HR specialist  
Ingrid Suhr Olsen guides  
seafarers when challenges  
and problems occur at home.

# GOOD COMMUNICATION IS EVERYTHING

As a seafarer you can feel neglected, powerless and frustrated when your family's life at home is changing and you are far away. Mutual communication is the most important ingredient to make long-distance family life work.

By Kirstine Thye Skovhøj, journalist

A work life at sea affects not only the seafarer but all family members. And sometimes it is necessary to seek both guidance and advice when unexpected things or long-term challenges escalate in the family.

Ingrid Suhr Olsen is a Marine HR Specialist at Maersk Tankers for 100 Scandinavian seafarers and 65 cadets, who she supports with guidance and advice when problems and challenges appear and affect their private and work lives.

*"All of us go through rough times in our lives, but for seafarers it is an extra challenge that they are so physically far away from their partner and family. To make a family work in those circumstances demands that the family has a mutual understanding from the beginning about how their family life will be affected by having a partner, mum or dad at sea".*

Ingrid Suhr Olsen gets contacted by seafarers who need help and support with solving different types of family life

issues and challenges – from small to bigger ones.

*"Maybe a wife has decided to leave her husband while he is at sea without any chance of stopping her or trying to solve their problems. Another example can be that a seafarer has a seriously ill family member who dies, and it is impossible to get the seafarer home quickly. Some experience problems with their children and it can be very frustrating that they can't be at home being closely involved in the dialogue with the school or institutions*

solving the issues”, Ingrid Suhr Olsen says. Seafarers get in touch with Ingrid Suhr Olsen when they are at sea, but also when they are at home on leave.

“Of course, a difficult period in a family gets even tougher to get through when you are out at sea and you feel powerless and cut off. It’s my impression that me listening, asking questions about their situation, and asking them how they are planning to deal with the situation can act as a release for their pent-up frustrations. Some need help to manage the situation and to list all the practicalities they need to deal with. Others will need help getting in touch with a psychologist through our healthcare insurance,” Ingrid Suhr Olsen explains. In general, the seafarers tend to wait with contacting the HR specialist until the problems have appeared, and possibly escalated.

“If the family is repeatedly struggling with the same issues, it is very important to try to solve the issues and to prevent them from happening. In cases like that, I might urge them to turn to a couple therapist or I guide them to other types of help”. If a difficult situation is about getting the seafarer home as quickly as possible, Ingrid Suhr Olsen directs the seafarer to the department that oversees the planning of the sailing route and the crew’s shifts.

“I do always encourage the seafarers to go to their captain or somebody else on the ship who they feel confident with. Because it is very important to involve somebody else and share the situation with them. Of course, it is also crucial to bring clarity to whether the seafarer is capable of doing his job without putting himself or others in danger”.

” In general, the seafarers tend to wait with contacting the HR specialist until the problems have appeared, and possibly escalated ”

#### DEMANDS ON THE FAMILY

In rare instances, it can be impossible to get the seafarer home to the family as planned, or there can be cases where the seafarer is asked to sign on earlier than planned.

“That is a condition that you know and accept when you choose to become a seafarer. But still, we will try to pull the strings we can to get the seafarer home.

Sometimes we try to give the family a consolation gift to show them our support”, Ingrid Suhr Olsen says.

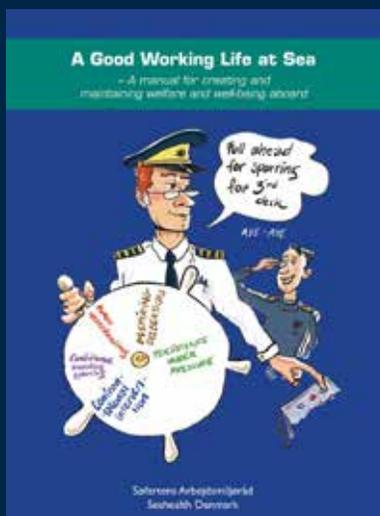
In special cases, Maersk has sent flowers to a spouse, a birthday present to a child, or done other things to recognize that the family’s plans had to be changed or cancelled.

Every year, Maersk Tankers invites their seafarers and families who are on the Faroe Islands and in Denmark to a Christmas party. This gives the families a rare opportunity to share their experiences and to make new connections.

Maersk also offers the seafarers’ family members to join a voyage. The purpose is to give the families a better understanding of life at sea and to give the families a shared experience that will strengthen family life.

The most important ingredient to make long-distance-family life work is, according to Ingrid Suhr Olsen, communication.

“It is crucial that expectations are aligned before the seafarer leaves home. If it becomes clear that it’s not possible to establish a set rules for how the communication should be, which works for both parties, then it’s important to get help from a third party. In addition, it’s very important to get support from a network that can help, and that both the seafarer and the family can draw on”.



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# EXPERIENCING DAD'S WORLD AT SEA

When wife of a seafarer, Kalyani Mukherjee and her family family spent 42 days together on one of the world's largest container ships, their everyday life became filled with exotic destinations and rough weather – while her daughters experienced a whole new side of their dad.

By journalist Kirstine Thye Skovhøj

It was the fourth time in her life that 40-year-old Kalyani Mukherjee had been sailing with her husband when she took her first step aboard one of the world's largest container vessels. Kalyani's normal everyday life is spent with her two daughters in their house in the western part of India, and every 12th week she is accompanied by her husband when he's on shore leave.

The first time she went out to sea with her husband was fifteen years ago. This time, Kalyani Mukherjee and her daughters, Kiyara (12) and Annanya (7), were received on the Triple-E vessel MAASTRICHT MAERSK in Rotterdam in the Netherlands – their starting point for their 42-day-long adventure at sea. Her husband, the Chief Officer at MAASTRICHT MAERSK, Shounak Mukherjee, began his career as a seafarer in 1999, when he started out as a cadet in Maersk.

*Why did you choose to go and spend more than a month at sea with your family?*

"It's important to us to let our daughters experience how their dad's life is when he is not at home. When we are all together at home, all of us enter a vacation mode. Every day is holiday, we do things slowly,

we do things together that we love, like hiking, and the girls don't really want to go to school because it's so nice dad being home. But it's also important to show them how their dad is at sea, why he loves his job at sea so much, and what it is like to run a vessel like MAASTRICHT".

"Our daughters saw that at work their dad is in a totally different mode, the opposite of vacation mode"

*What did your daughters learn?*

"They listened to different languages, tasted different food, and experienced different types of cultures so very different from our daily life in India. They especially loved the Netherlands, where we spent some days in Rotterdam. My oldest daughter really got to understand why it's so important to learn foreign languages.

