



You're The Boat

Charting a Course Toward a Life Worth Looking Forward To

By Pam Belding

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Charting a course toward a life worth looking forward to.

by Pamela Belding

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*This book is dedicated to my darling husband, Blake and wonderful son, Garrett
Thank you for everything.*

The Poem

This poem came to me as I was taking a walk in 2010. I love the beginning, “Worrying about bringing too much or not enough” and that’s why I wanted to share it with you here.

Writing this book is the hardest thing I’ve ever done. The hardest part was knowing what to put in and what to leave out. I’ve tried to do my best to share my experiences but at the same time not sound preachy. To help inspire you, I’ve shared quotes from famous, wise people and have tried to make sure to give them proper credit. Any quotes that don’t have a credit come from me.

Although I worry about whether I’m writing too much or not enough, I can’t let that stop me from sharing it with you. Discomfort and discipline aren’t fatal, but in fact, key ingredients to happiness and success. I guess we could just call them ‘growing pains’. I truly appreciate you taking the time to read this book and hope it helps you as much as it’s helped me.

Thanks for joining me on this voyage! Xoxo Pam

Joy in my heels

I get nervous sometimes
Worrying about whether I'm bringing too much or not enough
It's the energy in that anxiety that brings joy to my heels!
There's poetry in my heartbeat as I walk with confidence
Not knowing why or how not or whether I should.....
breathe

Welcome to my playground!
Humble in my happiness
And the lessons are just yet starting about grace and finesse.

Fear not the slayers for their jealousy only breeds impotence.
Go out and be awesome anyway, just because you should!

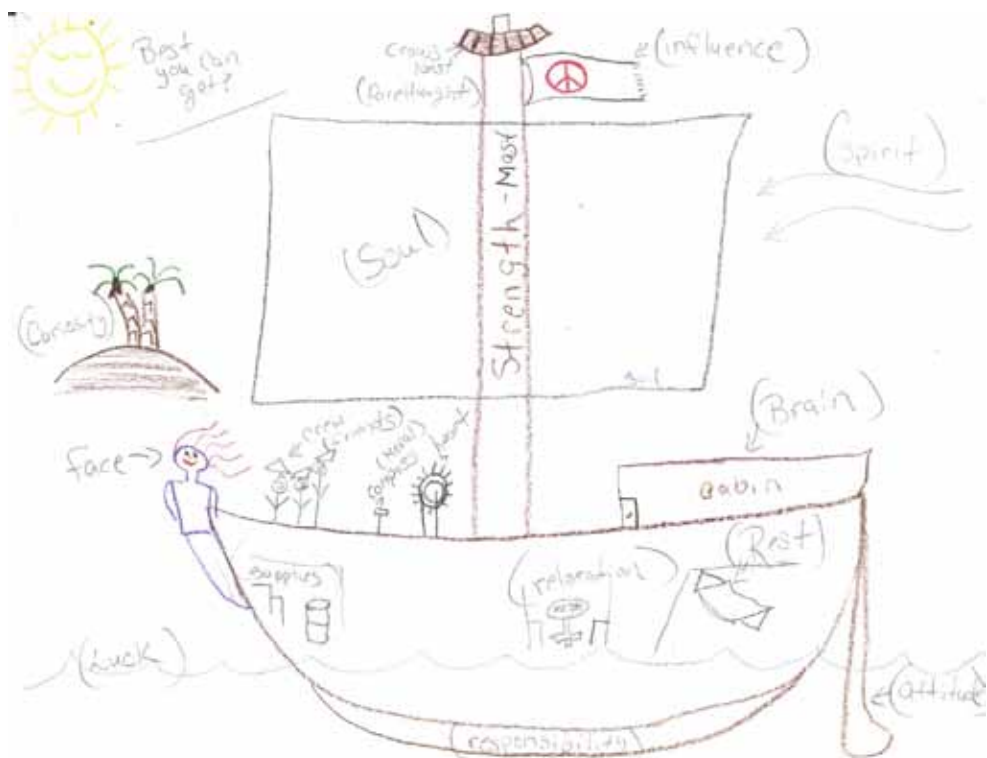
I double dare you to be sassy!
Laughter becomes you! :)

Now where did I put that?

Joy in my heels.
Poetry in my heartbeat.

Pam Belding 2010

Original Boat drawing May 2008



Introduction

I came up with the idea of an analogy back in May of 2008 and I called it You're the Boat.

