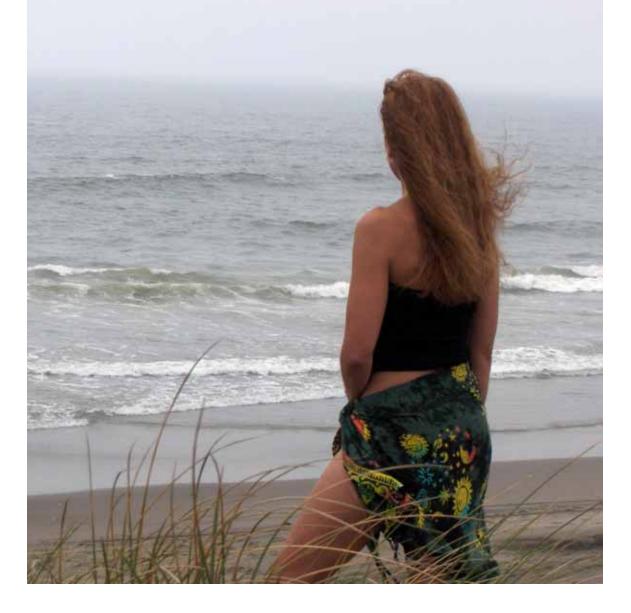
Dread Pirate's

IMPERIAL DREAD SEA SCROLLS VOL. III

Navigate Yourself to Success



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The Imperial Dread Sea Scrolls Volume III

Navigate yoursel f to success

By

The Dread Pirate



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CREATED & PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

These scrolls are dedicated to those who refuse to give up their dreams.

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AFT LOCKER

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The Imperial Dread Sea Scrolls Volume III

Navigate yoursel f to success

Introduction

I stand on the bow. The ship below my feet is still. Not a single sound comes from her rigging or sail. There is no wind. The ocean has turned to a wonderful dark tempest blue sheet of glass below the keel of the Destiny's Quest. All is calm, dead calm to be exact.

I take a deep breath in, my exhale turns visible. The night is calm, cold, and clouds obscure my stars. I see nothing. The night, is inky black. I close my eyes and listen. I hear nothing. Not the slap of the waves against the hull of my beloved ship, a buoy bell, nothing. I am shrouded in complete silence.

Like the silence in a sealed room, I hear only the rush of blood in my own ears. It almost overwhelms me. The pulse of my heart physically moves my entire body back and forth. It feels the like the push-pull of the shockwave of a cannon when fired. Yet, there is no sound. I stand alone, the sound of my thundering heartbeat in my head seems defining.

Then, from across the waters, comes a quake that shatters my defining silence. It silences the thunderous heartbeat in my head and ends my private sanctuary. The bay of a hound rolls over me like a bank of fog over a ship. The sound, low and slow, assaults my ears. I feel as though, somehow, I have been violated. My shroud of silence, now shattered, lay about me in shards. My heartbeat, my sanctuary, is stripped from my ears.

I ponder the moment while I shake off the feeling of complete isolation. My mind twists, I again close my eyes and listen to the sound of the hound. To me, the sound of the barking dog, its melodic, well-timed intervals, simulates the sound of my own heartbeat in my ears just moments before. I inhale, and realize how like the sound of this hound emulates the sound of life, the heartbeat, over time and space.

The sound of the barking dog shattered the tranquility of night, thoughts, the heartbeat in my ears, and yet, it is nothing more, than the sound of life. I am home...

TREASURE CHEST ONE

Look past the ships wheel, Look past the main mast, Look past the bow, Look past the white caps and gulls, Look past the horizon,

And tell me what you see...

But Dread, I have motivation...

Have you ever heard the phrase, "All dressed up and no-where to go?" Have you ever felt like it pertained to you in certain instances? Ever stand back and try to figure out why?

Sailors often get very charged up and highly motivated then move in the direction that is most convenient. They are after all, positively charged and highly motivated, they will be able to overcome all challenges right? Unfocused positively charged energy and all the misdirected motivation in the world will get you absolutely nowhere.

Sailors are famous for charting their course, taking readings constantly to make sure they stay on course, and plot their progress as they sail toward their next port of call. The best sailor in the fleet will never get to the port desired if he does not chart a course, take readings and chart his progress. A real no-brainer right?

Then why is it that so many positively charged highly motivated sailors of life get caught flat-footed and "all dressed up and nowhere to go?" Because several very simple and yet frequently beneficial principles for sailing the oceans of life are all too often overlooked. First, people do not set goals that they keep in focus. Second, they fail to maintain focus on their goals. And last but not least, they fail to set a course and track the process toward their goal.

Setting a goal is not enough. You must keep the goal in focus and know that the goal is attainable. Once you have begun on your journey, do not become distracted! Remain focused and move toward your goal at a steady and efficient pace no matter what the obstacles you perceive are in your way. Make sure to follow your predetermined course. Stay on course and record your progress daily. There is nothing more positive and motivating than seeing your goal get closer...and closer! When you get all dressed up make sure you have everything in place so that you can move with efficient focused motivation toward your goals. Their really is no sense in getting all dressed up and having no-where to go!

The Dread Pirate's Mantra

May I become at all times, both now and forever A protector for those without protection A guide for those who have lost their way A ship for those with oceans to cross A sanctuary for those in danger A lamp for those without light A place of refuge for those who lack shelter And a servant to all in need

Change of latitude can be a change in attitude.

I stood and stared into the depths of whatever self I could find. It seemed that I am older than the sea I sail and yet know her better than I know myself. I realized that all of the sudden, my life, my mind, my body, and my spirit needed a change. And yet, once again, I could not give you any definite change that needed to me made. I am like that. I know that something is wrong and things must change, but to put into words exactly what the problem is, I have not the slightest clue.

When I woke from my daydream, I found myself standing on the Quarterdeck standing directly in front of the ships wheel. My hands caress the well-worn handles of the ships wheel. I note that have a strong wind that fills my sails and am running before the wind nicely. I stare at the horizon and wonder why this course? Why this direction?

I check the pendants and flags to get a reading on the direction of the wind. It takes but a moment of contemplation. I realize that I must come first, for without me, I am nothing.

As if in a dream I find myself spinning the ships wheel. The sails goose wing and I find myself running downwind at top speed. My course is my own. My journey is that of my choosing. Only I can change my mind, my body, my spirit, or my life. I am both master and commander of my own Destiny.

This entry is dedicated to all those with ADD.

Change vs. Change.

Change is the one constant that we have in our lives. It is a continuous part of who we are and who we will become. Yet, it would seem by the actions of people around us that change can be our savior or our bane.

I bet a mug of rum, most of you have heard things like, "The change is so refreshing!", "What a welcome change.", or perhaps, "You are such a great change from all the others." Statements like these have filled our lives almost from the time of our being able to understand language spoken to us. The one interesting thing I have noted is at the beginning of most of my personal relationships with the opposite sex, I have heard the words, "You are such a refreshing change!" It would seem that change is a good thing.

Change is one of the few constants we face all throughout our life. We are immersed in a sea of continuous change. Our cosmos is in a state of flux, our world is ever-changing, the seasons are ever turning, just as our lives, our minds, and our bodies are evermore in transition.

Ironically enough, at the end of almost every one of my relationships with people in general (as well as personal relationships in specific) I have heard the following words. "You are not the same. You have changed." It would seem that change is a bane. I find it interesting that most of my relationships end, almost the exact same way that they begin, 'change' being the topic of conversation. In the beginning, the new and the fresh are adored, but, as time goes on, as a person continues to change, grow, and move forward, they find the same ability to 'change' that attracted them, a point of contention.

Change vs. Change. The sailor of life must not get caught up in mindless games and redundant people or situations. If you have heard the same old worn out lines, such as, "You have changed!", as a persons attempt to sail their own course. First, make sure that you have not changed for the worse. (Self-reflection

and a positive mental attitude should preclude this.) After you mentally confirm your positive change, thank them kindly, wink, and wish them fair winds and calm seas.

Change is what, and who, we are. We can no more stop change than we can push back the incoming tide with our bare hands. As sailors of life, we embrace change and continually move forward and upward in a positive direction. Some shipmates can't, or won't, sail through life in this manner. The best thing to do is to drop them off at the nearest port of call, and blow them a kiss as you...

Sail on... sail on!!!

Dreams stay with you...

I am not sure that many sailors of life realize that your dreams stay with you throughout your journey of life. My personal musings, dreams if you will, have been the fuel behind me for as long as I can remember. Dreams have become the energy I draw upon to move forward into the fray I call life. I am glad I have a lot of dreams. The more dreams I have, the more energy I can harness.

People have suggested that those who follow their dreams are on a fool's errand. I believe those who follow their dreams are on a personal journey most people can not begin to fully comprehend. This would explain why critics say that people who follow their dreams are foolish. Ever notice that people call what they do not understand "foolish"?

Land lovers settle for their lot in life. Sailors of life set and achieve goals that are outside the norm. Someone once said, "If you are going to dream, dream big!" I could not agree more. Dreams should have no parameters and no boundaries. Further, you must fully understand that if you can dream it, you can do it. If you think about your dream, no matter how far fetched, someone, somewhere is living that dream. That means someone has achieved the dream you are having today! So why then, can't you attain and live the same dream?

Dreams can be navigational charts. Our dreams can help tell us what we seek subconsciously. If you take time to understand your nocturnal musings you may well find that they are leg by leg navigational charts to what you deeply desire. Dreams can keep us on course.

Dreams can be hope. How many times have you heard of inner city programs that foster a Childs dreams and gives him/her hope for the future? Humanity understands the power of dreams. Hell sailor, the United States of America was built on the dreams of a few men! Walt Disney built the Magic Kingdom of his dreams. William Goldman wrote a story for his two daughters that turned into one of the most loved fairy tales in the world, Princess Bride! Dreams are hope. Dreams can be a source of motivation. Dreams can set a goal, they can also fire the desire to achieve that goal. Motivation comes from deep within. Somewhere close to the same place dreams emerge from. Motivation is the key when moving toward your dreams. Dreams are an essential source of inspiration!

For some people, dreams are the only thing that separates them from hopeless despair and not having any direction. Ask a homeless person what he dreams of. Ask yourself what you really dream of. Ask a person you hold in very high esteem what they dream of. Odds are, you will find that while different, everyone can dream of a better life. Dreams can be navigational charts, hope, and motivation. They can also be used to keep us on course. Dreams are a tool that can help us keep it real, keep it motivated and keep it positive.

Dream on... dream on!!!

Never ever give up...

Just don't do it. You must keep it real, you must keep it motivated and you have to keep it positive. It may take days, weeks, months, your even years, but you will attain your goal should you not give up hope in YOURSELF.

Actor Johnny Depp once said, "Keep moving forward, don't give a shit what anyone else thinks. Just keep moving forward." Even Captain Jack Sparrow agrees with the Dread Pirate's theory of motivation.

Don't let the negativity get under your skin. Do not let it permeate your mind and drive you down. Stand fast in your convictions. Maintain your moral and standards at all times, and never abandon ship when it comes to your ethics. Be yourself, be who you really are, be proud of you, and stand tall in yourself.

Give yourself the benefit of the doubt and the time to complete the journey of life. Be good to yourself, be kind to yourself, most of all, be gentle with yourself. Only you can take care of the most important sailor in your life, you.

If you keep the mindset, and act the part, soon, you will live your dreams.

No course charted...

People have often looked at me with surprise on their face when they find out that I am a certified locksmith, have two gold medals (and a bronze) in national competition, have beat the odds and have worked to hold a bachelors degree. They then find out I am a self published author with not one, but five, titles under my name and they shake their heads. "How can this be?" they muse. "Someone with a handicap is not supposed to be able to do all this!" they quip. For you see, I am ADHD & LD, I am not supposed to be able to do all of this.

Indeed! Along with my challenges, I was given a gift. Some people might consider what I consider a gift something other, but I believe that everything has a positive aspect depending on how you learn to use it. I have very little fear. I would not say that I am fearless. I would say however that I am not fearful in nature. Many people I know allow their own inner demons and fears to stymie their course to success. Being able to set aside those fears and look past the "what ifs" is a gift that has allowed me to excel in a variety of ways.

Shipmates have asked me, "Dread, I have no idea where I am going and have no idea how to get there. How can you chart a course when you have no clear goal?" Let me let you in on a little secret, I am 41 and I just figured out what I want to be when I grow up! Having a target goal is not necessary for success. You probably just reread that, and yes, it's true. Let's take the privateers of old as an example. They did not have any one clear goal when they set sail. They did not have written instructions to find, engage in combat, and then plunder the HMS Dipstick. They had nothing more than a Letter of Mark. This letter says nothing more than the ship and crew sailed the oceans under the seal of a certain monarch. They had nothing more and nothing less. Privateers had to make their own success happen!

You don't need a finely tuned set of goals and aspirations to be successful. Neptune knows I have no such written agenda! The one thing I have allowed myself is the ability to succeed. I have given myself a Letter of Mark, if you will, to sail about the world in search of treasure, booty and success! Like the pirates of old, I continue to sail forward looking for opportunity and fun on each new horizon. I allow myself a wide berth, because of my challenges, and make sure to seize the opportunities that arise. My current job is so far beneath me that I laugh, but I know I had to start swabbing the decks before I could move up. I took a chance and it *will* pay off. In the past, I took a correspondence course I could not fail and thus, became a locksmith. I stood shoulder to shoulder with hundreds of other competitors and won the match because I told myself I was just as good, if not better, than everyone there. It turned out that I was. I fought a battle to attain a four year college degree and won because I would not give up. My opponent? Me. I have self published my own works because I have always wanted to be an author. Therefore, I made it happen on my own terms.

I took the opportunities that presented themselves, and sailed ever forward, all the while having no clear course plotted. All I knew was that I had to keep moving forward and to myself, be true. These two principles have kept me alive and successful. Freebooters who sail forward toward truth and light will always find the treasure they seek. I tell you this from the heart, and because I know it is true.

If you do not have a distinct course, fear not! Sail ever forward into the fray of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and when an opportunity presents itself, *seize it!* If you chose to let it go at a later time that is your prerogative! Never lie to yourself or others. Stand fast in your beliefs and convictions no matter the persecution you may or may not face. If you stand in the rays of truth and light, no harm will ever come to you. This I know. Run before the wind with no fear and keep your eyes and ears open for your next opportunity. No plotted course needed sailor!

Staying motivated

Staying motivated is difficult in the best of times. One of the reasons for staying motivated is to achieve goals. In order to be motivated, you must expend energy. If you are sick, tired or even the slightest bit off of peak performance, expending energy to remain motivated to difficult. Keeping motivated in times of illness or stress is difficult but not impossible.

I have found there is more than one way to remain motivated. One very often overlooked form of motivation is being ever vigilant to new opportunities to advance. Just the fact you are seeking opportunity will prove beneficial. Some days, expending even one iota of energy toward positive motivation seems impossible. On certain days, even the most basic of motivational action feels impossible. Yet, the fact that I have kept my goals and aspirations within my minds eye has been beneficial during these periods of floatation.

There are times when I feel that I have become unmotivated or stagnant. During times of illness or circumstances-beyond-your-control, this may well be the case. I have come to the realization that this may be an inaccurate assessment of the situation. I must remember that an object in motion stays in motion. During my peak times I am able to expend copious energy moving in a highly motivated positive direction. When a time comes that I am unable to expend this energy on being positively charged and highly motivated, I have already placed "myself" in motion. In the good times I have set my course and filled my sails with wind. In the times when I am unable, for whatever reason, to generate my own motivation, I am, by default, floating in the direction I have originally set out upon!

Being highly motivated and positively charged is very important for many obvious reasons. We must be always on the look out for opportunity to help us achieve our goals and aspirations. When we are in need of some down time or some R&R we must not forget that we are always moving along our preset course because we are free floating in the direction we have preset. While we can't float adrift forever, it is just fine to let perpetual motion propel us toward the treasure we seek.

TREASURE CHEST TWO

Alone

There are times when I feel I sail alone. Often I look around, and I am alone, confirming the sentiment. Being a pirate has its advantages, and other times, it has its disadvantages. Being an outcast, being different, and being alone, are but a few of the challenges true sailors-of-life face.

At times, I have found myself feeling so alone that I believe I am but a hollow shell. Minutes, hours, days, and months have turned into years. At times, I contemplate if some curse has been placed upon my head. Other times, I muse if it is just the pirate way.

While on a long journey a short time ago, I came to what some may call a revelation, and others, a delusion. I come to believe that I am never alone. I feel that no matter where I am, I have two traveling companions, a total of three of us in all. I am sure that some other individual has placed this same theory in more eloquent words long before I, but, I shall give it a go nonetheless.

No matter where I stand, I have two traveling companions, Me and I. I come to look at the inner child within, as Me. I believe that the child we once were, comprised of innocence, simplicity, purity, and curiosity, are the core of every sailor. Thus, even though we grow, our core, our Me, stands beside us no matter what.

The companion 'I', if you will, is the person we aspire to be, or the sailor that we will be *tomorrow*. With each passing moment, we gain new insight and knowledge about life and our world. Thus, the 'I' is a friend that stands just before us, waiting to *be* us, on our journey though life.

The middle of our traveling entourage triad is myself. Myself is the sailor that I am at this very moment. I can look back and see the sailor I once was, (Me) and stare forward to the sailor I want to be, (I). Yet today, I am just myself. I am comprised off all that have been in the past as well as what has transpired in the present. I am myself.

So the next time you get to feeling like you sail alone, take a look about you. You may just find that you are not as alone as you thought. Take the hand of your inner child (Me) and reach out to the pirate you want to be (I) and you will find that, just perhaps, you may no longer sail solo.

Did you once know a very special child?

A beautiful, adventurous kind of child. The kind of child that is full of hopes and dreams and the world at their feet like a never-ending sandbox. Deep inside us we have an inner child. That child is who we were, who we are.

Today, I realized what is probably the most powerful self-revelation that I have had in years. Psychiatrists have done decades of research that tell us that how we learn to deal with the world by age six or so, is the way we will deal with the world evermore. I realize now, that as a child, I was fearful, unsure, and most of all felt powerless in the world around me. At that time my world was small, a mother, a father, and a kid sister. It matters not why I felt this way, all that matters is that I did feel these feelings and that the thoughts were well founded.

These feelings, helped mold the 'me' I am today. More importantly, how I felt inside helped to pattern the way I would deal with those feelings for a very long time. I would see the world through fearful, unsure and powerless eyes. No matter the odds I beat, or the new ground I broke each and every day, I could not shake those ill feelings. Part of me knew I was capable, knew I was sure, and knew I held the power... but there was always a deep feeling of, uncertainty.

For years I have struggled with feeling alone. I abandon my 'family' as much as they abandon me so many years ago. It was then that my odyssey of life began. People in my world came and went. All the while, even while in the arms of my lover, I felt deathly alone. I felt as though I was never good enough. My inner child stood alone, fearful, unsure and powerless. I forced the image out of forefront of my mind and in doing so I forced that lonely scared child to be even more alone.

Then the words of a friend helped me understand something that all my years of higher education had never touched on. I realized that the very special, adventurous, adorable child was never alone. Moreover, I realized that the child never would be alone again. For the first time in my life, instead of turning away from my inner child I reached out and took his hand. I knelt down and gave him a hug and whispered in his ear, "You will never be alone again. I am here and after all this time, so are you. Thank you for staying with me for so long. You are a strong person for having been alone so long. Now, we shall walk hand-in-hand evermore."

Have you held the hand of your inner child lately?

Dedicated to Joseph, with my sincerest thanks.

Do we have to belong...

to an organization, a family or a crew in order to live a full and complete life? If we are to believe Maslow, and the hierarchy of needs he gave us, we are. Maslow (1908-1970) tells us we must have food, shelter, and finally, love and belonging needs. What is a love and belonging need? My college professor put one word on the blackboard. Sex. I raised an eyebrow and let the man ramble on. I could understand the link between love and sex but I was not so sure about the link between belonging and sex. I parked the question in the "to be answered later" mental database and moved on.

Since that time, I have come to believe that perhaps love and belonging need is broader in scope. One of the best descriptions I read was, "In our day-to-day life, we exhibit these needs in our desires to marry, have a family, be a part of a community, a member of a church, a brother in the fraternity, a part of a gang or a bowling club. It is also a part of what we look for in a career." [1] Now the love and belonging need made complete sense to me outside the concept of the professor's original assignment of just, "sex."

The concept of love and belonging are always on my mind. It is a subject that is very personal to me. Having been told to move out at the age of 18 under duress has a lot to do with this. After I left home and joined the US Navy, I had very little communication with my family. To this day my family returns my correspondence and refuses to contact me. This is the reason for my personal quest to ascertain if a sailor truly needs to have an unlimited source of love and belonging on hand. This new input allowed me to understand that you could be part of a crew, or several crews, all the while, sex never need be involved. Then came the next question in logical progression. Is the need of love and belonging a valid requirement for a full and complete life? I noted the quagmire-like vortex upon up in front of me as soon as I thought the question. Would I not have to have a specific definition of both love and belonging as well as have definitive parameters for what constitutes a full and complete life well documented prior to the broaching of this question? The possible breath and girth of both the question and the answer could be nothing less than monumental.

Setting the specifics aside, might the question be answered on a very general basis I pondered. Then it hit me, the concept of love and belonging are always on my mind. Might this not be the answer? A human will dismiss the unimportant with little more than a shrug most of the time. But, given an important subject, the mind will continually turn over the possibilities and probabilities for what seems to be forever in an attempt to gain understanding. Might my genetic programming be telling me, by default, that being loved and belonging to a crew is very important by my continual abrupt and often intrusive thoughts upon the matter?

I refuse to casually dismiss my thoughts and ideas. The mind is an incredible supercomputer that is at our daily disposal. I believe that if the supercomputer between our ears continually runs a specific program, it is doing so for a very good reason. Thus, I must come to the conclusion that belonging to

an organization, a family or a crew goes a long way toward living a full and complete life.

[1] Abraham Maslow

Gift of myself

Last night while contemplating a book on CD, a thought, penetrated my thick skull. This does not happen often, but when it does, it seems like a revelation of magnanimous proportions. I sat in my dimly lit cabin, holding my cup of peppermint tea in my hands, and I realized for the first time in a long time that I have missed a very valid point in life.

Case in point, I have had more people sail through my life than most people have met. My fault? Perhaps. What I always felt was that I was robbed, cheated, as these often wonderful people, were 'taken' from my life. I felt a sense of loss and mourned their passing with massive voids left in my life where I felt they should have been. I felt as though I had been given a precious gift and then had it stolen away.

I have, almost always, concentrated on the void that was left behind. I wanted that space to be filled with something that was of at least equal or greater value. What I completely missed, and what I failed to understand, was that after each exodus, it was I that had been given a gift.

I had been given the gift of myself.

Land lovers need not know the business of a sailor...

This afternoon, I came to a very profound realization about certain people around me. These people believe that because I am a self-published author of ebooks, all I have in an on-line "life". I do not concur with their conclusion.

I don't talk to people about my personal life at work. I come to work to perform a function and then go home, nothing more and nothing less. I am not there to meet friends or play grab ass. I am there to earn a paycheck. I do not speak of my personal life with land lovers and because of this, they presume that I sit in front of a PC 24 hours a day and have "many on-line relationships" that fill up all my time.

At first I was taken aback. But, I then realized they don't know the depth of the Dread Pirate because I am a sailor of life that believes in the catch phrase, "loose lips sink ships!" They do not know what I do in my free time because I do not tell them. They are, evermore, clueless land lovers. Why should I be upset that they think I am Mr. WebGeek? That is the way I have set it up and that is the way it shall remain. The less they know about the real me, the better off they are.

I think sailors often get caught up in the fact that land lovers can't relate or have no clue. Quite frankly, this is ok as long as they are not part of your Crew. Most land lovers have no idea what is going on from day to day in their own life let alone anyone else's.

As sailors of life, we run before the wind and alongside the dolphins and porpoise! Is it any wonder they have no clue as to what we are doing at any given time of the day? They are land lovers, standing on the beach with their head in the sand!

If you feel misunderstood or unknowable, fear not. It is all the more confirmation that you are a true sailor of life. It is also a great way to confirm that you are far more complex than the average lover of land. Sailors are ever misunderstood and always unknowable! We live on the edge and sail ever forward toward our goals, aspirations and dreams!

Loneliness...

Being without the company of others, having been cut off from all others, not having contact with other human beings is thought to be the definition of alone, being lonely or feeling loneliness. I do not concur with this general explanation of the concept of loneliness. I believe that to be alone, you must add an additional component that most have left out. Few people today, even those who live in the farthest reaches of out world, are truly alone.

Have you ever felt completely alone and yet, stood within a crowd? Have you ever been to a family reunion and have been among strangers? Have you ever laid next to your lover and yet, been more alone than words can adequately describe? Some of you understand the direction I am heading. Others my not see that while you may be surrounded by a horde of friends and family, you can feel as though you are completely alone. The definition of being alone and feeling loneliness are for fully explored in the dictionary because they do allow the one single most volatile factor that must enter the equation; the mindset of an individual.

A family member can be completely without family standing in the middle of a family reunion. One can be alone, standing at the corner of Wall Street and Broadway at high noon. Being attached to another occurs *in* the mind (thus *within* the mindset) and not within the physical reality *per say.* Yes, there are some people that do not understand this concept. Therefore, they seek out places packed with people in order to feel some sense of fullness, albeit false. They are the type that can not stand silence. They must have the television going at all times in one part of the house with the radio playing at the other end. They must have something, even if it is just sound, to fill up their lives. Perhaps they replace human intervention with that of pets. (cats, dogs, etc.) Whatever their choice of substitution they continually replace the reality of a deep meaningful physical and mental relationship with substitutes they find available all around them.

There is an old joke, most of humanity never gets it, but the few who do understand the tale, have found treasure. The joke goes something like: "You know, I can never be alone, I have these three people underfoot all the time, always getting in my way, always mucking things up, they call themselves, me, myself, and I." And there you have it shipmate. The crux of the matter. The reality of our life is that we are never alone. The beauty of being aware, awake, and alive, is that we can understand that we have grown, and changed, over time, to be the person we are today. Further, the true sailor of life, understands that we continue to grow and change, thus, making us even more diverse and more intelligent than before.

In Previous entries, I explained how I view the three that are constantly underfoot. "Me" is the child of our youth. Wide eyed and full of wonder. The child we were in the past, is still with us. For never can we leave that child behind, because, the child is as much a part of us as we are of him/her. "Myself" is the individual we are today. The present and yet still changing self. We get up each morning and stare this individual in the face as we stare into the looking glass. "I" is the individual we aspire to be, our future self.

One can never truly be alone. Simply put, we are far more than we see *within* ourselves. Being alone is a mindset. We are not alone as long as we hold our self within high esteem and understand that no matter what happens, we shall always have the one person we can count on in the thick of it, at our side.

To fear loneliness is to fear the self. To be alone is to not accept the person we are. The answer is not to fill our lives with the falsity of false humanity and noise but to take a moment and understand that we are, and never can be, alone. We are, by design, never alone. It is the sailor of life that can understand this concept, who is the one who will dispense with the falsities of life and begin to expand his/her mind in a more productive, real, motivating, and positive direction.

Our own best friend...

The voyage of life is often not an easy journey. Skies are not always clear, nor are the winds always to your back. From my personal experience, sailing though the waters of life have been almost always anything but a 'day out on the

lake.' Being we are sailors of life means that we sail forward, no matter the conditions that we face.

This means that we may not always see eye to eye with the shipmates around us. As a matter of fact, I have found that if you stay true your course, and continually move forward in positive motivation... you will often upset and leave behind more crew than you gain. The reason? Land lovers like a fixed, unchanged surrounding. They don't like waves and they also do not like the winds of change. A sailor of life successfully navigates the waves, and uses the winds to propel them ever forward toward their destination.

It is said that a sailor has a girlfriend in every port. I would suggest a slight twist on this old saying. I believe that a sailor of life has a friend in every port and on every voyage. Being positive and motivated often sets sailors of life apart. These sailors feel like outcasts and pirates because they float a different course than those around them. I have come to understand that I have to be my own best friend on this journey of life. That way, I have a friend no matter the place, situation, or tide I find myself in.

We have no choice, if we choose to sail our own course, than to be our own best friend. As we sail ever forward toward our goals and aspirations, even our most steadfast shipmates may, by choice, debark on important journeys of their own. We can not begrudge a fellow sailor of life for catching the wind and starting off on a journey of their own! So rather than believe that we loose a shipmate, we just smile, wave, and wish them fair winds, because we know that we are our own best friend. While sailing the unpredictable tides and waves of life we have to have someone that will always be there for us. Why not make that sailor someone you know inside and out, and have known all your life?

Sorry?

Having one of those days, weeks or months where you feel as though you are a cockroach sitting on a turd, in a toilet bowel and someone is about to push the flush handle? Life, liberty and pursuit of happiness all have the stench of excrement and the world seems to have nowhere to go but into the sewer?

Ever hear the statement; "Ride the wave and see where it takes you?" Let the SOB flush the turd because it sure as hell can't get any worse shipmate! Ride the wave and see where the journey takes you.

Many sailors would rather sit in stagnant water, staring at the same shores day after day, month after month. To what gain? People fear change as sure as death. Not sure why, really ...they just do. One day I woke up and I said to myself, "Damn the man, I am sorry I was ever born." As I lay there, I thought about my past and present woes and obsessed on what nastiness the future had in store for me. I looked around my cabin. Taking a deep breath, my eyes fell on three medals that hang on my bulkhead. I had taken those medals from others who thought they were better than I. I glanced at my blue-nose certificate and wondered how many people have ever crossed the Artic circle. I realized that I was sleeping in a bed versus a burned out house or a friends' basement like I had when I was young. I looked around and realized I had acquired a roof over my head, one that I could call my own.