Now she is keen to learn French, and until now it has been a real struggle to get her interested in it. They also experienced really hard weather at sea, and how the landscapes of the different countries changed as they sailed along from the Netherlands to our end destination in Hong Kong. That itself was a perfect geography lesson that they couldn't have learned in school".

*What did they learn about their dad and his life at sea?*

"We saw and experienced that working on a big vessel is tough; loading and unloading in the big ports, climbing up and down, and working long shifts. We saw him and his colleagues dealing with rough weather, odd working hours and sailing in dangerous areas; it's all very hard and stressful. Our daughters saw that at work their dad is in a totally different mode, the opposite of vacation mode. They are very proud of him and they didn't want to leave the ship. None of us wanted to leave. It was a great experience; we were surrounded by very nice and welcoming people. The girls had plenty of entertainment: table tennis, a pool, a library, and they really got pampered".



Kalyani with daughters Kiyara and Annanya in front of MAASTRICHT MAERSK



The family sailed together from Rotterdam in the Netherlands, to Spain, through the Suez Canal to the Red Sea, then headed for Singapore before they signed off in Hong Kong.

*How do you stay in touch when you are apart for 12 weeks at a time?*

"Being married to a seafarer is like having a never-ending long-distance relationship. We got together a couple of months after he started sailing; we have never tried anything else. In the beginning of our relationship it was difficult to keep in touch. We had to write letters, send them off and wait for ages. It was very hard not to have any idea about how the other was doing. But then internet got better, and we started e-mailing. Nowadays, we use WhatsApp to chat almost every day. It means everything as we can share our everyday life.

*How have your daughters been coping with having an absent dad?*

"When they were small, they used to get very upset and miss their dad. There were periods where we couldn't speak for several weeks and that was an emotional trauma to them, because they saw other fathers and couldn't really understand where their dad had gone. We made the decision that when the kids were small, I should take complete responsibility for the home and I took a sabbatical from my full-time career, while their dad was away sailing for long periods of time. That way

the children had one of their parents as a constant support in their formative years. We also chose to move closer to my mum so I could get her support. But of course, it is and has been very difficult to be apart when the children get ill, or have to go to hospital, or if somebody else in our family is sick".

*Will you go to sea again with your daughters?*

"Absolutely. Hopefully we can go again next year when the girls are off from school

during the summer. We all seem to be natural sailors and love it, so we will do it again. A lot of wives of seafarers don't like sailing; they feel seasick and don't know what to do on a ship for that long. But still, I really encourage other women to do it because you learn a lot from an experience like that: about your husband, about your family, and about yourself. Our daughters are so proud of their dad, and in their school he is now known as "the cool dad".

#### **FACTS ABOUT THE FAMILY:**

Kaylani (40) and Shoukak Mukherjee (41) have been married for 17 years. They almost missed out on their wedding when the groom was delayed coming home from sea because he had problems getting a visa in Gibraltar.

When their daughters started school, Kalyani Mukherjee founded her own company selling art, home décor and lifestyle products. That means she manages her own working hours, which gives the family freedom to spend time together whenever Shoukak Mukherjee is on shore leave.

The family sailed together from Rotterdam in the Netherlands, to Spain, through the Suez Canal to the Red Sea, then headed for Singapore before they signed off at Hong Kong.

# Daily, caring contact is crucial fuel in a long-distance relationship

How do you get a long-distance relationship to work when you're apart and when you're together? Let couple therapist Gitte Sander advise you on how to maintain and recover intimacy, communication and cohesion.

By Kirstine Thye Skovhøj, journalist



Therapist Gitte Sander has many years of experience with long-distance couples.

*What is most important to get a long-distance relationship to work?*

"The cornerstone of a relationship is that you feel safe and that you can count on each other. If you want a stable relationship, you have to stay in contact. You don't have to have three-hour conversation every day, but you have to maintain daily, caring contact".

maybe jealousy if you are doubting that you are still meaningful to your partner. That can develop and create more uncertainty if your partner stops getting in touch with you as normal, or if your contact becomes less caring".

*How do you get a long-distance relationship to work?*

"It is very important to agree on a structure for how and when you get in touch with each other when you are apart. It is also very important to give each other space, and respect that you have different reactions. When both of you feel safe and respected, it will cement and strengthen your relationship and make you share vulnerable feelings".

*What kind of problems are typical in a long-distance relationship?*

"Both parties can feel and think that they are less important and more insignificant to the other than they really are. When you are separated from your partner for long periods over and over again, you are left alone with your fantasies, thoughts and feelings. Some can struggle to maintain the feeling that they are important to their partner when they don't have any physical contact. Some might feel that because they are out of sight they are also out of mind. This issue is closely related to your self-image and self-esteem. Typically, it will release feelings like uncertainty or

*How do you avoid drifting apart when you are physically separated for a long period?*

"Some couples spend time together daily, even though they are far away from each other, because they are really good at keeping in touch using Skype or social media. Couples like that usually share an understanding that there won't be big news every day. Maybe they turn on FaceTime while they are cooking or doing something similar. They talk about everyday subjects that are basically unimportant, like what was on sale in the supermarket or that the seafarer once again fixed a broken machine. But having conversations like that is

not unimportant for the couple's relationship because it's a way of staying in touch with each other's lives. The most important thing is to avoid getting into a pattern where you only have very sporadic contact".

*What is most important to get a long-distance relationship to work?*

"The cornerstone of a relationship is that you feel safe and that you can count on each other. If you want a stable relationship, you have to stay in contact. You don't have to have three-hour conversation every day, but you have to maintain daily, caring contact".

*What does it mean that you can 'count on your partner'?*

"To make a relationship work, it is very important to show each other that you are accessible, ready to be there for the other, and engaged in the other. Men can be especially action- and goal-orientated. And when they come home, they almost work themselves to death dealing with practical chores because they want to help their partner. They don't understand that doing a lot of practical chores isn't enough.

Instead, it's important that they show they are accessible, ready to respond to their partners feelings, and show that they're emotionally involved. Of course, you can show your engagement by getting involved in housekeeping, but often it means much more to women that their husband is ready to snuggle up, or listen to how tough it has been being separated".

