Transforming Mental Health at Sea:

A Vision for Wellbeing

Support for the development of a comprehensive mental health policy for shipowners, ship managers and maritime companies

CONTENTS

Your Crew's Wellbeing Matters

Designing a dedicated mental health policy is more than a statement of intent; it is a transformative commitment to fostering a supportive and thriving work culture both onshore and at sea. A well-structured policy acts as a guiding light for your organisation, paving the way for resilience, productivity, and job satisfaction.

A comprehensive and actionable mental health strategy allows your organisation to:

- Champion mental health at every level,
- Equip both crew and shore-based staff with essential tools and resources,
- Optimise existing practices to align with modern mental health standards,
- Establish practical steps for sustainable wellbeing.

Leadership: The Driving Force Behind Change

A policy without leadership support is like a ship without a captain. To effect meaningful change, senior management must take the helm, ensuring that mental health remains a priority. Leadership commitment signals the importance of wellbeing, ensures appropriate allocation of resources, and fosters a top-down culture of care.

Active leadership involvement transforms the policy from a mere document into a framework for real action. Leaders who actively advocate for mental health inspire others to do the same, fostering an inclusive, empathetic, and motivated workforce.

Moreover, leaders should receive training to recognise and address mental health concerns among their teams, onboard and ashore. This empowers them to provide timely support, foster trust, and reinforce a culture where wellbeing is prioritised.

Inclusive Collaboration: A Shared Responsibility

The most effective policies emerge from diverse perspectives. Engaging ship and shore teams, alongside mental health professionals, ensures that the policy reflects real-world experiences. By involving individuals who understand the unique challenges of life at sea, the policy becomes relevant, practical, and inclusive.

Collaboration fosters a sense of ownership and accountability. When crew members feel heard, they are more likely to support and champion the policy. Encouraging open dialogue during the development phase helps identify potential challenges early, allowing for proactive solutions and ensuring stronger adoption across the organisation.

Generating Enthusiasm and Engagement

Involving stakeholders from the outset sparks enthusiasm and fosters a sense of ownership. By inviting representatives from relevant departments to contribute, the policy evolves from a corporate requirement to a shared mission.

To maintain momentum, celebrate key milestones throughout the policy's development and implementation. Regular updates, feedback sessions, and recognition of contributions keeps crew engaged and invested.

Setting Objectives – Mental Health with Purpose

Defining Clear, Achievable Goals

Every organisation is unique, and its mental health policy should reflect that. Tailoring objectives to fit the team's structure, geographical spread, and specific roles ensures that the policy is not just a box-ticking exercise but a powerful tool for meaningful change.

Key Objectives to Consider:

- Commitment to Wellbeing: Make mental health a shared priority for every crew member and shore worker.
- Empowering Knowledge: Provide resources that help seafarers recognise and address mental health challenges.
- Tackling Stigma: Foster an open culture where discussing mental health is normalised.
- Support Systems: Ensure robust, accessible mental health resources for all crew members.
- Active Participation: Encourage engagement in wellbeing initiatives.
- Individualised Support: Provide reasonable adjustments so every team member can thrive.

Measuring Success

A policy is only effective if it makes a tangible impact. Regular evaluations help ensure objectives remain relevant and practical. Consider using the following metrics:

- Staff Surveys: Collect anonymous feedback on mental health support and workplace wellbeing.
- Happiness Index: Measure overall crew morale and engagement.
- Absenteeism and Retention Rates: Assess the impact of mental health support on workforce stability.
- Use of Mental Health Resources: Track engagement with counselling, helplines, or training programmes.

Adapting to Change

The maritime industry is dynamic, and your mental health policy should be too. Stay attuned to emerging challenges, evolving stressors, and technological advancements, adjusting your objectives accordingly to maintain relevance.