It came to me when I was home-schooling my then 8 year-old son. We were going to move to Brazil for my husband's work and planned on living there at least a year. I took my son out of school early so we could get the hang of home-schooling while everyone around us still spoke English and we had access to plenty of curriculum.

Although I tried my best, home-schooling wasn't nearly as easy or as much fun as I hoped it would be. We hadn't even left the United States and I was already feeling stuck and helpless. I knew I wanted to be a successful teacher and parent, I just didn't know how to get there. I was making things worse, like working too hard and accusing my son of being lazy when he got tired, and making mean-spirited jokes about what a horrible student he was, right in front of him. I could see the hurt in his eyes, and it just killed me! I knew I needed help, I just didn't know how to get it.

About six weeks before we were ready to move, as I got ready to take my chocolate Labrador, Tootsie Roll out for our morning walk, I thought to myself...

"How am I supposed to get through this?"

The next thought that came to me was, *"You know, your attitude is a lot like the rudder on a ship. If you can keep it adjusted appropriately, you can get where you need to go. If it gets stuck, you'll just go in circles and never get anywhere. You'll frustrate yourself, and everyone around you."*

This made total sense to me. For the first time in weeks, I felt the spark of hope. I was intrigued by the idea of what the other parts of the boat meant, so as I took my walk around the lake with Tootsie, the rest of the analogy came to me. Different parts of the boat symbolized different parts of life.

When I got home, I took out my colored pencils and sketched it out. When I showed it to my darling husband and wonderful son, they said they liked it and that it made sense to them. I taped the drawing up over my desk where I could see it every day and started working on keeping my rudder adjusted appropriately.

Instead of working myself and my son to the point of exhaustion, I started to ease up and tried to be consistent with the school work. Instead of wasting time worrying about what a horrible teacher and parent I was, I tried to look at our experience as an adventure, not easy, but well worth the effort. Those small adjustments enabled us all to live a much happier life in Brazil, as well as back home in Michigan.

Although I originally thought my boat analogy started with the rudder, it wasn't until I was talking about it with a lady friend that I realized it doesn't really begin there. It started when I opened up my heart and asked for help. Despite the fear and confusion in my mind, (more likely because of it) my heart cried out for guidance. I wanted to be better. To feel like I had some control over where I was going and to know I was on the right track.

Most importantly, I wanted to be a good influence on my son. I needed hope that I could become the mother, teacher, and person I wanted to be. By opening my heart and asking for help, I made room for my Captain to step in and take the helm.

I'm not here to tell you how to live your life. I just want to help you, YES YOU, *my friendly reader*, to feel happier, stronger and more balanced. My heart's desire is to have a lasting, positive influence on you, my family, friends, community, country and planet. Writing this book is just one way I can achieve that. I've been talking about the Boat in my community and even started giving presentations. Despite my initial fear of public speaking and having never written a book before, sharing this analogy has helped me grow. Since I started writing this book, I've realized there are more parts to it, so I've been adding them as I go.

The most important lesson that *You're the Boat* has taught me is that I'm never done learning. (It was only when I thought I was that I got stuck). By staying open to learning new things and meeting new people, I've found hope for a better future and faith in myself.

I believe *You're the Boat* can help you discover a fresh perspective. Take a look at how the different parts of your Boat represent the different parts of your life. By stepping back and getting a new perspective, you'll be better able to see how and where you can make adjustments in order to stabilize your own life.

In time, and with focus and positive intention, it's my hope that reading this book will help you heal your life and guide you toward a bright future. As you read, keep in mind this quote from Mark Twain...

“20 years from now you'll be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than the things you did. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade-winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

January 2011,
Ortonville Michigan



P.S. I apologize ahead of time to all of the Navy personnel (including and especially my Dad) who will find discrepancies between my analogy and real, maritime terminology. My goal is to be helpful, not perfectly accurate. I hope you will understand and forgive me.

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Chapter I - Guidance System

“We are made of star stuff. We are a way for the Cosmos to know itself. We are here to explore the Cosmos on a ship of the imagination.”

Carl Sagan

Captain

It starts with The Captain, who steers the Boat using the ship’s wheel. The funny thing is, when I first wrote the analogy, I didn’t put the Captain into it. It wasn’t until almost a year later, in March of 2009, when I felt the burning desire to write this analogy out into words, that I realized my Boat needed a Captain (and ropes too, but I’ll explain that part later.)