*How is it best to handle the great degree of unpredictability related to signing off a ship?*

"It can be helpful to know your partner's feelings. It is easier to accept that your partner can't sign off as expected if you know that your partner is also annoyed about the situation, rather than thinking that their ship is the only important place in the world and that you and life at home has become unimportant. Again, that is why it is crucial to show the other that he or she is meaningful. Send a message saying that you don't know when you can sign off, but you are looking forward to seeing your partner again. A message like that can make all the difference. Of course, conversely, it is important that the one who is at home shows patience".

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*Many couples find it can be difficult to make everyday life work when the family gets back together after having been apart and living two very different types of lives. How do you get back together and unite?*

"It is all about adapting your inner system to being in a new situation. It is very important that you take your time to establish some shared customs and routines, and get them up and running. Many make the mistake that they assume that everyday life will work without spending any time on banalities like that. But if you don't prioritize getting your relationship and family life working first, then you will end up with much bigger problems".

## GET THE COUPLE THERAPIST'S ADVICE FOR A LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP

### EVERYDAY LIFE APART

- Keep in touch every day. If possible, talk 15 minutes a day – video calls are the best way. It will strengthen your relationship that you hear and/or see each other. Choose a time that is suitable for both of you, where there is peace and you are not too tired.
- Greet each other with a caring hello and goodbye. Remember that a caring hello and goodbye is different from person to person.
- Don't talk about your relationship frustrations while one person is at sea. Wait until you are physically together again.
- If you start a fight or hurt each other, then try to fix it: Do something that will make the other person feel safe in the relationship again.
- Don't try to solve conflicts by text messages or email. In most cases, it will escalate the conflict or make things worse.
- Show understanding for each other's lives and needs. Recognize the other person.

### TOGETHER AGAIN

- Make sure you take time to just be together; time where you can talk about difficult subjects calmly, without being disturbed.
- Don't make any plans for the first 24 hours you/your family is back together again. Make a "safe space" where you can reconnect.
- Spend the last day before signing on together, without anything scheduled with others.
- Always say a loving 'goodbye' and 'see you again'.



# VOX POP

The term vox pop is derived from the Latin vox populi, that means the voice of the people and that is exactly what we try to do in the vox pop: Give the seafarers time to talk by interviewing a number of everyday people about their opinion or knowledge of a particular topic.

# How do you stay in contact with the family at home when you are at sea?

Belinda, our welfare consultant in Brielle, Port of Rotterdam, has visited the chemical tanker, TASING SWAN. We asked the crew members what they do to keep in contact to the family at home. This is what the crew members replied.

By Belinda Hoff, consultant in SEA HEALTH & WELFARE



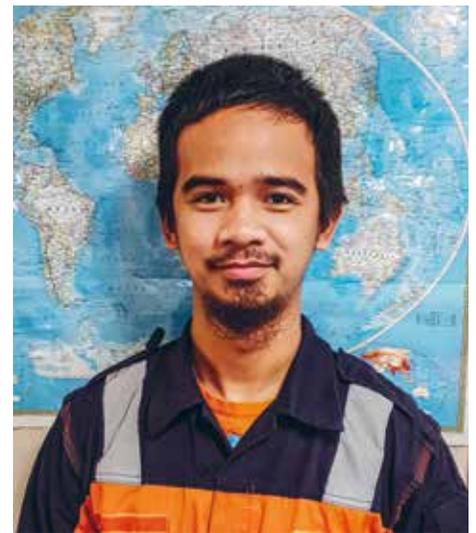
**RONILO GAYUTIN**  
2ND OFFICER FROM PHILIPPINES

We use Messenger to stay in contact! I try to contact my family every day after duty and when the internet connection is working. The contract I am on now is 6 months work, then 2 months at home. Right now, I am satisfied with the term of my contract and the time off I have with my family.



**ELIZSA D. CHOMI**  
3RD ENGINEER FROM PHILIPPINES

We keep in touch via Messenger! That is the most popular social media in the Philippines. If we have a connection, then we call via Messenger and contact each other. But without internet connection, then we have no contact. To keep a good work-life-balance, it would be nice that the shipowners send relievers on time in order to be signing off as scheduled.



**JEREMY ROWIN R. FLORES**  
3RD OFFICER FROM PHILIPPINES

We communicate with each other via internet and by using Messenger. I can only use it when I am off duty, and then I like to chat with my family. The shipping company is now upgrading the internet connection for us which is a good thing.

## ASK YOUR CONSULTANT

SEA HEALTH & WELFARE frequently receives questions from shipping companies and seafarers that could be useful to many of you. 'at SEA' will therefore be including questions and answers that concern practically all issues related to the working environment and well-being at sea. You are also welcome to send your questions to [info@shw.dk](mailto:info@shw.dk).

# Occupational health and safety course (Section 16) for supervisor and safety representative

DEAR SEA HEALTH & WELFARE

We have in our crew appointed a supervisor and selected a safety representative for the safety group. According to our ISM, both crew members must carry out the pre-course 'Get involved with your safety committee', but I cannot find the course on your webpage. How can that be?

Kindly John

DEAR JOHN

New rules have been introduced for training of the safety group. The changes mean that the safety representative and the supervisor now can take a Section 16 course – approved by the Danish Maritime Authority – either as e-learning, online or in classroom. I can recommend our 'Occupational health and safety on board course as e-learning' which is carried out on board the ship. The course consists of 14 modules, of which 1/3 is done on the computer and the rest are practical assignments carried out in collaboration with the rest of the crew on the ship. In this way, theory is put into practice straight away and the working environment improved from the very beginning.

The e-learning course covers the basic international requirements laid down in the 'Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, Regulation 4.3 – Health and safety protection and accident prevention' and 'Guidelines for implementing the occupational safety and health provisions of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, Section 5.7'.

You can also find the rules for Section 16 course in the Danish Maritime Authority notification no. 795 of 22 June 2017 and no. 846 of 25 June 2018.

Please notice that supervisor and safety representative must carry out the course within three months of the election.

Best regards

Anne Ries

Senior consultant in SEA HEALTH & WELFARE



# Who must pay for my safety glasses with strength?

DEAR SEA HEALTH & WELFARE

I'm no longer the spring chicken I used to be. For that reason, I have visited the optician to get a pair of glasses with strength and progressive lens.

As it is a requirement from my employer that I wear safety glasses at work, I purchased a pair of these with strength on the same occasion. I expected that my employer would cover the expenses for the safety glasses as it is required that my work provide safety equipment for me. However, my employer denied covering the full expense and will only cover a smaller amount.