Useful Mental Health Resources for Seafarers:

1. **International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN)**
   • SeafarerHelp – free, confidential, multilingual helpline available 24/7
   • Website: _www.seafarerhelp.org_
   • Email: _help@seafarerhelp.org_
   • Phone (free): +44 20 7323 2737
   • Live Chat: Available on their website

2. **The Mission to Seafarers**
   • Emotional, practical, and spiritual support through chaplains, ship visits, and drop-in centres
   • Website: _www.missiontoseafarers.org_
   • Email: _info@missiontoseafarers.org_
   • Phone (UK): +44 (0)20 7248 5202

3. **Sailors' Society**
   • Wellness at Sea program, welfare support, and chaplain services for seafarers worldwide
   • Website: _www.sailors-society.org_
   • Phone (UK): +44 (0)23 8051 5950
   • Email: _enquiries@sailors-society.org_

4. **Safer Waves**
   • Offers support to seafarers who have experienced sexual violence, harassment, or gender-based violence. Provides confidential guidance and emotional support
   • Website: _www.saferwaves.org_
   • Email: _support@saferwaves.org_

5. **Seafarers Hospital Society**
   • Mental health and wellbeing support, including access to Togetherall, an online community for mental health
   • Website: _www.seahospital.org.uk_
   • Phone: 020 8858 3696
   • Email: _admin@seahospital.org.uk_

5. **Stella Maris (formerly Apostleship of the Sea)**
   • Pastoral care, practical assistance, and emotional support for seafarers in over 350 ports globally
   • Website: _www.stellamaris.org.uk_
   • Email: _info@stellamarismail.org_
   • Phone: +44 (0)20 7901 1931

6. **UK P&I Club**
   • Resources and guidance for crew mental well-being, including videos, training, and partnerships with mental health charities
   • Website: _www.ukpandi.com_
   • Phone: +44 (0)20 7204 2400
   • Email: _ukpandi@thomasmiller.com_

CHAPTER 3:

Inspiring Mental Health Promotion and Training

Empowering Individuals through Knowledge

Providing easily accessible resources ensures that crew can take charge of their mental wellbeing. Consider a variety of tools, including self-help guides, mental health apps, infographics, and articles. These resources should be designed for ease of use, with digital and offline options to accommodate varying levels of internet access at sea.

Online platforms such as _Mind_, _Mental Health at Work_, and _ISWAN's SeafarerHelp_ provide excellent materials tailored to different languages, cultures and workplace needs. Additionally, ship-wide awareness campaigns can be reinforced through posters, newsletters, and digital bulletins that offer quick, digestible information on mental health.

Interactive Learning Approaches

Innovative approaches such as gamified learning and virtual reality (VR) training modules* can enhance engagement. VR can simulate challenging maritime situations, teaching seafarers how to cope with stress and anxiety in high-pressure environments. Gamified learning, where users earn points or badges for completing mental health training, makes the process more interactive and rewarding.

Highlighting key awareness days such as World Mental Health Day and World Suicide Prevention Day can also drive engagement and foster a sense of community. Celebrating these days through webinars, storytelling sessions, or creative workshops encourages open dialogue about mental wellbeing.

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* _https://oceantg.com/ocean-learning-library/_

* _https://ntnuopen.ntnu.no/ntnu-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/3054233/Applications%2Bof%2BMaritime%2BSimulators%2Bin%2BIndustry%2Band%2BResearch.pdf?sequence=1_

Training for Mental Resilience

SPECIALISED TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Training programmes such as Psychological Wellbeing at Sea and Cultural Sensitivity Training equip crew members with strategies to manage stress and navigate the unique challenges of maritime life. Practical modules covering stress management techniques, mindfulness exercises, and coping mechanisms for loneliness and isolation should be included. These sessions can be conducted online or through onboard workshops facilitated by trained professionals.

The _Sailors' Society Wellness at Sea_ programme is an excellent example, providing structured mental wellbeing training specifically for seafarers. Similarly, Togetherall offers online peer support and self-help tools designed for individuals in high-stress professions.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND ADVOCACY

Leadership training should also focus on mental health advocacy, helping officers create a culture of care and support. Encouraging peer-to-peer support strengthens the workplace environment and reinforces organisational commitment to wellbeing. When leaders are equipped to recognise early signs of mental health distress and intervene with empathy, the entire crew benefits.

Offering mandatory leadership courses on emotional intelligence and mental health awareness can shift perceptions and foster a compassionate leadership style. These courses should be supported with practical guidelines, such as checklists for recognising distress, de-escalation techniques, and referral procedures for professional help.