I thought back to all the shit I had waded through and how many sewers I had taken a flush through. And yet, I had just woken in a clean, soft, warm bed with the rest of my life sprawled out before me like a blank canvas. I had taken the short end of the stick and beat the hell out of fate with it. I then asked myself a question; "Why should I be sorry for being born?" Quite frankly, I could not think of a single *good* reason why I should not have been born. My life had not been silver spoon and crystal, but it had not been incarceration either. I could think of no real reason why I should not have been born.

Sure, there are times I think to myself, "Damn, if I was only born a hundred years into the future, maybe, just maybe, they would have a cure for what ails me. And the prejudice of having a handicap would not affect me so..." But the reality of it is that I am here, I am now, I am me, and I am nationwide. I threw the covers back and roared, "Carpe Diem!" as I rolled out of the rack into a brand new day.

The past is history. Today is an opportunity and tomorrow is an adventure that only we can navigate. We are all born for a reason. We may never understand the reason, we may never know the reason and we may never ponder the question of why am I here? I have yet to have been sorry of any gift that has been given to me. The bottom line, as far as I can tell, is what we do with the life we have been given.

Think for a moment with me...

have you ever looked around and asked, "Where has everyone gone? And yet been surrounded by people?" Have you ever sat in the middle of your home, looked around, have been completely alone and asked, "Where is everyone? Wasn't there supposed to be a significant other and a pack of screaming brats in this deal called life?" Have you ever stared at the ceiling at midnight and tried to ponder exactly what you have done that is so sinister that affords you an empty bed and few friends? Have looked around your home and noted a distinct lack of things such as family, friends, and all the hassle and headache that comes with? Have you ever opened your day planner and noted that if it were not for work and self-imposed projects you would have scant few entries in that leather bound journal? Have you looked into the eyes of a stranger and silently asked, "Why have you forsaken me?" Have you looked into the eyes of your family and asked the exact same question? Have you questioned yourself time and again in an effort to fully understand? Have you wondered if it is a self imposed exile or if you are victim to some sort of societal mutiny of sorts? Do the questions flow as the rivers down the sides of mountains, fast and furious? Are the answers as elusive as the Yeti?

Perhaps you have sat alone, staring out the window and felt as hollow as a mid-winter gourd? Suffer from a headache that is so incapacitating that all you desire is complete silence and pure darkness? Have you felt the muscles in your chest pull together in a feeling that can only be described as...alone? Have you been unable to look into your own eyes in a mirror because you have no more questions and no more answers?

I can assure you that I have felt all this and much, much more. Being alone in the world is not fun, easy or for the most part, *human*. I have no family, few friends and no lover. I have been sailing solo for a very long time. I have been cast aside, shunned and abandon by a myriad of people. Yet, as sure as the sun rises each morning, so do I. Each morning I face the unanswerable questions, and people of a world that are foreign to me. You are not as alone as you may think, for I sail right by your side, in our loneliness.

Being alone is very hard. Running before the wind with no safety net is not a good feeling. As a matter of fact, it is a very dangerous thing to do! Yet, I have found that no matter how many mistakes I have made, I have recovered successfully. If I can do this, so can you. You can be all alone and hide under a rock or you can board a sailing ship, weigh anchor, and sail forward in hopes that one day soon, you will hold the treasure in your hands that you...we...so desperately seek.

Climb aboard sailor. I can assure you that no matter how down or how lonely you have been/are I have sailed the course and survived. Positive motivation is within you. I know it is. You know it is. Stand next to the ships wheel. If the urge should strike, place both hands on the wheel and let us...

Sail on... sail on!!!

Who am I?

Today, I sit back and ponder. Don't get me wrong; I know my name. I know what I do for a living and what I do for enjoyment. I know where I have been, and for the most part, where I am going. I understand more about how I think and why I think the way I do. I, for the most part, even know why I think. I know as to what I aspire. I have even found the meaning of life. Yet, given all this, I am continually seeking to understand *who* I am.

Sometimes I wake up and wonder if I will be the same as yesterday or different in some way. Will I notice the difference? Will others? Yet will being the same or being different change who I am? Will a different hair style or new clothes change the "who" of me?

I have had little difficulty comprehending the thoughts, ideas or theories of man. Quite frankly I find the lot of them dull and hellishly boring. The mundane thoughts of mankind as a collective are sluggish and slovenly. Even the greatest and newest of ideas seem lackluster and dim-witted to me. The silliness of humanity has reached unremarkable proportions.

Yet, within this consortium of the known, mundane, sluggish and slovenly, there is a single question that sits so far *above* the pinnacle of this plateau of commonality that it is almost humorous. If the universe was in black and white, this singular question is in Technicolor. Who am I?

In the 41 years of my life, I have come father than I ever thought possible. I have defined my parameters and have continually broken those parameters to enter uncharted waters. I have continually raised the bar only to exceed my own expectations. Yet, all the while, I have not seemed to be able to glean the slightest inclination of who I am.

I believe that one of the greatest challenges a person can attempt is to try to answer the single most question that is by far one of the most difficult to answer: "Who am I"?

You do not sail alone...

Have you ever found yourself lamenting and feeling more alone than ever before? Might you sit and stare at absolutely nothing and yet see everything you desire but are unable to attain? Could you by chance feel a hole in your heart that pierces all the way through to the core of your soul? Is it possible that you may feel as hollow a freshly carved Halloween pumpkin? Fear not the darkness shipmate...

It has been over three and a half years ago that she walked out of my life. She was my best friend, my lover, my inspiration, my love, and most of all, she completed me. I can't say I didn't see it coming, but I will say I didn't want to see it end. Most of all, I did not want it to end the way it did. She had always said she wanted to sail free for awhile. I believe she needed to spread her wings and feel the wind in her air. When she left me and walked into the arms of another...and then lied about it, it all smacked of mutiny in the 3rd degree to the infinite power.

While I was struggling to pull the dagger from my back, she made a caviler retreat and has yet to look back. I envy her for that. I have had two dates since she left me. Both wenches had me not walking, but running in the opposite

direction. There is not a day that goes by that I do not think of her. There is not a night that I close my eyes that I do not dream of her.

While it might sound as though she is an obsession, I think she is more like six of the best years of my life stripped away and tossed aside. I think one of the hardest things for me to hear was that her referring to our time together as, "back in my college days." We were both in our mid-thirties! I am not sure what frustrates me more; not being mad at her or still loving her from afar. Yes shipmate, I have a confession; I still love just about every woman I have been with for any length of time. It is just the way I am. If I open up to you, and you to me, I believe it is a life-long bond that I treasure greater than the most precious gold. (Shhhh...don't tell one and a half eyed Jack or the First Mate, they will mutiny fer shur!)

The only exception to this is my ex-wife. She crossed far too many lines for there ever to be forgiveness. One of those lines was me being very sick and asking to go to the hospital, (If you know me, I would sever a limb and flat out refuse to go to the hospital! For me to ask was...monumental.) She flat out refused to take me. I had to get into the Dread mobile and drive myself to the emergency room. This infraction combined with other heartless behavior did nothing to foster endearment, if you get my meaning.

This spring has been a time of memories for me. We used to find gardens in bloom and I toke rolls and rolls of film of her. I am pretty sure she took all of those photos with her when she left. I have changed the look and feel of my quarters 150% and yet, still a sound, smell or fleeting memory will open a flood gate of feeling in me that leaves me frustrated, hollow and wanting.

I tell myself that I have done wonderful things since she left; self-published five ebooks, made my own Nautical Techno CD, built lots of great websites, sent more care packages to the troops in Afghanistan and Iraq than I can ever count, created a recording booth in my home and finally entered into the career field that I have been striving for. Yet, each of these colossal victories has been shared with no-one close to my heart. This makes them all seem like nothing more than another day on deck. Her smile, her acknowledgement helped me feel that what I did was worth more than badge sludge.

So, if you have ever found yourself lamenting and feeling more alone than ever before or sitting and staring at absolutely nothing and yet see everything you desire but are unable to attain, feeling a hole in your heart that pierces all the way through to the core of your soul or perhaps feeling as hollow as a carved Halloween pumpkin...fear not the darkness shipmate. You are not alone in your journey. I, the Dread Pirate, Cavalier extraordinaire, stand square to the bow on the main deck of the Destiny's Quest right beside you. Perhaps, just perhaps, on our quest to better understand why we feel the way we feel, we will both find the answers we seek.

Let us, sail on... sail on!!!

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Arrogance vs. Confidence

I was just about to sleep when it hit me like a marlin spike dropped from the ropes. All I once, I understood why. Eureka! After 20 years of thinking, I had done it. I was able to pull all the fibers of experience and all of the strands of observation into one cohesive bundle that spun itself nicely into an answer. As I lay in my rack, I realized that like so many things, the answer had been there all along. I was just looking at it from a different perspective.

Allow me to back up and at least give you a basic premise of what I am speaking of. Please pardon me; I get ahead of myself at times. I personally don't like arrogant people, but the world is full of them. Let me help you with the

definition of arrogance: overbearing pride evidenced by a superior manner toward inferiors. I have always wondered why some of the most arrogant people I have had the misfortune to come across always have a lover or mate. I have noted that rarely are these individuals without one or more long term "admirers". This observation led me to ask the question, "But why?!"

As my subconscious was scanning memories, placing stimuli and data into the Matrix, and compiling facts, something a friend said to her husband threw the process into overdrive. What were these mystical magical words? "I married you because you were confident." The word confidence has a much broader and longer definition. Confidence is freedom from doubt; belief in yourself and your abilities; a feeling of trust (in someone or something); a state of confident hopefulness that events will be favorable; and/or a trustful relationship. The words arrogance and confidence sound alike in a way but are very different in meaning. It was the like kind sound of the words that got me onto the right track. Could it really be that easy I pondered? My mind began to spin back though all of the experiences I could recall searching for confirmation of my premise turned theory.

My theory was simple. People unknowingly mistake arrogance for confidence. While I could only pull from my personal databank of experience, I went back through what I could recall and I became convinced that my observations were accurate. People do in fact make the mistake of equating arrogance for confidence. While the two concepts are completely different, the perceived outcome is quasi-alike. Think about just for a moment; the actions of an arrogant person may well mirror the actions of a confident person in any given situation. Yet, both people are acting in the same fashion for two completely different reasons. People were unable to ascertain the difference between and mistaking, for reasons beyond me, arrogance with confidence! This would explain why the arrogant people I come across have at least one, if not more, in their entourage.

I believe that most people have come to expect a certain type of behavior from a confident individual. Think about how an arrogant individual will act in a given situation then ponder how a confident person will act in the same setting, you might note they have very like-kind actions/reactions. Most people confuse arrogant behavior for confidence! Confidence can be humble while arrogance can not. Confidence can be freedom from doubt while arrogance can not. Confidence can be belief in yourself and your abilities while arrogance can not. Confidence can be a feeling of trust (in someone or something) while arrogance can not. Confidence can be a state of confident hopefulness that events will be favorable while arrogance can not. Confidence can be a trustful relationship while arrogance can not.

The next time you are looking at a potential lover or mate, take a moment to analyze the reasons behind the individual's behavior. Remind yourself that arrogance is a mask with little to offer but a grade façade. Remember the true litmus test is confidence can be humble while arrogance is not.

At the speed of life...

Facing the insanity of humanity is often the order of the day. As sailors of life, no corner of life, no area of the globe is off-limits. While some adventures are far more adventurous than others, every sailor must journey into the vast unknown, and make it known. That is when the insanity of humanity slides out of the fog like one of her Majesty's finest ships with guns blazing. What to do?

Give ten sailors a challenge, and you will watch a not so unique phenomenon. Five sailors will stand silent and frozen with blank looks on their faces. Two sailors will actually begin to think about the approaching challenge and consider various options for approaching the event, and the last three will immediately, start to verbally bounce ideas off each other. Inevitably, one of the verbal idea bouncers will bark an order, and all will heave to. It matters not if there is a better way. It matters not if the 'work' being performed is absolutely meaningless. Moreover, 90% of the group will have no idea as to why they are approaching the challenge in the manner they are or why they are caught up in a scene of insanity when they know not what the challenge really is!

Sailors of life are movers, shakers, motivated, and most of all, thinkers. Our world moves at the speed of life. At times it is very easy to get caught up in the madness that seems to be our ever-present nemesis. The old seadogs know that it is the top-notch sailor that works smarter and not harder. The sailor of life is a sailor that learns from mistakes, gains knowledge through experience, and sails forward armed with a new understanding of the world around him. While the insanity of humanity swirls all around, the sailor of life sails gently, yet with purpose, through its mists.

If there's someone who likes being the center of attention, it's a Dread Pirate. And why not? Those born as a sailor of life are giving, proud, energetic, confident -- the world can't help but look! That is as it should be, says the Pirate. They're firebrands with plenty of smolder in their eyes and a golden glow all around. Pirates are focused in their work and make excellent team leaders. The Pirate is also a risk-taker, someone who wants the world (for starters) and often gets it. Whether it's for a big project or a noble cause, getting the Pirate to jump on board is a shrewd move -- and one that's sure to attract attention! These folks can't help but be in the limelight, thanks to their larger-than-life personality. Hand-in-hand with this is an infectiously positive attitude. Colleagues are often quick to seek out the Pirate as a role model, since those signature qualities of leadership, truth and justice are ones that many seek. However, Pirates must be careful not to indulge in selfishness or manipulation or to fall into a state of complacency. And as for all that primping and posing, Pirate: enough is enough! Yes, life is a banquet, and you are the star, but do you really want to let yourself go that way? As much as the Pirate likes being in the spotlight, there really is plenty of room for a team to assemble all around. Is there a game to be won? A deal to close? The Pirate's team is the winning team, and a happy bunch of cats it is. The Dread Pirate's office is likely to be overwhelmed by the throne behind the desk. And you thought it was a chair? Ha! That desk, of course, is gleaming mahogany, as is the well-stocked liquor cabinet in the corner. Pirates are usually driven around in large ships, but will take the wheel of a schooner if they're at a start-up. Cutting a deal with Dread Pirate over lunch? It'd better be the Ritz! Pirates are well suited as managers, architects, inventors, teachers, athletes, and Emperors of the cosmos!

Entry adapted from astrology.com and their career profile of a 'Leo'

In the beginning there was Imagination...

"I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world." ~ Albert Einstein ~

While I can not vouch for the validity of this quote, (Either the accuracy of the quote or to whom the quote is given.) I find the words to be of infallible inspiration. I find the words to be incredibly inspiring because I see beyond the words, beyond the concept, and into the *possibility*. While I see all of this within the context of the quote, I see one shortcoming in which I hope to correct. Yes shipmate, only the Dread Pirate has the audacity to correct the great and noble Albert Einstein...

Imagination is more important than knowledge. Why? Imagination leads one to knowledge. Imagination has been the precursor from the first stone tools to the men who currently walk and work in space. Knowledge is useless if one does not have the power to imagine greater things. While Albert suggests that imagination encircles the world, I would bold suggest that imagination encircles infinity. While our race is in its infancy, imagination has fired each and every advance, both great and small.

The fault of this brilliant and motivating citation is that Einstein suggests that knowledge is limited. I believe this is to be a falsity. If we know that imagination is the motivation behind ideas, and ideas are then put into action and turned into knowledge (Even if the idea fails, we have gained knowledge!) we then have a true highly motivated and positive realization! Just because I can, I am going to expound on the words within Einstein's illustration using the above logical reference.

"I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination encircles infinity. Imagination is therefore unlimited. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Imagination is the basis for all knowledge. Therefore, if imagination if unlimited, it must follow, that so is knowledge."

> ~ Dread Pirate ~ Caviler Extraordinaire

Jumping the gun...

can cause nothing but grief and aggravation. One thing that most people confuse is "getting the jump" on life and "jumping the gun". Two different leaps, I assure you! One allows you to take advantage of life, liberty, and the pursuit of booty, and the other can, and most likely will, place you squarely in front of the firing squad. The discriminating sailor knows the difference.

Let us start with the fatal jumping action to spice things up. Jumping the gun does nothing but place you in front of the barrel and trying to outrun the bullet. You do not want to be on the business end of the muzzle nor will you outrun the bullet! All too often people think that if they "start first" they will "finish first". Nothing could be further from the truth. The object is it to take "pre-race" time to prepare, train, and practice for, the upcoming event. A smart sailor uses their time wisely in preparation of everything from going grocery shopping to career goals.

Getting the jump on life is something anyone can do safely and with absolute authority. Learning your strengths and weaknesses as well as learning your limitations is a vital part of being able to create realistic, attainable goals. Understanding who you are, what you can accomplish, and what you desire to accomplish, places you within proximity of the goal. To sail with no map and no compass is sheer folly. If you have a map, compass, a sextant and the stars, and know how to use them, you will be more likely to reach your destination! Getting a jump on life has nothing to do with getting a head start. It has everything to do with working smarter and not harder.

I have achieved every goal I have set for myself. That is not a boast, it is a fact. How have I done this? I have learned my limitations, studied my options, prepared my strategy, trained for the event, (be it education, exercise, etc.) and mentally/physically practiced the scenario hundreds of times *prior* to the execution of the journey. Yes, I have gotten discouraged. I have become disillusioned. I have even become frustrated beyond words, but... I never gave up the prep work for the upcoming journey. That is why I won a gold medal and two

bronze medals competing against thousands of other competitors at the National Shooting Matches. It is why I have self e-published my own ebooks. It is why I have my own "side business" that will continue to grow and mature. It is why I have the job I have coveted for over a decade. Taking the time to prepare in advance for the any leg of a journey, is the key to success.

Just a unique positively charged highly motivated sailor-of-life!

One of my readers writes, "I've always wanted to be one of the positive people. I try to see the good in people, but when it comes down to it, I'm just an ordinary person with a little more negative than most. It's ... not happy." While I am not surprised at this statement, let us take a look at it a bit closer. Perhaps, if we see this statement as it was really meant to be stated, we can fully understand the self-perception of this shipmate.

The first statement is a good start. You are a positively charged individual and you say so in a round about way. I always wanted to be one of the positive people too. As a matter of fact, I wanted to be one so much so, I became one. How did I do that? The same way you did, instead of using past or future tense in my sentences, I chose the positive present. I think what you meant to say was, "I am one of the positive people!" This places both the statement and the ideal firmly in the present and makes it a positive statement rather than a wish. Wishes and dreams are, and will always be, part of our arsenal of motivation. But the positive present is always the best way to chart your course!

The second sentence is a little rockier, but you can't trick an old seadog like me with such a thinly veiled ruse. "I try to see the good in people, but when it comes down to it, I'm just an ordinary person with a little more negative than most." Here we have two simple admissions of motivation. The first would be the word "try". When we replace this word of action in with the present tense; active, it becomes the word, "do". The second part of this sentence was one of those "crazy Ivan's" that you threw in to attempt to sneak something past the Dread Pirate. No chance shipmate. We all know we are inherently unique. No chance of "ordinary" being involved. Nice try, but "ordinary" does not read The Imperial Dread Sea Scrolls! The third part of this was sentence was an obvious typographical error. Just prior to suggesting that you are "a little more negative then most", you clearly state that you are both a positive sailor-of-life and you do see the good in people. How then, if you carry out both of these things, can you be a little more negative than most? This is logically a contradiction, thus, impossible. I make typos all the time. No biggie, just glad I caught it!!!

And your last sentence is right on the money! Being a sailor that sees the good in people and taking action to maintain this outlook makes you a unique positively charged highly motivated sailor-of-life! Happy never enters the

equation until we take action and put that positive motivation into our own sails as well as the sails of others. Your conclusion is absolutely correct!

I really enjoy getting such inspiring and enlightening comments from the sailors-of-life that cross the deck of the Destiny's Quest. It is very fine news indeed to know that so many shipmates are positively charged and highly motivated!

Sail on... sail on!!!

Master and Commander...

Will I be successful? Will everything turn out alright? Will my life be my own?

Quite frankly, it depends. What does it depend on you ask? It depends completely on you. What? The tides change and people mutiny and monkey's drop slippery banana peels you say?

You are correct; the world is full of variables. The tides change continually. People you thought you could count on, become slackers or worse. And yes, the <u>trunk monkey</u> will occasionally throw a banana peel in your face or under foot! Life is full of surprises and adventures, twists and very unexpected turns. The world around us, to include our life, is in a constant state of flux.

Thus, we must look at not the variables in our lives but the constants in our lives for stability. Many of the old sea salts will pipe up now and say something profoundly wise like, "There are only two things that are constant in life, taxes and death." And while I would be hard pressed to dispute them, I feel they have left out over very important constant...me. As arrogant as it may sound, if I am not alive, I am not living, therefore have no life. If I am alive, I am in the game and as long as I am in the game, I can win! The three constants in your life now become taxes, ME and death. This is very important because now we have added a weighted constant to the equation of your life. If there is one thing that will tip the scales in your favor, it's a weighted constant, shipmate!

So you can't stop the changing world around you? Who cares? You have the ability to adapt and overcome everything and anything that should arise. You have complete and total control over *the* single most important weighted constant in your life, you! Can you see how this concept is vitally important to your success? How many people have you heard say, "My life is out of control! I am out of control!" or "I just don't know what to do." Bottom line here is, if you can't

control you or if you don't know what to do in any given situation, there is not a lot anyone else can do to help you. Like it or not, you are master and commander of your own destiny. Therefore;

You ask: Will I be successful? I answer: You will be successful if you chose to be.

You ask: Will everything turn out alright? I answer: Everything will be alright of you make it alright.

You ask: Will my life be my own? I answer: Your life is your own only if you take possession of it.

My perception vs. your perception

After reading an email this afternoon, I had to take a moment to ponder a very unique question. What is more important, my perception of myself or others perception of me? I usually don't pit queries against each other because each has their own merit. However, I became intrigued as to what perception is more important.

At first I found myself in a circular argument. It went something like this; my perception of myself is very important because without knowledge of how I appear to others I have no idea as to how to act. However, how others perceive me is also very important because, ultimately, how people perceive me is how I am perceived by society en masse. Thus, one feeds the other in a continuing cycle.

I realized that I had no real parameters on the initial musing. When you have an open ended question, your answer can be very broad. I rethought my initial question. I narrowed the answer by expanding the question. What is more important *for my personal development and well being*, my perception of myself or others perception of me? I immediately felt more comfortable with the second, more refined question.

I realized almost immediately that the question now had only one realistic answer. Only *my perception* [of myself] can assist me in my personal development and well being.

One possible glitch in this response might be if I adopt others perception of me as my own. I believe that many people gather all the feedback they receive and adopt it as their own. While we all do this to some degree, we filter extreme data and delete it with prejudice. Temperance is a tool that serves us well. If we did not filter the incoming data our variance would be so far and wide that our perception would be skewed drastically. Thus, the perception of others must take a back seat to the perception of self based on the potential randomness of data gathered by us from others.

The perception of the self also has a very important role in playing how others perceive us. If we have a poor self image, others will pick up on this and identify us based on that perception. Therefore, one must have a highly motivated positive self-perception in order to foster positive perception by others. Further, if a person is working toward personal development and well being, they should have a very good understanding of who they are. Self-perception is one powerful tool we can use in our journey to understand who we are in relation to the world around us. As sailors of life, we need all of the tools we can get in order to navigate the cliffs of insanity!

Perfectly imperfect...

Accepting the imperfections in our life and using them to our advantage can be a primary source of motivation. You may not believe it, but imperfections and idiosyncrasies can be transformed, if acknowledged, into empowerment. This is a basic truth of life.

Albert Einstein failed his college entrance exam. Professors stated he was mentally slow! Yet his contributions to science are nothing less than astounding. Agatha Christie could not spell. She had to dictate her mysteries and have them transcribed. Walt Disney was fired from his first media job for, "lack of imagination."* When we read these truths, we shake our head in disbelief!!! Yet, each one of these things is true. Each one of these individuals took an imperfection, and turned it into empowerment. They did not allow their personal idiosyncrasy to stop them from achieving their goals and aspirations.

The self-acceptance of who and what we are, is paramount to the sailor of life. One thing that a sailor must do is understand his or her imperfections, accept those imperfections, and regardless of how horrid we think they are, move forward into the fray of life undaunted.

I am like Agatha, I can't spell. Further, my understanding of the English language is not anywhere it should be, yet, I claim to be a writer. I accept this flaw, and continue to write my motivational essays, no matter what others have said, and continue to say. I have been so bold as to publish my works even though they have not been professionally proofed or edited, because, if I waited for others, I would have not yet e-published my first work! I accept my flaws, understand them, and move forward. Have my efforts paid off? The super support of Team DPe (All quasi-paid shipmates), in addition to the kind comments, email, letters, post cards, and cards I receive each month, are testament to my efforts.

The acceptance of your imperfections, your flaws, and your unattainable ideals, is a key to ultimately achieving personal inner joy and relaxation. Each

day we are barraged by the media telling us we need to act perfect, look perfect, drive the perfect car, live in the perfect home... live the perfect life. Each day, rather than accepting the wonderful advances we have made as sailors of life, we aspire to goals that are set for us by others. As a sailor of life, the only goals that matter are our own. We need to accept our life, who and what we are, so that we can chart our course and seek the treasure we believe to be the most important.

* Source: Living Wabi Sabi by Taro Gold

Seeing the good

There is a character in the movie <u>Serenity</u> that sees the good in people, no matter how bad they seem to appear. (Serenity's predecessor series is <u>Firefly</u>. The series name, Firefly, is derived from the space ship the crew calls home, a 03 Firefly Class Transport Ship.) Not surprisingly, she is also the ships mechanic. In her eyes, the ship, one that is not quite as streamlined and beautiful as others, ranks as one of the most beautiful in the fleet. Have you ever met or known a person like this? Have you ever wanted to be a person like this?

I like to be around people like Kaylee. (played by the <u>actress Jewel</u> <u>Staite</u>). I like people who see the positive in life, liberty and the pursuit of booty. Being with an individual that is positively motivated and has a kind word is always a pleasure. Having a shipmate that sees the good rather than emphasizes the negative is always a boon. I don't think that anyone finds this type of sailor of life repulsive. If anything, we are attracted to this type of human being!

Breaking cycles, habits and negative relationships are one of the hardest things we as sailors face on our journey of life. Shipmate's who are negative or even neutral, are often no help in setting an example for us to break away from the whirlpool of self destructive behavior or the wharf of habit. Most of the time, negative family members, friends or acquaintances act more like an anchor than wind in our sails. Kaylee is not only a mechanic in the physical sense of the word, helping the ship she works on move through space with relative ease, but, she puts the wind into the sails of the entire crew with her gentle, positive and kind actions and comments.

I suggest that you might want to take a look around and see who is working on your "ship". I have been told by more than one shipmate that the person that they were working with, to better themselves or their situation, only made things exponentially worse! The first thing you have to ascertain is, does this individual see the good in everything around them? You will find that people who see the good, have a profound affect on all they come into contact with, just like Serenity's engineer Kaylee. If you can find one or more of these type individuals to sail with, you will find your journey easier, more enlightening, positive, and most of all, just a little more, "good".

We are only unlovable for a limited time...

This morning I had a discussion that I thought I would never have with another male human. Train people talk to each other. Let me explain. Land lovers are creatures of habit. People are also extremely boring. They will sit in the same seat, everyday, no matter how many empty seats are open about them. I am the type of fellow that will knowingly and willingly sit in your seat just to see the dirty look you give me when you arrive at "your" seat only to find it occupied! Yes, you are weird and I am no less odd.

One morning, at zero dark thirty, a kindly fellow and I engaged in conversation about a variety of topics. Being this chap was able to string two syllables together as well as speak in more than one sentence at a time, I was amazed. Most people can't speak coherently at 5am let alone hold an interesting conversation! Every so often, we indulge in polite conversation. This morning, we were talking about work and he said something that I have found to be a truth in all things, "You have to have the will to change before you can really implement change." See why I like this gent?

Now, I know just a little about this sailor-of-life. First of all he dresses clean, crisp and sharp. He is polite to a fault. His portfolio, to include a brilliant agricultural plan, is nothing less than genius. And the fact this he owns and operates his own business is a testament to his abilities and self-motivation. While his children are grown, he takes the time and effort to be in their lives even though he works long hard hours. I know a damn fine sailor when I meet one. This sailor is the type of person I respect.

While gliding along the rails this morning, he gently slipped me the facts of his current relationship status. Recently, a friend of his introduced him to the woman that has rocked his world. His buddy took the liberty of introducing him to a lovely lady. What is so special about that you query? Nothing of course, unless you consider the fact she stepped out of his television set and into his life! Much to this sailor's surprise, his friend's wife knew an actress who plays the part of a certain show he very much enjoys...

This southern gentleman (and I do mean that quite seriously. As most of you know I use the term very rarely!) treated this lady, (lets just call her Ms. Hollywood shall we?) to dancing, dinner and no doubt intelligent conversation, more than several times! He sat there, with a very bewildered look on his face, and quietly stated, he had no idea why Ms. Hollywood would be interested in him! Indeed!

He does not realize how his clean, crisp and sharp manner of dress looks to others. He does not understand that his polite mannerisms are a joy to be

around. Nor does he comprehend that is brilliant portfolio, is nothing less than insightful. Most certainly does he not fully realize how he caries himself. He does not understand how nice it is to have a person that enjoys the success of his children as well as involves himself in their life in a positive manner. This sailor does not see the person who he really is. He only sees the same guy in the mirror every morning. But then again, don't we all?

You made your bed, now lay in it.

You have chosen this path, walk it. You have created your own destiny. Do you like the world you have created? It's your life, do what you want!

Many shipmates hear these accusations or questions and become defensive or upset. They immediately feel as though they have done something wrong. I say to ye', if you have plotted your own course and sailed it, why be ashamed?

Land lovers seem to get all bent out of shape when you chart a course and make the tack. We all make decisions. Some of those decisions can be puzzled out for an extended period of time before they are executed and a few of them are made at the spur of the moment. We all make decisions based on our past experience, our current knowledge and instinct. We sail the course we think best at the time.