Can it really be, that I must pay majority of the expenses for the safety glasses?

Kindly Poul

Dear Poul

In order no. 1246 in Notice A from the Danish Maritime Authority, 'Technical regulation on occupational health in ships' it is stated that the employer must provide personal protective equipment for the employees while referring to the Danish Working Environment Authority's rules. When we look into the Danish Working Environment Authority Guide D.5.8 – 1. April 2007 on eye protective wear it is stated in connection with acquisition and adjustment:

If the user needs vision correcting glasses the eye protective equipment must be big enough to fit the glasses underneath, or one can use eye protective equipment with corrective lenses.

In other words, the employer can choose only to cover the expenses for safety glasses that can be used in combination with your normal glasses. However, over the years many workplaces have signed agreements with opticians in which employees can have majority of their expenses covered when buying safety glasses with strength.

There may be some confusion about the rules of safety glasses versus computer glasses. If an employee needs computer glasses, the employer must cover the full expenses for the prismatic glass but is only obligated to cover a fair subsidy to the frame. This does not apply to safety glasses with strength.

Best regards

Ester Ørum

Consultant in SEA HEALTH & WELFARE



# NEW RULES FOR **CLEAN DRINKING WATER**

The Danish Maritime Authority has updated the rules for clean drinking water on board ships. This is brought into effect with a new Order on Food and Drinking water 'BEK nr 1519 af 13/12/2019'.

As a consequence, we have in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment and Food, updated the rules in 'Drinking water – on board ships. A guidance about how to provide clean drinking water' appendix 1.C.

## WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

It means that the ship's drinking water guidance p. 27 must be replaced with an updated version that can be downloaded on [www.shw.dk/drikkevand](http://www.shw.dk/drikkevand)

## WHAT DOES THE NEW RULES CONCERN?

Threshold limit values are included in the rules.

## WHY DON'T WE JUST RECEIVE A NEW UPDATED GUIDE?

We are expecting several new rules regarding clean drinking water on board. Therefore, we are waiting to send a new version of the full guide. We expect the new rules to be announced by the end of 2020, after which they will be updated in a new 'Drinking Water Guidance. 3rd Edition.'

If you have questions to clean drinking water on board, you are welcome to contact senior consultant, Anne Ries, [ari@shw.dk](mailto:ari@shw.dk) or phone +45 7240 2610.





## EBOOKS AND AUDIOBOOKS AT THE SEAFARERS' LIBRARY

From spring 2020 the Seafarers' Library will be able to offer all seafarers on board Danish flagged ships access to ebooks and audiobooks in English.

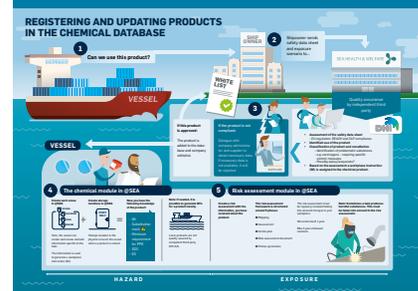
Via the app Libby you will be able to download ebooks and audiobooks to your own device and read them offline.

The staff at the library has started to choose and buy books for the library but we would love if you would write to us with suggestions for good books.

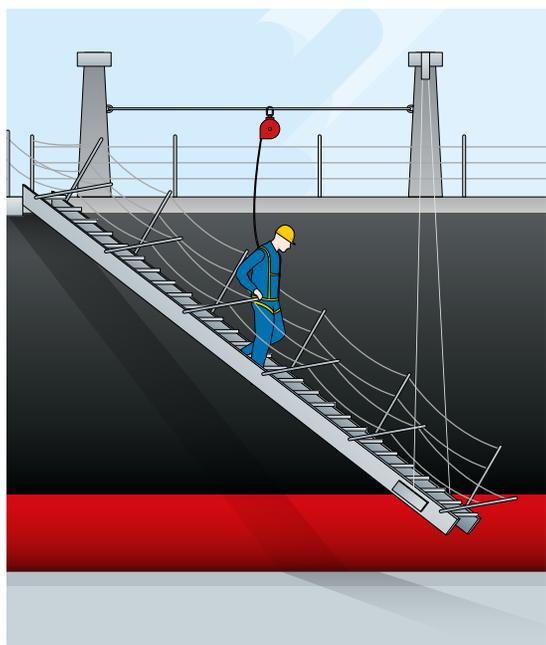
To be able to borrow books you need to register as a borrower at the library. Please contact the library at [bibliotek@shw.dk](mailto:bibliotek@shw.dk) if you want to register or if you have some good book suggestions.

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO REGISTER AND UPDATE CHEMICALS IN THE CHEMICAL DATABASE?

WE HAVE MADE IT A LITTLE EASIER FOR YOU TO KEEP TRACK OF CHEMICALS ON BOARD. SEE P. 30, PULL OUT AND HANG THE POSTER WHERE YOU REGISTER CHEMICALS.



## New updated version of 'FALL ARREST'



A new and updated sector guidance is on its way. The guidance has been updated with new rules and important information, such as what to do when an accident has occurred, 10 rules of thumb and calculation of fall length. The guidance also includes new rules such as overhaul of fall arrest equipment.

### IMPORTANT INFO ON FALL ARREST RULES

The ship's crew can no longer carry out the annual inspection on complicated fall arrest equipment such as fall arrest block or other equipment that must be disassembled. In the future, this must be carried out by

persons certified and trained for the purpose by the manufacturer or by its representative. It is, however, possible to obtain such certification. It must be said that such certification only applies to the equipment of the specific manufacturer and is not a general certification, even though the equipment may be comparable. It is, furthermore, important to notice that fall arrest equipment must be placed and tested by an approved organisation and not by the ship's crew itself. Finally, all fall arrest equipment must carry the CE-marking.

**We expect the new sector guidance to be ready by Spring, 2020.**

# Health & Safety at Sea has had a make-over – and new features

The program where you can register and handle chemicals and create risk assessments has a new name, @SEA-@SHORE.

## WHY IS THAT?

We want to give you a better user experience. That's why we have made a new intuitive design that is much easier to navigate in. And the new platform only takes up about 15% of the previous solution.

## WHY SHOULD I INSTALL THE PROGRAM?

Because you can do much more now. You can read news from most of the world. You can watch fitness videos, register results in the Fit4SEA competition and win great prizes.