Overcoming Resistance to Change

ADDRESSING COMMON BARRIERS

Change can be difficult, and some crew members may be hesitant to embrace mental health initiatives. Address concerns through transparent communication, active listening, and by reinforcing a no-blame culture where seeking support carries no negative consequences. Myths about mental health, such as the misconception that seeking help is a sign of weakness, should be debunked through educational campaigns and personal testimonials.

To further ease resistance, organisations can establish confidential feedback mechanisms where crew members can share their concerns anonymously. Digital surveys or suggestion boxes can help identify common worries and inform targeted interventions.

NORMALISING MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATIONS

Creating mental health discussion forums—both online and in-person—helps seafarers feel that their concerns are being acknowledged. Regular onboard group discussions, led by trained facilitators, can serve as safe spaces for crew members to share experiences and support each other. Initiatives such as 'Tea & Talk' sessions, where colleagues meet informally to discuss wellbeing topics, encourage openness in a non-intimidating setting.

IMPLEMENTING PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS

Developing peer support networks enhances resilience among crew members. Trained 'Mental Health Champions' onboard can serve as go-to individuals for emotional support and guidance. Organisations such as _Mental Health First Aid England_, _Sailors' Society_ and _the International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN)_ offer certification for workplace mental health first aiders, who can be invaluable in identifying and assisting colleagues in distress.

Monitoring and Sustaining Progress

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

Tracking the effectiveness of mental health initiatives is essential for ensuring long-term success. Establishing key performance indicators (KPIs), such as:

- Crew wellbeing surveys and feedback forms,
- Mental health awareness training completion rates,
- Reduction in absenteeism and incidents linked to stress or mental health issues,
- Engagement levels in peer support programmes.

The _Happiness Index_ can be a valuable tool for measuring crew morale and wellbeing, offering insights that help refine policies and interventions.

Continuous Improvement Strategies

Mental health policies should be living documents, subject to periodic review and adaptation. Annual reviews, post-training evaluations, and data-driven adjustments ensure that initiatives remain relevant and impactful. Involving crew in the policy refinement process through advisory panels or focus groups strengthens engagement and fosters a shared responsibility for mental wellbeing.

By embedding mental health into organisational culture, providing accessible and engaging resources, and fostering leadership advocacy, companies can create a workplace where crew members feel supported, empowered, and valued.

CHAPTER 4:

Building Bonds – Positive Relationships Onboard

Fostering Strong Crew Dynamics

Diversity is a strength in the maritime industry, but it requires proactive effort to ensure inclusivity. Addressing language barriers, cultural differences, and gender balance fosters an environment where every crew member feels valued.

- Cultural Diversity: The maritime sector is a truly global workforce. Crew members come from various nationalities, with different cultural practices, languages, and social norms. This diversity can create challenges, but it also offers opportunities for greater innovation and resilience.
  - International Maritime Organization (IMO): *IMO Diversity Resources* provides guidelines and policies to encourage diverse and inclusive working environments in the maritime industry.
- Language Barriers: English is the international language of maritime communication, but many crew members speak different native languages. Training in communication and conflict resolution, as well as providing interpreters or bilingual staff, can help bridge these gaps.
  - Maritime Safety Training: *World Maritime University (WMU)* offers language and leadership programs to equip seafarers with effective communication skills across language and cultural barriers.
- Gender Balance: Promoting gender diversity on ships is essential to foster equality and enhance team dynamics. The maritime industry has traditionally been male-dominated, but efforts to include more women are growing.
  - Women in Maritime: The *Women's International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA)* is an organisation that supports women in maritime and advocates for greater gender balance in the industry.

Encouraging Camaraderie

Team-building activities, shared meals, and social gatherings can help create an environment where crew members feel more connected. These simple but meaningful gestures improve morale and create a sense of belonging.

- Team-Building Activities: Activities such as ice-breakers, trust exercises, and group challenges allow crew members to bond outside of their typical roles. It also enhances collaboration and mutual understanding.
  - Leadership Development: _Lloyd's Maritime Academy_ provides training and resources on leadership and team-building for maritime professionals.
- Shared Meals & Social Gatherings: Meals onboard are not just about food; they're an opportunity for crew members to come together and share experiences, fostering camaraderie. Celebrating different cultural holidays onboard also promotes diversity and inclusion.
  - Onboard Welfare: The _International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)_ advocates for the well-being of seafarers and the importance of maintaining social activities to support mental and emotional health.