There are times our decisions lead us into places we would rather not go. Sometimes there is ample time to avoid unpleasantries, and other times they seem to pop up unbidden. Sailing the sea of life is like that. You never know what is just over the horizon; it may be an undefended treasure laden merchant barge or one of Her Majesties Royal sloops out hunting!

People have often said negative things like the aforementioned to me. When they do, I just smile. Why do I smile, because they took notice! I have made my own choices. I have plotted and sailed my own course. And I alone navigate my own journey of life. For right or wrong, for better or worse, for rich or richer, I shall ever make my rack, and lay in it, I have chosen a path, I will like the world I create and do what I want with my life and will sail it, and finally, I will create my own destiny.

Be accountable for everything you do. Take charge of your life. Stand fast in your decisions and make way for the new while ever moving forward. Smile when the land lovers notice your efforts and forever...

Boot to the head...

Ever have one of those days where when you turn right and someone pokes you in the eye? Turn left and someone knees you in the crotch? Do a 180 only to have someone mash your toes like grapes under a hammer? When you duck some kind soul finally puts out your lights with a boot to the head? What? You have not just had days like that...but weeks and possibly months? Have no worries shipmate, life is a mosh pit.

Sometimes it would seem that everyone we know, have known and will know in the future all come to together to make our life a living hell. Sweet fellows they are! There are those of us who learn early in life to duck, dodge and parry. Others however, seem to, no matter how hard we try not to, "take it on the chin." One might think this is a BAD thing. However, upon reflection, I have personally come to the conclusion that falling into the mosh pit of life is not exactly all terrible.

Before you load that pistol and aim it at my head, allow me a moment's reprieve to impart to you my thoughts on the matter. Life, as we know it, is full of extremes. We experience wonderful joys and then sometimes, end up looking up and out of a deep dark hole. This is what allows us to gain something called perspective. If you have never had something incredibly bad happen in your life by what gauge would you measure the good things that happen? If all you ever sailed were fair winds and following seas, how would you know what to do in a blow? Granted, no one likes a fore arm to the face but in contrast, how could we appreciate the soft, tender kiss of our lover without it?

It is within the extremes that we learn how to deal with everyone and everything. I lost a bunch of readers many years ago when I wrote, "Unless you have walked a mile in MY boots, you would never understand." The comment was in reference to combat(armed conflict), as well as having to stand fast and fight my way out of a group of individuals who believed it was OK to beat on me because I was different. One of my schoolmates asked me one time if I ever got tired of getting beat up. I looked him in the eye and said, "With every battle, I grow stronger." That was in middle school. I had no idea how prophetic those words would come to be. My life, from stem to stern has afforded me a wide variety of experiences that have given me an incredibly wide berth of perspective. I never gave up and I never gave in.

So the next time you take a shot to the gut and a boot to the head, just remember that it's all in perspective. What you learn through your life's experiences is what makes you the person you are. While a degree from the local college is nice, we, as sailors of life, ultimately, strive to receive a PHD from the University of Hard Knocks.

Falling together...

This day, I have had a collage of thoughts that have all fallen together to help me, perhaps, understand the person I have become. I would not say that I am more enlightened, but I would suggest that I am a step closer to solving a personal mystery. I do not like Harley Davidson motorcycles. That is not quite accurate, "do not like" is not quite a fitting term for my feelings. I would suggest a deep seeded loathing is far more accurate. The fact that every Harley Davidson owner I have met has been a self-centered, egotistical, self-important, moron has not helped the issue any. The year before last was the absolute worst. It was all I could do not to steer my vehicle into operators of these obnoxious overly loud status symbols. This past year however I began to attempt to seek out the root of this sinister loathing within my psyche.

Not less than a week ago, I found out that a past lover of seven years recently became a Hog owner. My first thought when I read the sentence was, "She is dead if she ever goes down." Being the sharp witted fellow I am, I caught this passing fancy with a mental net and held it fast. While discussing the occurrence of her getting a bike with the First Mate, my only true confidant, he made the statement, "Damn man, you *really* hate Harley Davidson's." This statement was also snared in the mental net which I had been holding up in order to unravel the mystery inside my head.

Being slightly incapacitated, I lay in bed staring up at a blank white ceiling. Music from my Rio Karma filled my ears, but, my mind floated what seemed light years away and I began to think upon the why of it. Why was my first thought of her getting a Harley attached too a negative connotation of, "She is dead if she ever goes down." Then, as if on cue, my mind spiraled back to a day that I have not forgotten, but not clearly remembered.

It was summer in Library, Pennsylvania. I was sitting on our front porch waiting for my father to return. I can remember the telephone ringing and my mother sounding odd. I listened intently through the open windows our small home. My step Grandfather was a Fire Chief of several volunteer stations and was a professional firefighter that worked at an airport. To this day I remember the line of "old" firefighting hats he had that lined the walls of his office and home. He was now, on the phone, speaking to my mother, a rare occurrence. He was one of the few people I knew that had a scanner at the time. He explained to me that he was able to listen to the surrounding area police and fire calls and be abreast of the situation, oftentimes prior, to the tones of his stations going off.

My father had not arrived at his home to visit his mother as scheduled and they thought little of it until my grandfather caught a call that aroused his suspicion. A motorcycle had been found, mangled, up against a dirt embankment, covered in blood. It was a Honda 350cc. The same make and model my father owned and operated. He immediately disembarked to the scene. The crash site was only a very short distance from his home. Upon his arrival, he gave a positive identification of the motorbike to police. Red, my stepgrandfather, was known by every firefighter and police officer for more than a few hundred nautical miles. He explained that he needed to know where his son-inlaw was. Needless to say, the long arm of the law extended quickly. Red was on the phone with my mother, via a radio to land line conversion they used to use in the old days. He was explaining to her that they had found my fathers motorcycle but not my father. By the tone of my mother's voice, I knew that she was petrified. Oddly enough, I was not scared. I was guite angry. I walked into the kitchen, opened the silverware drawer, grabbed a butter knife and headed out the door.

After awhile, my mother came to sit on the front steps. I was standing, leg spread, taking hold of the business end of the butter knife and throwing it into the ground. I had already gotten good enough to get it to "stick" on almost every throw. My mother looked at me and asked, "What are you doing?" With the utmost sincerity, I looked at her and said, "I am practicing to kill the man who killed father." I rarely called my father, "dad". We did not have that sort of relationship. She looked at me for a long while as I collected and threw the knife several more times. When she spoke, she told me that my father was not dead, but in a place called the critical care unit of a hospital. When my blank un-understanding stare froze her heart, she simply said, "He is alive, just... hurt."

I would not see my father for months. He would not permit his children to see him "in his condition." What I do know, is that I hated the man who had hurt him as a child. As an adult, to this day, I do not understand why my father never pressed charges. The man and his wife had been having a domestic dispute and the gents wife had taken her car and left. The man's "excuse" was that he was not paying attention because he was attempting to hurry to catch her. In his haste, and backing out of his drive at full speed, he almost took the life of my father.

So, this brings me where? As I lay in bed, staring at the blank white ceiling, I realized that I could still see the Honda 350 in our garage in pieces. I can remember specifically telling my father that I wanted him to teach me how to fix the bike so, "we could ride again."

I had gone on a long ride with him one time and done everything wrong. He told me that you had to lean into the corners. Being a fearless child I *leaned* into the corners and he had to pull over and tell me not to lean so much. Because of the small seat, I had to sit close to him. When he touched the brakes, the front of my far too heavy helmet would tap the back of his and it would infuriate him. I could tell by the way his stomach muscles would bunch up when it happened. I could tell by his body heat. I could tell by the way his helmet shook side to side ever so slightly.

Instead of repairing the motorbike (My father was a professional jet engine and airframe mechanic) chose to give the bike away to a complete stranger. I can remember the man coming with a pick-up truck and taking it away. As I lay in bed, I became angry once again and tasted the metallic taste of bitterness in my mouth. Then, all at once, as if I had been granted some small insight into my own psyche, I understood.

I was not angry at the overloud, obnoxious, status symbol motorcycles. I was not angry with their owners. I held no true angst against those that operated these machines *per say*. My anger and frustration was focused completely and totally on my father! I was angry at him because he had not fixed the motorcycle and gotten back on the bike and continued to ride. (A neighbor had even offered to *give* my father a classic BMW that he was, in his mind, to "old" to ride. My father had turned this quite generous offer down.) I realized that I was angry because I see my father as weak. I view his inability to overcome his fear of the accident and get back on the bike and ride as unacceptable. With the passing of each loud motorcycle, I am reminded of my father's weakness and it infuriated/s me. It is not the motorcycles or the operators that I loathe, but my father's inability to overcome his own fear and get back on a bike, any bike, and ride. For a man

Flat stomach, perfect hair and hard nipples.

If you are like me, you combat the frustrating habit of comparing yourself to others. Not a single day goes by that I don't catch myself trying to compare myself with another persons dress, anatomy, mannerisms or prosperity. While I am a 21st century pirate, it would seem that I succumb to some real 18th century ideals such as wanting to be like "royalty." What I try to remind myself each and every day is that I am better off today than most 18th century royalty!

As I have often penned, everything is relative. Success is relative, your dress and your mannerisms are relative, even your anatomy and prosperity is relative. Relative to what you ask? Relative to where you began. I will use myself as an example. At the age of 18, I was asked to leave the home of my parents. I left, quite literally with the clothes on my back and a few dollars cash in my pocket. I joined the US Navy and began my personal odyssey known as life. On my journey, I acquired two gold and one bronze medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary medal, an honorable discharge, a home I pay mortgage on, a baccalaureate degree, and have self published five ebooks.

Taking a moment to look at my starting point, we can see that I have moved quite a distance away from the broke teen wandering about the suburbs of Pittsburgh. The distance I traveled is further let's say, than the person whose parents paid for their college degree, purchased them a car for a graduation present and gave them a lump sum of cash for the down payment on their home. Thus, success is relative.

When you compare yourself to another, you cannot discount their starting point. We must, as educated sailors, look at everything from their genetic background to the path they have, and have not...walked. Case in point; does the lady with the perfect body who survived breast cancer not rate higher than the debutant who spent her trust fund on plastic surgery? I call this the relative factor.

So sailor, the next time you find yourself staring at the television wishing...think about where they came from. They came from a long line of thousands of people waiting to audition. The person you are looking at has been hand picked out of thousands of people to *play a role*. With the help of professional makeup artists (who work hours every morning to cover Angelina's copious tattoos), wardrobe professionals who make the clothes fit just so, lighting, CGI and other special effects...all just so they can play a role. Do you want to really compare yourself to humanity? Compare yourself not to those that play a role on a sound stage, but to real people. Take a shower, dress up in your best clothes, fix your hair and accessorize. Then take a walk through Wal-mart. Odds are you will find that you are not "as bad" as you thought you were.

While it's nice to have dreams, fantasy's can drag you off course. Never discount how far you have come and how far you plan to go. Make sure you remember where you came from. When you lose the starting point, your track chart becomes skewed. The next time you find yourself comparing yourself to another, stop for a moment and ponder just how far *you* have come. Then take a moment to look at the other person for whom and what they are. Take the relative factor into account.

Get over yourself and get motivated.

How often do we get in our own way? How many times will we foil our own best laid plans before we realize the saboteur is from within? When for the love of Neptune will we realize that we are our own best and worst enemy? The key to inner motivation and success is getting past our own inner demons and self doubts.

Sailors of life really are humorous. These buccaneers will plan ahead for ever possible contingency, set their course, weigh anchor and sail off into the sunset only to find their inner psyche shredding their confidence from the inside out. I have seen it time and again in the people around me. Let me give you an example.

One of my best friends in high school lost his father to suicide early in life. Mac was very mature for his age because of this. That is why we got along so well, mentally, we were on the same level. Mac was 6 foot plus his freshmen year in high school. He was academically and physically advanced. He was a quiet student that wrote wonderful lyrics and poetry but completely dominated on the basketball court. He played the game like he lived his life, fearlessly. Mac was 6 foot tall and bullet proof.

He was the first in class to have his own apartment. Technically I should say *our* apartment because it was half mine. We decided that living at home during the weekends and at certain other times was unacceptable. We went in half's on a nice little two bedroom apartment and used it as our own until about a month before graduation when Mac moved into a small house. Mac and I needed free space away from the insanity of our homes; we got over the let-be-pitifuladolescents and did what we had to do in order to find peace.

Mac joined the USMC at almost the same time I joined the US Navy. We trained together in order to prepare for boot camp. Mac would leave a few months before me for boot. Oddly enough, he was back home before I left for boot. When he got to boot camp he did not like what he saw. He was a free thinker and a musician. The Marines are really very welcoming to a guy with hair down to the center of his back and a propensity towards writing love songs! Why the hell Mac enlisted in the USMC, I will never know. What I do know is that he had the mental agility to use the system against itself and be discharged in one quarter of the time it took him to get in. Once Mac figured out that he did not want to be a Marine, he got over his dilemma and made the decision to get out. He did so quickly and efficiently.

You are probably already wondering why I chose Mac and these two examples to demonstrate some sabotaging their own life. You are probably programmed to look for a negative rather than the positive. I write differently, thus, you must look deeper into the given examples to understand. In the first example, both Mac's and my home life were not remotely logical, normal or rational. We could have very well sat back and played the angry young self destructive teen. Hell, if anyone I know to this day, Mac and I had the right to be that way. But we did not allow the insanity and frustration of our situation to sabotage the life we wanted to live. Undoubtedly we could have traveled a very different road, but we chose not to.

In the second example Mac joined the USMC and got out almost just as fast. At first I was disturbed by his "failure". But something he said to me about his experience has stayed with me to his day. He said, "From the very first morning, I knew I was not supposed to be there." A six year enlistment seemed to last far longer than I expected and I absolutely loved the US Navy. I thought about Mac's situation and realized that if I had disliked the military, my six year enlistment would have seemed to last forever and I would have been utterly and completely destroyed at the end of my contract. Had Mac really been a failure? In my opinion, not in the least! Any person who can assess a situation and know it

is not for them, then make adjustments to rectify their mistake, has done nothing but make their life more realistic and more positive.

Many times we can set ourselves up to fail. The trick is not to allow the failure to destroy our psyche and our lives. Use each experience to gather knowledge about yourself and the world around you. If you change your mind after setting course, don't make a big deal about it and act like it is the end of the world. Plot the new course, make the adjustment at the helm and sail on! People are into drama and they also want attention. Understand this; the only person in the cosmos that gives a marlinspike about you has to be yourself. No one cares if you make mistakes. Mistakes are expected. It's the bonehead that dwells on the mistake that is waiting his time and the time of everyone else. Do yourself a very big favor and get over yourself and get motivated.

I question, therefore, I think...

When you were a wee-sailor-of life your parents became very annoyed at your "question phase." They could not wait to sufficiently cull you into asking no more questions. Questions annoyed them. You became an annoyance by asking questions they probably did not have the answers to, or, more than likely, were not interested in finding the answers!

I am not going to venture into the known facts that land lovers are lazy. Nor dare I suggest that, on average, children are smarter than their parents...these are things you know. What you may have missed is that asking questions of yourself, your surroundings or your situation is perfectly acceptable.

When you formulate a question, which means that you have, at the very least, thought about the subject enough to know you need more information! People, who loathe questions, are often the same people who loathe knowledge. Sailors, who embrace questions, often embrace knowledge. While by no means is this an absolute, it is true relative to a wide variety of land lovers. Simply put, knowledge leads to questions, and questions lead to more knowledge.

In order to grow, we must ask questions. As a child we ask questions in order to expand our knowledge base. The parents who say, "I don't know." Or worse, "who cares" are stealthfully stunting the mental capacity of their child! As young adults, and adults, we learn that most land lovers know a little about a few things and some land lovers know a lot about nothing. It becomes our responsibility to gather data, formulate our own queries, and then research in order to find the answers to our questions. Of my collegiate endeavors I learned one very important thing, never memorize, you can always research the ever changing pool of data and find an answer to your question.

Our pool of potential data is ever changing and ever expanding. Just this past week a new crustacean was found in the oceans of earth. Kiwa hirsuta is so distinct from other species, researchers created a new family and genus! (The family was named Kiwaida, from Kiwa, the goddess of crustaceans in Polynesian

mythology.) Divers in the South Pacific say the sea monster resembles a lobster and is covered with silky blonde fur. What was once lost, is now found. What was once unknown, is now known. All because a diver asked, "What is the white looking thing on the ocean floor?"

Sailors-of-life ask questions continuously. They re-ask questions they may think they know the answers to because more knowledge may have been collected since the last time they sought an answer! Questions lead to answers. And answers shipmate, lead to treasure. Need I say more?

It's not just a ride...

This morning on the way into work, I hade a very interesting train ride. When I finally reached my destination and we had all detrained, some of the passengers were griping heavily about a few minor inconveniences. (Remember, a happy sailor is a bitching sailor!) As we all walked down the platform, I smiled and said loud enough for all those around me to hear; "The VRE, it's not just a train ride, it's an adventure!" I broke into a huge grin and when the other passengers looked at me, they all smiled and began to laugh.

I think one of the most important things we lose when we become an adult is our sense of adventure. A case in point was the other morning when an Army officer brought his seven year old to work with him for "bring a brat to work day." I am not sure if that is the official title...but the child was wide eyed and completely enthralled staring out the window staring at the white lights passing though the black of night. When I asked the officer the nest day how his song enjoyed the day trip be laughed and said, "He came with me for two things; the train ride and lunch at the chow hall!"

As far as I am concerned, the kid is a genius! I mean, how many of us go to work for the...well...work? When I realized that I too look forward to the "train ride" and "lunch" I knew that I had re-learned something I forgot as an adult; Life is one great big adventure and all we have to do is participate!

I think one of the key components is in the details. Land lovers are always talking about "the daily grind." If they began to look for the differences rather than the similarities, they would be shocked to find out that each day is very different than the last. While you may think it was "Monday all over again," if you took the time to really analyze the day, it would be almost 75% different than Monday!

Breaking out of that shell...

Seeing the similarities is good. But seeing the differences will pay you back in gold doubloons! Every land lover can tell you that the car that just passed them was a "blue car with a loud exhaust." Only the real adventurer can tell you that the car was a 1969 Ford Mustang, twin turbo with glass packs is painted non-factory electric blue! The difference is what makes just another ride home, an adventure.

Try to break out of the habit of seeing only the similarities in your life. Try your best to note the differences. Once you do this, you will find that the day-today grind seems a lot less taxing and a whole lot more fun. Life will automatically move from the boring and mundane to the exciting and ever changing! Make your life an adventure and not just another boring-ass day.

Advance notice is always nice.

However, it is a luxury that life rarely affords. I am, and always have been, amazed at shipmates who get all bent out of shape when life gets in the way of their best laid plans. While I have succumbed to the disappointing effects of Murphy's Law wreaking havoc on my itinerary. I just can't get all torked about events occurring at the speed of life.

Events, some of the most fun and gratifying in my life, have occurred at the spur of the moment. From joining the US Navy, diving in Puerto Rico, and dating one of the most beautiful people I have ever met... all began in the span of a decision made between heartbeats. I could break out the logbook and list multitudes of wonderful actions that have gone from 'flash inspiration' to reality all in the span on nanoseconds. This weblog is also testament to snap decisions.

Now don't get me wrong, there are certain events that should be thought about quite a bit prior to entering the actions. The consequences of some actions are worth the time to invest in their contemplation. Entering into a craps game with your last gold coin lets say, does not require as much thought as signing onto a Crew bound for the edge of the world!

Advance notice is great, when it happens. Some people can go with the flow and some cannot. Life is far too short to ponder the inconsequential bull. Being a sailor of life requires being able to think lightening fast on your feet. Further, it requires that you are able to live within the moment, rather than plan for a moment that may never happen. Life is to be lived at the speed of the heartbeat.

Strength or something else?

Yesterday, I was asked a question that has made me, once again, indulge in the process of thought. The spark that led to this entry was the query, "How can you be so strong?" At first, I thought only a little about the question. Then, little by little, just as the weevil gnaws at the ships stores of hardtack, it ate at me. Today, less than twenty-four hours later, I pen on the subject. This may be a long winded blow, so you might want to grab some beverage before the start of it.

Strength, just like everything else, is subjective. Ants are one of the strongest creatures on the planet and yet who gives them the respect they deserve? Most people see ants in their home and immediately break out the chemical insecticides or call the local exterminator do to their dirty work.

I was, at first, taken aback by the implied fact that the individual viewed me as strong. Of myself, I see an incredibly tenacious individual. I would not speak of myself as strong. Then I mused, as to what aspect of 'strong' did this person query? A person can be physically strong, spiritually strong, psychologically strong, or the multitude of combinations that exist between the three. Herein awaits my quandary. What aspect of strength did this person suggest I had? Or perhaps, is there another aspect of which I have not the mental capacity to yet comprehend? Being I am only, as of this moment conscious of the three aforementioned types of strength, let me attempt to examine each, in turn, as they pertain to me.

Physical strength. I would say that I am average to above average in physical strength. While at the current moment, thanks to a surgeon's scalpel, I am weak as a kitten, I speak in generalities. In my youth, on a white water rafting trip, the raft I was in, did a neat 3/4 flipped on a rock. I was the only one to "stay aboard". While the raft continued to float through the white water I began to pull people into the raft. Standing on the soft rubber bottom of the raft, I would see a mate, reach over with one hand and pull them out of the water and drop them into the raft. While we were only in our teens, I hung out with some pretty big guys. John, was over 200lbs. After I pulled everyone out of the soup and into the bowl and we came ashore. One of the girls I was rafting with gave me a very odd look and asked me, "Do you realize that you were pulling people into moving raft, in whitewater, single handedly, and I mean that literally?" I looked at her and said nothing.

I have been known to move boulders of pure granite by myself. How heavy these behemoths are is beyond me. But, I can tell you when I lifted one of them, and placed it into a metal and wood wheelbarrow (new) the machine crumpled as if under a colossal amount of weight. When my neighbor saw one of the huge piece of quartz gracing my garden he looked at me with an odd look on his face and asked, "Is that the rock from all the way back in the woods?" I nodded yes and smiled. His next question was, "How did you move it?" I simply responded, "I had to carry it over the logs, but I rolled it probably half the way." He looked at me as if I had lost my mind and walked away. People do that a lot. Look at me as though I have lost my mind and walk away, I mean.

I have been known to move things by myself that take more than a few men to move together. Thus, I would suggest that in the physical strength department, I would think, when I am physically un-sick, I am a tad over the average. Yet, I have met individuals that are far stronger than I, thus, once again, I must place myself above average, yet, not much higher. One the one to ten scale I would suggest a 6.5.

Spiritual Strength. Here is one that is most difficult for me to gauge myself. I claim no formal religion as my own. Yet, I believe, that I am, by my very nature, a spiritual individual. Being that I am not a card carrying member of any church, and have been told on many occasions that I am not the right religion... has me wondering. My first girlfriend told me she had to break up with me because I was the wrong religion. I was Roman Catholic and because I was not "saved" she could not date me. (Goes to show how much non-Catholics understand the sacrament of Confirmation!) I have since that time had "friends" part ways citing religious differences. I have also had other women in my life leave because of my spiritual beliefs. I don't imbibe, I don't smoke, I don't do drugs, I live life to the fullest and do my utmost at all times. I believe that there is an architect behind the great construct. Do I "fall back on religion" when times get rough? Nope, being born as raised Roman Catholic, I remember one very important concept I took from the Bible, "God helps those who help themselves." (Quote is given to Thomas Jefferson.) Thus, when the seas get rough, I don't look for others to help me. I look within myself, and carry on as best I can. I can't tell you where on the scale from one to ten that I would fall on the Spiritually Strong scale, I really don't.

Psychological strength. Within this arena there are so many sublevels it would take me all the server space that Xanga currently offers to fully explore the topic. Therefore, I shall attempt to only touch upon the greater rather than the lesser. First allow me a brief overview of what I believe about myself, then I shall delve into the how's and why's of it all.

I believe that I am psychologically stronger than the average individual. I would not say that I am the epitome of psychological strength, but, I believe myself to be well above average in this area only because of the challenges I face each and every day, as well as the life I have lived. On the one to ten scale, I would have to say that I am at the very least, an 8. (I do factor my IQ score in this figure as well.)

Remember that tenacity statement a while back? Here too, I chose to use the same statement. I am psychologically tenacious. I do not give up easily. (When I do however, the ax usually falls hard.) Now, if I may be so bold, allow me to expound. I have been diagnosed with Adult ADHD, (that means I have had it since I have been a child) dyslexia, and a mathematical disorder. Yeah, three strikes and you are out! Not. Being "disabled" can do one of two things to a person. It can either rip them apart, or it can make them stronger. I failed first grade. The teaching staff told my parents of my difficulties, but they never bothered to pass the information on to me. I was told by my parents, not quite

directly but most assuredly, that I would never amount to anything. I never had a girlfriend in high school because I held the esteemed position of janitor. Not many young well-to-do Catholic girls (I was forced to go to twelve years of Catholic school and work off my tuition as a janitor/groundskeeper the last four years.) want to date a janitor, no matter how dashing and debonair I was. (I was actually told that by a young lady. I had to go to the library and look up the word debonair!) Since that time, I have been married and divorced. (One of the happiest day of my life was when I left my ex-wife, yet according to the Catholic Church, I now live in sin, all very confusing.) I have been told by some of the women I have dated that; I am too fat (I currently weigh 230, at one time I was almost 300), too short (I am 5' 10"), too poor, change jobs too much, am unable to empathize, do not have good family lineage, (thus a safety net should things go south.) am too giving, care too much, trust in people too much, and a host of other wonderful complaints. (most directly correlating to how an individual with ADHD thinks, reasons, and lives.) This very weblog, thus my thoughts and feelings, have been the target of more than one stalker, and more than a few hundred morons who have done everything from create anti-Dread Pirate blogrings (I think the name of one is/was, People blocked by the Dread Pirate... or some such) to entire weblogs designed, created, and built, for the sole purpose of slandering yours truly. I have a "blocked and threw your ass into Davy Jones locker" list a mile long. (Thanks to John, CEO of Xanga, for listening to the users and creating this function and not putting a limit on the morons we can block.)

I dare say that I have gone through more rejection in my life than entire generations encounter. I have been rejected by family, society at large, (thus the pen name Dread Pirate) and the few women who saw me, at least at one time, as intriguing. I have honed the ability to say and do the exact wrong thing at the exact wrong time. So much so as a matter of fact, that I ought to write a book on it.*raises eyebrow* I have scaled the psychological walls of being homeless to that of the being the owner of my own business (with a great business partner bye the bye). I have a great berth of peaks and valleys most people never dare dream of.

In the psychological strength department I would offer that while I have adapted to rejection. I am in no way immune. I would suggest that my life's experiences have afforded me an understanding of the human psyche far better than most people. I would also propose that while most people see ADD as a handicap; I sit in the exact same row of seats as Mozart, Thomas Edison, and Einstein. (All had ADD) What some see as a handicap, I see as having the ability to *think outside the box* as some of the greatest minds on Earth have done.

Well now, where does all this leave us? "How can I be so strong?", was the question at hand. I believe that I am no stronger than the next sailor of life. I believe that I am a sailor that has taken my personal life's experiences and learned from them. While I am by no means anywhere near where I wanted to be at age 40, considering the fact, I, at one time, lived on the streets and suburbs streets of Pittsburgh, living in abandon houses and in friend's basements, I, on whole, have not done too badly. People told me that my domineer, my attitude, would change once I hit the age of 40. I understood what they were saying, but I was skeptical. I know now however, they were more than correct. My entire psyche has undergone a most unique change since my 40th birthday. If you had asked me if I was a strong sailor prior to that time I would have looked at you and smiled, winked, and gave a slight nod. Now I believe that while I have lived through more than most people can comprehend, I fully understand that being strong is relative and proportionate to the events that comprise ones life. Today, when asked if I am a strong individual, I look you in the eye, shrug, and say, "I am who and what I am. Nothing more and nothing less. While I am not the strongest man that ever lived, and am surely not the weakest. I know that I would want *me* as a friend and at my back when the shit hits the fan. I also know that people rarely see a diamond, even one they are holding in their hand."

TREASURE CHEST FIVE

Rainbow

Each of us, at one time or another, has seen a rainbow. By far, the most incredible rainbows I have ever seen were while I was off the coast of Norway in the North Sea. (Approximately 56° latitude and 8° longitude.) These rainbows spanned from the mountain shorelines of Norway far out to sea. Their colors were a vivid and stark contrast to the North Sea, and the bleak shoreline of Norway in January. To this day, I can see their brilliance in my minds eye. They are one of the few cherished memories I carry with me from the days I sailed the oceans clear, blue, and black.

Recently, I purchased a pair of sunglasses. Regular non-descript things they are. But they have a special power. They help me see rainbows. They help me see rainbows of the smallest size or ones that span across my view of the horizon. Funny thing is, when I take the sunglasses off, the rainbow that was just there, vanishes. When I put them back on, the rainbow reappears as if by magic. I have magical sunglasses that can help me see rainbows.

Not many people notice rainbows and such. They miss rainbows, the sent of fall, the smell of spring, and the sound of soft rain on leaves. Some sailors even miss the big stuff like how a sunset in fall can turn the forest leaves golden or how a slight offshore breeze can chop the seas into small whitecaps. We get all tangled in the rigging of life and are left so intent on our ascension to the top that we miss everything from the keel up.

Sometimes we, as sailors of life, need to take in the sights, sounds, scent and movement around us. We sail through the waters of life steady on course to our next goal or port of call, all the while never bothering to see the flying fish, the dolphins playing in the bow wake and even the occasional gull fishing the aft churn. It is as though some sailors wear blinders to help them focus on their goals and aspirations. Today I ask, why not replace your blinders with sunglasses that can help you see rainbows?

Butterfly flutter dance

I took a walk today. So what you reply, "You have been walking three to four hours a day so that you can fully recover from the operation you had. What makes today's walk any different?" Fine point shipmate, damn fine point. Today, I took a walk back into my special place. My normal walks are around the new subdivision that has been built to forward. Aft you see, is still, the wilds. Within those wilds run a small but dependable stream. Some people go to their room, some go to church, and some go shopping when they need to think. I go to my special place. It's the closest water I can find...