Even though I didn’t realize it at the time, I was being guided. My desire to share the Boat analogy with a wider audience was, and is, my Captain’s way of directing me.

Although I can’t tell you who your Captain is, I hope this book will inspire you to think about and recognize your own connection to your guide. Your Captain refers to God, Allah, Grace, the Divine, the Collective Consciousness, the Universe, the Source, or the Force. Whatever you call it doesn’t really matter. Knowing that you’re loved and supported does.

Your Captain serves you, but it's up to you to ask for and then willingly accept help. Every time you ask for guidance, you will receive an answer. Although it may not come in the way you expect, guidance will always come. It might be through another person, in the words to a song, the shape of the clouds or maybe even a thought that pops into your head. You'll recognize Divine guidance by the expansive, hopeful feeling it creates within you. Shame and fear are man-made constructs and of no use to the Divine.

Your Captain is a benevolent force and always has your best interests at heart. Although it may not always be an easy course, trust your Captain to steer you toward a happy, successful life. It's not your place to tell your Captain how to make miracles happen, my friendly reader, just to recognize them when they do.

Your job is to serve your Captain and your Crew to the best of your ability. You don't have to be perfect. You are already exactly who you're supposed to be. Your Captain not only accepts you for who you are, but celebrates you, even when you screw up, even when you feel like crap.

You are always loved.

By accepting love and guidance, your Captain will be able to steer you on course, using the Ship's Wheel.

Ship's Wheel

The Ship's Wheel of your Boat represents your Heart.

In order to get past the day-to-day obstacles, your Ship's Wheel needs to remain adjustable and free. You do that when you keep your Heart open to learning new stuff, trying new things and meeting new people; by staying 'open-hearted' . When you're open-hearted, your Captain is able to steer you toward a happy, fulfilling life.

When you listen to guidance from your Captain and keep an open heart, you'll be able to enjoy your voyage, content in the knowledge that you're headed toward a life you can look forward to. Even when the seas get stormy, keep an open heart so your Captain can steer you in the right direction. That's where the rudder and your Attitude come in.



Rudder

The Rudder is connected to the Ship's Wheel. It symbolizes your Attitude.



This was the very first part of the Boat analogy that came to me. That's why for a long time, I thought that's where the story began. In a way that's true. "Your attitude is a lot like the rudder on a ship. If you can keep it adjusted appropriately, you can get where you need to go, but if it gets stuck, you'll just go in circles, frustrating yourself and everyone around you." That little nugget of wisdom came from my Captain, I have no doubt. It changed my life because I allowed it to.

Your Attitude is the only thing in your life that you truly have total control over. (And you do have that control, whether you've realized it up until now or not.) Have you ever met someone who insists upon being right all the time? I'm sure you have because they're everywhere. They're so determined to prove how smart they are that they overlook the real joy of life. When you only focus on being 'right', you'll never know what's 'left' to look forward to.

Think about how your Attitude effects your life. How you choose to react to people and situations will determine where your life takes you. Do you want to be right, or do you want to be happy, peaceful, and successful? It's your choice. If you think life is going to be difficult and frustrating, then that's exactly what will happen because you'll steer yourself toward it. You'll be right. Miserable, but right.

When life gets difficult or you make mistakes (because you will), don't waste time beating yourself up.

Be mindful of your actions and reactions. Focus on ways to keep your Attitude adjusted appropriately. Take a walk, meditate, talk to a friend, look at or make some art, go outside, take a nap, exercise, listen to or make some music, have a healthy snack and get a drink of water. Whatever you do, take care of yourself and treat yourself well. Believe the best of yourself and remember, you are NOT your feelings. You're feelings are like the weather. Although they effect your day to day voyage, they don't define who you are. You're a person with talents, skills and experience. Recognizing these qualities within yourself will not only help you, but everyone around you, as well.

Your Attitude effects everything and everyone in your life. When you listen to your Captain, and keep your Heart open, your Attitude can direct you to where you want to go.



Bridge

The Bridge represents your Mind.

In the Bridge you'll find many tools to help you navigate along your adventure. It's essential to be able to get to your tools, and use them to the best of your ability. Cultivate your capacity to learn and use your tools effectively. Be sure to actively and regularly let go of what you don't need in order to make space for what's important. A strong, healthy mind will lead you to a strong, healthy life.



Compass

The Compass is your Morals.