Open Communication

Providing safe spaces for seafarers to share concerns and seek guidance builds trust and strengthens team cohesion. Mentorship programmes and peer support groups can further enhance workplace relationships.

- Safe Spaces for Communication: Establishing clear communication channels for seafarers to voice concerns without fear of retaliation is essential for maintaining a positive onboard environment.
  - Seafarer Welfare: _Seafarers' Rights International (SRI)_ offers resources and guidance on the rights of seafarers, ensuring they can communicate freely about their concerns.
- Mentorship Programs: Mentorship is a powerful way to integrate new crew members into the team, fostering leadership skills and developing trust.
  - Seafarers Training & Support: The _International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC)_ provides mentoring frameworks for seafarers to help them develop professionally while adjusting to the unique challenges of working at sea.
- Peer Support: Building strong relationships between crew members through support groups and peer networks can enhance mental health and well-being. This is especially critical given the demanding nature of seafaring.
  - Mental Health Support: _The Mission to Seafarers_ offers services to provide emotional and psychological support to seafarers, helping them build a strong sense of community.

CHAPTER 5:

Breaking Stigma – Redefining Mental Health Conversations

Creating a Culture of Openness

Mental health in the maritime industry is often overlooked due to the isolating nature of life at sea and the demanding work environment. However, promoting mental health awareness through campaigns, workshops, and leadership advocacy can change this. By ensuring that mental health is openly discussed, a positive and supportive environment can be created, making it easier for crew members to seek help.

- Mental Health Awareness: Raising awareness about mental health through various campaigns, workshops, and training programs is essential for creating a supportive environment onboard. Regular mental health workshops can help crew members recognise the signs of stress, anxiety, and depression, promoting early intervention in themselves and colleagues.
  - Seafarers' Mental Health Campaign: *The Mission to Seafarers* provides global campaigns and resources aimed at raising awareness about mental health in the maritime industry.
- Leadership Advocacy: It's crucial for leadership to model mental health advocacy by discussing its importance openly. Leaders should encourage crew members to speak up if they are experiencing mental health challenges and ensure they know the proper channels for seeking support.
  - Mental Health & Leadership in Maritime: The *International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC)* emphasises the role of leadership in promoting mental well-being and has published various guidelines to help improve mental health awareness among seafarers.
- Ongoing Communication: Regularly share mental health resources through newsletters, webinars, and team meetings to keep conversations active and normalise mental health care. This ongoing communication ensures that seafarers are aware of where to turn for help when needed.
  - Maritime Mental Health Resources: *Seafarers UK* provides a variety of resources, including articles, mental health guides, and helplines to support mental well-being in the maritime workforce.

Confidentiality and Trust

One of the biggest barriers to seeking help is the fear of judgment or negative consequences on one's career. It's essential to reassure crew members that all mental health support mechanisms are confidential and that seeking help will not negatively impact their professional lives.

- Confidentiality Assurance: Ensuring confidentiality is a key factor in encouraging seafarers to seek help. Providing reassurance that their privacy will be protected builds trust in the mental health support system. Creating an anonymous system for reporting mental health concerns can also alleviate the fear of stigma.
  - Support Services for Seafarers: The *Seafarers' Welfare Board* emphasises the importance of confidentiality in mental health services and provides guidance on how to ensure privacy in the maritime workplace.
- Peer Support Programs: Offering confidential peer support programs allows crew members to confide in colleagues who understand the unique challenges they face at sea. This builds a supportive network without fear of judgment.
  - Seafarer Support Networks: *Sailor's Society* offers peer support networks and confidential counseling for seafarers who are struggling with mental health issues.
- Stigma Reduction: Breaking the stigma surrounding mental health starts with creating a culture where seeking help is viewed as a positive action, not a weakness. Normalising conversations around mental health can help reduce the fear of judgment.
  - Breaking the Stigma: *The International Maritime Organization (IMO)* has been working on initiatives to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health and has partnered with organisations like *Seafarers' Mental Health Awareness (SMHA)* to spread education about the importance of mental health in the maritime workforce.

Addressing Mental Health in the Maritime Culture

The maritime industry has historically been resistant to discussing mental health due to the nature of the work environment. However, cultural shifts are occurring with greater emphasis on well-being and mental health care.