Sailors of life seek guidance or insight into themselves at various times. Today, I chose to brave the horseflies, the mosquitoes, the snakes, the briar bushes, and the spider webs to seek an answer to the question that plagued me. As I made my way back, after about thirty minutes, I came to my place of rest. A mammoth Oak had fallen across the stream and it looked to be a fine place to sit. As I sat upon the once grand Oak, I listened and watched. A Great Blue Heron found my presence unacceptable and took flight toward more favorable company. I sat, listened, watched, and waited.

After more than a few moments, I realized that I needed to walk further down the creek. I slowly stepped from rock to rock in the direction I needed to go. Then, my eyes fell upon what I had come for...

On the right bank of the creek my eye did spy: five butterflies all huddled together. The small gathering had not been disturbed by my presence. Four of the butterflies were of lovely yellow color with black dots and markings, each different and yet the same. One of the butterflies, the same size as the others, was black with white and blue markings. They all stood on the same large flat moist oak leaf that lay in the mud next to the waterline. Every once in a while one would open its wings to full span and the others would all flutter their wings in some sort of what seemed to be ritualistic dance. Then they would all become still. Another would chose to spread its wings and the others would then repeat the butterfly flutter dance. I slowly and gently backed away. I had received the answer I had come for.

Now, can you tell me the question I was seeking an answer too?

LIVE the life of a pirate ...

I do not speak of modern day pirates who operate modified speedboats and launch grenades at cruise ships and the like. Nor do I speak of those who hold a crew or their ship hostage until a ransom is paid by some corporate entity. What I speak of are those modern day sailors to sail the high seas of life and continue to fight the good fight.

Modern piracy is often thought of an underhanded corporate buy-out or a back ally stock purchase that had the legal status of 90% of all Mafia transactions. If we look back to our 18th century brethren, we see a group of men and women that joined together for the greater good. They created the first retirement plan and were the first, and probably the only group, to ever truly

adopt and practice democracy. Every hand had one vote and all votes were of equal value. The crew voted for their Captain. The Captain could be removed from office at any time by a vote from the crew. Sailors were paid in direct relation to the skill and knowledge they brought to deck. If a sailor was hurt, or worse, on the job or in combat, the crew had workers compensation for the seaman and/or his family.

Yes, for a bunch of 18th century wharf rats and scoundrels, they had some very advanced ideas of how things should be run. I find it very interesting that pirates were called uncivilized and hunted and killed with the standing governments sparing no expense. Is it not ironic that entire civilizations would later take their lifestyle, rules and guidelines and adopt them as their own?

Modern day piracy is all around us. We *LIVE* the life of a pirate of the 18th century today. We have a vote that counts. Most of us have a retirement plan; all of us have workers compensation if we should be hurt on the job. And we are compensated for our time according to the experience we bring to the table. Moreover, we are permitted to jump ship anytime and sail on toward more diverse waters should we choose to do so.

Our treasure may not be gold and jewels but we are not going to turn down a bonus or check from some side-work we have done. Combat is a tad less life threatening, but we go into combat with our adversaries each and every day. We climb out of the rack and make the journey to the place we call "work." If we make it without happenstance, we begin to perform our duties that we signed on for at the beginning of our journey. If, in the course of our duties, we perceive that some outside entity or group is about to hinder our progress, we rally the crew and wade into battle. We may have traded our pistol and saber in for a pen and PC, but they are just as deadly in the waters we sail.

Many shipmates have no idea they live the pirate lifestyle everyday of their lives. They are land lovers with blinders on. Those that understand the guidelines and understand how to navigate their ship and crew through the waters of life will ultimately find the treasure they seek. Odds are if you never thought of yourself as a pirate before, you do now!

Plan of the day...

Some humans have their lives scheduled down to the finest detail while others sail completely blind. I am not sure why this is. While I agree that spontaneity has its time and place, and an itinerary is most helpful when things get too hectic, what is the best way to live?

Sailors of today, all the way til back then, kept log books. Not only do they keep logs but they have watch schedules, and a routine that does not deviate greatly from day to day. Things for a true sailor are almost monotonous, but not quite. Spontaneity has a place. A place in bed and a place on weekends. If you

have the time and the cash, it can be all about vacations too. Day to day life is not always as spur-of-the-moment as most world like. However, there is something to be said for schedules. What? I have lost my marbles? Read on sailor.

Two very important lessons I learned in both the military and in college come to play here. These two foundations have served me well. First, you never memorize the answer. Answers change all the time. From the very basics of physics to your check book balance, everything is in a state of flux. Why memorize and fill your head full of crap when you can simply remember where to find the answer? One example of this was a beautiful sailorette I once dated. She bragged that she had never forgotten a phone number, she could rattle off the phone number of her childhood home, when she was seven! While a nice venue for coffee table discussion, what point did it really serve other then keep her hard drive full of useless crap?

The second thing I learned is that there are 24 hours in a day and if you sleep eight, you can pack 16 hours of action packed LIFE into every day. People ask me how I can continually turn out ebooks, music and spiffy looking web pages. My retort is quite simple. "How much could you do if you threw your television out the window and focused your efforts?" Some land lovers recoil in horror at the thought of not watching their allotted six hours of brain numbing cabelized stupidity a day. Other sailors of life nod and realize if they ax even half the time they spend in front of the idiot box on a focused task, they could realize their dreams and a whole lot more.

Spontaneity has a place in bed with your lover and/or during weekends. Schedules however will keep you on course and on productive. While I am not an advocate of scheduling your 16 hours a day down to the last moment, I do believe that unscheduled time is time overboard.

Time...

I sit here and glace at my watch and it is 9:15am DST (US). I know this is the exact time. Why do I know this is the exact time? I purchased a watch that synchronizes itself with the atomic clock at Ft. Collins. The atomic clock is the most accurate clock on this planet today. My watch synchronizes itself with the atomic clock four times a day making it one of the most accurate watches on the market today. Forget a Rolex, forget the gold and diamonds, give me the most accurate time possible. I am a sailor.

Sailors of old had to turn the hour glass on the hour, strike the bell, and hope that they had an accurate approximate time because without it, their calculations of longitude and latitude would be drastically skewed. A mariner, who had a false time, thus would by default have the wrong longitude and latitude charted. This was a very real danger. If your time and calculations were off, you guessed it, lost at sea.

Is time, in this day and age of self synchronizing watches as important to sailors of life as it was back when an hour glass was used to measure the passing of an hour? I would say not only is it more important, it is far more important. Our lives today are scheduled to the minute of the hour. "I will meet you at the coffee shop at 12:45 for lunch. I have an 11:30 meeting that will break at about 12:35 if I know old blabbermouth. That will give me ten minutes to get to the coffee shop." While the measure of time is manmade, it has come to play an integral part in all of our lives. J.R.R Tolkien wrote a series of books about one ring that would rule them all. I say that there is one thing that does rule each and every person alive, and dead, time. We wear it on our wrist, hang it on our walls, place it on the lower right hand corner of our computers, we are never far from a device that measures time. One thing that does rule us all, time.

It is said that the moment we are born the clock starts ticking toward our death. Once dead, we mark our passing with a date upon a head stone. We measure those we love by the amount of time they have been gone. We measure our work day, our play time, time to start dinner, even the time it takes to achieve orgasm. Time, it is all around us, it plays a role in our world from birth. Our birth certificate records the exact moment we exited our mother's womb. It continues with the conversation, "Are we there yet dad?" "In ten minutes we will be there" and ends with, "His (Her) time on earth was not wasted time..." Time, it is all around us, it is *in* us.

As sailors of life we use time to its fullest. We understand time is a measure and using that measure is proficiently will help us stay the course we have plotted. The more accurate the time we have, the closer we can hold to the course we have plotted. Time is not an enemy but a way we can measure our progression toward our goals. Time is our ally, our friend, and our means of achieving the end. Time is what we give ourselves to grow and become the people we chose to be. Using each moment of each day to its fullest is what the realistic, motivated and positive sailor of life does. Why? Because without the passing of time, there would be no way we know our present location or where we intend to be at day's end. Without time, we are all lost at sea.

Unpredictability

The unexpected is often frowned upon. Unpredictability in a person is more than likely stifled at an early age. This silencing of randomness can be the downfall of an entire person's *life*. Impulsiveness is a trait cherished for decades by corporations seeking innovative new ways to destroy the competition. Volatility has been sought out for as long as man has been alive to maintain superiority of his surroundings and his country. Twenty first century piracy is born of allowing the highly creative and often-unpredictable motivational juices flow through ones veins with wild abandon.

Predictability is the seed of boredom. Boredom leads to stagnation and stagnation leads to depression. Unpredictability however, is the seed to motivation, motivation is the core of creativity and creativity leads to expression! Random action, while chaotic in nature, is not as unpredictable as some people believe it to be. Variations of the compositor have led us to the almost microscopic processors that we find today in cell phones and PDA's. The unpredictability of the outcome of many experiments has lead to great advances in medicine and technology.

Being unpredictable, while often looked upon by your peers as most inappropriate, can be your salvation. While your shipmates are caught up with inside the box thinking and actions, you can set a most random course for a destination far beyond their wildest imaginations. While they become bogged down in the mundane of the daily grind, your unpredictability will set you free to work on a series of projects at the same time all the while perusing your primary goal or goals.

Twenty first century piracy is about becoming superior in every way you can. As a sailor of life you must allow the highly creative and often-unpredictable motivational juices to flow through your veins with untamed passion. It is only through unpredictability that you will be able to attain the predictability you so desire on your journey of life.

What do you seek?

Recently I have taken a step back and asked myself, "What do I truly seek in life?" Sure, I have asked myself this question hundreds, if not thousands of times, but...I find that each time, I find myself giving a different answer! It really is most confusing.

I think it has to do with the factors affecting us at the moment we ask ourselves this profound question. When I was just out of high school, had no real place to sleep at night, I wanted a surrogate family with a warm house, lots of food and love, and a soft warm bed with lots of pillows. When I was sailing the high seas and seemed to find every combat zone on the planet, I dreamed of the white sands and warm sun of the islands and R&R. When I was just out of the Navy, I wanted a good high paying job. After my divorce, I wanted to be left alone. When I was sicker than sick, I wanted nothing more than to feel human. When I was exhausted day after day, all I wanted was sleep. And through it all, I have, under it all, just wanted someone I could turn to and love just as much as she loved me. Beyond that I wanted a network of friends and family that would be there when it all fell to pieces. So many wants! In my mind, my wants, thus, my desires are what I seek. I seek different treasures at different times based on my life situations and my current needs. Like any pirate, I would love to find that buried chest of treasure; an old wooden chest filled with gold, gems and priceless artifacts. But, like a sailor of life, I seek many more things than untold wealth.

I believe that part of our voyage in life is to find the balance that keeps our ship afloat, our mind motivated and our body positively charged. What we seek must be within our wildest dreams, and yet, quasi-attainable. If you would have told me when I was walking the streets, at 40 years old I would have gold medals, five of my own books, a music CD, a home of my own, and at least another 40 years to go...I would have kicked you in the head.

Dream big, because even if you fall short, odds are, and you will have gotten further then you ever imagined. Seek, and you just may find!

Why ask why?

There are times when asking why is useless. Wasting time is the folly of most land lovers but not the dedicated sailor of life. We must be sailors of action and reaction must not get caught up in the detailed misguided reasons of others. It is easy to run into the shallow reef of others erroneous 'reasons why' and rip our hull to shreds while going nowhere.

There are questions in our lives that need to be asked and answered. The key word in that sentence is 'our'. All too often we become caught up in trying to figure out why others have acted toward us in a certain way and loose sight of our own personal goals and aspirations. In attempting to ascertain why a person thinks or acts in a specific manner we loose the ability to act and react in a focused manner. In reflecting on their actions we loose control of our own. We cannot put all our effort into understanding another's actions while we also put all our energy into managing my own affairs. Sailors of life must, at all times, remain focused, positively motivated, and realistic.

In attempting to ponder why a land lover has acted in a certain why we loose our ability to properly react to a given situation. The harsh reality is that it matters not why a person has acted the way they have, what matters is how we choose to react, or not react to a given situation. To get caught up in the underlying reason of why a person acted in a specific way is a waste of your precious time and energy. Remember, even if you understand why a person has acted in a specific way, it does not mean that you can change their actions!

Sailors of life are constantly active (proactive) or reacting to a continuous flow of stimuli from a wide variety of sources. The only reasons we need to understand behind actions taken, must be our own. Our time in port is too precious to be squandered on the useless speculation of why others act toward us in a specific manner. What is far more productive is focusing on our own personal reasons for acting or reacting the way we do. Our time and energy is limited so we must put it to the best use possible. And what cause is more important than you?

TRESURE CHEST SIX

Action and not reaction

It is the highly motivated sailor of life that fills a void with action and not reaction.

I am rather amazed at the people who refuse to take action when action is exactly what needs to be done. It matters not if it is their personal life or at the daily grind...why not take action when you know you are right?

I have the answer, it is locked tightly in a little box in each and every one of us, that box is held with great regard because it contains what we most dread, fear. Fear has stopped the most righteous from acting upon a problem and allowing it to grow like a cancer and spread all over the globe. I can think of several world wars, including the current world war, as well as cancer, HIV, divorce, racism; the list goes on forever, which might have been prevented from a single act. But a person or a group of people were too fearful to do what was right, therefore leading to the quagmire we call humanity.

Tell a lie and the world will believe you and throw money at you. Tell the truth and you are disbelieved and shunned. Dread's Law of ass-backwardness.

However, we are judged, in more ways than one, on what we do and how we do it. Damn the torpedoes and full speed ahead into the action of what must be done. Land lovers sit back and fear anything the moves. Sailors-or-life ride the swells of the ocean currents, move with the tide and are ever vigilant to the constantly changing conditions. Sailors of life use the fear to fire their mind and body into positively motivated action that will help not only themselves but others as well.

Some great once said, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." The worst you can do is make a mistake, walk the plank, swim to a tropic island and spend a few days on vacation until the next ship passes buy.

Carpe Diem.

Dreams can come true....

I have always been a 'preacher' of positive motivation. The one thing that I have always said was that through a positive mental attitude, anything is possible. I agree wholeheartedly by that theory. Recently however, I came to the conclusion that there is just a little more to it than that. While positive motivation is the key, the lock it turns is action. Action then leads you directly to success.

For years I have read motivational books, listened to motivational tapes and studied human psychology in an attempt to understand how to better motivate myself. You see, sailors by nature, would much rather sip rum, kick back, and tell sea stories than jump aboard a ship and sail forward into the fray of the unknown. What separates sailors from pirates is the positive motivation to act. Pirates have the key that turns the lock that leads through the hatch to success.

I can not tell you how many times I heard motivational speakers and authors say this in a myriad of ways. But, until very recently, did I fully comprehend the relationship between positive motivation, action, and success. Life is short. To damned short all things held equal. Once we start to figure out the rules of the game and get into the flow, our lives are half over. Granted, some pirates are fast learners and score early, but for the most part, most sailors don't acquire the pirate positive motivated mental state of mind until they have lost their sea legs. Thus, the crux of the lesson in four part harmony;

No matter the cost, attain a positive mental attitude.

Realize that your dreams and aspirations (your goals) are within your grasp.

Take action toward your goals.

Reap the benefits afforded you by your tenacity, dedication, positive mental attitude and action.

Getting what we want...

Getting what we want is never easy. It is never simple, nor does it come to us the way we expect it to. Getting that we want is exactly the thing that we most crave, and yet, in many instances are what we do not necessarily need. But my question is, what happens when the want crosses over into the boundaries of need and visa versa. Nothing is ever simple, let alone when we want a need and it remains unfulfilled.

In today's society of instant gratification, our wants are often skewed or blurred into our real needs. What we want, in our mind, becomes a need. It times, this need for a want becomes so overpowering we believe it to be a need. We fool ourselves into believing that something we do not need, is, in fact, something that we can not live without. Our reality becomes distorted because of our desires and not our needs.

I believe, that to have the ability to separate our wants from our needs is one of the most difficult things for a person to do. It is a very strong person who can see clearly the difference between a mere desire and a true need. In a society were we have become accustomed to more luxury than the kings of old, it is a most intricate mental challenge to define the lines of want and need.

It is the sailor of life that takes time to ponder upon the want that is worth his weight in gold. The sailor who can identify a desire and differentiate the difference between a want and the need is a sailor that has the ability to be in control of her is her life. Rarely is it when that a need can not be easily met. More often than not, it is the fool that becomes obsessed with a want that goes overboard in more ways than one. Herein again, does the guidance of keeping it real, keeping it motivated and keeping it positive come once again into play.

It is the sailor of life that can remain steadfast in the reality of his or her needs, remain motived and move ever forward in a positive manner that shall stay the course and not only have his needs met, but may, one day, have a few wants satisfied as well.

Haze gray and underway...

Sailors and land lovers alike argue that life is nothing more than a continuous series of reactions that are all tinted shades of gray. One decision made after another in order to counteract the onslaught of stimuli thrown at us. Given this premise, it is no wonder that so many people fail to successfully navigate the waters of life.

Notice I chose the word "reactions" in the first sentence. Most people float along and act only when circumstance forces them too. If you are constantly reacting to situations that you perceive are affecting you, you will never have time to take unique and distinct action separate and apart from your reactions. No wonder most people think that life is a series of reactions all shaded gray! They have placed themselves in a situation only to react to stimuli around them never to take action on their own.

Is everything really a shade of gray? I have found that this mindset has become a wonderful crutch for people who are afraid to make a commitment and sail forward into the fray. I am sure you have heard a family member, friend or colleague say, "Well, it was such a gray area, I took a shot in the dark." Do yourself a favor and distance yourself as quickly as possible from this kind of person. Their next shot in the dark may well place a round ball through your chest!

I have met so many sailors of life with absolutely no vision. I find this astounding. I can not comprehend life without a mission statement or a vision plan. No matter what you desire, create yourself a simple mission statement and then envision a plan of both strategy and achievement. A mission statement can be as simple as a one word sentence or as elaborate as a twenty page dissertation on the reasons behind your desire. The vision plan can be just as simple or complex as you desire. It can be a single sentence or a report that is housed on seven CD-ROM's. Most importantly, the vision must be firmly affixed within the minds eye. A mission and a vision are essential to any sailor of life that wants to be successful.

Captain Jack Sparrow, in the movie Pirates of the Caribbean, had a very simple mission and vision. You know exactly what his mission and vision were even if you watched only one fourth of the movie! He wanted to Captain his ship, The Black Pearl, no matter the odds.

His mission simple; Find the ship, The Black Pearl.

His vision; Stand behind the ships wheel and sail towards the unknown. The most inspiring thing is that he used everything, to include the most devastating of circumstances, to further his mission! If you doubt this claim, revisit the movie.

When fellow sailors of life see you, do they see a sailor with a mission and a vision or a sailor lost at sea? When family, friends, colleagues, or complete strangers see you, do they see a sailor that is a sailor of action or a sailor of reaction? Do you take each action, no matter how outlandish some may think it, to further your mission and vision? When all seems lost, do you close your eyes and see shades of gray or do you see the object of your vision?

There are only two types of sailors of life that sail the oceans of life. There are those that are part of the problem and then there are those that are part of the solution. If you want to be a sailor that ends the movie with a sailing off into the sunset with your ship, a chest of gold, or any other prize you desire, I highly suggest that you design your mission statement and create your vision plan *today*.

Some days

Some days we decide to remember. We remember yesterday, last week, last month, last year, last decade. While some of us reminisce on the negative, others muse over the positive. We remember the good times and the bad. We think fondly of bad people and believe uncaringly about good people. The reverse is also true. We sit back and recall history. Sometimes our own personal history, sometimes history that we have read or taken note of via some form of media, but we always like to sit back and think of the past.

It is said that we can learn from the past, and to discount the past is sheer folly. To this I laugh. We did not learn from World War I. How do I know? World War II. I believe, as a species, we have an inability to truly learn from past mistakes. How many billions of dollars have we thrown at cancer research? We are no closer to a cure today than we were twenty years ago. And yet, every year, humanity throws millions more at the dollar hungry program that has done nothing but give a few individuals fat wallets and a few people jobs. Each day, people purchase goods and services on credit cards knowing full well they are so deep in dept, the possibility they will ever make good on their credit is a joke, even to them. What has humanity really learned from the past?

I believe each generation learns little from the previous. And even less from those before it. Each generation has to face its demons and its own crisis. Singer/songwriter Pink sings a song that likens her family life as the Vietnam War. She belts out, "This is my Vietnam, I'm at war, Life keeps dropping bombs, And I keep score..." You know the gap between generations has widened to a monstrous distance when *anyone* equates their family life, no matter how dysfunctional, to that of combat. (I highly doubt that you will ever hear a combat vet write a song that equates their family life to combat.) Life does drop bombs, we don't keep score, and we keep sailing forward into the fray.

As Sailors of Life we learn as we go. We know each day will be a new challenge. We do not stop, we do not give up, we do not settle for what we know is a falsity, we self advocate, we move forward. The past was yesterday. Today is the day we will make a difference and tomorrow has not yet arrived, thus, null. Today is the most important day of our life. Today is the day you can make a life altering decision to become who and what we want.

While others are remembering, you have the opportunity of becoming! Take this day, this opportunity to set a goal, set your course, and set sail for what you desire. While others think of the past, think of the present. While others dream of the future, keep your feet firmly planted on deck and chart your course. Life does drop bombs, family life is dysfunctional, and humanity has collectively lost their minds. That just opens doors for you to get where you need to go faster, stay on course and ultimately, achieve each and every one of your goals!

Myth-conceptions about life

Other sailors said it would happen and I did not believe them. I rarely believe peoples myth-conceptions about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. When I turned forty, shipmates said that my life would change. When I pressed them for details, they said that my life would change because my attitude toward people would change. I scoffed. My attitude toward people has not changed in decades. My thoughts and feelings on people never changed because I never understood one damned person that I have ever met. I am unable to understand the reasons behind their actions or their inner motivations.

A few years ago it hit me. The reason why I can't figure people out is simple. People can't figure themselves out. Most people have never taken an hour of their time to reflect on why they do the things they do. I would venture to say most people have no idea what truly motivates them or why they act / react in the way they do. Given this premise, if the individual that I am trying to understand does not comprehend their inner workings, how then, am I to make sense of their actions?

I was looking at a billion-piece puzzle with no idea what it was supposed to look like once assembled. Further, the pieces had no definite shape or size, and were continually in a state of flux. And all the while, I was trying to assemble this monstrosity in an effort to understand!

I had always heard the phrase, "Lead, follow, or get lost." But found it rather vulgar and abusive. But recently, my mind cross referenced this saying with my belief that there are only two types of people, those that are part of the solution or those that are part of the problem and it clicked. I realized that for a very long time I have tried to help those who seem to be lost. I reached out and tried to help those that I thought could use a helping hand all the while allowing my course to be altered. I went out of my way to help people whose puzzle piece had yet to be formed!

At forty I am hitting my stride. I do not have time for those that are lost. If they are lost, it is time that they stay lost, follow or attempt to lead themselves to a better future. I have too much life to live, to many projects in motion and far to much fun to have, to waste my time with dead weight. It is not my job to figure them out. It is their job. It is not my job to put the puzzle together. It is my mission to make sure that I navigate my course so that I reach my goals all the while remaining an accountable positively motivated and sailor of life. And that shipmates, is exactly what I aim to do. Like we used to say in the navy when we had to navigate a crowded space, but slightly modified by yours truly, "Make a hole and follow or get lost!"

One day...

So many shipmates get caught up in the details they miss the point of the "can do!" Each day we have thoughts like, "My life should be different." Or perhaps, "If I would have only…" And then there is the ever present, "If I only had the time…" The sad part is this process is all a cop-out. You know it, and so do I.

One day I was walking the streets with no direction, no family, and no home. The next day, I was a professional sailor. One day I was single, the next day I was married. One day I was married, the next day I was single. One day I was working for the man, the next day I owned my own business. One day I decided to become a college student, one day I was a graduate of a four year college. One day I wrote motivational musings for myself, the next day I was a self published author. One day I wanted my own website, the next day I built it. One day I was working for the man and being abused and the next day, I became a US Government Service employee. One day I lived in a dump, the next I live in a beautiful home. One day I wanted to make my own music, the next day I released my first Techno CD. (Well, I will be in the very near future anyway!)

I had a personal revelation the other evening that was rather startling. When I was in college (I went back as an older student and graduated in May of 2002), I made a wish list of short term, medium term, and long term goals I had for myself. I found that list the other night. As I read the list, I realized that not only did I accomplish the short and medium term goals, but I had achieved ALL but two of the long term goals. I was astounded. Here I was thinking I had pissed away the last three years of my life, then all of the sudden I come to the understanding that I had been working my ass off in order to get exactly where I wanted to be!

As crazy as it sounds shipmate, it *really is* this simple. All the above, and so much more, have happened to me because I made them happen. Not because someone gave the opportunity. I took the initiative, mapped out and charted the course, kept slow positive progress forward and got the treasure I sought. If you think you can't get where you want to be in life, I am telling you right now that you are not fooling me. You are only deluding yourself. Make your life your own. Make your dreams, desires, and aspirations come true. No one is going to give you anything. You have to take what you want and give nothing back. And that sailor is a fact.

Plank a slacker...

I will bet you a doubloon that you know at least one person who has told you they will do something and when it comes time, they are nowhere to be found. It would seem that I have the distinct displeasure of having met more than a few. Upon contemplation, I can recall meeting more than a few... hundred.

For the lack of a better name, I will refer to the parties in question as slackers. Even though we could come up with multiple descriptors to use, I find the term slacker fits a wide variety of useless land lovers quite nicely. Thus, for the rest of the entry, the term; slacker, will be used when referring to those individuals who talk the talk but do not walk the walk.

It would seem that the more I sail the oceans of life, the more adept slackers have become. When I was a kid, others would make promises, cross their heart and hope to die, and then proceeded to forget all about the aforementioned undertaking. The sad part was they still lived to move forward in slackerdom. In high school most people who blew you off covered their former pledge with some outlandish drama that included beer, their girlfriend and if you were lucky, a parent or police officer. In later years, when graduated from the Drama Club, they began to realize the same old worn out stories would not fly. This was when they began to use new and improved excuses to cover their tracks. You know the kind. "But little Johnny had a fever of 160 degrees and was puking purple. We think he ate the cat food, some purple candy and caught that new bird flu thing going around." I am sure you know the type!

Recently I have noticed a higher level of slacker evolution. This person is not the type to commit to anything directly but will "ask" if you are doing something. This gives you the idea they might be doing the same thing. You know, like an open ended question. "Are you going to be at dinner on Friday night?" or maybe, "Are you going to *insert names here* get-together on Saturday evening?" When you answer in the affirmative, they say something clever like, "Great! I am glad to hear that." While the normal person may take this as, "Great! I did not want to be the only one to go, glad you are going so we can chat." This is really slacker talk for, "Great! I am glad you are going to HER place because I am going to be at HIS place instead!" Slackers, the older they get, the more devious they get. Slippery bastards.

I can't wait until I become ancient. Then slackers will start to come up with Alzheimer's excuses that are completely based in dementia. You know the sort, the kind that involves some outlandish drama that included beer, their live-in and a parent or police officer. Wait a minute that sounds familiar...

While slackers seem to flourish in our society it is their absolute counterpart that I find most invigorating. Have you met the type of person that makes plans, six out of the original nine cancel but they still hold course and deviate not? This is the type of sailor of life that I have come to respect. They do not deviate from their course because of slackers. They hold fast and carry out the plan of the day. They don't give a rat's ass about the slackers and keep up the positive mental attitude and outlook about the event.

The question is, what sort of sailor of life are you? Slacker or damn the slackers and full speed ahead type?

If you find yourself waking along with the many slackers I have met. This includes the telling of not so realistic sea stories, walking the line and not committing or just standing people up and not showing up, only later to come up with some lame ass fabrication involving a child and cat and a leave blower... Do me a favor, the plank is amidships, take a swan dive.

If you are a positively motived sailor of life that keeps the plan of the day no matter what... please know that your efforts are appreciated. Your efforts are appreciated by other highly motived sailors of life that realize there is more to life than living a lie. Know that it is sailors like you that keep the ships log book and the ship for that matter, moving forward into the fray!

Successful people are successful

There are times when the only way to get where you need to be is by taking a risk. Life is not a comfortable cruise on a full service yacht. It is more like passage to a new and exciting world on a work for your meals and rack ship that needs a lot of work! Some sailors never cease to amaze me. You can give them an idea, give them the arena in which to work and even hand them a lead or two and yet, they come up with a fistful of reasons why they can't do something. Sad really.

Risk is life therefore we must deduce that life is risk. Everything we do has a certain amount of risk assigned to it no matter how risk free the venture seems. Getting out of the rack in the morning and taking a shower as a certain amount of risk. The risk? We could Slip and fall on the slippery deck of the shower. Yet, because the risk factor is so low, and we have become used to taking the risk on a daily basis, we think nothing of performing this risk. Going to work or school each morning has a much higher risk factor or pain and grief. From car accidents to student rampages with daddy's pistol you face a far greater risk here. And yet, you dutifully, and sometimes gladly, enter this risk-laden environment willingly.

Then, when it comes time to take a risk and self-publish, follow a dream, ask that special someone out on a date or some other highly motivated act, you say that it is to 'risky'. Perspective shipmates. Life is all about putting risk into perspective. Some of the most successful people are successful because they were able to put risk into the proper perspective and take action. The Pirates of old are one excellent example. Sailors, out of work and out of pay, joined together to sail the seas actively looking for targets of opportunity. Was the risk involved in sailing the high seas any greater then carousing in the local tavern, getting drunk and possibly being thrown into jail by the local constable? The reward of sailing the seas in search of treasure was far greater than winning a game of knuckle bones at the local tavern and quite frankly, the amount of risk, by proportion, of staying on shore leave was just as 'dangerous' as putting out to sea.