As part of the guidance system, it helps pilot you toward what you care about the most. Your morals show you what you value, as well as what you don't. You'll be able to tell what's important to you by looking at how much of your time and energy you're willing to focus on it. For instance, if you say you believe in adventure and knowledge, but you spend most of your time in front of the television, then what you really value is comfort and security.

Take a few moments to think about what you truly want to believe in and whether you point your time and energy toward it. Your awareness will guide you toward what's truly important to you.

Don't worry about where other people are going or what their doing. They have their own course to follow. Just focus on what matters most to you and you'll steer away from trouble and get where you need to go.



Maps

The Maps represent where you've been and where you're going.

They show you where you've learned your most valuable lessons as well as where you're looking forward to exploring.

For example, I was married once before back in California in the early 90's. My ex-husband and I were terrible to one another, insulting and verbally abusive. Going through that particular adventure taught me to appreciate my current husband and to speak to him with kindness, respect and admiration. My current marriage is much more stable and fun because I took those lessons to heart. I'm looking forward to many happy years with my husband.

Take a moment to look at where you've come from and what knowledge you've taken from there, what lessons you've learned. Think about where you want those lessons to take you. Use your past experiences to see what you want to look forward to.



Captain's Log

The Captain's Log contains stories and beliefs you have about your life.

These are the memories and ideas that help make you unique and valuable. They can also get in your way, so take a good look at whether your beliefs are helping you or holding you back.

If I hadn't learned my lesson from my first marriage, my current marriage would most likely have ended up ruined as well. Learning to speak and be spoken to respectfully has not only made me happier, but has created a much more solid foundation for all of my relationships. Despite my failed first marriage, now I trust in my capacity to learn from my mistakes and move forward and that has made all the difference in my life.

Sometimes the Bridge becomes cluttered with useless stuff. When worry, anxiety and fear overwhelm your mind, you risk steering yourself directly toward that which you fear the most.

You are not your thoughts! You are what you do with your thoughts.



If your mind races, bringing up worries and doubts, your life will end up being stagnant. (Imagine trying to drive while standing on the brakes.) Just like your Captain needs a clear path through the Bridge, you need a clear mind in order to move confidently through life. Make some time every day to let go of thoughts that don't serve you. Let go of doubts, anxiety, worry and shame. They just get in the way of your hope, courage, faith, and peace of mind.

Meditation, rest, healthy food, nature, good friends, joy and exercise will help clear your mind and keep you healthy and confident. I've found most of my best ideas come to me while I'm taking a walk. It must have something to do with the fresh air and time to think.

Whatever you choose to do, as long as it works for you, be consistent and you'll quickly start to feel better. Focus on taking care of your responsibilities and learning new things in order to have a successful journey, because doing gets stuff done -- worrying never does.

Remember to take time for stillness and clarity. They help to reveal what is truly useful and good.

Port-holes

Port-holes are opportunities for self-development.



They are times, people and things in your life that allow you to see deeper within yourself, as well as out beyond. Everyone has them, the only difference is whether or not they recognize them.

For instance, going to school, moving, changing jobs, becoming a parent, getting sick, recovering, and retiring are all opportunities for self-development. You can also learn a lot about yourself through social media, by looking at what you share with the world. Meditation is also a very valuable tool for getting in tune with your essential self, as well as therapy and coaching. Even this book has been written to be a porthole for you.

By reading this analogy, you're making an effort and taking the necessary time to study yourself. Give yourself a pat on the back!!!

Since you've made this decision to look deeper within yourself, to consciously develop yourself, your life will start to become more fulfilling because you'll realize YOU are the one filling it up! You're learning about what's really important and valuable to creating the life you want to live. Congratulations on starting your voyage to a happier, healthier life!

The Port-holes in this analogy offer you a look into getting your needs met, having fun and getting rest. Taking care of yourself is fundamental to a successful life, which brings us to the next section of the book.

Chapter 2 - Logistics

*“It’s good to be doin’ what I’m supposed to be doin’
with the people I’m doin’ it with.”*



Take a look at the picture on the cover of the book. You can see the Port-hole up on the Bridge showing your Mind, which we’ve already covered. The Port-hole in the body of the Boat on the left shows barrels and boxes, representing your Provisions. The Port-hole in the middle shows a table with some games and a radio on it representing Fun and the Port-hole on the right shows a person sleeping in a hammock, representing Recovery. All of these represent things that fortify your Boat.

Your first and most important job is to take good care of yourself.