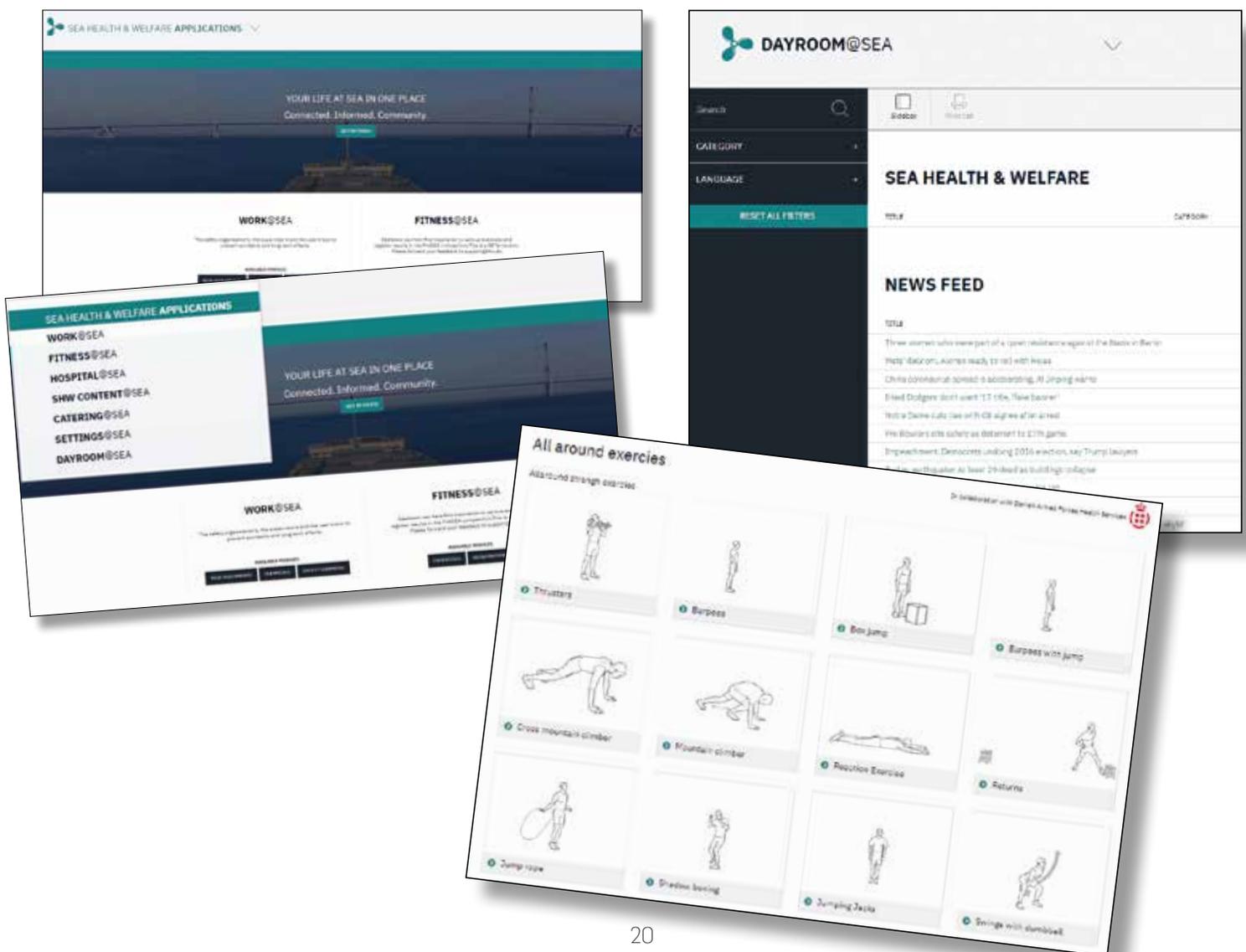
## BUT I CANT WORKOUT NEXT TO THE SHIP'S COMPUTER

No need to. You can access @SEA-@SHORE from your mobile phone or tablet and bring it with you to them gym or wherever you work out. All you need is to be connected to the ship's wifi.

## WHAT IF THERE'S NO INTERNET?

No worries. The platform works offline. Once the ship is in port with a connection, you will automatically be updated with fresh news and features. It is that easy!

To learn more about @SEA-@SHORE go to [www.shw.dk](http://www.shw.dk)



# BE A BUDDY

## - NOT A BULLY

*How to act when experiencing harassment and bullying*



### **WANT TO BE A BUDDY?**

You can make a difference if you experience harassment and bullying. Get the guide online [www.shw.dk/chikane-og-mobning](http://www.shw.dk/chikane-og-mobning)

### **HELPLINE**

We offer seafarers and shipowners confidential, neutral counselling and guidance on harassment and bullying at sea.

Call us or send an SMS: +45 6015 5824

Email us: [helpline@shw.dk](mailto:helpline@shw.dk)





Caption: Where there's a will, there's a way. Pictures from HAVØRNEN's 'temporary' gym.

### In 2019, seafarers broke records in the gym big time!

From January to December, seafarers biked a total of **385.094 km**.

That is about 70.000 more kilometers than in 2018 and is equivalent to **biking 30 times around the world**.

The ship that has biked the most kilometers in 2019 is fishery inspection ship HAVØRNEN on which 6 crew members in total have biked 9.439 km.

	2018	2019
<b>Cross</b>	16.665 km	22.093 km
<b>Strength</b>	24.002 hours	35.467 hours
<b>Rowing</b>	64.826 km	62.561 km
<b>Running</b>	152.863 km	167.898 km
<b>Biking</b>	244.699 km	385.094 km

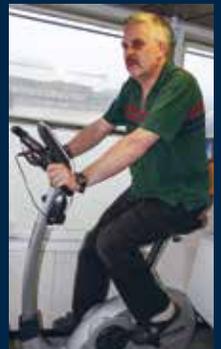
Would you also like to participate in the Fit4SEA-competition and win great prizes?  
Go to [www.shw.dk/fitness-og-events](http://www.shw.dk/fitness-og-events) and find out how you get started.

Fit4SEA  
resultat



## WHY BIKING IS GOOD FOR YOU

- Biking burns calories. The longer and heavier you bike, the more calories you burn.
- Biking gives you stronger muscles and a lower pulse.
- Biking reduces the risk of becoming overweight and of developing high blood pressure, high cholesterol and precursors to diabetes.
- Biking can reduce the risk of heart disease.
- Biking is – as any other form of exercise – good for your memory and power of concentration.
- Biking is a gentle way of exercising and protects joints and knees.
- Just one hour a week of biking has an impact.