Putting the risk factor into perspective in what it is all about. Begin to understand that the simple mundane tasks that you each day often has a far greater risk than ideas that will land you on treasure island shipmate! Take a moment to ponder the risk in your life that you already take. Then look at the risk involved in attaining the dreams and goals you desire. Place the risk into perspective and into proportion. Like the pirates of old, I think you will find that the reward far outweighs the risk.

The key...

A sailor of life need to know only one word, and understand its meaning, in order to begin his or her quest for treasure. Many would-be sailors fail to understand the very foundation of what makes a sailor of life. They sit back and ponder adventures, journeys and voyages, their minds full of wonderful experiences and incredible treasure. And yet, when the keel hits the brine they miss the boat.

What separated the pirates, corsairs, and buccaneers from the average sailors in the golden years of piracy? One word; *action*. When your average sailor was bitching and whining about going to sea their rogue counterparts clamored to set sail! They were men and women of action. The seagoing adventurers realized early on that those who sat dockside and dreamed of fame and fortune were just dreamers. Being sailors of life, they new it was useless to sit in a tavern and hope for the perfect voyage to present itself. Being sailors of action they set sail and made their dreams reality.

Life is not static. Life is an alteration by force. Alteration by force is action. Thus, we can conclude that a sailor of life is by definition, a sailor of action. To miss this vital foundation can be disastrous for a person who never understood that being a highly motivated individual takes action on their part! Action is the foundation, the very key if you will, to taking adventures, journeys, and voyages, which fill your treasure chest with wonderful experiences and incredible booty.

To quote a living legend...

I have come to believe that a person is who they believe they are. While this may sound a little off the bulkhead, it has been my experience that people who believe in themselves go further and do more than people who do not. While this may sound like an absolute no-brainer, there are a lot of sailors that do not fully understand this. We all know that action gets you what you want. Inaction gets you a seat at the bar pier side.

Negativity and a self-defeating attitude do nothing but foster a deep seeded feeling of inability and the lack of motivation. These combine to paralyze a sailor into inaction. Inaction gets does not move you forward, does not help you to aspire to goals and dreams, nor does it help you sail forward into the fray. Being positive with a motivated attitude affords you the energy to move forward. Movement is action. Action, no matter how "small" helps you see results. Results spur you forward and before you know it, your hold is full of treasure. But Dread, I am motivated, I use caffeine to wakeup, I use nicotine to stay up, and alcohol to wind down. I am balls to the wall 24/7 and I still can't manage to get what I need done. I am positive that I am a great person and highly motivated. Well shipmate, I don't know a single addict that has anything to show for all his/her best intentions in the long run. Know that the only thing you need to stay positive, motivated, and a sailor of action is the proper sober state of mind. You will not find what you seek in a drink, a smoke, snort, hit, or a swig. While you may find bliss for a short period of time, using drugs and/or alcohol will ultimately destroy your dreams, your aspirations, your attitude, you life, and you. Don't believe it do you? Take a stole through your local rehab facility and listen to the men and women tell you of broken lives, destroyed relationships, and shattered dreams. What ever you do, don't take my word for it, do your own research, draw your own conclusions.

If you believe in yourself, you have no need for drugs or alcohol. If you believe in your dreams and aspirations you know the only way to get them is to set a course, and let nothing deviate you from that track. Having a clear mind and a strong body is the key to success. All sailor's of life know this. I think DJ and radio personality Casey Kasem say's it best, "Keep your feet on the ground and keep reaching for the stars!"

TPF for success!

Shipmates say it all the time, "I just can't get ahead!" or "Why wasn't I picked?" or "I wish..." I used to have a buddy in the navy who, every time someone would start a sentence with, "I wish..." would hit them with, "Wish in one had and shit in the other and see which one fills up first!" Danny-boy had a way with words he did...

I don't want to year yer bellyachen! Every single person who has a bitch, gripe or complaint, I have come across has done very little to help themselves! People do not take the time to research and set their goals. Further, they fail to prepare for the journey on almost every level. From packing the correct gear to plotting their course on a chart, they fail in properly preparing for the event. Ultimately, in the end, most people lose focus of their original goal because they become distracted and change course.

The one thing that is very important to remember is Time, Preparation & Focus (TPF) equals success. While TPF is not the answer to solving all your problems, it is an equation that will help you move from your goal setting phase toward success. It has served me well over the years and if you take the initiative to implement TPF into your life, you will see a very distinct change in your journey.

Once you set your goal, take a moment to reflect on how much time you are willing to invest in the project. If you find yourself not able to "find" time to

spend on the journey, it will fail. The more time you invest toward your goal, the higher probability you have toward success. If you are serious about achieving your goal, make sure to set ample dedicated time aside to work toward your goal.

The one reason why the US Military is so incredibly efficient at warfare is they have learned to prepare to prepare (pre-prepare), prepare, and then double check their preparations. While this may sound nonsensical and overly redundant, it is what separates the posers from the hard core. Pre-prepare by creating your check lists, setting aside resources needed and drafting your step by step outline. Prepare by refining your checklists, making sure you have the needed resources at hand and proofing your outline. Then set everything in motion for a dry run to make sure everything falls smoothly into place. Double check your preparations after you have set them into motion. Make sure that you missed nothing on your checklists, your resources are being used to their best potential and your outline is in fact the correct course of action. You may need to move back and forth, more than once, into the various stages tweaking and refining as needed. This is acceptable. Just make sure to set plenty of time aside, in advance, for your efforts!

Time and preparation can be all for not if you don't have focus. The goal you set in your goal setting phase must be kept in focus at all times. Focus can not be shifted to another goal or set of goals. Ever notice how those single minded sailors always get what they are after? Ever notice they seemingly beat all odds? Ever wonder why? Simply but, it is because they don't lose focus of their goal. Keeping your eye on the treasure chest is the key.

If you commit time, execute proper preparation and maintain due focus on while on the journey to your goal, you will achieve success. Just remember TPF = success.

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Grouse Hunting

Recently, I looked back on my life and realized that I taught myself something very important when I was in my teens. This lesson if you will, has stayed with me for many years. One of the few "sports" I was allowed to participate in when I was a kid was <u>hunting</u>. My father approved of the sport whole-heartedly, thus, so did my mother. Pennsylvania had a <u>long small game season</u>. The license was cheap and so were the shotgun shells for my <u>12 gauge Ithaca featherlight</u>. Small game for me consisted of rabbit, squirrel, grouse and pheasant.

Damn the man I love <u>grouse hunting</u>. Just thinking about hunting thunder birds makes my heart beat faster. Nothing like being entangled in a vine thicket and having the sneaky little bastards explode all around your feet in a thunderous flurry of wings! All other game animals I happened upon while seeking the ever elusive grouse, were just bonus meat. I lived for grouse hunting. The strange thing was I brought home more game than my father, year after year. My father was an avid outdoorsman and a decent shot with rifle or shotgun. Yet, at the end of the year, I would secretly count the game "in bag" and come out far ahead of my old man consistently year after year.

Why? Two reasons, first, I walked my ass off. I was not afraid to walk up one mountain and down the other side in search of the thickest cover I could find. While my old man would walk *around* the cover lobbing acorns or sticks into its center, I would fight my way into the center of the cover even if I had to crawl! Yes, I have killed more than a few ruffed grouse while kneeling and even, on occasion, while in the prone position! I was not afraid of a few scratches. I also knew that you had to damn near step on a grouse before it would leave its cover. Walking around the thick stuff gave you a flush once in a while but not as often as if you mashed around inside of briar and vine thickets!

The second reason why I bagged more game than my old man was simply because I would take the shot. Put simply, I would pull the trigger. My father was the type of hunter that wanted the wide open shot where he was assured an open and clean shot at his query. Not me. I would see the flash of a rabbit or grouse between the smallest of openings in the wood and I would take the shot. Any shot was better then no shot. The shotgun was created for this very type of shooting. I used it to its full capacity when I hunted. I pushed the envelope as often as I could. I would shoot from the center of the ticket out. Sometimes I would have only a flashing blur and the thunderous sound of a grouse to tell me where they were headed. I would take the shot with the least amount of data possible. I would miss a few. But most of the time, I would find myself picking up a bird off the forest floor. I killed more birds than hunters with dogs. I understood early on that if you did not shoot, you did not bring home supper.

I have used this mindset all through my life albeit slightly modified. People sail through life just like my father, waiting for that nice clean open shot at their query. Life rarely offers you something so easy. Most people, like my father, live a life of mediocrity and frustration. I ask, why not pull the trigger, seize the moment if you will, and take the chance? If you miss, you miss. But, if you hit, bingo, chow time baby! All too often we wait for the shot. A once in a lifetime shot is made. You have to do all you can, walk into thickets or walk up and over mountains, in order set up the perfect shot. It takes work, perseverance and the ability to take action when most people are only willing to beat around the bush rather than jump into the center of it. Work for what you want. But most of all, even if you only get a glimpse of it, make sure you pull the trigger!

Walking about in distraction...

I believe that our world is so complex, so harried, so *insane*, that it is very difficult for shipmates to take stock of a situation. Sorting out the details of a

given situation is often the hardest thing to do. Finding the core issue is almost impossible for a land lover in today's world.

The constant barrage of news stories, office politics, family issues as well as personal challenges, taxes our faculties to the breaking point. Periodicals, news print, television, radio, and the internet all dump ship loads of stimuli into our worlds every day. Then we have to spend more than a few hours at the daily grind putting up with a variety of senseless stupidity. All the while, we get to go home and deal with extended family, immediate family as well as spouses and children! Finally, add our personal issues into the soup and what we have is grade A, hand tossed, psychedelic confusion that numbs, boggles and dims the mind.

By lunch we have difficulty deciding if we want to super size, by dinner we are asking, "Super size what?" Is it any wonder that most people are truly unable to sort through the idiosyncrasies of a difficult situation? This explains why most land lovers dive for the, "I am staying out of it." hatch at the first sign of having to think upon a situation. Land lovers will take the easy way out every time. Of course they come up with a myriad of rationale behind their 'opt out' decision, but, the bottom line is that they never come close to understanding the basics of the situation.

This is where the sailors of life stand apart from their land loving cousins. A sailor of life will think upon the subject while riding the waves. With practiced precision a sailor breaks down the various denominators to the least common factors. Then, and only then, does the sailor of life make a decision on what action he or she should take. While land lovers have opted out and taken the route of inaction long ago, a sailor of life stays motivated, realistic and positive in an effort to sail forward into the ever challenging journey we call life.

The best thing to keep in mind at all times is that there are only two kinds of people in the world; those that are part of the solution and those that are part of the problem.

TREASURE CHEST SEVEN

Chronic condition...

Making the best of a situation is probably one of the hardest things to do. Often, when the weather gets nasty, so does the crew. Fair weather sailors if you will. They are all peachy and in high spirits when the sun is shining on them. This type of shipmate is just fine as long as he or she does not see a cloud in the sky. But let it cloud up, let the waters chop and they are the first ones to make for port. That may be fine for some, but if you are a sailor of life, you know that you will never get far sitting in safe harbor waiting for potential weather to pass you over.

When faced with a diverse situation, the hardest thing to do is make the best of it and ride it out. I have found, the greatest lessons I have learned, were not attained while all was calm and peaceful. I gleaned these valuable bits of treasure when everything seemed to collapse and the world around me seemed chaotic beyond my personal comprehension. It was within the insanity of life that I realized my own potential, or more importantly, that I had unlimited potential if I keep my attitude positive. It was not the situation that caused me harm, but my perception of the situation that had the potential to cause me great distress. If I let my perception of a situation slip into a negative perception I was surely doomed for hurt, discontent and frustration. What I realized was that if I sought out the good, positive and opportunity in the situation that I was able to gain valuable knowledge about my surroundings and myself.

It is easy to see the negative in everything. It is even easier to weigh anchor, jump ship and say it was a piss poor day for sailing. Letting negativity encompass you is the absolutely easiest thing to do. I have yet to meet an experienced sailor that has attained dreams, and found booty, that has an unmotivated, negative outlook. For the highly motivated, positively charged sailor of life, this is not an option. Is it harder to be highly motivated and positive? You can bet your last piece of eight it is. Why bother? Because on the journey of life the sailors who excel, attain goals, and in the end, find the treasure they seek, suffer from a condition called positive motivation.

Calm weather never made an experienced sailor.

Every wonder why you are so tired?

There are days that I fall into a captain's chair and find that I am beyond exhausted. I think of those folk who are not American and score something insane, like six weeks of vacation a year, and I seriously ponder moving! I find myself both mentally and physically drained of all energy as I stare at nothing off in the distance. I ask myself, "Why the hell am I so tired?"

I think when I get so involved in what I am going I forget to eat, sleep and yes, sometime I even forget to breathe! If I take a look back on my busy day I realize that most days have been at least 16 hours in duration. Being of the cavalier sort I will be brazen and say that I travel further before 0700 on Monday morning than most people travel all week. Further, I work at my "day job" so as to pay the bills, and then effectively and efficiently own and operate <u>my own</u> business on the side. I have to take both with an equal amount of seriousness or I would loose not only one, but both.

My itinerary, should I ever bother to log it, would astound even the most dedicated workaholic. I often wonder if I am a workaholic. But then I realize that I have more fun operating my business than should be allowed so I know that while I may put in the time, I do reap the rewards. No, I don't pull in boat loads of treasure for my hold. But I do acquire one hell of a lot of booty for things like the <u>Dread Pirate's Summer Beach Bash</u>. I don't think there are too many self published authors out there that pull in sponsors like <u>AD</u>!

Then I realize that I am not tired in a *bad* way. I know that I am tired only because I push the envelope one hell of a lot further than most people dare. Just about every sailor I have met complains they don't have the things in life they desire. Yet, I don't see them putting in the time or the effort to achieve their goals! While I may be exhausted from sailing ever forward toward my goals, they seem content to sit in their dingy, rowing in circles, pointing at everyone else asking, "Throw me a line?"

I can't remember a night I have not crawled into the rack bone weary. For me, it is a good thing. It lets me know that I have not wasted my time. Being tired tells me that I have spent my time wisely and have not squandered it on foolishness. I shall sail ever toward my goals of truth and light, while always keeping an eye out for booty and treasure! If you find yourself being tired...ask yourself why you are exhausted. If you realize it is because you are doing something you love, you may just catch your second wind.

Sail on... sail on!!!

Heavy rolls

Ever been so damned tired you can't think? Have you ever been so frustrated that you have no idea what to do other than...nothing? Might you have had one

of those days that start to kick your ass the moment you roll out of the rack and are non-stop grief and aggravation until you roll into the rack three hours after you wanted to? Has confusion ever entered your mind, scrambled it like an egg in a margarita blender and left you a blathering idiot? Could it be that one day you woke up and did not have the motivation, desire or energy to get out of the rack? Did you just want to pull the blanket over your head and just go back to sleep...for a century or so? Ever know that you are supposed to do something, but just don't have the moxie to take the step in that direction? Have you ever been depressed? Have you ever been so far down...you are looking up at the bilge pump? How often have you had a great morning only to find that your afternoon becomes a complete nightmare? (Let's not even mention the evening!) Could it be that you know exactly how a mutiny feels? You know, when the dagger in your back feels like it is splitting you heart...and soul? Might you have looked around you, seen a hundred thousand people and yet, felt as hollow as an empty rum barrel on the inside?

Yeah, me neither...

Sure glad we are all positively charged highly motivated sailors of life that will continue forward no matter what we must sail through!

Sail on... sail on!!!

Taking a stand

Yesterday for the first time in a very long time I made a stand. I did not fear. I did not care, I do not fear this day. I am walking taller and I am much more confident than I have in months if not years. Sometimes a sailor just has to draw the line *within*.

I went to bed at 10 and got up at 4:30am. I slept for the first time in a very long time. Six and one half hour of slumber. While I slept something happened. I had a dream, one that I can not clearly remember...

I used to have a nickname in the US Navy, "Ice Man." I was cold, hard, calculating. The mindset kept me out of trouble, alive, and helped build the person I am today. This morning I woke up and I knew something in me had changed from yesterday. Something in the dream that I can not quite recall, something in the words I spoke yesterday, and something deep inside, began a <u>catharsis</u>, or perhaps, more appropriately, a rebirth.

You see, I am the type of person that has very little fear of just about anything. People (yes, more than one) have pointed guns at my head and I have stared them in the eyes and told them to be a man and pull the damned trigger. Quite frankly, I have never feared death. You will find that when you show no fear, the weapon or "power" they perceive they have over you, turns the fear around within them. Remember, never screw with a sailor who has nothing to lose.

Each day is an opportunity to create your own catharsis. It is time that you, as a rational, logical, thinking, strong individual begin to take steps toward our own fate/future. We become entangled in the hopes, dreams & fears of others, we place constraints and restraints on our person because of perceived expectations, we take to heart what moron friends and family try to force down our throat. We succumb to the man and his ways even though we know better. We allow ourselves to buy into the doldrums of the day and get all worked up over inconsequential bullshit. We fail ourselves and most of all we fail to live life to its fullest.

Cast off the expectations of others. Sever the negative influences in your life. Sail away from the depressing, draining unmotivated and downtrodden. If it is not real, positive or motivating, cast it over the side and out of your life, forever, and do not look back. Stand fast in the belief of self and your in your ability to achieve the goals and dreams you desire. For you are, and ever will be, a sailor of life.

On Fear...

It is at times when the lies have reached a frenzied peak, the truth distorted beyond all rational thought, and life is a confused, mangled mess of emotion, illogic, and thought, all running amuck that bad things happen to good sailors. It is then one person can hurt another without truly realizing it. Because they have woven a web of falsity, a cocoon of their own design about them, they are unable to see reality or any other part of what is truly present. It has been said that people live in their own world. I say that people mentally manufacture the world they wish to see so that they may rationalize their means to an end.

Yes, yes... once again, I begin a diatribe with an abstract. Oh' how the masses loathe the abstract. For it is the same as a falsity to them. Allow me to follow with a more specific and quite personal example for those who prefer specifics rather than forcing their minds to work without specific parameters. My last lover, a beautiful talented intelligent woman, (who to this day, still owns a very large part of my heart and soul) told me two things upon her leaving me. The first thing that I clearly remember her telling me was that she "feared" me.

Did the love of my life tell me that she feared me because she, in fact, was in some sort of physical danger of bodily harm? While I spent seven years at her side, I never so much as raised a hand to her. Yes, there were times my

emotions ran amuck and I did not know what to say, or do, so I would take my leave. This would confound her, but after we found out together that I had ADHD, and both realized when I became overwhelmed, my mind, my ability to logically assimilate information, would just shut down. I don't think she ever fully understood the concept. While she wanted to sit and talk, while overwhelmed, I was unable to fully comprehend the words, ideas, or the feelings, that she wanted to share. She told me more than once that I could not empathize with her. Was this what she feared? Might the key be that she felt as though I could not fully comprehend her feelings and/or thoughts and would dismiss them because I was unable to fully relate? I believe that after the third time I sat down with her and explained, to the best of my ability, that I may not fully be able to understand the gauntlet of fears that swirled about within her. I am, as most people with ADHD are, unable to comprehend fear per say. Do not mistake this comment as meaning I have never felt fear. People with my way of thinking do not dwell upon the past but look forward and into the next moment each and every moment of our lives. We do not fear yesterday's failures because that was vesterday and today is a new day to succeed. Ever wonder why such great people like Thomas Edison, Mozart and Einstein were all ADHD? Failure is not an option. Why? There is no fear of failure. Might her fear be of an individual who gave her everything she desired and more? She wanted to open her own store. We then opened our own book store and art gallery. She wanted to go to modeling school. She went. She wanted to be a studio model for artists. She was. Might her fear of me be a fear that one day there would be no more dreams to dream?

The second screwball she threw at yours truely, was that she had felt, after I had attained my baccalaureate degree, that I would no longer need her and that I would cast her aside for another. Might this inner fear of me rejecting her, jade her, and begin to warp the life we had made together? The inner demons of another are almost impossible for a lover or friend to slay. It is has to be the individual that harbors the falsity close at heart that must take the lance to the evil within. If she might have taken a moment to realize this, perhaps, just perhaps, she then may have realized the time I would need her most would be when the keel hit the brine after my graduation. Might she have had some inner doubt, some inner fear that she would not be able to be strong enough for me? Might it even be possible that she could not conceive the heights we would achieve together given my new status? This may have well been the case. Since I had seemed to be some sort of quasi-human male that had the ability to set a goal, attain that goal, no matter the conditions, the logic, or illogic of the situation, the odds, or the danger therein and then attain it. It may well have been her fear that she faced and not a fear of me personally. I am sure that shrinks have a word for those who project their fears onto others, blame another, then jump ship, all the while pointing a finger in any direction but their own. Never once do these shipmates take a moment to realize that the fear they faced was not that of another but their own demons within.

It is at times when the lies have reached a frenzied peak, the truth distorted beyond all rational thought, and life is a confused, mangled mess of

emotion, illogic, and thought, all running amuck within our own minds that we become out of touch with the reality. We live *within*. It is then that an individual can hurt another without truly realizing how or why they do so. The sailor has woven their own personal web of falsity, a cocoon of their own design, which only allows them to see their reality, their demons, and their world. It has been said that people live in their own world. I say that people mentally manufacture the world they wish to see so that they may rationalize their own actions. It is the sailor of life that continues to strive to keep it real, keep it motivated as well as positive, which will conquer the demons of the inner self. It is the sailor who stands on the quarterdeck, in the bright sunlight, with ships wheel in hand, destiny on the horizon, a very real course charted and plotted, that will find real treasure.

Pain.

Pain can be described in many ways. The primary two are physical and mental. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to mental pain as mental anguish. Physical pain will be referred to as pain. While copious amounts of variations and concoctions exist, I will only attempt to speak of the basic, separate prime two types as motivators of life.

Pain, a motivator? Abza-freakin-lootly! Pain is the foremost motivator in our lives. If a person causes us mental anguish we quickly learn to avoid that person at all costs. If a person or situation causes us pain, again, we learn very quickly avoid that individual or circumstance. In avoiding the situation or person that has caused us pain or mental anguish we have learned to move in a more positive and productive direction.

The motivation of mental anguish: The frustration, grief, and anger of being hurt mentally can afford us the incentive to exit the situation or learn how to better deal with these feelings on a more efficient basis. Mental anguish is often over looked as serious cause of illness. The facts tell us that stress (mental anguish), is the primer to most illnesses great and small. If you are able to recognize that you are in a state of mental anguish, you must, by all means, remove yourself from this state of mind.

The motivation of pain: Physical pain is quite the icebreaker. Unlike its silent and deadly counterpart mental anguish, pain lets you know it is upon you like a blinding flash of lighting across the midnight sky. Physical pain is a motivator like no other. If the person or situation causes you pain, both your mind and body's first instinct is fight or flee. That instinct can save your life if you listen to it closely.

Your instinct in a painful situation can also motivate you to a far better place. A rock feels no pain. A ship never cries. Yet, as sailors of life, we do feel pain. In avoiding the situation or person that has caused us pain or mental anguish we can learn to move in a more positive and productive direction. It is up to us to use this motivation to move forward on our journey of life to a painless place that allows us to live in peace and tranquility.

Mutiny!

You may often find that those around you, who have alternate plans, orchestrate their mutiny at the exact most inopportune moment possible. That time of course is when you are down. Any show of weakness will undoubtedly cause even the most civilized human to take advantage if the situation. It is the nature of the beast. And yet, can we turn this disadvantage to an advantage?

What I speak of is when a crewmember (or the whole crew) has pulled the braided hemp out from under your feet and you fall flat. Perhaps a close family member opens a vein and does not have a care in the world. Maybe a friend decides to hoist their true colors and you don't see it until to late. Perhaps a lover cuts you to the quick and leaves you marooned on a deserted island. You may have known the time, it is when you find yourself muttering the phrase, e tu Brute? E tu? The wind in your sails changes to the exact opposite direction, from forward to backward, in a split second. And never does it come in one single blow. Oh no, never. That would go against the ancient mariners law of, "it never rains, it pours." The situation plays out that once you are down, and you have shown some sign of weakness, all hell breaks loose and you are pummeled from every possible direction.

Then all of the sudden it happens, when your sails are flagging, your cannon empty, and your crew oddly missing in action, all really comes down upon you. The mental bulkheads, hatches, and portals that once held out the crashing waves of reality all seem to fail at the same time. Your Achilles tendon is struck, you become exposed, in a most grieves fashion, you come face to face with the reality of the world around you. No longer can you keep the reality at bay, all of your defenses crash in all around you and with it comes all that it holds back.

A mate once told me during a time such as this, that when I had taken a massive blow, I should wait to make a decision about the future. With an odd clarity, I realized that my vision had never been better. While this mate was suggesting that I wait until I could make a well thought out decision, I realized that my vision, my understanding, had never been keener. The bulkheads and hatches that I had put up to hold out the reality that I so feared were now gone. There was nothing to shield my vision, no self made obstacles, phantasmal storms, or mysterious fog banks to obscure my view. I stood, like it or not, cloaked in pure reality. I, after what seemed like an instantaneous eternity, looked about me, and realized that I could finally see the real horizon.

I had been given clarity, a rare precious view of the real horizon. As beautiful, powerful, godly, reality gleamed all around me, my eyes became misty. My mind bulked for only the slightest of seconds as I struggled with what I was hearing from within. The words that had been in my skull, "e tu Brute" lessoned, softened, and then, just as the sun breaks over the horizon at sunrise, so to did the new feeling within. They came softly, full of inner power that filled me with renewed strength, positive motivation, and a newfound understanding. From the deepest chambers of my soul, I recognized the words for the truth they were, and then I heard the words as they escaped my lips in a whisper, "thank you Brute, thank you!"

The only constant is change.

When I first heard this I thought it was whale excrement. The only constant is change I thought... what a contradiction! And yet, over time I have come to realize that this is, in fact, the case. Our world, like the ocean tides, is in a constant state of flux. And ebb and flow of motions and energies that are never ending comprise our moments, hours, days, weeks, months, and years.

To be able to sail a course with the tides flowing in one direction and the wind blowing in another is often difficult. Our journey is never easy, our course ever-changing. It is the tenacious sailor of life that can flow with the tides, sail with the wind, and yet still stay on course!

TREASURE CHEST EIGHT

Remember

I have spent a lifetime being trained, and training myself to remember. We are taught from an early age to use our minds to remember. Our minds are, for the lack of a better description, electro-chemical databases. We are made to remember. Teachers and professors force us to memorize a plethora of useless knowledge over at the very least, twelve years of memorize-to-pass school. For those of us with an overabundance of curiosity, we often seek more years of memorization torture. Cram the electro-chemical database full of information. Memorize, retain information, but most of all, remember.

You become accustomed to the brainwashing. Remember the dates and times, remember the faces and the names. Miss a question on an exam and you are penalized. Miss a significant others' birthday and pay with your relationship and/or your life. Get it right, keep it in sync and keep it at the forefront for immediate recall or be damned. Our society, our world, revolves around the memorization of facts, figures, and copious amounts of irrelevant data. We are trained to collect memories and data almost since birth.

Then, there comes a time when you must, out of necessity... forget. You must go against every electro-chemical molecule and un-remember something that you have worked diligently to remember. Moreover, you must forget only parts of a whole, thus, launching yourself into an even more hyper-selective deletion of electro-chemical data. Buddhist teachings suggest that one can look at a situation differently by un-asking the question. My quandary is, how do you un-remember the memory? Un-asking a question is relatively basic. I am however, not quite up to speed on the concept of un-remembering a distilled memory.

Thus, to you I ask; if you had to un-remember a memory, a series of memory's or a multitude of memory's, how would you do it?

Critique me not...

The one thing that I have often heard from individuals far and wide, is that they enjoy being critiqued. I have never been more revolted in my life. We all know that in childhood we hear the word 'no' at least ten times more often than the word 'yes'. As a young adult, and then adult, we hear more often the negative of what we are about to do, or have done, than kudos. Can a person be barraged so often with the negative that we actually begin to desire it?

Critique is defined as 'an act of criticizing'. To criticize, in turn, is defined as 'to stress the faults of.' The entire process is bathed in the negative. How then can sailors rise above their own fears, frustrations, and self-doubts, when all they hear is negativity about their work? What exactly is hearing a person's dislikes about your work supposed to do? Are you to then to hurry and change your work into something that is no longer yours, but an effort now based on the dislikes of another? What is the point of changing your work into the work of another?

Not long ago I received a phone call from a friend of mine who was very upset. A student of his had committed suicide. This student was an art student of a prestigious college of art and design. The classes are based in large part on critique from both professor and students. Is it any wonder that a sensitive human being, found deep depression and pain within a community that is based on finding every fault possible while rarely, if ever, bolstering the strength? The caller was upset because the student had not come to ask for help or understanding. My question, after months of contemplation is thus, why would you go to the very source of your pain and grief for consolation? When you find delight in the critique, and not in the building up of a person, they are highly unlikely to come to you in a crisis situation. As children of early age we learn not to go to those that tell us 'no'. The very system that my friend works within destroyed this artist. How many artists turn away from this educational institution and countless others because of their negative 'critique' based system? How many talented individuals (even as professors) get tired of this system, get fed up, and leave the day in day out grind of negativity rather than help other artists learn, grow and prosper?

As a society we wonder why the culture of art takes a back seat to the junk bonds, fast turnover of real estate, and the insanity of the nine to five grind. You need to look no further than those who feel an uncontrollable desire to spew forth negativity in some misguided effort. To criticize is nothing more than to be negative. To be negative is nothing more than to be part of the problem. From 'Crit' blog rings to self imposed critics, the world is full of idiots who don't like, or can find fault in, just about everything. If you find yourself seeking criticism for any reason, seek help immediately. Any individual that purposefully seeks out the negative is in a dire straight. An individual that feels the dire need to find fault in others should be avoided at all costs.