No one else in the world can know as well as you do what you need or when you’ll need it. You are your own best resource. However, it takes time and focus to make sure you’re well stocked and your needs will change regularly and often. Think about it, groceries, clothes, gas for the car, relationships, and work. There’s always something! Don’t beat yourself up for not having everything you need. It’s a never ending job. You’ll never truly be done, just caught up, if you work at it. Just do your best and be kind to yourself. You deserve to feel good.

One of my heroes is best-selling author, teacher, speaker, and retreat leader, Jen Louden. On her website at www.jenniferlouden.com, she talks about our minimum requirements, the basic information you need to know in order to be your best self.

When you're not getting your needs met, she writes:

"...not only do you get all pissy and resentful, you start thinking something out there has to change. Or, even more tragic, that something in you is broken, bad and irredeemable. When, really, so often, it's **the simple lack of what you need to feel like you**, to be resilient and resourceful and human, that is causing your suffering. Knowing your minimums allows you to make choices that say, "I love you. I'm on your side. When I love someone, I treat them with kindness. I honor their needs, most of the time. All of the time would be impossible. I'm very human." Knowing your minimums brings you home, to yourself, to this **embodied existence** as in "I am here!"

So, *my friendly reader*, be kind to yourself! Think about what your minimum requirements are and try to make a point to fill them every day. For instance, in order to feel like myself, my minimum requirements are to be able to brush my teeth, have a hot cup of black coffee, talk to a person and take a walk. Although I can survive without these things, without them I feel icky and off-balance. When I get my needs met, I feel strong and willing to serve my Captain and my Crew. Whenever I start feeling resentful and over-worked, I have to stop and think about what it is that I need and then make a point to go get it. It takes practice, but it's absolutely worth the effort.

Consistently getting your needs met helps you feel stronger and more effective. When you make yourself a priority and work to get your needs met, not only will you feel better, you'll show other people how to treat themselves with kindness and respect as well, and that's inspiring.

Provisions

Provisions represents all of the stuff you will need on your voyage.

Start with clean water, healthy food, shelter. Think about what you need in order to have fun, exercise and rest. Equip your Boat with good, healthy stuff so you can keep yourself and your Crew healthy.

Remember to balance your needs with your wants. If you fill up on lots of junk, you're body won't get what it really needs and you'll end up feeling cranky and bloated. Keep your Boat well stocked, but make sure you'll be able to get to your stuff later. If you can't find it, then you don't really have it. Just like in the Bridge, clear space helps to spotlight what's most important. Simple is good.



Fun

Fun helps to keep you healthy, physically as well as emotionally.

It's where the real joy of life happens! Find whatever it is that makes you happy. Cultivate your Fun-lovingness and creativity. Laugh, giggle, smile and feel the wind come back into your Sails. You can't depend on anyone else to make you happy. Nobody else can make you have Fun. It's up to you to figure out what tickles your funny-bone. Notice how this window is balanced in the middle of the Boat, over the Keel and directly under the Mast? I think that represents how keeping Fun balanced with your responsibilities helps to make you stronger. (When I first drew up the Boat, my Fun was not centered or balanced. Once I recognized that and made some adjustments, I've become much, much stronger.)

Having Fun is great way to promote bonding with your friends and family, too. Find someone you love and bring them along with you because when Fun is shared, joy gets doubled. To create a life worth living, have Fun!



Recovery

After you've taken care of getting your physical needs met and you've had your fill of fun, you need to take plenty of time to recover.

Recovery takes time, tools and intention. Just like sleeping at night, you can't cram eight hours of sleep into two. (Believe me, I've tried.) In order to offer your best, give yourself, and your Crew, enough time to Recover. Without it, you run the risk of burning out and causing more harm than good. Think about what tools you'll need, like a quiet, dark room and a comfortable bed. Concentrate on holding the intention to heal.

Instead of focusing on how tired you are, or how much pain you're in, try to concentrate your energies on feeling better. Practice staying open, let go of trying to control everything, and clear a path within yourself to allow your Captain to step in and do what needs to be done. Your Captain wants to help you, but you have to be willing to receive that help. You don't have to know how it's going to happen, just trust that it will and be thankful when it does. Be compassionate with yourself. Your Captain created you as a gift to the world, to help make the world a better place. You honor that gift when you treat yourself and others well and by holding yourself accountable to your responsibilities.