**DELICIOUS  
JUICES FULL  
OF VITAMINS**

.....

◀ **BEET ROOT AND POMEGRANATE**

- 4 servings
  - 2 apples
  - 2 beet roots
  - 1 piece of ginger
- .....

IT IS A GREAT IDEA TO GET A JUICER FOR THE GALLEY. NOT ONLY IS IT HEALTHY, YOU ALSO GET TO MINIMIZE YOUR GREENS AND FRUIT WASTE.

.....

◻ **SUPER GREEN DETOX ▶**

- 4 servings
- 1 green apple
- 1 cucumber
- 3 stems of celery
- 1 piece of ginger
- 1 head of lettuce
- 1 lemon without skin



TIPS FOR MORE FIBERS  
IF YOU WANT MORE FIBERS, BLEND 1/3 OF THE VEGETABLES AND ADD TO THE REST OF THE JUICE.

**ONE GLASS OF JUICE**  
counts as one of the '6 a day' recommended by the Danish dietary council.



.....

◀ **CARROT AND APPLE**

- 4 servings
  - 2 apples
  - 10 carrots
  - 1 large piece of ginger
  - 1 piece of turmeric root
- .....

Thanks for sharing recipes Anders Hjarsø, Chief cook on VUOKSI MAERSK. Do you have a great recipe you would like to share, feel free to send to us on [atsea@shw.dk](mailto:atsea@shw.dk) and we'll feature it in the next magazine.

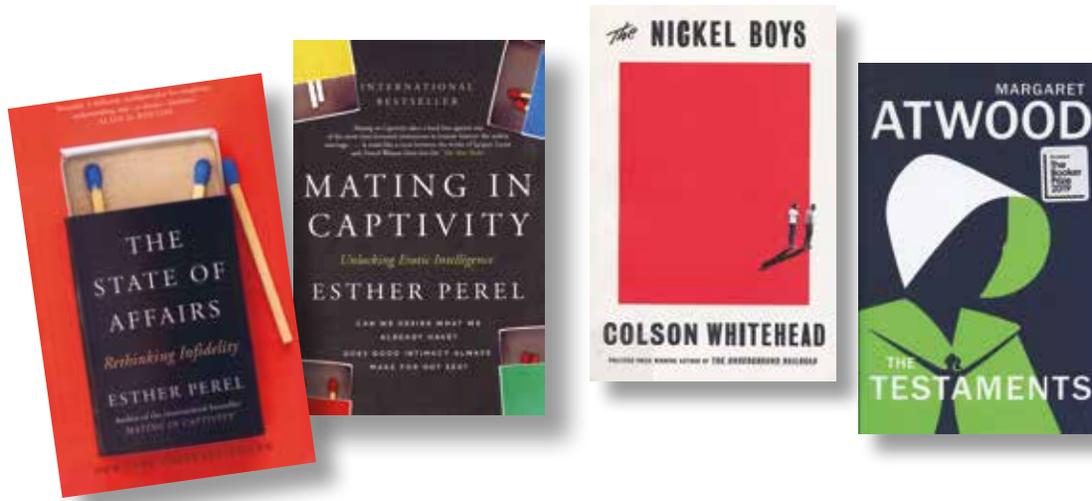




# NEW BOOKS AT THE LIBRARY

Remember that all crew members on board Danish ships are welcome in the ships library. If you don't find a book that interest you – or if you have read all books in the library – you are welcome to contact us to get new books on board.

Send your e-mail to [bibliotek@shw.dk](mailto:bibliotek@shw.dk)



Our books belong on your ship! Remember that the Seafarer's Library, the SHW stations, seafarer services in Denmark, and the Danish Seamen Churches around the world love to provide you with new books! So please reach out to us, either directly to the library at [bibliotek@shw.dk](mailto:bibliotek@shw.dk) or to the stations, seaman services and churches.

We have books in many different genres about a wide range of topics. Here are some examples:

### **The State of Affairs – Rethinking Infidelity**

Esther Perel

In this book couples-therapist Esther Perel gives us a provocative look at relationships through the lens of infidelity. Infidelity is the ultimate betrayal. But does it have to be? Relationship therapist Esther Perel examines why people cheat and unpacks why affairs are so traumatic; because they threaten our emotional security. In infidelity, she sees something unexpected - an expression of longing and loss. A must-read for anyone who has ever cheated or been cheated on, or who simply wants a new framework for understanding relationships.

Esther Perel has done a TED talk about the subject "Rethinking infidelity" find it on YouTube.

### **Mating in Captivity – Unlocking Erotic Intelligence**

Esther Perel

Esther Perel looks at the story of sex in committed couples. Modern romance promises it all - a lifetime of togetherness, intimacy and erotic desire. In reality it's hard to want what you already have. And often, the very thing that got us into our relationships - lust - is the one thing that goes missing from them. Determined to reconcile the erotic and the domestic, Perel explains why democracy is a passion killer in the bedroom. Argues for playfulness, distance, and uncertainty. And shows what it takes to bring lust home.

Esther Perel has her own channel on YouTube and has done TED talks about relationship.

*Number 1 on Time Magazine's list of best books of 2019:*

### **The Nickel Boys**

Colson Whitehead

Inspired by a Florida news story Whitehead imagines two black boys fighting to survive a juvenile reform school in Florida in the 1960s. The Nickel Academy is a nightmarish upside-down world, where any boy who resists the corrupt depravity of the authorities is likely to disappear.

*Number 2 on Time Magazine's list of best books of 2019:*

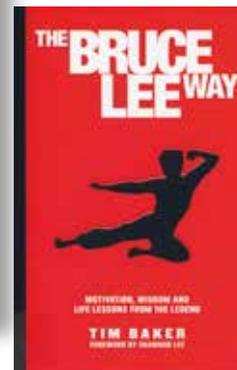
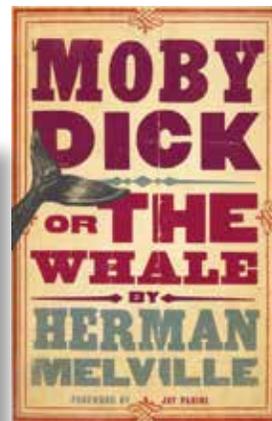
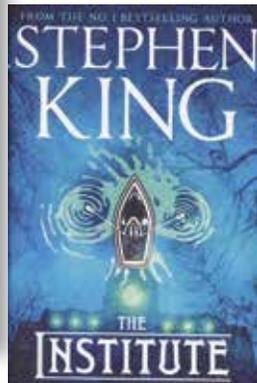
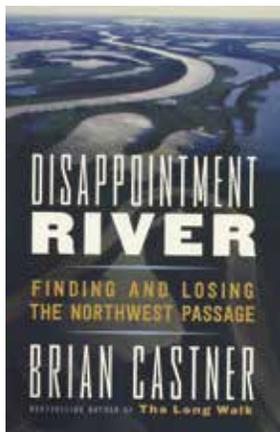
### **The Testaments**

Margaret Atwood

We return to the Republic of Gilead 15 years after we left June/Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale* and we are told what happened to her. The story is narrated by three women, Aunt Lydia, whom we know from the first novel, Agnes, who lives in Gilead, and Daisy who lives in Canada. The book traces the rise and ultimate fall of Gilead, the totalitarian theocracy and a society with frightening parallels to the ugliest aspects of humanity.