Being part of the solution is hard. Being upbeat, positive, motivated, and moving forward in a world where negativity flows like a tidal current against you is even harder. If you find yourself surrounded by critics and wonder why you cannot spread your wings and fly... ponder no more. It is only the sailor that leaves the critics behind who can truly find positive motivation and thus, become part of the solution.

Addition/update:

Example of why critiques are worthless. In high school I submitted the following as a 'potential beginning of a short story' to my English teacher in hopes of getting approval for a project;

--Begin—

I cannot, for my soul, remember how, when, or even precisely where, I first became acquainted with the lady Ligeia. Long years have since elapsed, and my memory is feeble through much suffering. Or, perhaps, I cannot now bring these points to mind, because, in truth, the character of my beloved, her rare learning, her singular yet placid cast of beauty, and the thrilling and enthralling eloguence of her low musical language, made their way into my heart by paces so steadily and stealthily progressive that they have been unnoticed and unknown. Yet I believe that I met her first and most frequently in some large, old, decaying city near the Rhine. Of her family -- I have surely heard her speak. That it is of a remotely ancient date cannot be doubted. Ligeia! Ligeia! in studies of a nature more than all else adapted to deaden impressions of the outward world, it is by that sweet word alone --by Ligeia --that I bring before mine eyes in fancy the image of her who is no more. And now, while I write, a recollection flashes upon me that I have never known the paternal name of her who was my friend and my betrothed, and who became the partner of my studies, and finally the wife of my bosom. Was it a playful charge on the part of my Ligeia? or was it a test of my strength of affection, that I should institute no inquiries upon this point? or was it rather a caprice of my own --a wildly romantic offering on the shrine of the most passionate devotion? I but indistinctly recall the fact itself --what wonder that I have utterly forgotten the circumstances which originated or attended it? And. indeed, if ever she, the wan and the misty-winged Ashtophet of idolatrous Egypt, presided, as they tell, over marriages ill-omened, then most surely she presided over mine.

-- END --

This effort received an 'F' with red circles and comments filling the side columns. My buddy and I almost fell out of our chairs laughing. You see, Sister Christopher, Phd. had just given Edgar Alan Poe an 'F'! This is the first paragraph from <u>his 1838 work, "Ligeia"</u> As tears rolled down our eyes in laugher, she asked what was so amusing. When I explained that she had just flunked Edgar Alan Poe, Sister C turned red and began an extended lecture on plagiarism and copyright violations etc. etc. I received ten demerits, (a personal record thank you very much!) and was told that I had to write a paper on plagiarism and copyright infringement if I expected to pass the class.

What does this silly high school prank have to do with anything? The comments below in the comment section are, for the most part, pro-critique. For a moment, ponder what would have happened if Edgar had changed his works to meet the strict criteria of the scholars of his day. Would his works have been the classics they are today? How about other great authors, thinkers, painters,

doctors, scientists, who told the critics of their day to go to hell and did it their way. How different would the world be if they had curtailed to the critic? What would this world be like, if a few fellows that penned a book called the bible, had succumbed to the critics of the day and changed their works to meet 'the standards of the masses?'

I have just shown you all that critique has not accomplished. Now tell me again what good a critique is?

Cussin' the fleet...

If there is one thing a sailor can do it is cuss! We can string obscenities together in such eloquent fashion as to make the most hardened criminal raise an eyebrow in salute. Next to drinking, it is our best pastime. We cuss and drink, then cuss some more!

I like obscenities and profanity. The use of an explanative livens up the conversation and adds just a tad of off-color to the most mundane of comments. People feel that it is impolite to use these types of words in sophisticated society. I suggest that only the sophisticated can string together a handful of profanity combined with innocent words and make them sound blissfully irate. I also think that fully expressing yourself, no matter how you chose to do so, is very important.

For years, I would cuss a fool like a dog. Let's say some half-wit would pull out in front of me or operated their motor vehicle in some manner unbecoming of an individual with a brain. I would willingly and gladly insult their entire family lineage to include their grandmother. (Now you can insult the most pious man on Earth and he will do nothing. You insult his grandmother and you have one hell of a fist fight on your hands!) Over the past several years, I found myself on the road more and more. At one point, five hours a day was the norm. Dealing with bad drivers for two hours a day is stress. Dealing with them for five hours a day causes some serious mental anguish that will force out obscenities from even the most religious elderly blue-haired grandmother. I became so proficient at letting the explanative's fly that people turned red just from reading my lips!

Then one day, out of the blue, it all changed. If memory serves, some jackass on an obnoxiously loud motorbike roared by me at the speed of hog and whipped into the lane in front of me with only millimeters to spare. What came out of my mouth astonished even me. I simply said, "May your blade chip and shatter." All at once I felt a sense of calm settle about me. The simple statement seemed to embody everything I wished to convey and more.

While not blissfully colorful or profane, the words not only curse their blade (and their house), but calmed me almost to the core. I found myself smiling... I asked myself, "Why does this comment just work so well for me?" After a moment, I realized that it worked for me because it is cerebral. While profanity strung together like popcorn on a string is always an option, it will however elevate your blood pressure. The comment I swiped from the book Dune, forces

your opponent to think upon your words. It is reminiscent of my insult to the driver who cut me off and then stopped in the middle of a three way intersection to cuss me out. I simply stated, "Fuck you and your mother." The look on his face was priceless. When I told my partner (we were in the work van) that I had not said "fuck you and your mother," but clearly stated, "you drive like your mother..." he broke into fits of laughter for at least two hours.

Profanity is fun but cerebral insults are by far the absolute best. Why? Because you can defuse the stupidity of a situation with an insult toward a degenerate, all the while not lowering yourself into the quagmire of "lowly" profanity. Further, if you smile while stating your cerebral "insult," odds are the twit will never have any idea what has transpired. This saves your knuckles from being bloodied upon their skull when they get out of hand! The object, you see kind and gentle sailor, is to make sure you place a curse upon their blade so when such a time comes when they rely on their blade the most, it will shatter, leaving them helpless and without defense! Allow their own negative actions and stupidity to work against them. That way you can keep all of your highly motivated positive energy to yourself!

Great effort...

I have often lamented on why, we as a race of beings are as war-like as we are. Life seems to be a constant struggle from birth to death, ever combative, ever difficult. From getting into "trouble" with your parents as a child to the playground of grade school, we are birthed into a world that seems to be a never ending struggle of having to prove oneself. Then we are thrown into the insane would of middle and high school were no matter how "right" we are, we are picked apart by both "the man" and our peers. For those who took the leap into higher education, college is supposed to be a place of knowledge but turns into a place that we must prove ourselves worthy of academia by "arguing" and "proving" our points. Our world is steeped in conflict.

For those of us who entered the military out of high school, no matter the reason, we had no idea of the struggle that lay ahead of us. No one told us we would learn to operate four or five hours of sleep a night. No one warned of the physical and mental trials and tribulations we would face in boot camp and beyond. Those who entered the Armed Forces had a vague understanding of armed conflict. Sure we had seen it in the movies, on the news, we had lived through high school, we understood the dangers, how bad could it be? For the ones who served their country in time of war, (Especially for those of us who fought wars that were not called wars because it was politically incorrect...) we learned very quickly that armed conflict can be a little more deadly than the prom queen throwing a snide remark in your direction. We came quickly to understand

the meaning of birth by fire, insignificance, armed conflict, inconsequential bullshit, war, calm, death, peace, combat, silence and so much more.

Today we look upon the media and find a plethora of conflict. From those doing combat with their peers to young strong men fighting the forces of tyranny that would take away the most basic of freedoms, we see struggle in high definition broad band Technicolor. Our lives are the personification of struggle. We relax by watching struggle between good and evil on the silver screen. Struggle is such an integral part of our lives, it has become ingrained.

While standing on the firing line today, and burning up 400 rounds of 9mm ammo with a friend, I thought about struggle, conflict, the events of my past, and the events in recent world news. As I threw a clip full of rounds into the red X & ten ring of a silhouette target, I realized that conflict has been the greatest part of my life. It has been the pinnacle of everything I hold as dear.

How can this be? How can *conflict* be good? When I looked up the definition of conflict, depending on your resource, it might say something like, "great effort..." That is when it hit me.

Perhaps the reason why I hold these things close is because I had to step up and perform above and beyond in order to succeed. I had to expend great effort in order to be exactly where I am today.

Great effort takes a positive mindset. Great effort takes motivation. Great effort takes keeping your mind based in reality.

Great effort = conflict

Thus,

Conflict helps us keep it real, keep it motivated and keep it positive.

Waking dreams

I have come to realize that my dreams, the ones I have while asleep, are an interesting hybrid of past events, places, and people I have experienced, combined with my desires for the future all wrapped into a world of bizarre and unsettling backdrops. Some people say that they cannot remember their dreams. I can not only remember my dreams, but, I also seem to be able to recall in the most insignificant details of my nocturnal mental adventures. At times, this can be most disconcerting.

Our waking dreams and aspirations are based in the physical world around us. We believe that we can, and will, attain our goals through or positive thought and enthused motivation. But when we are asleep, our world becomes... for the lack of a better descriptive term, macabre. Perhaps not in the true sense of the word but in the sense that our dreams, even the most genteel, always seem to have the potential to be a second away from a nightmare.

Not every nightmare is, in my opinion the bloody ax or worst fear come to light sort. I often have dreams that, for all intents and purposes, are more like, future events waiting to be found. At the risk of sounding like a heretic or some mystic seer, when I was a child I would go to bed, dream of the next day, down to the moment, wake, and live the dream. Over and over, I knew, in advance, what was going to happen the next day with uncanny accuracy. I even knew that the hobo's my kid sister and I met on the train tracks would not hurt us, but would ask us to bring them hot dogs.

My nightscape has often been of the future. Futures that I do not want to see, feel, or know of. My dreams have done everything from kept me out of lawsuits (don't ask) to knowing who my next lover will be. I am not sure if it is a blessing or a curse. What I do know is that as of late, my nightscape has been on unique shade, color and feel. I believe that I have been able to change my future, my life, because of this gift. I can only hope, that one day, the dreams that I desire the most, I will be able to foresee and make come true.

To you I say this, be it a night dream or a day dream, always strive to make your dreams come true no matter how bizarre they may seem to others. Your dreams are your own, and dreams are the one thing that no one can ever take from us!

Loyalty

Base Definition: loy-al 4

Pronunciation: 'loi(-&)l

Function: *adjective*

Etymology: Middle French, from Old French *leial, leel,* from Latin *legalis* legal **1**: unswerving in allegiance: as **a**: faithful in allegiance to one's lawful sovereign or government **b**: faithful to a private person to whom fidelity is due **c**: faithful to a cause, ideal, custom, institution, or product.

Loyalty definition looks simple, and yet, when placed into the ever tidal waters of life falls deep into one of the ever present gray areas of life. Being loyal is not simple, easy or even logical at times. The concept of loyalty, it can be argued can be illogical because of its first or primary definition, "unswerving in allegiance." This would suggest that it is unchanging or permanently fixed in nature, and we all know that we, as well as, everything around us, are in a perpetual state of flux. Loyalty is one of those open subjects that will provide as many beliefs as people who attempt to explain the concept. One such belief, I held as a young man. I believed that you should give at least two weeks notice before leaving a company. I believed as a "loyal employee" you should do nothing less. One day while I was speaking of this to an older sailor of life, he smiled and asked me one single question that would change my outlook on this concept for life. Howard asked, "Would your employer give you two weeks notice if they were going to fire you?" His words slammed home and helped me to understand that employee loyalty should go only as far as company loyalty. Land lovers have told me time and again, "Never burn your bridges!" My response; I am a pirate, I have a ship, there are many ways to get to the place I need to. Only land lovers need worry about bridges.

What about loyalty on more personal level? Being loyal to a cause or shipmate. Causes change like the tides, don't waste your time. Loyalty to your shipmates, now there is a real topic of heated discussion. Ever hear the saying. "Shipmates come and go, but family is forever"? Deep six that idea as well. People are people. Shipmate or family member can turn into a backstabbing mutinous piece of whale excrement at the drop of a marlinspike. One example of this might be if one sailor asks you to keep a bit of information from another mutually known shipmate. You know the bit of treasure will impact the second unknowing sailor like a shot to the head. Where do your loyalties fall? Do you hold you tongue and fain ignorance or do you speak the truth and let the pieces fall where they may? Loyalty, while a fine and noble cause, will never set you free like the truth.

Loyalty is faith based. I have faith in only a two things. I have faith in death and me. Sailors sail with the tides, if you miss ships movement, no tears will be shed on your behalf. I sail this world with my four best and closest shipmates, me, myself, I and my shadow. The rest is all a matter of perception and a roll of the knucklebones...

People are surprising...

And yet, completely predictable! Have you ever read the book by Spencer Johnson, *Who Moved My Cheese*? I had the distinct pleasure of reading this short but exceedingly powerful book last Friday afternoon. I believe that I am a hybrid of Sniff *and* Scurry. For those who have not read the book, Sniff "sniffs" out opportunity and Scurry moves forward and takes advantage of the opportunity. I am the guy who was creating ebooks in the year 2001 when most people had not heard of them let alone read one. (If you have not taken the time to read one of my ebooks, to the plank with you!) I am definitely a Sniff, and being I have been running with the proverbial e-ball ever since, I have a hell of a pair of Scurry approved running shoes.

I think that is part of my problem. I have an eye toward the future and a momentum that frightens most individuals. A personal intensity if you will that makes most land lovers a wee-bit nervous. Life is too short to be sitting around waiting for the perfect moment, the perfect day, the perfect time...

Yet, I think, that perhaps, I have been a bit too "future orientated" and perhaps a tad bit more overzealous in my attempts to motivate myself and others than I should be. I once dated a young lady who had a saying I did not understand. She would say, "If it doesn't fit, don't force it, just relax and let it flow..." For over two decades I have had that saying rattling around my skull. Today, I think I am beginning to understand its meaning.

The Prize...

Each day is an adventure. There are times when we do not desire one more day of unknown, but, as sailors of life, that is what we must face. The new, the untried, and the unproven are what we sail for. Our world, no matter how uncertain, is, none the less, ours. We have no choice but to sail forward into the chop. Even as the thorn twists into our side, we must, hold fast onto our dreams. As the deck pitches and rolls, we should let our sea legs hold us fast. As the wind whips about us and tears at our clothes, we have to let our open eyes water as we keep focused. We have little choice but to keep focused on the prize.

For the prize, no matter what it may be, to a pirate, is all.

Truth or Dare...

I find it interesting that a games played in childhood have such interesting parameters viewed through adult eyes. Truth or dare is one such game. Does this game not sum the life we lived as a child? Considering it was never played with adults spying over our shoulders makes even a stronger case. We played the game openly, with spontaneous curiosity and joy, having not yet been jaded by the adult tendency to lie and conceal who and what we are. We sailed our voyage with a pure heart and a fresh eye. We dared to adventure into the new unexplored parts of our world with wild abandon. Truth or dare, a game where everything was new and fun based on truth. When was the last time you played a game, or even lived a single day, based on truth? Our journey through life has helped jade us into those adults we see in the mirror each morning. We stare into the mirror and see a person with tired eyes staring back at us. That same person looks to be familiar, and yet... not. Long gone are the days of the simple truth. When was the last time we felt our blood race with the excitement of a dare? When was the last time we explored the unknown parts of our world with motivated interest?

As children we played the game of truth or dare. It was a game well suited for our lives, our minds and our hearts. Playing the game of truth or dare as a child taught us about the people and world around us. And yet, as an adult, we abandon the game of truth or dare for its sinister knock off, falsity and safety. As sailors of life, why not resurrect this priceless treasure as we sail through the waters of life? Why not ask for truths? Why not dare to be young again and do things that are new and unique? Why not dare to seek the truth that once helped us understand and grow?

Obligations gone.... Awry?

Not so long ago a sentence I read caught me totally and completely off guard. "A deep friendship should not be based on an obligation, it should be based on mutual affection and respect first and foremost." Now I understand I am not the brightest sailor in the fleet but damn the man... a friendship should not be based on an obligation? Obligation is defined as the action of obligating oneself to a course of action, something (as a formal contract, a promise, or the demands of conscience or custom) that obligates one to a course of action. I guess what hit me so hard was the shipmate was suggesting that a friendship, or relationship, should not be based on a promise. I was, and am currently, having difficulty with the concept of understand how a relationship cannot be based on anything but a promise or an obligation.

To break it down simply, let us ask what comes first, the obligation or the relationship. I can think of no circumstance in which a relationship precedes the most basic of obligations. The obligation, spoken aloud or by action of kindness, acceptance, and or mutual understanding, must first be extended and accepted prior to any form of 'relationship' occurring. I find the statement, "A deep friendship should not be based on an obligation, it should be based on mutual affection and respect first and foremost", most unenlightened and shortsighted. Isn't affection nothing more than a promise to hold an individual in fondness or tender attachment? Respect is an obligation to hold an individual in high esteem. How can you dismiss the obligation when it is the very core of the action of friendship? While I agree that a deep friendship may well *include* affection and

respect, I would suggest that it might not be the driving force behind the relationship.

For millions of people in relationships, including marriage, their relationships are based solely and completely on the action of obligating oneself to a course of action. The foundation of marriage is based on nothing more than a formal promise! Billions of business relationships (some of the strongest friendships I have come into contact with, and have acquired, are based first and foremost in the business realm) are based on obligations, some written in contracts and some only verbal promise. Relationships, no matter the depth or width, have a basis in some sort of obligation.

Land lovers will use any excuse they can to jump ship and take a holiday on the beach. Suggesting that a deep friendship must, first and foremost, be based in affection and respect is a skewed view of reality. Relationships are based on obligations, promises if you will, that cover an innumerable amount of foundations. From the predetermined course of liking an individuals hair color or respecting and valuing another's opinions to just enjoying their company is the mainstay of many millions of lifelong deep friendships. Suggesting that there can be only one specific criterion for a deep personal friendship is ludicrous. Relationships are born of obligation and either grow and prosper through mutual strengthening of action in synchronicity or die due to lack of continuity.

After posing this entry on my weblog one shipmate's response hit the marlin spike on the head and may help further clarify the point:

Ten points for our fearless leader! What the hell does that mean, anyhow?

Without obligation, what is a relationship but a tryst in the informal of

attributes. What it breaks down to is translations, I guess. Affection, mutual

respect, first and foremost on your list of "constant thoughts"... but obligation

could be listed as a moral, ethical or emotional binding that makes a

relationship more than a cheap prostitution ring. People need to remember,

there ARE underlying obligations and not believe that a relationship can be

taken for granted as to be without obligation first.

Nicodaemus_Cain

TREASURE CHEST NINE

Credit score tee shirt...

Dread on money. There is no shame in living a frugal life. There is no shame in being poor. I have never had anything that I could not pay for in cash. Therefore, I have not had much. That is why I drive a 1987 Nissan Pickup with 350,000 + miles on it. I can't afford the \$35,000.00 Dodge Magnum RT I covet. It is also the reason why I just liberated a coffee table from the neighbors junk pile that now graces my living room. I have never purchased a piece of furniture in my life. What I have I have acquired has been by covert midnight raids on 'trash' nights. I feel no shame in what I have done. There is no shame in doing what you have to do in order to survive.

A few blogs ago, I mentioned that I was no longer asking women out. I stated the reason was that if women want equality, they should reach out and grab it with both hands and forget the societal double standard. I also told you that my last date cost me my grocery money for the week. You laughed. But I was deadly serious. It is also the reason why the women in my life have sailed on.

Money is what allows us to live, grow and thrive. It is what affords us food, clothing and shelter. It is to our lives, as Qi is to the human body. Money is not just want sustains us; it is literally what makes the world go round. It is what people kill for, it is what people will willingly die for, and it is the centrality of our known society.

I had not pulled my credit report in years. I don't really care what it says. But recent events in my life suggested that I take a peek at what big brother had to say about me. The lady who helped me get a copy of the report does this sort of thing for a living. After pulling the report, she called me and told me that she had never seen a higher score. She also added that I should put my credit score on a tee shirt... that I would never again have a problem getting a date.

If you want to live like a 21st Century Pirate, the code is simple. Do not live beyond your means. If you do not have the cash in hand, do not spend it. Simply put, do not spend what you do not have. Only the foolhardy and the unintelligent spend money they don't have, then make some other jerk rich while they try to pay off as much as 20%+ interest. Some might call this code hand to mouth. Others call it a superior credit score.

There is no shame in living a frugal life. There is no shame in being poor. Pay for what you need in cash. Recycle what you can; scavenge for what you must and be creative in financing. I feel no shame in what I have done. There is no shame in doing what you have to do in order to survive. Further, there is no shame in having an excellent credit score.

Dread C. Pirate...

Thou shall not covet. What a bleedin' crock. Like a guy with the pen name "Dread Pirate" is going to be able to sell you a bill of goods suggesting I do not covet...anything! Today and today only, the deal of a lifetime, you send me a check for \$500.00 US and I will send ALL of my ebooks, my CD, and wait, there's more!!!

When I was a kid my Grandfathers cars always got bigger and my fathers always got smaller. I liked my Grandfathers style. Bigger was better, it even smelled better. My Grandmother always had candy in her purse. To me, that was class: big car and an ever full purse of candy. My parents were the type to put everything in the bank. You got five bucks in your birthday card and that shit was gone. It was, "in the bank." My Grandfather would slip me cash for candy and comics. Guess who I liked better.

Why would some deity make a rule that said something bone headed like, "thou shall not covet?" Perhaps he made a generic set of rules up for the cosmos and forgot to tweak them for humanity. Tell me you don't covet. I will be the first person to raise my hand and tell you I covet at least one hundred times a day. I see a nice ring, sweet! I want it. Let me see a Rolex, I drool. Have you seen some of the cars on the market today? I drive down the road just...wanting. I'll take that Hummer, ooohhhh, ahhhhh, no way, I want that BMW, mmmmm, o sweet, did you see that new....makes me dizzy.

I covet houses, boats, clothes, shoes, cuff links, jewelry, cars, trucks, your wife, your girlfriend, your mother...well, maybe. (At least her cooking!) and yes, your daughter. I covet art, I covet books, stamps, gold, jewels and coins. Of course, I covet one thing 24/7/365 and that is CASH. I covet artifacts, arrowheads, Indian trade beads, Argentine soccer shirts and kukri's. I covet laptops, I especially want a MAC.

Who does not covet? Turn on the TV and what are you barraged with? New and improved ways to make you covet what you don't want! Walk into a store and the latest marketing technique they are deploying is designed to make you covet something you have no need for! I was in the Mall yesterday and I was coveting this great blue surfboard! I could not surf if my life depended on it!!! But I sure as hell coveted that great looking surf board.

Just call me Dread Covet Pirate. It will make things so much easier.

Methinks Einstein was mistaken...

A = X + Y + Z

A = SuccessX = WorkY = PlayZ = mouth shut

"If A equals success, then the formula is A equals X plus Y plus Z. X is work. Y is play. Z is keep your mouth shut."

Albert Einstein

The audacity, to say that I do not agree with Einstein is beyond bold. Well shipmate, I am a pirate! Quite frankly, I do not believe that Albert Einstein's formula for success is valid. Nor was it ever. Like so many of his theories that have been disproved over the decades, I believe has this equation become outdated the moment it left his flippant lips.

Allow me to expand. Given the fact that success is subjective, I would say that the overall meaning of success has changed (in dollar value) since Albert's day. And that success, in this day and age, is measured in dollar value. Further, I believe that was once attainable by the 'male breadwinner', is now barely attainable by both partners working full time jobs. Yes shipmates, what was once considered success, is now considered American lower middle class!

Given the above premise, and moving into the here and now, I suggest the following adaptations to Einstein's theory.

A = X + Y + Z

A = SuccessX = Work that pays you at least 2x minimum wage.Y = Play that leads to cash or makes you cash.Z = Ask all the questions you can, even the stupid ones.

"If A equals success, then the formula is A equals X plus Y plus Z. X is work that pays you at least 2x minimum wage. Y is play that leads to cash or makes you cash. Z is ask all the questions you can, even the stupid ones..."

Dread Pirate

As you can see, there is a vast difference in the composition of the two equations. I suggest that it is not enough to work (X). I further state that it is not enough to work for minimum wage. To get by, one must be paid for their labor at least twice the minimum rate of pay set forth by law. This is obvious to almost anyone who has to live on their own without the safety net of family financial backing.

The second, and very major contrast is the notion of play (Y). Play, quite frankly, is for children. Once you are old enough to understand the concept of success, all 'play' should take on a new meaning. Play should be viewed as an opportunity to network and make contacts with will lead to further prosperity. If at all possible, play should be lucrative! What is better than having at good time? Having a good time that puts cash in your pocket.

This brings us to the final, and by no means contrary element of success, Einstien's Z. While Albert pleads the fifth, (silent treatment) I say that a silent sailor is one who misses opportunities to ask questions. I suggest a radical change in the third component and state that an individual seeking success can not remain silent but must ask questions, yes, even the stupid ones... Unless you can learn everything you need to know by never asking a single question, Albert Einstien's 'Z' is the biggest flaw of the theory. Knowledge is power. We gain knowledge by asking questions and receiving answers. Not asking the question leaves you with nothing but an unanswered question. Asking a question may well afford you with a bit of knowledge that will further your journey to success.

In closing, Success is the goal of every highly motivated sailor of life. Success is not, and never will be, work, or play or silence. Therefore, I do not agree in the least with Albert Einstein and his theory of success. I suggest that, success, if measured in medium of exchange, can be attained by work that pays you at least 2x minimum wage, plus, play that leads to cash or makes you cash, in addition to, asking all the questions you can, even the stupid ones. Booty is the bottom line sailor!

One armed sailor and seabags...

Recently while on vacation, I was talking to the First Mate about the serious lack of female interaction in my life over the past two years. The first thing he said

was, "Its time to lower your standards!" I had to laugh because this came from the sailor of life that convinced me too finally, after years of exceeding low expectations, to raise the bar on my personal standards. He suggested that perhaps my 'standards' were too high and that was the reason for the famine. I again just laughed and we sailed on...

But I find that I am not the only person that struggles with such dilemmas. A crewmember writes, "It is bad when I get this way, because my standards change and my kills become unpredictable..." Now aside from the fact that she labels her sexual conquests 'kills' (what a Wild Thing!), I think she and the First Mate can fully relate. A sailor becomes so desirous of companionship that he/she sets aside their personal standards, beliefs and ethics to satisfy their primal craving of opposite sex companionship. One must ask however, what is the cost am I willing to pay for such an encounter?

My past experience has told me that to lower ones standards, and conveniently set aside ones ethics, is fool hardy at best and devastating at worst. What price do we personally pay for lowering our values in an effort to satisfy our desires? Is that price to high? Moreover, how does it affect the rest of our journey through life? Damn the man, that forward thinking can be a real kill-joy. There is an old joke among one armed sailors, "Yes Sir, I woke up one morning after to much rum and had to cut off my own arm so as not to wake her up!" What can we learn from the one armed sailor? A whole hell of allot if you ask me.

For the dedicated sailor of life lowering ones morals, standards, and ethics is not an alternative. Even in the most desperate of times lowering ones personal values is not an option. Why you ask? To compromise on your personal integrity is the first step toward a back-slide that opens a vortex few sailors can pull out of. Simply put, after an error that will derogate from your reputation, there is often no recovery. Because you have 'done it once', you have overcome the initial lapse of behavior and feel at ease with the behavior. Just like the alcoholic who claims that it all started with just a sip... it does, in fact, start with just one slip!

At the end of the day, a sailor's morals, standards, and ethics are all he really has in his sea bag. To compromise ones personal integrity for naught will haunt you for the rest of your days. We are nothing more than our greatest moment. If you have low morals, warped standards and pathetic ethics, how great can your moment ever be? Do yourself a favor and don't put yourself in the same place as the one armed sailor. It is far better to sail forever onward in search of reality than to stop the world for a fantasy.

Value added?

Many in the business world will know the "buzz words," value added. When I first heard the term, I was confused. You see, land lovers purchase goods and services with expectations of them providing a valuable addition to their home, business or life. My knee jerk reaction was, who the hell would buy something in *hopes* of it being valuable? Then, I realized I was dealing with land lovers.

I threw the words aside like I do with many fad terms and left them behind. About a month ago, I began to ponder exactly how I was going to treat people in my life. I had come a cross roads (to coin a land lovers phrase) and needed to make a decision that would effect the rest of my life. Quite frankly, the problem I was having was dead weight. You know the type of person I am referring to...real anchor heads.

Then out of the blue, a thought hit me, "What I need are *value added* shipmates!" While the term made little to no sense to me in the business and web arena, it seemed to fit quite nicely in the personal relationship department. Having shipmates who are dead weight and a constant drain is not productive. Having shipmates who add value or who would become a valuable addition to my Crew would be very desirable. What I needed to add to my roster was value added sailors of life!

Let's face it; no one likes to be used. But on the other side of the coin, no one likes a freeloader/slacker. The no-brainer conclusion is that no one wants to hang out with losers and everyone wants to sail with people who are dynamic, exciting and motivated. Dynamic, exciting and motivated shipmates bring value to your life even if they are only within quasi-close proximity. Being around losers only weighs you down and drags you under.

This revelation of having only value added friends became very real when I came to the realization that I would much rather have a very few value added crew who are at the other end of the ship, than be surrounded with dozens of negative and unmotivated *anchors*. Value added gives you space and allows you to breathe, and anchors suffocate you.

Cutting the anchor chain is never easy. We often say things like, "They will not be able to get along without me!" or "But...they are my friend!" No matter the excuse, if you reflect upon the excuse long enough, you will ultimately see that it is just that, an excuse. Being a foot loose and fancy free sailor of life is demanding. You have to have the positive motivation to move toward your goals and aspirations. Simply put, you can't sail forward dragging anchor(s)!

Take a moment to look at your current Crew objectively. Ask yourself, "Is this shipmate value added?" or "Does he/she provide me with additional value other than friendship & helping me spend my loot?" If the answer is no, you may well consider removing them from your roster of Crew. Will it be hard? Absolutely. But no one ever said that being a highly motivated positively charged sailor of life was easy!