- Cultural Shifts in Mental Health Awareness: The stigma that once existed around discussing mental health in the maritime industry is gradually shifting. Several organisations are advocating for open conversations and creating an environment where mental health is as important as physical health.
  - Maritime Mental Health Resources: *The International Transport Workers Federation (ITF)* provides valuable information on promoting mental health, breaking stigma, and ensuring the well-being of seafarers through workplace education and support initiatives.
- Support for Seafarers: Offering programs and initiatives specifically designed for seafarers can help in addressing the challenges posed by the unique conditions of life at sea. Mental health services should be tailored to meet the needs of seafarers who face long periods of isolation and limited access to traditional healthcare.
  - Mental Health at Sea: The *Seafarers Mental Health Awareness (SMHA) Program* works towards promoting awareness and training for seafarers and shipping companies on how to manage mental health issues onboard.
- Access to Mental Health Services: Digital mental health tools can provide remote support to seafarers when they need it. Using telemedicine or mental health apps can offer immediate, confidential access to professional support.
  - Telehealth Resources for Seafarers: *Maritime Health Services* offers telemedicine services that seafarers can access for mental health consultations while at sea, providing critical support during times of isolation.

CHAPTER 6:

Tailoring Solutions – Reasonable Adjustments for Every Role

Practical Adjustments

In the maritime industry, creating a supportive and flexible environment for seafarers is crucial to maintaining mental and physical well-being. Making reasonable adjustments is essential for ensuring that seafarers can perform their duties without compromising their mental health.

Mental Health-Focused Adjustments:

- Flexible Work Hours: Where feasible, offering flexible work hours can help alleviate stress and allow crew members to better manage their mental health. While maritime operations may be scheduled tightly, flexibility in non-essential duties, or adjusting watch schedules, can provide respite.
  - Workplace Flexibility Guidelines: *International Labour Organization (ILO)* outlines global labor standards, including guidelines for seafarers' work hours and conditions, and can assist with understanding how flexible scheduling might work within international shipping norms.
- Adjusted Workloads: Preventing burnout is essential for maintaining mental well-being onboard. Crew members should not be expected to continuously perform tasks under extreme stress or work beyond their capacity. It's important to adjust workloads to avoid exhaustion and reduce the risk of mental health issues.
  - ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006: *MLC 2006* sets internationally recognised standards for working conditions on board ships, including hours of work, rest periods, and workloads. Adhering to these standards ensures that crew members are not overburdened and have the necessary breaks for mental and physical recovery.
- Quiet Spaces for Rest and Reflection: Providing spaces for quiet reflection, rest, and recovery can make a significant difference in reducing stress levels. Such spaces can offer a mental break from the high demands of seafaring life, promoting better mental health and productivity.
  - Seafarer Wellness Spaces: The *Seafarers' Welfare Board* offers advice and guidance on creating wellness spaces onboard ships, ensuring that seafarers have access to a peaceful and safe environment for mental restoration.

Annual Policy Reviews, Feedback Sessions, and Flexibility

To ensure the effectiveness of mental health policies, regular policy reviews and feedback sessions are crucial. Keeping mental health policies relevant to current challenges at sea allows for continuous improvement and the incorporation of emerging best practices.

- Policy Reviews and Updates: Annual policy reviews are essential for making sure that mental health support systems are up-to-date and effective. Engaging with crew members through feedback sessions will help highlight areas for improvement and areas that may need more focus.
  - Mental Health Policy Frameworks: *The International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC)* provides guidelines and frameworks for shipping companies to incorporate into their HR policies, ensuring that mental health is continuously monitored and supported with relevant adjustments.
- Feedback Sessions: Implementing regular feedback sessions with crew members allows them to voice their concerns and suggest adjustments to their work conditions. This can improve morale and ensure that the crew feels heard and supported.
  - Mental Health in the Maritime Sector: *The Mission to Seafarers* offers resources for maritime HR professionals on setting up feedback mechanisms, promoting better communication between seafarers and management about mental health challenges.
- Flexibility in HR Practices: HR policies should allow for flexibility, particularly in responding to mental health needs. Adapting HR procedures to consider the individual needs of seafarers, such as mental health support, and offering options such as temporary role adjustments or leave, can have a positive impact.
  - HR Flexibility Guidelines: The *International Transport Workers Federation (ITF)* provides guidelines for HR practices in the maritime sector, including how to integrate mental health support and flexibility into onboard policies.