„ Modern romance promises it all - a lifetime of togetherness, intimacy and erotic desire. In reality it's hard to want what you already have „

From the book 'Mating in Captivity - Unlocking Erotic Intelligence' by Esther Perel



### **Disappointment River – Finding and Losing the Northwest Passage**

Brian Castner

In the late 17th century explorer Alexander Mackenzie crossed the North American continent in a canoe to find the North West Passage and a trade route to Cook Inlet in Alaska. What he found was a river that he named "Disappointment", and he died thinking he had failed. Former elite soldier, Brian Castner, makes the same journey as Mackenzie, and he tells us an adventure tale of white-water rapids and threat of bears, and shows us the thawing permafrost and remote indigenous villages. Not disappointing at all! The river was later named Mackenzie River.

### **The Institute**

Stephen King

The latest novel by master of horror, Stephen King, is a scary story of a group of highly intelligent children who are abducted from their homes and put in an institute where they are forced to use their brilliant minds on scary projects in the service of a secret organization that doesn't care how it affects the children. The children revolt but they are up against strong forces.

### **Moby Dick or the Whale**

Herman Melville

The great novel about young Ishmael who gets on board a whaling ship where the crew tries to track down Moby Dick, the white whale who has killed many sailors and destroyed many ships. The novel is regarded as a masterpiece.

### **The Bruce Lee Way – Motivation, Wisdom and Life Lessons from the Legend**

Tim Barker

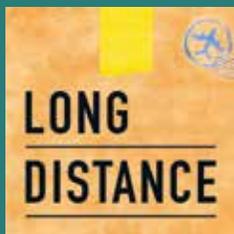
Bruce's story is distilled through a series of lessons that will lead you on to the path of what Bruce called "self-actualization". The book offers a unique window into the mind of the master, and gives you examples of how to channel his methods into your own life.

You can get new books in the following ports Gothenburg, Hamburg, Rotterdam, Algeciras, Jebel Ali, Port Said, Singapore, Tanjung Pelepas, and Hong Kong. In Denmark you find the book depots in Esbjerg, Aarhus, Aalborg, and Copenhagen, and in Greenland in Nuuk, Aasiaat and Sisimiut.



We still love podcasts! This time we recommend a unique podcast about the Filipino diaspora and two podcasts that in their own way enlightens us about relationships.

Listen to podcasts via iTunes or Spotify, through one of the free Apps like Stitcher or Podcast Addict or directly via your computer. Also remember that some of the large providers of podcasts often gather all their podcasts on one site, see e.g podcasts from Gimlet here [www.gimletmedia.com/shows](http://www.gimletmedia.com/shows)

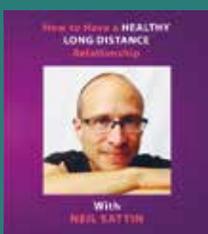


## LONG DISTANCE

is the first and only documentary podcast series about stories in the Filipino diaspora. It is a collection of Filipino audio stories set a long way from home. What does it mean to be Filipino outside of the homeland? To grow up there and to have to leave it? Or what if you've never been there at all? Each episode moves

beyond typical immigrant narratives to share thoughtful tales of love, loss, history, and humor through audio documentaries. The Philippines has one of the largest diaspora populations in the world, and yet these stories are rarely covered in mainstream media. Host and producer, Paola Mardo started an audio project about LA's Historic Filipinotown in 2016. Through her work as a journalist, she saw a great need to tell thoughtful, well-reported audio stories about her community. She expanded the project and that's how Long Distance was born.

[www.longdistanceradio.com/](http://www.longdistanceradio.com/)



## RELATIONSHIP ALIVE!

Is a podcast about relationships. Host Neil Sattin loves to have conversations with interesting people, and he wants to share information about relationships and help you to have the kind of relationships that you want to have in your life. Episode 89, May 2017 is about long distance relationships: "How to have a healthy

long distance relationship." Other episodes are "What to do When Things Get Challenging" (episode 199), "Depression? What You can do" (episode 181), "A Crucial Key for Building Trust in Your Relationship (episode 161) and "A User Manual for You" (episode 101).

[www.neilsattin.com/relationshipalive/](http://www.neilsattin.com/relationshipalive/)



## WHERE SHOULD WE BEGIN?

In this podcast we step into couple's therapist Esther Perel's office and listen as real couples anonymously tell the raw, intimate, and profound details of their story. From infidelity, to sexlessness, to loss, it's a space for people to be heard and understood.

It's also a place for us to listen and feel empowered in our own relationships. So.. Where should we begin? Perhaps start with episodes such as "I Don't Want to be Your Caregiver, I want to be Your Wife" and "I've had 100 Conversations With You in my Head".