The Keel



At the very bottom of your Boat, the Keel represents your Responsibilities.

The Keel is very heavy because it balances your Boat. When I first drew this analogy, one of the first things I realized was that my Keel was too heavy. Although I had the best of intentions, I felt like any mistakes I made would have dire consequences. I wouldn't take a break and relax because I felt like that wouldn't be acting "responsibly". I spent all of my time and energy focused on educating my son and I ended up resenting him for it. I second guessed everything I did and overworked both of us, making everyone miserable in the process. This Boat analogy helped me realize my Keel was too heavy and was dragging us all down. I needed to let go of trying to do everything by myself and ask for help.

Our responsibilities are supposed to help keep us stable by giving us something good and healthy to focus on. Holding yourself accountable enables your Captain to work through you to help serve your Crew and yourself. When you take care of yourself and your Responsibilities, not only will you feel stronger and healthier, you'll gain the respect of your Crew.

Your Crew

Your Crew are those people around you.

Family, friends, co-workers and neighbors all help us sail through life. Although we could survive all by ourselves, we won't thrive without other people. (Remember you're not Robinson Crusoe, marooned on a deserted island – you are sailing the seven seas on the journey of a lifetime!) When you take care of your Crew, your Crew can help take care of you. Providing for the needs of your Crew will not only gain their respect, but help them to feel strong and healthy, too. (People behave better when their needs are being met.) Your voyage will be much more successful when you take care of your Crew.

Although it's your responsibility to take care of yourself and your Crew, you don't have to do everything by yourself. Asking for help strengthens the bond between you and your Crew. It's a compliment because it shows your Crew that you trust them. Knowing you're trusted and supported frees your mind and helps you become more effective.

Remember this quote from Maya Angelou...

“People may not remember what you said or did, but they always remember how you've made them feel”.

Speak to your Crew with kindness, respect and admiration because harsh words, criticism, judgment and bad behavior throws your Boat out of balance, and steals the wind from your Sails. Although you can't control other people, you can and must control how you react to them. Most importantly be aware of how you treat your Crew. "To speak well of another is a blessing to all." When you're thoughtful of your Crew's needs, hopes and dreams, hopefully they will respond back to you with respect. However, if they don't then you need to consider showing them the Plank.



The Plank

The Plank represents the necessity to let go of people, attitudes and behaviors that are rocking your Boat.

Just like taking out the garbage, everyone has to let go of negative stuff, regularly and often. Cleaning and clearing out your Boat is well worth the time and effort it takes because it benefits everyone.

You'll notice stuff that needs to be released by the negative energy and drama it creates, which throws you and your Crew off balance. Noticing how these people and situations negatively effect your life is the first step to fixing it. The second step to balancing your Boat is to let go of the negative person, attitude or habit.

That's not always going to be easy, I'm certainly not trying to insinuate that it will be. But when you focus your attention on the negative person, attitude or habit you give it more power over your life, making the situation worse.

Don't waste time staring over the edge of your Boat, worrying about what you've left behind. Pay attention to the task of skipping your Boat back on course and taking care of your responsibilities.

When you pay attention to the people and situations that help you feel healthy and balanced, you starve the Negative of the attention it needs to grow. Letting go of toxic people, attitudes and behaviors may be difficult, (especially in the beginning), so make sure to ask for help from your Captain and Crew and then (this is the most important part) accept their help! It's a sign of strength and respect for yourself and the rest of your Crew. You'll all be glad you did. You'll become more present, engaged and aware of your surroundings, which allows you to be more able to defend yourself.



The Cannons



The Cannons symbolize your defenses.

They represent how you protect yourself from other people and situations. This analogy is meant to help you think about your own defenses, and whether or not they're adequate or holding you back.

I was struggling with trying to write this part, so I went to someone I consider an expert on setting boundaries. Yolanda Facio is the author of the website www.RedHotMomentum.com and the Meanie Manifesto, a guide to enforcing boundaries around your time and energy. I described my analogy to her and then asked her for a quote about protecting yourself. Here's what she had to offer.

"I used to love this Melissa Etheridge song called "Chrome Plated Heart". I figured if I could harden myself I could protect myself against all things bad. The problem is you become edgy, trigger happy, you shoot long before you know whether or not you need to. It seems perfect and even "cool" until you start alienating people. Who wants to be around someone with a loose trigger? Before you know it you're alone. So how do you find a happy medium? A line or boundary that makes sense but isn't too tight or too loose?"