TREASURE CHEST TEN

Gone fishing...

Let me impart a bit of wisdom to you that a Baptist preacher / barber and a true sailor of life once gave me.

BACKGROUND: I was working as a part-time logger, a full time firefighter, and also, construction around the small town of Tallapoosa, Georgia. I was getting about two hours of sleep a night, and had not taken a day off of work in over four months. I was exhausted, frustrated and not feeling well because I was not eating properly.

STORY: I sat in Uncle Buds barber chair getting a flat top haircut. I was helping him lay brick at the time, so he invited me into his newly decorated in 1950 barbershop. It was the 90's. He said that he could not have a friend of his looking shabby and that he had to 'make me presentable for the lady folk'. I was exhausted, I could hardly think, I struggled to remember the simplest things as I tried to stay awake in his well-worn, overly comfortable barber chair. As I sat still trying to keep alert, he asked me out of the blue the last time I had gone fishing. I laughed. I could not have even given him the last year I had gone fishing. I truthfully told him that I had no idea. Uncle Bud liked fishing. He was an accomplished angler and had more than a few fish stories to tell. He then asked me the last time I had eaten a home cooked meal. I shrugged and asked what that was. The shop was empty and silent for a few moments accept for the two of us. I as the customer sat diligently still, and Uncle Bud, the barber, moving about with skilled hands applying his trade.

He then launched into his sermon. You see, if you got your hair cut at Uncle Buds, the deal was that you paid about half the going rate (A flat top haircut for \$6.00... no tipping allowed) but you had to listen to him preach the 'good word' as his old hands stealthy cut your hair. On this day, he began to explain to me the story of creation, as told by the Bible. He gently explained that it had taken God six days to create the world, as we know it.

As he cut my hair into an obscenely level boxed style, I closed my eyes and listened to the old preachers voice. It had a musical quality to it. He was known as one of the best voices in his congregation. He told me how it had taken a God, a being that was all-powerful, six days to make the world. And then, on the seventh day, The Man himself, God, had taken a rest. As I sat there with my eyes closed, Uncle Bud chatted away. I think I fell asleep for only the briefest of seconds I was so tired. Somewhere between the hum of the clippers, Uncle Bud's voice, and sleep, I felt his hand on my shoulder. You see, Uncle Bud had a little ritual that he did with each and every customer that sat his barber's chair. When he was done, he was done. There was no looking in a mirror and giving the OK nod. When Bud was finished, he was finished. He placed his hand on your shoulder, and said your name followed by, "I just want to remind you that Jesus loves you." I stood and dug in my pocket for the money I owed him. He reached out his hand, and with a downward motion of his hand patted the air. "Go home and get some sleep" he said to me. I smiled a sad smile and told him that I had a shift at the station house. Hurricane Opal had just battered the area and I was working with FEMA in an effort to get the never-ending mounds of paperwork turned in so that residents would receive financial aid. Uncle Bud walked over and picked up the receiver of 1950's model telephone. "Go home, I will call the Chief." He waved his hand then, and if by some magic, I became more tired than ever. I don't remember driving down the street, or even getting into the house, or lying down.

I woke up over eighteen hours later. It was mid-morning and I was already late for my shift at the station. I bounced into the shower and slowly began to remember what Uncle Bud had told me. Somewhere in the fog of my exhaustion I remembered simply, "It took God six days to make the world." As I stood under the warm water, all at once I realized what the story Uncle Bud was trying to tell me meant.

I received a call while trying to choke down breakfast from the Assistant Fire Chief. She told me that I was not to report to work for two days. I was supposed to go fishing, Chiefs orders.

If I have done nothing here but help you sit, relax, and read this email for a few moments, I have been successful. If you understand the story that Uncle Bud told a young man who was going to do it all in a day, you have learned a great lesson. If you realize that you help many people that rely on you for far more than you could ever image, and that you can not be exhausted, running on empty, fatigued and unable to think because you are not taking care of yourself, you are sharper than a tack.

Have you ever walked alone along a beach at night?

There is something about a warm breeze, bright stars, crashing surf, and warm sand between your toes that calms you to the very center of your being. What about losing yourself in warm soapy water that smells o'-so-heavenly? There is something about being submersed in warm water, your olfactory sense being overwhelmed with the calming scent of lavender and the tension just dissolving from every fiber of your body. Have you ever had a perfect evening with that certain special someone? An evening where everything went right? As you snuggle and don't do anything with the exception of enjoy each other's company, the stress of the day, the week, just fades away. Have you ever had such stress reducing experiences?

If you answered "no", you may want to take a moment out of your hectic life and ask yourself one question. Does eating stress for breakfast, lunch and supper do well for my palette? And another bonus question: Do you realize that stress is considered the <u>number 1 health problem</u>? Stress is directly related to more health issues than ever before realized. Stress will make you feel bad. Stress will make your body very sick. Most of all sailor, stress will kill you.

I currently have one major nemesis in my life; it is that tyrannically evil bastard, Mr. H. Stress. Mr. H. Stress is a nefarious fellow that gets me all bent out of beautiful shape and turns my normally jovial attitude into most detestable thoughts. Stress is not only my bane, by a force in my life that has caused more illness to more people around me than I can count.

Mr. H. Stress caught up to a co-worker of mine about two years ago. He narrowly missed me. Mr. Stress worked on him so hard that it destroyed his heart. The sailor had a heart attack less than an hour after coming to work. The gent destroyed my calm by having the unadulterated audacity of falling on the floor in front of me. I had to get down and do CPR on a man whom I considered a friend. He died a few days later. Mr. H. Stress 1 - Dread 0.

Holidays are a time where the stress of everyday life gets wrapped up in the additional stress of the holiday season with a bow on top. This means we are staggering about with double the stress in our life. All of this stress equates to more doctors office visits, more visits to psychiatrists, more suicide and more "attitude" to share with friends, family and humanity at large. Stress is something that can come into our world a little at a time. It will however build up in your life and slowly destroy your defenses. Stress will enter your psyche undetected and slowly destroy you physically and then, as a finishing touch, taint your mind with such dastardly mind sets as anxiety, depression or even psychosis. It is the ultimate terrorist.

This holiday season if you think you and Mr./Ms. H. Stress (yes, stress can change genders as needed the tricky bastage) are not bedfellows, you might want to take a long hard look at yourself and your life. Stress affects us all, period.

I suggest that if you can, take time to relax. Take as much time as you possibly can in order to relax, distress, and re-energize. Many shipmates do not realize how much energy it takes to combat the effects of stress on the psyche and physical body. If you can de-stress, you will find yourself with a newfound wealth of energy. And we could all use more energy!

If you are a <u>member of the Crew</u>, please take as much time as possible to de-stress this holiday season, even if you think you are not stressed! If you are not a member of the Crew, join the crew, and then take as much time as humanly possible to de-stress. {Joining the Crew automatically relieves stress by the way.}

How can I know?

I have, most incessantly in the past, asked why. Why did he do that? Why does she do it? Why do they act like that? Why is it done this way? Full of questions am I. Yet, less answers I have today than yesterday!

I am always seeking the answers to why others act in the way they do. I seek to understand the rational behind their action(s). If I knew the motive behind their actions I reasoned, I would better understand how to act, react, and understand humanity on whole. For the past 40 years, this tactic has failed me miserably. As a matter of fact, it has given me no more insight into humanity, or the actions of my friends and acquaintances, than reading an introduction to Humanity 101 text book. My idea of learning humanity by watching humanity and through silent mental questions, has failed. I am no closer today to understanding people than I was when I as a child. (I would venture to say that as a child, I had more insight into adults than I do today!)

Last night I came to a realization, or at least a musing that has afforded me a glimmer of hope. In typing an email I mused, "How can I know the mind of another when I know not my own mind?" I think I heard a gong sound somewhere in the distance or perhaps is was just one of those cars going by with a double bass kicker in the trunk, who can tell these days? But nonetheless, I believe I have been searching in the wrong direction. I have been looking to others to answer my questions, ie. Outward.

It would seem I am cursed to be a student always. Today, I become a student of myself. What is the primary course of study you ask? I believe I shall start with, "Why do *I* do the things I do?" I shall debark on a comprehensive self-study journey into the expanses of my own mind. A self-study if you will, of the inward kind.

How many times?

How many times do we give at least 99.9% and not make the grade? How many times do we fail to raise our hand? How many times do we not ask the question? How many times do we fail? How many times does this lead to us thinking our efforts on our voyage of life futile?

As sailors of life, it is very easy to get caught up in questions just like these. We become bogged down in the quagmire of 'how many times'. As children how often did we hear, "how many times do I have to tell you..." As adults, do we not still hear the same question from friends, co-workers, clergy and family? It is difficult not to get caught up in this whirlpool of rhetorical, redundant questions.

Today, for the first time in a very long time, I realized that the answer to that question for me will evermore be, "until I get it right". How many times do I give at least 99.9% and in an effort to make the grade? Until I get it right. How many times do I raise my hand? Until I get it right. How many times do I ask the question? Until I get it right. How many times do I fail? Simply put, until I get it right. Failure is not an option. Never has been and never will be.

As long as I can take a step forward, as long as I can raise my arm, as long as I can speak, as long as I can... I will. Just like the pirates of old, I must stand fast in the face of insurmountable odds and overcome. I have charted my course, I have weighed anchor, and I have unfurled my sails. I must persevere, adapt and overcome.

For how long must I do this you ask? Until I get it right, sailor, until I get it right.

Mr. Motivation...

I received an email the other day that stated I was, "Mr. Motivation". Moreover, it suggested that because I was Mr. Motivation, I should simply 'get over' being walked on. I believe this individual does not fully understand the meaning of the word 'motivation' or its far-reaching implications. I also think the concept of positive motivation is even more perplexing to this land lover. I believe motivation is many things, but ultimately, I know, it is not blind.

Positive motivation is not indiscriminating. It is not reckless, mindless, delusional or haphazard. It will not allow you to be treated in a sub-standard manner. Being positively motivated does not suggest that being treated like whale excrement is acceptable. Positive motivation is not stupid.

As sailors of life we encounter individuals from all walks of life and in all levels of growth. Motivation is the energy, or force, behind our actions. Positive motivation is when a sailor of life tries his or her hardest to do what is best for them. What is best for one sailor, may not be the best solution for another. What one sailor of life may find as motivating, another may find mundane. What one shipmate may be able to' forgive and forget', another may take to their grave.

Positive motivation fuels self-respect. It is the motivation behind inner understanding and acceptance of the self. Motivation is also the core energy that allows us to believe in who, and what, we are. And last but not least, it is the force behind staying true to self. A wise sailor understands the difference between motivation, positive motivation, acceptance and rejection. Each is a very different concept, yet, all are part of the voyage we call life.

People change with their relationships

Have you ever known a person that changes their world view depending on the partner they are with? I have. While I am going to use a totality, I believe that in part, it is true. We all change our being when we are in a relationship. And the two shall become one...

People once used to use the term "propriety" or "proper" to keep their partner in check. For decades that mindset was used to keep females in tight control. Men even enacted laws that helped solidify the mindset. It was illegal to take a single Virginia girl across state lines! It was not proper for a young lady to do such a thing. Yet, let her become engaged and her man would then enact a new set of morays and standards that would disable her from doing just about anything open and honest.

A person who was in a relationship with a wealthy individual was expected to accept different parameters. Most affluent people were expected to have a lover on the side. The spouse was supposed to let the relationship stand, unchallenged. The spouse had to change their mindset because of the relationship they were in.

How many people (think friends or acquaintances) do you see only when they are single? Is this not a prime example of a person changing their personality, their life, when in a relationship? They abandon their friends just because they fear their new partner may not approve, may not understand or will feel they are not getting 100% the attention they deserve.

Why does this phenomenon occur? I believe that many factors must be taken into account. However, I believe that brutal honesty, or the lack of, plays a very large role in our relationship with others. What I am about to say, probably 99.9% of you will agree with *in theory*. People want to be in an open and honest relationship. Our society basis its entire structure on truth, or at least your ability to project that you are truthful. This translates into every man and women in the world seeking "an honest and good-looking professional that makes at least 60K a year."

Now it typical fashion, I am going to scatter a little reality about the decks. Try hard not to step in it! People are scared shitless of the truth. Sure, they say they want an honest relationship but the fact is; they want nothing of the sort. They believe the truth will somehow destroy the fragile relationship they have built. So they, like my ex-wife, only speak part of the whole. Why dredge up the past? Why rattle the skeletons in the closet? How I can tell you the *truth* when you will think me mad, you ask. I suggest you ask yourself a far more important question. How will your partner react when they find out you have lied to them? And for the record, an omission of the facts is just as much a lie as if you purposely distort the truth. Sorry sailor, I know you have been riding that wave of "if I don't say anything, it's not really a lie" but the reality is you are living a lie.

When we find Mr. or Ms. Right, we begin to change who and what we are out of fear of not being accepted. Our biggest worry is that they will see the real us and move along. I personally can't imagine powering a grand façade for as long as I desire to be in a relationship with my partner! (I have a theory about the current divorce rate and the ability of a person or persons to maintain a façade but that is a topic for another blog!) It is bad enough when one person is not being truthful in a relationship. Can you imagine what the foundation of this relationship is like if both individuals are building on the façade of the other? You got it sailor, a collapse just waiting to happen.

People do change when they enter a relationship. They can become more aware of themselves and others. In a moment of epiphany they may even realize that they can't do it all alone and that compromise is not a four letter word. Change is not a bad thing. The cosmos around us is in a state of flux. We are in a state of movement. Our life has been in constant movement. Change can be the key you seek for a better life. Just know that your ability to be truthful will ultimately determine the outcome of each and every relationship you enter.

Rough water not enough...

While watching a documentary on the crab fishermen of the North Atlantic, I watched a 23 year old man flip over the side of the boat while trying to hang onto an eight hundred pound crabpot. The seas were high, it was at night, and this sailor took 180 degree flip into the ice cold North Atlantic. His odds of survival are 1/1000.

A one in one thousand chance of living is all this man has. This is his first season as a crabber. He is a "Greenhorn". He will receive half share of a regular deckhand. The length of his tour of duty? Four days on the raging North Atlantic. He will work twenty hour days until the catch limit has been reached, and then he will fall into a comma like sleep for at least eight hours. What will his earnings be for working the deck of this small craft for four days? His booty for working at one of the most dangerous jobs in the world as a greenhorn will be five thousand dollars. A deckhand will receive twice that.

We as sailors of life face similar challenges each and every day. Is our life all that different from the sailor, perched on the top step of the crabpot ramp awaiting the next pot and a possible dive into the bone chilling waters of life? Are we not just as vulnerable to becoming lost at sea? We face a myriad of possible disasters each and every day. From drug & alcohol addiction to being hit by a bus... we face both victory and defeat all in the same moment.

His shipmates scramble to hurtle life rings and "man catchers" at him, as the ever vigilant ships Captain slams the boats engines into reverse so as not to float away from the now adrift deckhand. The Captain speaks calmly and confidently over the ships PA system to the two deckhands who now work to recover the man overboard. The Captain is 37 years old. He has been working as a fisherman for 18 years. Slowly, methodically, an electronic wench pulls the man aboard. If he slips from the floatation collar, his changes of recovery are far worse. Somehow, the deckhands, and the greenhorn, cheat the odds, and the crabs. They pull him over the gunwale and drag him below decks to strip his now soaked body and begin to slowly warm his extremities. Because of the sudden temperature drop, the blood in his body has rushed to its core to keep the vital organs at temperature.

The young man lives. It is not what the man said about the experience that struck me. It is what that Captain said that hit home, "Since the moment he stepped onboard, he has been willing to do anything, to learn anything, and give 100%. He is by far one of the best deckhands I have ever had on the boat." There you have it. A lesser man would have gone over the side, never to see the light of day again. A man, a sailor of life that gave 100% from the very beginning lived. Why? Because he gave absolutely everything he had to give, even when the odds were stacked heavily against him, he never gave up, he never gave in, and he never succumbed. In this crazed life of continually heavy seas, it is the sailor of life that gives everything who will be rewarded with a treasure beyond any price. The treasure of life.

Saying "I'm sorry..."

The FTD people have us buffaloed into thinking that if we send their overpriced vase of a dozen roses, all will be forgiven and a choir of angels shall sing from the heavens. Hallmark has a similar approach telling us what if we *care enough* to send the very best, once again, the heavens shall part and a clean slate will once again be our playground. Hey, truth be told, I have found myself flipping over a card to see of the purchaser went the extra mile or just to the card outlet store. So, if you are dumb enough to fall for these marketing gimmicks you are not alone.

But what happens when you make a colossal mistake, and it takes a few years for you to realize your blunder, but, you want to say to a shipmate, "I am sorry. Please, forgive my actions." Or, let's say, you just realize that your actions hurt people and you want to say something to let them know you are now aware that you are or were a moron. Our knee jerk reaction is to send a card and flowers because we have been programmed by our corporate big brother to do so. In more sophisticated circles, where people are more intelligent and less prone to the brainwashing of corporate giants, they sit down and pen a letter. [In today's world this directly equates to; type out an email.] Perhaps you are the

more personal type and would rather call. Lets be honest here, who doesn't plan the call during a time when you know they are not home so you can leave a message on their answering machine? If you are brave enough to call when they are home, kudos but... putting your true feelings into a disembodied voice and as much distance as possible between you and the offended party really does speak volumes about your sincerity. Maybe you convince yourself you are pressed for time and your schedule is just too tight, so you opt for a quick message to their Instant Messenger saying, "Just thinking of you and wanted to say I am sorry for treating you like shit." Nothing like saying nothing at all...

What most sailors try to do when they want to apologize, is minimize the possible risk to themselves. What risk you ask? The risk of loosing face, the risk of being flipped off, the risk of being told off, the risk of being human, and most of all, the risk of being seen as wrong. Oh' what a travesty it would be to be seen as wrong, imperfect, vulnerable! It would never do to be seen in this way... ever.

The sailor of life understands that existence has its ups and its downs. He or she also understands that mistakes will be made no matter the rhyme or reason. I have a saying; if I am not making mistakes, I am not working. This is not a joke, it is a fact. I have told every one of my employers that if I am not making mistakes, fire me because I am surfing the net and not doing my job. I am quite serious. While I strive to be as good as I can. I fully expect to screw something up at least once a day. Sure, I blame it on Murphy's Law, but a pirate must have a logical infallible recourse! The bottom line is that we all make mistakes. But it is the sailor who is strong enough to admit to his or her mistake, learn from that mistake, then sail on... is the one sailor you want on your Crew. Further, it is the sailor that can look you in the eye and say, "I am sorry. I made a grave mistake. I have learned the error of my ways. Please know that I am sorry for having put you through that." That shipmate is the sailor of life you want as a permanent shipmate!!!

Notice, I said, "look you in the eye." When it comes to apologies, cards and flowers are for the brain dead. Letters, emails, and Instant Messages are for the cowardly. Phone calls, while a tad more personal in nature, are for those who have too much fear in their hearts. An individual who is humble and enlightened enough to take the time, effort, and the coin, to come see you in person, look you in the eye, admit their fault and explain their sorrow for hurting you... is a treasure without value.

The Mind

The mind is a very flexible and self adapting tool It *will* if *allowed* flow with the utmost efficiency **O**ur brain can and will adapt in a millisecond o almost any *change* no matter how unique **T**he intellect is so lithe it will make rational deductions in virtually no time at *all* with little to no effort on your part

There are those that would dispute this fact **P**eople refuse to allow their minds to work at the speed and complexity in which *it* by *nature* works naturally **R**ules and regulations must be followed with strict regard **O**ne must not allow the mind or actions to stray beyond the standard deviation **T**he rules must be adhered to and damn the torpedoes **A**nswers as well as *questions* must be found inside the box

Reality is far different The mind is an underutilized tool that most land lovers carry about for no good reason **S**ailors of life learn that their intelligence is far more than just something that plays nicely inside the sandbox **T**o push the *envelope* or to allow the mind to escape *confinement* is the true test of those that have the ability to tap into their true capabilities

It is the sailor who allows the mind to move beyond false confinement that shall reap treasure untold **T**rue abilities can only be found when the convention of others is left on the docks and one sails for newer waters **J**ust as you have adapted to reading this entry with no *problem* you can expand your psyche so as absorb new and unique arenas of thought **N**ever give *up* always have faith in *yourself* and realize that you will find the answer....... outside the box

Watch and learn

For as far back as I can remember I watched my father operate his motor vehicles. I watched every move he made and when he made those moves. I listened to the words he used when driving. I kept my mouth shut and watched.

My mother was a bit unstable. She would go off the deep end over the slightest real or imagined infraction. I would get hit with everything from shoes to silverware to a metal skillet. I watched every move she made. I watched when she made those moves. I listened to the words she used when she was enraged. I kept my mouth shut and watched.

From what people now call middle school through high school I was a target. I went to the wrong school, I lived in the wrong neighborhood, I was shy and I was overweight. Needless to say, I got the shit kicked out of me more times than I can remember. I watched my adversary's and how they moved. I watched when they made those moves. I listened to the words they used when stomping my ass. I kept my mouth shut and watched.

When I entered the U.S. military, boot camp seemed like a vacation. I got four meals, was paid to exercise and even had free time. It was a four star resort as far as I was concerned. I watched every move fellow recruits made and when they made those moves. I listened to the words instructors used when giving a lecture or mashing us. I just kept my mouth shut and watched.

When my father took me driving for the first time, I got into the 1976 Chevy short bed pickup (step side) with 8 under the hood, mag wheels and a Hurst shift kit on the floor and operated it flawlessly. My father put me through a tougher test on my first day than my driving instructor had on the day I got my license. When my father looked at me and ask, "Who taught you to drive?" I simply looked at him and answered, "I have been watching you all of my life, so I guess you did."

My mother made a comment about me to a friend, "He knows everything I am going to do before I do it. It is scary." When the friend told me about the comment and asked how I knew what she was going to do before she did it I looked her in the eyes and said, "I have lived with her since birth and I have watched her since my birth. I know everything she is going to do because I have to." I learned after a skillet to the skull that I had to be smarter, faster and ahead of her at all times.

When I entered the fleet I was alone. I sailed the seas with no ties on shore. I was a true sailor, foot loose and fancy free. I was what they called a 4.0 sailor. Our performance ratings were based on a 0 to 4.0 scale. After my third year of consistent 4.0 ratings a Chief Petty Officer asked me, "How do you manage to get a folder full of letters of accommodation and recommendation thicker than mine after 20 years in only three?" I looked at him and smiled. I had learned the ropes by listening and watching. I did what was expected and more because I learned the right moves at the right time.

When Danny, a shipmate of mine once asked, "Why is it that you have no fear? When Marines, Sailors and even S.E.A.L.S get on your shit and start a fight, you always win. How do you do it?" I looked at Danny and never uttered a word. How could I tell him that I had been trained since childhood not to fear? That I had watched more people "fight" than I could remember? How could I explain to him that I knew what the other person was going to do before they did it because I taught myself to anticipate, adapt and overcome just about any situation that anyone could ever throw against me? How could I explain twenty plus years of on the job training?

If you want to be smarter, faster, ahead, when you need to anticipate, adapt and overcome at all times I suggest you do three things.

Watch every move people make. Listen to the words they use when interacting with you. Keep your mouth shut and watch.

You will find that you will gain an incredible amount of insight into the people and world around you. You will also find that one day you will be smarter, faster, able to anticipate, adapt and overcome, thus, so far ahead of others that they will be standing on the dock as you sail away toward the goals they once had.

What do I know?

I once heard a very arrogant professor tell a student, "I have forgotten more than you will ever know!" My years are nothing when it comes to the span of time sailors have sailed the oceans. When I look at my time here on this place we call Earth, I understand that my time here has been short. My collective knowledge is nothing as compared to what it needs to be or should be. This afternoon while trying to remember something I once knew, I found myself thinking, "I have forgotten more than I once knew!"

Each of us is granted strengths, and much to our regret, weaknesses. What we have is ours to treasure. What we have not is ours to covet. After the initial frustration of not being able to remember something I should be able to clearly recall in a moments notice, I began to contemplate... What do I know?

I fold my hands behind my back and walk about my cabin in deep thought. I notice the plethora of tombs about and realized that I had read each and every one. My mind flitted back to the local librarians slightly raised brow and look of amusement behind her eyes at my continued erratic choice of books I check out. I remember that I have taken college classes up until last year. This tells me I have been "in school" continuously until the age of forty. I may have missed a year or so, but, not much more. I think of the works I have published and the works I have not. I scan the bulkheads and note the pictures and plaques. I see the places and things I have done. I see much, and yet, my minds eye sees nothing at all. I try to remember something, anything, that would allow me to validate the time I have spent upon this water covered rock, and yet, I can find nothing that stands out. What I know is so little, so fleeting, so... obtuse.

Each moment of every day we are given to learn is an opportunity to excel. While I see no glaring lighthouse beam in the darkness of my quest for knowledge that might bring me safely to the port of understanding, I instinctively acknowledge that I must never fail myself. It matters not what others may think of me, what matters most is my own personal inner understanding. I have leagues to travel to gain the treasure I seek. I have only a limited understanding of my course or my purpose. Yet, I have the tenacity and the vision to continue my quest no matter how much knowledge I may or may not have in my ships hold.

How much do I know? Not enough to fill the bottom of a thimble. This means that I have all that much more to learn. Each day is yet another opportunity to learn what I must in order to move forward into time and space. What I have come to understand is that I always have more to learn. I may never know it all, but I can try. And if I find myself knowing it all, it will be time to remember what I forgot.

What happens tomorrow?

This three word question has been a dominant force in my life for as far back as I can remember. I wondered about tomorrow and what it would bring almost continually. Would I be prepared for its tidal currents, its high seas, and its presence? I prepared for tomorrow, both mentally and physically. Yesterday was ancient history and today was nothing more than a platform to launch into tomorrow. Tomorrow was the gateway to the endgame. Tomorrow was the way to my goals, and today, well... today was the means of how I was going to get there.

I have spent more than a few hours pondering tomorrow. I have spent entire years thinking of what would be happening tomorrow. In doing this, I have missed a whole lot of today's. Having an eye toward the future is not a bad thing but having both eyes and mind focused on the future might not be your best option. Why? Because one day you wake up at the age of 40 and realize that tomorrow never gets here. The past has been misspent waiting for your dreams and aspirations to come true, your today's have been spent in preparation for a tomorrow that never appeared on the horizon. You have a moment of lucidity and all of the sudden you realize that you managed to squander away 40 years of today's for a single tomorrow that never showed up.

pauses to realize the significance of this

I have never been accused of being a genius. But how I could miss this basic foundation is astounding to me. I stated above, "today is the platform to launch." What I was unable to fully comprehend, was that if today is the platform, and the goal is the endgame, then the launch is just as important, if not more so, than the journey itself. For without a launch today, there can be no journey, thus, no journey or achievement of goals. As many times I have heard, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a first step." I never understood that a journey toward my goal begins with a launch *today*.

It looks like I have a bit of mental re-arranging to do replacing my tomorrows with today's. This just might help me on my quest.

Thoughts?

Where is your element of mystery and surprise?

The one thing I have noticed about the human race on whole is that they distain mystery and loath surprise when it comes to their personal relationships. I have yet to meet a person that has said, "I really wish my spouse was more of a mystery. I hate the fact I know everything about their life." Mystery is for the movies, authors and Scotland Yard.

Who really wants to have two very mean looking guys knock on their door at 10:00pm asking for your significant other who happens to be on a business trip? Do you really want the surprise of finding out that because of a slight underestimation on the part of your significant other, you are 10K in debt to the local bookie? I bet that will make you jump their bones upon their return...and not in a good way! "But wait one minute honey, I thought you loved surprises? And my gambling addiction really is a mystery, even to me!"

How about after their third drink they blurt out that they had a threesome. You shrug it off and figure it was back in their wild college days. Then you find out it was four months ago when they went on vacation with their friends... Yep, you really like the mystery of it all right? And what a surprise! You DO enjoy surprises right? Sure you do...

People do not want mystery and/or surprise in their life. If you want to test this theory out, go straight to your place of employment and flip off your stupidvisor and quit your job. Then come home with two plane tickets to Mexico and see the reaction you get. People *say* they like mystery and surprise but the reality of life is very different. Being mysterious and surprising is the best way I know to kill any relationship.

Say what you mean and mean what you say. Don't say you want mystery and surprise in your relationship because you don't! What you do what is *fun*. One of the major problems in today's society is communication is lacking on very many important levels. Counselors spend 90% of their time with clients trying to get everyone on the same page, using the same verbiage, and communicating effectively. Just because you can communicate does not mean that you are fully understood.

I have heard women say time and again they want mystery and surprise in their relationships. But, when I query them, and we discuss the statement further, they admit what they are seeking is fun. I love to have fun and laugh. I do not want surprise and mystery in my love relationship. Odds are, if you take a minute to think about it, you will probably agree.

TREASURE CHEST ELEVEN

Random acts weekend!

It is the official Dread Pirate practice random thoughts of wisdom and perform random acts of beauty weekend. Here you have it shipmates, your official proclamation from the Dread Pirate himself to get motivated and move forward into the weekend with a positive mental attitude and take charge!

It is, very possibly, the weekend that just may jumpstart the rest of your life. This weekend do something out of character, something new and something fun. Take some time out for you. Do something special for the number one person on your Crew.... You. Give yourself a treat, a gift, a long bath, a make over, a body rub. Wake up early and stay up late. Smile.

Smoke less, drink less, and don't get stoned or high. Look at life, your life, and see where you are compared to where you want to be. Take a moment to think about you. Plot a course, chart a journey, and pack your sea bag, think about next month, and not just tomorrow. Sailors of life begin their journey with a clear mind, open heart, full sea bag and a plotted course. This is the weekend that your world, your life, your journey can begin anew.



Duck, dodge or reach?