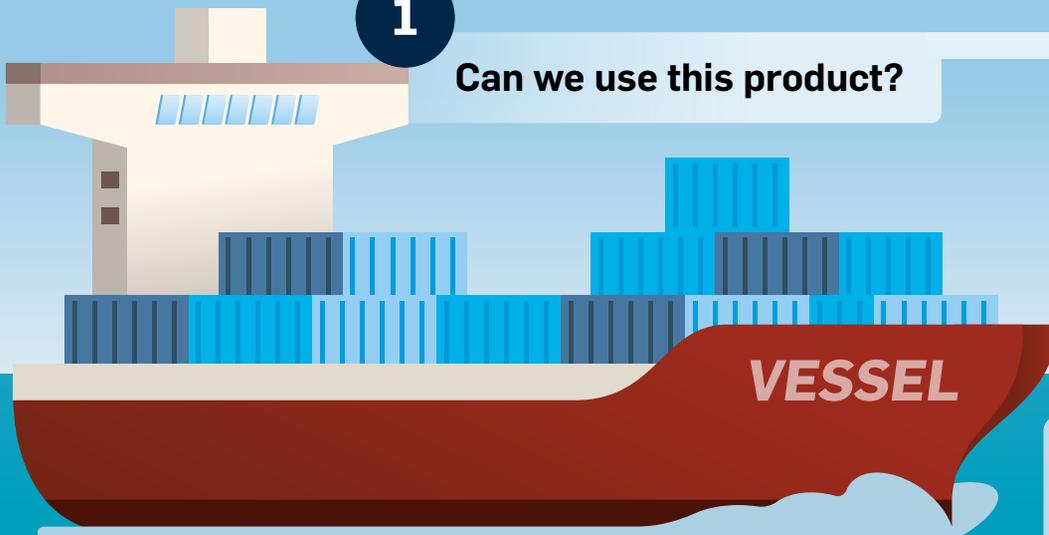
See also our book review where we mention two books by Esther Perel.

[www.estherperel.com/podcast](http://www.estherperel.com/podcast)

# REGISTERING AND UPDATING PRODUCTS IN THE CHEMICAL DATABASE

1

Can we use this product?



**If this product is approved:**

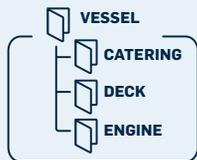
The product is added to the database and company whitelist.

**VESSEL**

4

**The chemical module in @SEA**

**Create work areas in @SEA**



Here, the vessel can create work areas and add information specific to the task.

The information is used to generate a workplace instruction (WI).

**Create storage locations in @SEA**



Storage location is the physical area on the vessel where a product is stored.

**Now you have the following knowledge of the product:**

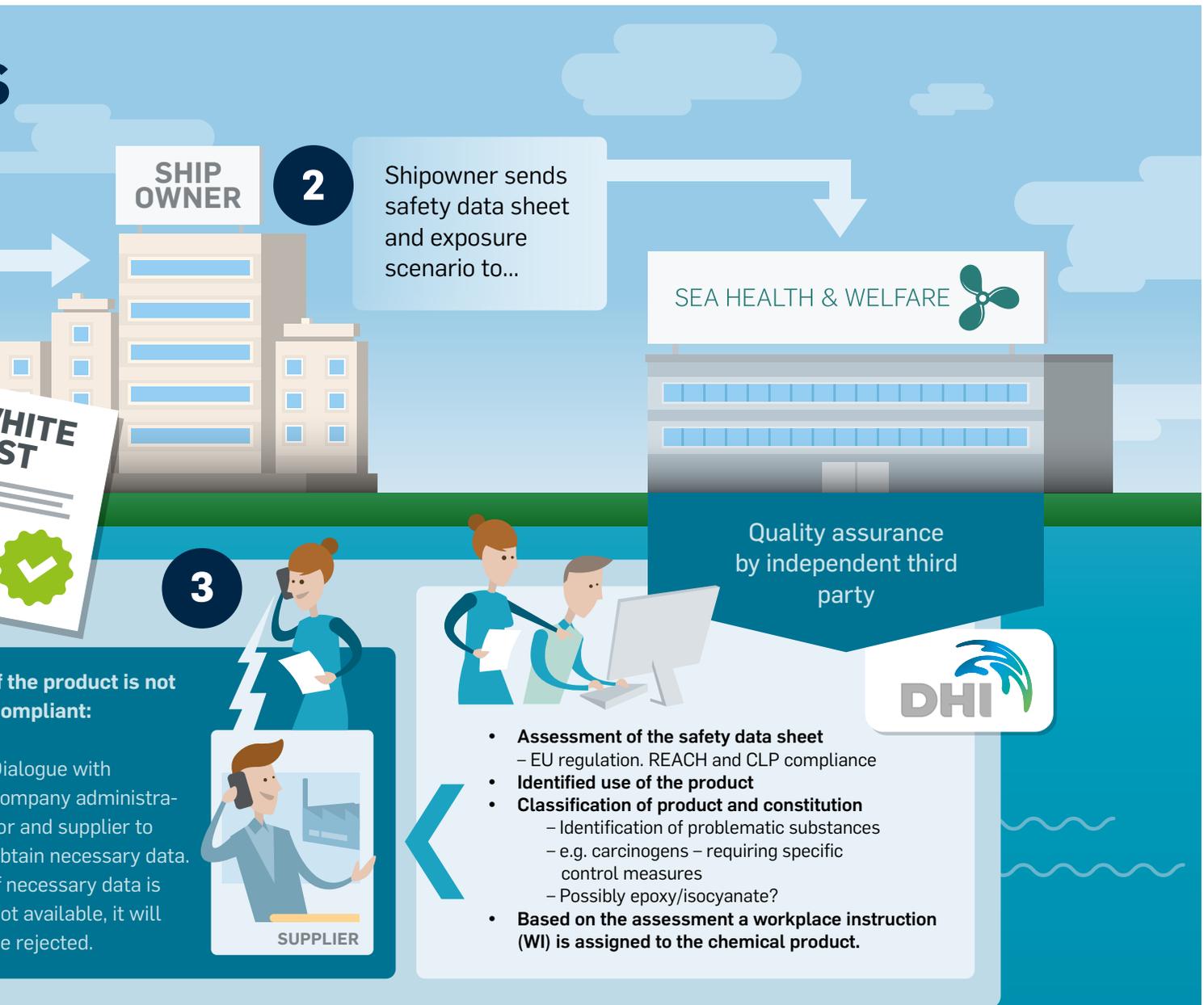
- WI
- Substitution mark ⚠️
- Minimum requirement for PPE
- SDS
- ES

**Note: If needed, it is possible to generate WI's for a product locally.**



Local products are not quality assured by competent third party DHI A/S.

**HAZARD**



## Risk assessment module in @SEA

create a risk assessment with the information, you have received about the product.

The risk assessment framework is structured around 5 phases

- 1 Mapping
- 2 Assessment
- 3 Action plan
- 4 Risk assessment document
- 5 Follow up/revision

The risk assessment must be regularly reviewed taking into account changes in your workplace.

We recommend 1 year.

Max 3 years between revisions.

**Note: Sometimes a task produces harmful substances. This must be taken into account in the risk assessment.**



EXPOSURE