Be open. Be open to what's happening first, check it out, evaluate. Then decide. It is never too late to enforce and protect. But do it too soon and you may not get a second chance."

It's true. Lots of people sail around with their Cannons proudly displayed up on deck, ready to shoot cannonballs (criticism and accusations) at the slightest provocation.

Sure, they're well-protected, but they're also lonely and afraid because they've alienated everyone out of fear. Fear that comes from feeling vulnerable and weak. By giving in to their fear, they've allowed it to grow to the point that it takes over their lives. They've protected themselves right out of any kind of life worth living.

"A ship in port is safe, but that's not what ships are built for," Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hopper.

Unfortunately lots of people criticize simply because putting other people down makes them feel good. They're not filling themselves up, doing the work of fortifying themselves. They're just preying upon other people's energy. That energy never lasts for very long, that's why they have to do it a lot. Think of it like cotton candy. You can eat it, but it doesn't really satisfy you.

Knowledge about yourself and valuing your energy protects you.

When someone accuses or criticizes you, knowing yourself enables you to be able to see whether their point was true and helpful or simply coming from their own insecurity.

The Cannons (continued)

For example, I know myself well enough that if someone accuses me of being lazy, their criticism would just bounce off because I know I'm anything but lazy. However, if they were to accuse me of being hyper and distracted, I can recognize that as a pattern of behavior that I need to work on. Knowing myself and valuing my energy helps to protect me against unwanted criticism and accusations, the cannon balls of other Boats.

Protecting yourself is essential but knowing how to do that can be tricky. Yolanda wrote a post on a website called Birds on the Blog titled "The Power of setting boundaries." I'd love to share the essence of it with you here, in the hopes that it will help give you the tools and confidence you need to defend yourself without alienating your Crew or any other passing ships.

1. Start with the end result in mind. What do you hope to achieve? Knowing what you're trying to achieve with your boundary will help you see that's it's just a way to get your work done and be more effective. Boundaries are not static. Once you set up your new rule, you may need to make adjustments. Be flexible.

2. Let everyone know what's happening. It could be a general household announcement, a memo or a meeting. Just make sure everyone is aware of the rules. They can't respect them if they don't know about them.

3. Enforce the rules. Boundaries don't work without enforcement. If you allow someone to cross the line it becomes an invitation. When someone crosses the line, let them know. Verbally tell them where they've gone too far and then respectfully let them know what you expect from them in the future.

4. The final part is patience. It might take some time to get everyone comfortable and "trained". Keep at it. Be consistent. Be nice about it and as time passes you'll see changes in your productivity and in the attitude of those around you.

This is YOUR voyage. You have every right in the world to protect it. However, if you want to enjoy your voyage, make sure to use your ammunition (defensive words and actions) sparingly. Know the value of what you're protecting because your energy, your happiness and your time can't ever be replaced. Be clear about where you're going and what you believe in. Be aware of who's around you and where you're headed. When you stay engaged in your voyage, clear at communicating what you believe in and strong with your boundaries around your time and energy, you'll be well protected.

Your awareness about who you truly are is your best defense. By clearly stating your intentions and showing respect for yourself and your Crew, you will all feel more stable and secure, enabling you to sail forward confidently and safely.



Chapter 3 - Propulsion

“An opportunity is a challenge met.”

The Figurehead

The Figurehead on the front of your Boat symbolizes your Face.

This has two different, but equally important meanings. The first is about how to you Face your challenges. The second is part of the navigation system and will be explained in the next chapter.



The Waves

The Waves upon which your Boat sails represent your Challenges.

I interviewed an expert seamen from the Great Lakes Coast Guard, based in Cleveland. According to retired boatswain's mate Doug Sharp, when you Face on-coming Waves (technically called 'heaving to the sea') your Boat will be more stable because the wave has less surface area upon which to effect your vessel. The Wave pitches your boat upwards, lifting you up, propelling you forward.

Sailing upon the high seas gives you the opportunity to grow and develop, meet new people and see exotic places. If you turn away from your Challenges and try to avoid them, the Waves catch your Boat broad-side and threaten to capsize it. When you face the Waves head-on, it shows how much you care for and want to protect your Boat and Crew.

Although you may feel frightened by your Challenges, facing into them will help to push you ahead, eventually enabling you to feel stronger and more confident.



The Mast

The Mast represents your Strength.