I never thought that I could feel this way. To be honest, I just finally got it. If a shipmate would have told me several years ago that in a few years I would be a self published author, I would have laughed at them. If a mermaid would have told me that I would have attracted a solid highly motivated reliable group of shipmates that would become Team DPe, I would have scoffed at her silliness. If a sea gull would have whispered in my ear that I would have a pleasant variety of web pages to keep up with, I would have chased it away sighting the fact I did not know html.

And yet, here I am, a self published author with three ebooks in my wake. I have a great team of individuals that help keep me motivated and moving forward. And as you can tell by the many links that grace the Imperial Dread Sea Scrolls web log, I seem to have created more of a web presence than I ever thought possible.

As I stand on the quarterdeck, I look forward and see even more probabilities. I see an audio book on CD in the near future. I see a sequel to Birthright... Slayer, and I also see a web site for the author, MM. All of these things I never thought possible. And yet, because I never gave up, because I never bailed out on my dreams, and because I always made the right dodge at close to the right time... I have achieved more than I ever imagined. I never gave up on me, no matter how many others had.

Today shipmates, my advice to you is:

Keep your feet on deck, your eyes focused on the stars and keep reaching for your dreams as you...

Sail on... sail on!!!

Unique view

Pirates had a unique view on life and their self-made situation. They knew that they had to be self-motivated, self-reliant and keep a positive mental attitude. Those that chose to live the lifestyle knew its drawbacks but they also fully anticipated its rewards. The 'pirates life' was not an easy life, nor was it an overly popular life, but it was a life that held adventure, comradeship, and most of all, the possibility of more booty than they could spend in a lifetime.

Why did a sailor risk life, limb and name to sail under the Jolly Roger? There are only two kinds of people in the world; those that are part of the problem and those that are part of the solution. Or, as Captain Jack Sparrow noted in the movie Pirates of the Caribbean, "There are only things that a man can do and that a man cannot do." The men and woman that chose the pirate way of life knew the risks... and the rewards.

Motivation kept the sailors moving in a forward direction. Corsairs kept their eyes turned to the horizon in all directions seeking their prize. They sailed with the wind so as to be on the same track at to what they sought. Sailors used what they had at hand, to the best of their ability, to maximize its usefulness. Pirates were self-reliant, and stood fast, next to their closest mates in order to move forward to achieve the goal or goals they had set. But most of all they kept a positive mental attitude. They kept one eye out for the prize and the other on their heading. As sailors of the high seas, each one kept a positive mental attitude because they had chosen their life style and their means to an end. They were part of the solution, they did what they could do in order so as to reach for their brass ring. The question is, can you, as a sailor of life, use self-motivation, self-reliance and a positive mental attitude to find the treasure you seek?

Sometimes things get muddled.

In our world of ten to twelve hour work days we use electronic calendars, digital watches, hardcopy planners, laptops, MAC's and PC's, PDA's and even the occasional scribbled note, all in an effort to keep on course. Our effort to utilize our time efficiently has grown to almost an obsessive compulsive global disorder. We fret over what time it is, where we are, where we have to be and what we have missed. Missed meetings and appointments have become a popular topic for after hour's chats with friends and family. What we missed has taken a front seat priority in our lives almost as much as what we have done!

Our calendars are all filled with care in hopes that the 'dead' time we allow for will be sufficient to pad overruns. We plan our lives, day by day, hour by hour and minute by minute. Then it happens, a missed meeting or appointment sets us back more than a few hours and we never seem to recover. Our scheduled meetings, tasks and appointments seem to collide like drunken sailors walking a rolling deck in high seas. Even a half hour mishap seems to force us to do the appointment shuffle that crunches and cramps the rest of our carefully planned day.

The first time I heard the term, 'time management' I scoffed. Who can manage something that is ever changing I thought to myself. In my youth I did not fully comprehend one very important concept; the sailor that finds a way to manage time is person who owns time! And when you own time shipmate, your life and your world, becomes a much nicer place. Sailors of old kept log books for just about everything. A log book was kept for cargo, stores and ships movement. It is much the same today. We can learn from these sailors of old. Logging what we have done, in detail, can teach us how to do it again, better, in the future. Think about that for a moment.

With all the available equipment available to us today, we use it to focus on the next appointment or task. How often do we revisit our 'logs' to seek what happened, what had to be shifted and what fit where best? Do we perform trend analysis on our calendar to see if there are predictable, consistent tendencies that continually disrupt our efforts at efficiency? If there are identifiable trends with definitive sources, can we plan in advance for this so as to better utilize our time?

Time management is a crucial part of every sailor's motivational tools. Being able to plan in advance for not only the known, but the 'probable' will make your journey of life much more relaxed. Setting aside 'me time' is also a very important part of your itinerary. We must, as sailors of life, set aside blocks of time for ourselves. It is this time, our time, that rejuvenates us and allows us to move forward. Some future expanse of time, set aside for no one but us, is a very motivating factor. Use your log books of the past to help you gain insight into the future. Manage your time efficiently and you shall have more time to spend on things you want to do! The sailor of life that can control time will be the sailor who reaches his destinations time and again with time to spare.

A crew is as only as good as its Captain...

If you are a follower, you usually look for the best, brightest, and strongest to follow. It is the law of nature. If you are not willing to be burdened with the authority of command, find someone who is and follow them! Since the dawn of time man has found himself grouping together and the best and brightest rising to the top as leader or role model.

Leaders are chosen for many different reasons, and under the guise of many diverse criteria. Some are chosen because of their educational level, others because of their diplomatic skill, others for their ruthlessness, and still others for their ability to set an example in peace and moderation. There are all kinds of leaders, all types of Captains.

When a Crew appoints a Captain it is a position of honor. It is a title and a position that should be treated quite seriously. In some situations, a single word from you may place them in harms way, or help them achieve their wildest dreams. A Captain carries an unseen burden and one of great import. The Leader must set the pace, the example, and the tone. He must lead by example and from in front. He can not effectively lead from the rear and with words only. A Captain must be able to maintain, constrain, remain and detain as well as act,

and react all in the blink of an eye. The leader must also remember that all eyes fall on him, at all times, no matter the time, place or circumstance.

If you have a motivated, inspiring, positively changed Captain that leads from the front, learns to immediately adapt and overcome all the while thinking of his Crew, he/she is the person for the job. Good leaders are hard to find. Real leaders are priceless.

Earlier I asked the question, "Why did France lose and Italy win the world cup?" Allow me to offer you a tit-bit of information that might help you better understand the question. Match Stats

ITA		FRA
5	Shots	13
5	Corners	7
17	Fouls	24
1	Cautions	3
0	Expulsions	1

Not a soccer fan? Let me help break things down for you. Italy had 5 shots on goal. France had 13. (The more shots on goal you have the more likely you are to score. France out shot Italy by almost 3x) Italy had 5 corners and France 7. "Set pieces" are very important and also very dangerous because this is normally when most goals are scored. Again, France had more opportunities to capitalize. A foul is when a player intentionally commits an offense against another player. More here... Again, France had twice as many fouls against the Italians. While this is not in itself determinative of a game, it is a barometer of the team's ability to play fairly and sportsmanship. Cautions are a harsher foul and not only does the team loose the possession of the ball, but a player is carded. Again, France led the way with 3 to Italia's 1. Then we come to Expulsions, France, because of no good reason, had a single expulsion. Looking at the STATS alone, one could presume that France won the game.

Not so! The game played through regulation and into the 30 minute overtimes. Being the score was still 1:1, it came down to penalty kicks. Italy is known as a poor penalty kick team. France is renowned for its strength in this area. Italy won the game via penalty kicks. Statistically speaking, this was an improbability.

But why did France lose? It may have something to do with the teams' Captain...

ABC News writes, "Explanations were nonexistent for Zidane's action in the 110th minute of his farewell game. He was walking upfield near defender Marco Materazzi when, in his final act for his national team, he bashed his shaven head into Materazzi's chest."

This is a Red Card offense. Simply put, it means immediate expulsion from the soccer game. You can not even stay on the field to watch. You must leave the field of play. End of game sucker.

Most teams have a Captain. A team is built around the team Captain. The Captain should be, at all times, the leader, the example, the roll model and most of all, the pinnacle of what the team *should* be. It is a difficult harness. It is not easy. A lot of eyes fall on you. People watch you constantly, further, people look up to you.

Zidane's actions are unexplainable. No explanation has been given by him or anyone on his team to include the coach. Millions of soccer fans, young and old watched what was once considered a great soccer player, lose his mind. But wait! This is not the first time this supposed professional has done something completely uncalled-for. During the last World Cup he stepped on the back of another player. Soccer players wear cleats. When a six foot plus man stomps on your back...with cleats...it hurts. Again, it was an unexplained act of violent aggression.

Zidane is clearly not a sportsman. He is a pathetic example of a soccer team Captain, and as far as I am concerned, a human. A Captain must be able to maintain, constrain, remain and detain as well as act, and react all in the blink of an eye, not in a head butt. The leader must also remember that all eyes fall on him, at all times, no matter the time, place or circumstance, especially in the World Cup with millions of fans watching the Beautiful Game. A Captain must be motivated, inspiring, positively changed that leads from the front, learns to immediately adapt and overcome all the while thinking of his Crew. His violent action lost the World Cup not only for his team, but for his country. Once he was ejected from the field of play, the French team, his team, was thrown into turmoil and never recovered from the loss. For every action, there is an equal and sometimes not so opposite reaction... A "great" player has ended his soccer career with a Red Card. Not the way you want the fans and children of the world to remember you. Not what you call a good role model. Simply put, Zinedine Zidane is a butt head and a real dyed in the wool bum.

Some of you are asking how I, the Dread Pirate, have the moxie to call an international superstar a butt head and a bum. I am glad you asked. I have two gold medals earned in national competition and a bronze earned in Inter-service competition. I was the Team Captain that led the US Navy shooting team to place in the Inter-service matches at Quantico for the first time EVER. Further, I am the only sailor that has even won the Navy Cup. (National Matches USA.) I have competed against thousands. I have heard every slur, insult and slight you can't imagine because I was a squid playing in a "soldiers" game. I held fast and I won. No head butts needed.

One of the things that saddens me the most about the entire affair is that the journalists that covered the FIFA World Cup voted to give Zidane Zinedine the Golden Ball Award after such behavior on the field of the beautiful game. They too are morons full of whale excrement. Henceforth, I will never, ever, on my honor as a pirate, human and man of honor, will accept any type of award that journalists have voted me worthy of; and that shipmate, you can take to the plank.

So what is the problem today?

Odds are you have a laundry list of negative things that assault you on a daily basis. Most people do. What you say? I am full of piss and vinegar? Now..now sailor, that might well be true but the fact still remains, our life is exactly what we make it. Sailors get all bent out of shape when something does not go their way or the tide changes and they missed the call. The trick is not to fuss and fume about what you missed or don't have, but to use it, somehow to your advantage.

What? You say you have few friends and only a small family? I have no family. Does this bother me? Sure, I have absolutely no safety net under me. Should I take a fall, I know for a fact, there will be no one there to catch me. But is this inherently a bad thing? When you understand you have no safety net, you make damn sure you don't make a mistake. Sure, I save a bundle of cash during the holidays. Sure, I don't have to run around acting like I like people I am related to when I would just as soon kick 'em in the head. I have a very small core group of friends that I can count on 98% of the time. What more can I ask for?

What you say? You are sickly and your body does not like you? I have syndrome X, insulin resistance and some kind of thyroid condition. None are curable and every day above the swells is a good day. Most days I am a walking shipwreck. I live with pain, grief and aggravation. Do you hear me bitchin'? Exactly what good would it do? Life is not easy, nor is it pain free. Get over it, get used to it, make the most of the good days and do your absolute best on the bad days.

Not having a family and being sick ain't whale excrement compared to having a handicap you say? Well shiver me timbers, I am ADHD, LD and have a mathematical disorder. Each and every one is considered a handicap. Yep, count 'em brainchild, One, two, THREE! And yes, for the record, they are all "documented." I was given a certain hand of cards to play if you will. Some people say being ADD is a handicap. Tell that to Thomas Edison, Mozart & Einstein. If you do your research, you will find more than one handicapped individual has pushed the parameters and exceeded even their own expectations because of their motivation. You can be handicapped and it doesn't mean shit to me. I have two gold medals and a bronze, have self published five books and also graduated with a bachelors degree with a 3.0 average. Take your handicap and stuff it in the bilge.

Depression you say is a killer? Anytime you let your negative mental capacity absorb your positive highly motivated self, you have a very good chance getting dead quick. Depression is an effect, not a cause. The real issue at hand is that your mind is trying to tell you something is amiss and you need to start to pay attention. If you succumb to the effect, you will surely reach a gloomy end. If however, you do all you can, to include doctors, medications, self help books, confiding in a close friend and never giving up the fact that you are a highly motivated, positively changed sailor of life, depression is nothing more than what a cough is to an allergy.

You say there is one more thing that is far more fatal, the lack of money. Yeah well, get this greenhorn, I have never made more than \$25,000.00 a year. There were times I had to work two and three jobs to just pay the bills. I have never had "extra" money. Groceries are a luxury. I drive a wrecked 1987 pick up. I live on the smallest house on the street. I have not purchased new clothes in over two years. I have an online business on less than a shoestring budget. I hold contests that have great prize packages that I give away. Not having money has never stopped anyone from doing anything if they truly want to do it. I expect my salary to triple in the next three years. Anyone want to take a bet I am wrong?

Until you stop dwelling on the Micro and begin to look at the Marco your life can be a living hell. Sure you might be tired, sick, poor, handicapped, frustrated, angry, depressed but the fact is, our life is exactly what we make it. Last week is ancient history, yesterday was bad, today is ok, but tomorrow...tomorrow can be whatever we can dream!

World of high risk

The insanity of the work-a-day world is enough to make anyone stressed beyond imagination. Crowding into the office with a bunch of people you would never willingly been seen with let alone spend eight hours with is enough to drive you mad. Then you actually have to interact with the morons on a variety of interpersonal levels. Is it any wonder that humanity's stress level has skyrocketed?

Of course, the best thing you can do it try to make the absolute best of the situation. Pirates of old came from all walks of life and all social casts. They broke out of the mold they found themselves in for the adventure of the high seas. They took a chance and entered the world of high risk acquisitions. Casting off the mundane, they entered the world of anything but.

The question we must ask ourselves; what are we willing to risk to find the treasure we seek?

Stranded...

I hung, suspended in the inky blackness as though I was hovering within a black hole. My body was upright, by arms and legs spread eagle, held by some unseen force. I felt as though I was being, held, yet, ever so gently pulled in an infinite number of directions at once. I held my eyes wide open and yet, I could see nothing but the complete and total darkness all around me.

It came to me then, like the soft landing of a morning dove upon a pile of thistle seed. Not a single seed disturbed by its landing, yet, the dove is there. So too was the same subtly of the idea that gently lay upon me. I soothingly closed my eyes and began to think about where I was and how I came to be in this place. I further focused my mind onto a single strand that seemed to be holding me in this place. I mentally found the strand and concentrated on its being. One after another, my mind flitted from strand to strand. I then, by feeling, more then sight, began to arrive at the understanding of my predicament.

Within my minds eye, I could see hundreds, nay, thousands of fibrous strands extending from all parts of my body outward into the great abyss that surrounded me. The strands that held me fast were of many colors, many thicknesses, and made of many compositions. I was surrounded in a rainbow of colors, from opaque to metallic and beyond. These stands, some flexible, some pulsing, some rigid, some wispy and fluttering in a non-existent breeze seemed to hold me firmly in place.

As I noted each strand, I realized that each was of my own making. Each line that stretched from my body into the unknown was one I had placed upon myself. Some were memories, some ideas, many were relationships, some antiquated morals, false beliefs, others standards, more than a few hopes, a plethora of dreams and aspirations, others desires, some frustrations, even selfexpectations glistened and glowed as each strand held me firmly in place.

I could not move forward, or back. There was no upward or downward movement for me. Each strand was anchored either in the past, present, or somewhere in the future. All strands terminated *within* me. They all held me firmly in a prison of my own making. As if seeing a sunrise for the first time, I came to an understanding. I was my own jailor. I was my own cell keeper and the forger of the strands that bound me. For the first time in my life, I realized that I was the one who has held me where I am.

I used all my strength to curl my right fist into a ball. I felt it then, the smooth polished handle that I had always known would be there when the time came. I squeezed the handle and the blade of the long knife began to brighten as if by sheer will. Twisting my wrist the edge of the blade touched a strand and it snapped. I felt no pain as I watched the strand recoil away into the darkness as though it never existed. Moving my wrist back and forth I began to cut the strands. Soon I felt myself swinging back and forth. I felt things leave me that I have longed to release for years. I continued to swing my arm and cut though the

strands that bound me. I was cutting my way thought my own prison. When I was down to the final stand, a twinge of hesitation reverberated through me. Would I ever be the same if I cut the last and final cord that held me in place? I had taken it this far I thought and as the edge of the knife blade struck the last strand, I fell.

I fell into the abyss. I twisted and turned, I laughed, and I felt the wind on my face for the first time in what seemed forever. I caught the scent of honeysuckle, then jasmine and then coconut...

When I woke this morning from the dream, I understood what I had done. Today, I feel as though I walk on the deck of a rolling ship even though I stride dry land. My world, the one that I had known, is gone. The cosmos that lay before me is mine to explore. I can still feel the handle of the long knife in my hand should I ever need it again.

Today, for the first time in a very, very long time, I feel as though I am able to sail on... sail on!!!

What does not kill you will make you stronger

or it will pull you below the surface and hold you there in hopes of making your fearful, weaker and disorientated. Have you ever gotten the feeling that something from below you in the deep abyss is holding you just under the surface causing you to panic?

In the current World War against Terrorism it is very easy to get sucked into its vortex and fear for your loved ones, your way of life, and yes, even your sanity. For me, when I heard that Israel had had enough, and attacked Hezbollah and their insane partners in crime Hamas, both organizations backed by Syria and Iran. I went backwards in time.

You see, I was part of a UN Peacekeeping force that entered Lebanon to stop act as mediator between the Lebanese government and the Israelis who where kicking the dog shit out of them for the exact same infractions the Hamas are waging upon them today. Today, with the financial and political backing of Syria, Lebanon has become a host to the Islamic terrorist organization Hezbollah and Palestine has forged their own brand of home grown terrorists known as Hamas. But fear not, the Hamas brotherhood did not start in Palestine. It was originally founded in Egypt and has branches all over the Middle East. What a twisted web the Islamic extremists weave. Iran, Middle East power in its own right, has stated openly that Israel does not have the right to exist and "should be wiped off the map."

I met some good people when I was in Israel, kind people, gentle people. People who are more determined to live than many people can possibly understand. When I saw the CNN footage of Israeli rockets and bombs slamming into openly and widely known terrorist targets, I remembered a lot. We have young men and women in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Iraq, Qatar, & Kuwait to name a few. The US war on terror has only been going on since 2001. The Israelis have been fighting terrorism their entire existence and *before*. In case you missed my point, we now have what can be considered a World War against Terrorism.

It does not boil down to everyone against Islam. What it does boil down to is all peace loving nations and people versus extremist's factions that believe they must live and die by the sword. Make no mistake, this war has no borders and it has no lines in the sand. A shopkeeper by day and a Hamas fund raiser by night. Ever notice how in the movies the bad guys cover their face? How many terrorists have their face covered versus the faces of the men and women who fight them? Sometimes it is brutally easy to spot the bad guy.

This will escalate and will continue to expand. I hear the training base by my home practicing night opts as I type this. We continue to train and prepare. Know that the terrorists hope to pull you below the surface and hold you there in hopes of making your fearful, weaker and disorientated. When it all becomes overwhelming to me I try to remember these three things, I lived underwater for nine months in my mothers' womb and lived, I am only as weak as they think I am, and anywhere I surface, is home.

Topless vs. nude...

A shipmate asks, "Why is it that I get so very upset when my girlfriend did something that we both wanted to do together, but, she did it before me and without the 'us'?"

Grab a cup o' grog and kick back a bit. You look tired and frustrated. Let me tell you a wee bit of a sea story.

This very situation arose not so long ago with a wonderful lady and me. You see, as a quasi-photographer I had always wanted to take nude photos of my lover. Not porn shots mind you, but some classic fine art style black and white images of a woman I loved. After several years into the relationship, this lovely lady decided to go to modeling school and get into modeling for artists, runway, etc. During one of our many conversations I mentioned that I had never taken any nudes and would love her to be 'my first'. She expressed a desire to pose nude and said that she to would enjoy being my first nude model. Further, she stated that she thought it appropriate that I be her first 'nude photographer'. Modeling school came and went and life moved on.

One day she came home with a stack of over one hundred photos a lecherous old man who called himself an artist had taken of her. While sitting by her side, she casually handed me a few dozen topless shots she had posed for. My heart sank to the bottom of my balls, and I had to fight very hard to remain composed and civil. After viewing all the photos I casually asked, "I thought we were going to do a nude shoot together first... before you went to another photographer?" She flippantly replied, "We are!" As she piled the photos back together in her folder, I sat silent, completely lost. Not much was said for a day or two on the subject.

During the next few days I felt a very strong sense of jealously... at first. I felt jealous of an old nasty man who had more hair in his ears than I had on my chest! (And that shipmate is one hell of a lot of hair!) I slowly began to analyze my feelings closer. Was I really jealous? I came to the realization that what I was feeling was not really jealousy. I am not the sort of sailor that will tell my Lady what she can and cannot do, especially with her life or body. I expect her to think for herself and make informed decisions. In this case, my lover had gone to another photographer to have her first nudes done... I had no problem, I realized, with her having nudes taken by anyone. What I came to realize that what I was feeling was not jealousy but the bad feeling of being lied to. We had, in my mind, made a promise to each other to do a 'first' together and she went off and did it without me. I felt left behind, lied to, unimportant and most of all, rejected.

After a few days passed and I came to terms with my feelings, I broached the subject and was very surprised by her response. In her mind, what she had posed for with the old bastard, (at this point she found out that he had sent 'a few' of the nudes to 'close friends in complete confidence') were not nudes but topless photos. While I had made no such distinction, she had rationalized that topless photos were different that nude photos because in nude photos you were, 'all naked'. At this point, I understood what had happened. While we had discussed a certain action, we had not delved into the specifics of exactly what, and what did not, constitute 'nude photos.' In her mind she had not, in any way, infringed on our original 'promise'. In my mind, she had broken her word. At this point I was a little more than desirous of bashing in the skull of the asshole known as Ron Miller for not only scoring a 'first' but also for sending her images to people on the internet. I however, was tempered by the fact that my lover did not seem bothered by this. If anything, she seemed to care less that her beautiful face and tits had undoubtedly found their way to places that only degenerates and very lonely old nasty men lurk in cyberspace. I came to the conclusion that if she cared not, why should I spend five to life for bashing this frelling bastards kneecaps to a pulp and burning his house down around him while he lay inside broken and battered?

I digress, what I realized is that I was not feeling jealous, but betrayed. I was feeling as though she had said one thing and acted in an opposite manner. After careful reflection and continued discussion, I further realized that she had not thought of the act as a betrayal, but an act of spontaneous courage and 'fun'. While I felt as though I had been rejected, my feelings and our priorities cast aside, she felt as though she was living life and being adventurous. The difference was based on the fact that what I perceived to be nudes... she perceived to be just 'topless'!

While I make light of this situation, I will say now, in retrospect, the 'topless affair' marked the beginning of the end of our relationship. In today's world of instant gratification, lower moral standards, a passionate desire to be accepted

no matter the cost, grandiose selfishness and the lack of personal integrity... it is no wonder that promises made one day, are broken the next with blatant disregard to any and everyone.

Why do we get upset and feel betrayed and rejected when our lover acts in selfish, must-do-it-now, thoughtless manner that reeks of instant gratification, selfishness and a screw-you-not-in-a-nice-way stench? Because shipmate, as sailors of life, we aspire to greater things such as personal integrity, positive motivation and keeping our word. As a different breed of pirate, we know that we are only as strong as the actions we put behind our words. And when our lover acts in such a pathetic manner, it breaks our heart, our spirit, and most of all, our belief in their ability to follow through on their word. We realize that their selfish weakness, by almost any standard, is unacceptable. It is because; we see that they are not really thinking of us when they decide to be spontaneous, adventurous, and 'fun'. Finally, ultimately, it hurts the most because when we look at the single act of defiance all we can see is the "I" and not the "us."

Life brief of a Sailor

In 1966 I was in the terrible two's and had no idea what in the world...

In 1976 I was in middle school and had not a care in the world.

In 1986 I was getting out of the US Navy with an honorable discharge and had seen the world.

In 1996 I had been recently divorced and had one thing at my feet, the world. It is now the year 2006.

I can remember more than one time when I thought I would not see the year 2006.

The first time was just after my senior year in high school, fall of 1982 I believe. I had no guidance, no direction and no family. I had always been different and different was not accepted in my family. I lay on a moldy mattress in an abandon house. My frigid hands were stuffed deep into my pockets. Even though I lay on a bed I found no comfort, no rest and no calm. My eyes were open yet I did not see the filthy half burned ceiling of the abandon house in which I found refuge. I saw what I perceived to be my future. I saw the faces of the homeless in Pittsburgh. Shivering in the darkness, I thought about my life and realized that I had no idea how long it would be. The only thing I knew was that if I kept traveling on the path I was on, I would not live long. The collage of images flashing through my mind stopped abruptly. An album cover of a band that I love dearly came into focus.

I ground my teeth and looked at the number. I grew angry. I doubted I would ever see the year 2000 let alone 2112. I allowed the rage to flow through me to warm me. I stood and stared out of the open garage door. The city lights always made the skyline look twilight to me. I never knew what time it was because I did not own a watch. I owned nothing with the exception of the clothes on my back. The wind whipped through the old house making eerie cheap show type noises. The only specter in residence was me. I came to the realization that if I thought of myself as dead, I would end up that way. I focused on the numbers on the album cover and spoke silent words to myself.

Around the year 2000 my mind was slipping. I had lived with unchecked insulin resistance for years. My vision was failing, as were my kidney and my mind, oh God, my mind... If someone ever tells you that your blood does not play a vial role in your ability to think, *execute them*. Because of the lack of interested health care providers in my life and my inability to comprehend my situation due to a serious deterioration of mental capability, I was very ill.

I am sure that some doctor out there will argue with me on this, but I have lived through it so I say what I believe. My body was so insulin resistant that it was not getting the glucose it needed to function properly. The body will use what sugar it has to operate the higher functions. It will use the energy it has to fire the heart and lungs. Sight and the capacity to think clearly is not a higher function, thus, the body does not expend precious little resources on these things. My kidneys were functioning but only on the most basic of levels and barely. I believe that the body compensates for the lack of sugar by producing large amounts of adrenaline over long periods of time. I felt as though I was constantly on an adrenaline rush. I lived like this for years.

My mind was not operating within normal parameters. Imagine living on nothing more than adrenaline for years on end. My world was a cross between the lyrics of a Jim Morrison album, angst and dozens of black and white movies all spliced together. I had no memory of the past or present. I believe that I was so sick that I was not psychologically constant. I had no ability to focus on anything for any reason.

One day I was feeling particularly horrid and I lay on the floor of my home staring at the ceiling. I realized how far I came. But I asked myself how long ago had it been since I was on the street? A day, a month, years? I could not tell you. As I stared at the ceiling I closed my eyes and realized that I had done very well for a kid who started out with nothing. When I was about to pat myself on the back and call it a life, words from long ago and an image flashed into the forefront of my mind. It was only after I saw that number again and recalled what I had promised myself did I get up off the floor. It was then I began to hear the words my girlfriend was saying to me. After the tests and the diagnosis, came the pills that changed my body and mind.

On New Years Eve of 2006, I found myself in the one public bathroom that Fredericksburg offers. As I entered the restroom I saw a man standing in the handicapped stall. He was standing tall and proud. He looked as though he was waiting for a train. I asked him if he needed assistance. The man looked at me and asked if I could help him with his pants. The room was full of men who had ignored him. They gave the graffiti on the bulkhead more attention than they gave this man. As I helped him dress, he explained he had lost the use of his left arm. As I helped him sit in his chair he thanked me at least twice. I pushed him out of the restroom and to his beautiful wife and daughter.

As I stood in the street, packed with people, awaiting the giant multicolored pair to do its thing, I thought about 1982 and the year 2000. I then recalled the man in the chair I just helped and how he had not apologized or acted any way ashamed of who he now was. I stood behind a couple that kissed passionately through the countdown.

As I leaned against the hard cold brick of a shop I felt the cold pass through my jacket and into my shoulder. My hands where chilled even though I wore super-thick gloves. I stood alone. Yet, for the first time for as far back as I could recall, I found comfort, rest and calm in the most unlikely of places. Can you tell me what number I saw in my minds eye when the crowd yelled "zero!"?

Aft Ships Locker

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Additional Resources:

For additional Dread style motivation, please the official source for news and information on the Dread Pirate and his works.

Dread Pirate's Secret Cyber-Island DreadPirate.info

The Dread Pirates Personal Motivational Web Log; <u>The Imperial Dread Sea Scrolls</u>

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Dread Pirate

The Dread Pirate is a seafaring fellow that sails the oceans of life. Needing to motivate himself and the Crew, he began to scribe motivational musings years ago. Upon realizing that his nautical writing style and motivating nature afforded shipmates insight to their own lives, he chose to share a little of his experiences, philosophies and revelations via his motivational web log, <u>The Imperial Dread Sea</u> <u>Scrolls.</u>

He furthered his efforts by self-publishing IDSS Volume I and Volume II, Crossing the Line into Motivation. He has also published Shore Leave, Taking a Long Walk and now IDSS III.

Being the Chief Motivational Officer of the Destiny's Quest and <u>DPebooks</u> is a full time billet but he finds time for star gazing, writing, fishing, and fencing.

Visit <u>Dread Pirate's Secret Cyber Island</u> on the Web for the latest information on the author and his works.