International Regulations and Best Practices for Mental Health in Maritime HR Policies

While there are currently no specific global regulations dedicated exclusively to mental health adjustments in maritime HR policies, several international regulations and best practices can be applied to address the mental well-being of crew members.

- International Labour Organization (ILO): The ILO has established various conventions that indirectly address mental health by regulating work hours, workloads, rest periods, and the welfare of seafarers.
  - MLC 2006: As mentioned earlier, the *Maritime Labour Convention (MLC)* offers a comprehensive set of standards that include provisions for the health and safety of seafarers, indirectly covering aspects of mental health by ensuring adequate rest, appropriate working conditions, and access to medical services.
- IMO Guidelines on Mental Health: The *International Maritime Organization (IMO)* has published guidelines and recommendations for improving seafarer well-being, which can be incorporated into HR policies. These include measures for addressing mental health challenges, such as access to counseling and establishing support networks onboard.
- Seafarer Mental Health Guidelines: The *Maritime Labour Convention (MLC)* and *IMO* both support measures to provide access to mental health services and resources for seafarers, encouraging ship owners to establish mental health policies that are in line with these guidelines. These regulations push for the adoption of proactive wellness strategies.
- Wellness and Work-Life Balance: The *Sailor's Society* advocates for creating a work-life balance for seafarers, offering wellness initiatives and support programs, which can be incorporated into HR policies to ensure that seafarers' mental health is a priority.

CHAPTER 7:

Empowering Your Team – Training and Leadership

Equipping Leaders to Drive Change

Leadership in the maritime industry plays a pivotal role in shaping the work environment and supporting mental health initiatives onboard. By equipping leaders with the right skills and knowledge, they can effectively support their teams, particularly in recognising and addressing mental health issues. Leadership training should prioritise the following:

RECOGNISING EARLY SIGNS OF MENTAL DISTRESS

Leaders should be trained to identify early signs of mental distress in their team members, such as changes in behavior, mood swings, withdrawal from social interactions, and other signs of stress or anxiety. Early recognition allows leaders to intervene before issues escalate, ensuring that seafarers get the help they need.

- Mental Health First Aid: *Mental Health First Aid International* offers courses tailored to helping leaders and crew members recognise mental health issues and take appropriate action. They provide programs for seafarers and maritime leaders specifically designed for recognising and managing mental health concerns.
- Maritime-Specific Training: The *Seafarers Mental Health Awareness Program (SMHA)* offers mental health awareness training tailored for those working at sea. This program helps maritime leaders recognise the early signs of mental distress among their crew and provides practical advice for supporting mental health on board.

Offering Empathetic Support

Leaders should be trained in offering empathetic support to crew members experiencing mental health challenges. It is crucial for leaders to listen actively and respond with understanding, creating a supportive atmosphere where seafarers feel comfortable seeking help without fear of judgment.

- Empathy in Leadership: The *Sailor's Society* offers training programs aimed at fostering empathy among maritime leaders, teaching them how to support seafarers effectively in both personal and professional challenges.
- Supporting Mental Health at Sea: *The Mission to Seafarers* provides resources for leadership on offering mental health support to crew members. They offer a range of workshops and resources that focus on building empathetic leadership practices, which can be critical for reducing stigma and offering effective mental health support.

Creating an Open Culture of Discussion

Leaders should be empowered to create an open culture of discussion where mental health issues can be addressed without fear. Encouraging regular dialogue about mental health can reduce stigma and allow crew members to feel heard and supported.

- Building a Healthy Work Culture: The *International Maritime Organization (IMO)* has published guidelines on improving mental health and promoting mental wellness on board. This includes advice on how leaders can facilitate open communication and create an environment where mental health can be discussed openly.
- Training for Open Communication: The *International Transport Workers Federation (ITF)* offers programs for improving communication between crew members and leadership, specifically in relation to mental health. Their workshops focus on fostering an open and supportive environment for mental health discussions.

Encouraging Leaders to Model Healthy Behaviours

Leaders have the power to set the tone for their teams by modeling healthy behaviors, both mentally and physically. Encouraging leaders to maintain a healthy work-life balance and seek support when needed is critical in showing the crew that it's okay to prioritise mental health.

Promoting Work-Life Balance

Leaders should set an example by prioritising their own well-being, taking breaks, managing their workloads, and seeking professional support when necessary. This behavior sets the standard for the rest of the crew, encouraging them to take care of their mental health as well.

- Work-Life Balance for Seafarers: *Seafarers UK* offers resources on maintaining a healthy work-life balance for seafarers, with specific guidelines on how leadership can model these practices onboard.
- Mental Health Advocacy: *The International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC)* provides training for maritime leaders on maintaining work-life balance, which is an essential aspect of mental health advocacy in the workplace. This includes how to manage stress and recognise the signs of burnout in oneself and others.

Seeking Support and Leading by Example

Leaders should demonstrate that seeking mental health support is a responsible and necessary action, not a sign of weakness. By showing that seeking help is okay, they can encourage crew members to do the same.

- Leaders Seeking Support: *The Mission to Seafarers* offers a leadership program that focuses on how leaders can model healthy mental health behaviors by seeking support themselves and being open about their mental health journeys.
- Supporting Each Other: *The Sailor's Society* offers programs that teach leaders how to seek support, with a focus on building a culture of mutual respect and understanding onboard, which encourages other crew members to follow suit.

Additional Resources for Mental Health Training and Leadership Development

- Mental Health and Well-Being at Sea: The *World Maritime University (WMU)* offers training courses on maritime leadership, including specific sessions on supporting the mental health and well-being of crew members. These courses cover leadership techniques for creating a mentally healthy working environment and effectively handling mental health concerns.
- Leadership Training for the Maritime Industry: *Lloyd's Maritime Academy* provides leadership training that includes modules on mental health awareness, offering a framework for leaders to promote positive mental health and well-being in their teams.
- Global Leadership Training for Seafarers: *The International Shipping Federation (ISF)* offers resources and leadership training tailored to the maritime industry. This includes training on emotional intelligence and leadership, both of which are essential for creating a supportive mental health environment.
- Mental Health Training for Maritime Workers: *Maritime Health Services* offers mental health training, including specific programs for leadership teams to learn how to recognise and respond to mental health issues in the maritime context. Their training programs aim to equip maritime leaders with the tools they need to foster a mentally healthy workplace.

APPENDIX A:

Mental Health at Sea Policy template

The Mental Health at Sea Policy template is designed to provide a clear, structured approach for supporting the mental health and well-being of seafarers working onboard ships. It outlines the company's commitment to promoting mental health awareness, reducing stigma, and ensuring accessible support for crew members facing mental health challenges.

The policy defines responsibilities for management, leadership, and crew members, detailing mechanisms for confidential support, mental health first aid, and training programs. It emphasises the importance of creating an open and supportive work environment, where mental health concerns can be discussed without fear of judgment.

Additionally, the policy includes provisions for prevention, well-being initiatives, and an easy reporting process for mental health concerns. It also ensures confidentiality and encourages leaders to model healthy behaviours. Regular reviews and feedback ensure the policy remains effective and responsive to the needs of the crew.

The overall goal is to promote a mentally healthy onboard environment, where seafarers feel supported, respected, and equipped to manage their well-being.

[Company Name] – Mental Health at Sea Policy

Effective Date: [Insert Date]

Reviewed: [Insert Date]

Next Review: [Insert Date]

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy outlines [Company Name]'s commitment to supporting the mental health and well-being of all seafarers working onboard our vessels. The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework to promote mental health awareness, support crew members facing mental health challenges, and create a healthy, supportive work environment onboard.

The policy applies to all seafarers, officers, and staff working on board vessels.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To create a work environment where mental health is prioritised and stigma is reduced.
- To ensure all crew members have access to appropriate mental health support and resources.
- To equip leadership with the tools necessary to support mental health and well-being onboard.
- To provide clear guidelines on how to handle mental health-related issues on board.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- Management:
  - Ensure the implementation of this policy and the provision of necessary resources.
  - Promote an open and supportive environment for discussing mental health issues.
  - Provide regular training on mental health awareness and crisis management.
- Leadership (Officers and Senior Crew):
  - Be proactive in recognising early signs of mental distress among crew members.
  - Provide empathetic support and encourage open communication.
  - Set an example by promoting work-life balance and seeking support when necessary.
- Crew Members:
  - Be supportive of fellow colleagues and encourage an open dialogue about mental health.
  - Seek help when needed and participate in mental health awareness initiatives.
  - Respect confidentiality when mental health issues are discussed.

4. MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT MECHANISMS

- Confidential Support:
  All crew members will have access to confidential mental health support through designated onboard personnel or external resources, such as a mental health helpline or counseling services. These services are available 24/7 and will not affect career progression.
- Mental Health First Aiders:
  Each vessel will have trained Mental Health First Aiders who are available to provide immediate support to crew members in need. They will be trained to recognise signs of mental distress and provide appropriate support or referrals to specialists.
- External Support:
  Crew members will have access to mental health professionals via [Company's] contracted telehealth services. Details of these services will be provided during crew onboarding.

5. TRAINING AND AWARENESS

- Mental Health Awareness Training:
  All crew members, including leadership, will undergo regular mental health awareness training. This training will cover topics such as:
  - Identifying early signs of mental health issues.
  - Providing empathetic support and communication techniques.
  - Reducing stigma associated with mental health.
  - Promoting self-care and resilience.
- Leadership Development:
  Senior crew and officers will receive additional leadership training on managing mental health on board. This training will focus on:
  - Fostering an open culture of discussion about mental health.
  - Managing workloads to prevent burnout.
  - Offering flexible working arrangements when needed to support mental health.

6. PREVENTION AND WELL-BEING INITIATIVES

- Work-Life Balance:
  Leadership will encourage healthy work-life balance by ensuring proper rest and time off for all crew members. Clear guidelines on work hours and rest periods will be adhered to, and any deviations must be approved by management.
- Quiet Spaces and Rest Areas:
  Quiet, designated spaces for rest and relaxation will be made available to crew members to provide a peaceful environment away from the stress of work. These areas will be equipped with comfortable seating, reading materials, and a non-disturbance policy.
- Physical Activity and Recreation:
  Crew members are encouraged to participate in physical activities and use onboard recreational facilities (e.g., gyms, outdoor spaces). Physical health is closely linked to mental well-being, and these activities will be regularly promoted onboard.

7. PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

- Reporting Mechanism:
  Crew members experiencing mental health issues or concerns should report them to their immediate supervisor, a designated Mental Health First Aider, or via [Company's] confidential reporting system. All concerns will be handled discreetly and with sensitivity.
- Support and Action Plan:
  Upon receiving a report of mental health distress, management will assess the situation and offer immediate support. This may involve one-on-one counseling, workload adjustments, time off, or referral to external mental health professionals. An action plan will be developed in collaboration with the affected crew member.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY AND TRUST

- Confidentiality Commitment:
  All mental health discussions, reports, and records will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. Information regarding an individual's mental health will not be shared without their consent, except in cases where safety is at risk.
- Non-Punitive Approach:
  Seeking help for mental health issues will not result in any form of punishment or negative career impact. We encourage crew members to seek help early, and we provide a non-judgmental, supportive approach to mental health care.

9. EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- Policy Review:
  This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Feedback from crew members will be actively sought during these reviews to ensure that the mental health support mechanisms in place are meeting their needs.
- Continuous Improvement:
  The company will stay updated on best practices in mental health care at sea and integrate new approaches or services that can improve crew well-being. Regular surveys and feedback mechanisms will be used to assess the effectiveness of mental health initiatives.

10. CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information on mental health support onboard, please contact:

- [Designated Mental Health Officer/First Aider]

- Confidential Helpline: [Insert contact details]

- External Support: [Insert contact details for external services, e.g., counseling or telemedicine services]

CONCLUSION

[Company Name]

is committed to fostering a healthy, supportive environment for all our crew members. Mental health is just as important as physical health, and we are dedicated to ensuring that our seafarers have access to the resources, support, and understanding they need to thrive both onboard and in their personal lives.

SIGNATURES:

- Ship Master:

- Human Resources
  Officer:

- Date:

This policy template can be adapted and expanded according to the specific needs of your fleet, with further customisation based on the resources and regulations relevant to the company.