If the Mast gets broken, your Boat won't sail anywhere. You'll be aimlessly adrift and powerless. If you don't know what your Strengths are, my friendly reader, consider this an opportunity to discover them!

*“Strength does not come from winning.
Your struggles develop your strengths.
When you go through hardships
and decide not to surrender, that is strength.”*
Arnold Schwarzenegger

Facing up to your struggles, problems and issues, all of the 'Waves' you have to Face, are your Captain's way of helping you grow. Challenges create an opportunity for you to learn lessons, which help you move forward.

Once again, make sure to ask for help from your Crew and your Captain. That takes Strength too, as well as stamina, tenacity and focus. In time and with practice, you'll become stronger and more confident.

The background of the page is a faded, artistic illustration of a wooden boat. The boat has a prominent mast with a wooden bucket-like structure at the top. A large, light-colored sail is attached to the mast. On the deck, several figures are visible, including a person in a red jacket and another in a blue jacket. The boat is shown from a side-on perspective, moving towards the right. The overall tone is soft and inspirational.

The Sail

The Mast supports the Sail. **The Sail symbolizes your Soul.**

Your Sail propels the Boat just like your Soul wakes you up in the morning and carries you through the day. Looking out on the ocean, the Sail of the Boat is the first thing people can see. Your Soul can be recognized in the quality of the energy you carry within you. The energy of your emotions, your feelings create the Wind that expands your Sail. Joy, courage, hope, faith, love and peace fills up your Sail, while disappointment, fear, anger, guilt and shame steals the Wind, leaving you stuck and helpless.

Be aware of your feelings the same way you would pay attention to the weather. Although it's a smart idea to be prepared for what's in store, don't take it too personally. Your feelings aren't permanent. Focus on doing your best and enjoying your adventure. Trust in your relationship with your Captain and Crew to help you along. Every day brings another chance, so never give up, never stop asking for guidance, and never let go of faith in yourself.

The Ropes

The Ropes connect the Sail to the Mast. Your Ropes represent your Self-Discipline.

Without Ropes to harness the Wind's power, your Sail will just flap, and your Boat won't move forward. The more disciplined you are, the more you believe in yourself, the faster you'll sail toward your goals.

I mentioned earlier, when I first drew up this analogy, my Boat didn't have any Ropes. This made me realize I didn't have a lot of Self-Discipline. Although I was trying to take care of my Responsibilities, I had a habit of getting frustrated and then moving on to something else. I didn't stick to one task long enough to work through the tough parts. Once I realized my Boat needed ropes, (although it was really hard at first), I soon came to see how staying focused for longer periods of time would not only help me to learn more, it could also help me develop more Strength and confidence. Self-discipline allows me to get where I need to go. However, if I pull on the Ropes too tightly, (by focusing too much on my goals, not on my voyage) my Sail will become too rigid – and I risk flipping my Boat.

Allow me to take a moment to tell you a story. When I was a twelve-year old kid in California, my dad took me and my friend sailing one day on Lake Almanor. He told me “hold onto these ropes” but then let them out at his command. Although I was paying attention and thought I had let the ropes out, I was actually sitting on them.



When we went to make our turn, the wind caught the sail and literally pushed our boat over. It capsized and we all ended up in the water. My friend and I started screaming and panicking because we couldn't see my dad. We hadn't heard him say he was going under the boat to cut the lines loose in order to free the sail and return the boat upright. A few minutes later, he came back up and calmed us down and we all managed to get the boat flipped back over, but the memory of that day has stayed with me ever since.

Although I didn't realize it immediately, the lesson I have since learned from our sailing adventure was to let go when I'm supposed to. Really, truly LET GO. If I don't, I end up doing more harm than good. Not to say that I am always good at this. Quite the opposite. This is one of those things I'm still struggling with. I'm trying to get better at it by practicing meditation and time management. Mainly, I try to focus on doing my best and not beating myself up when I make a mistake, because I still do sometimes. While it's important to work toward my goals, I can't let that blind me to the true joy of the voyage itself. The best any of us can do is find the flow, the place where we're heading in the right direction, doing what we're supposed to with the people we're doing it with. (Here's a phrase that popped into my head one day while I was taking a walk. It's good to help get into the flow, "It's good to be doin' what I'm supposed to be doin' with the people I'm doin' it with." repeat! Try it for yourself!)

Chapter 4 - Navigation

“Heaven isn’t where you may go someday; Heaven is who you are.”

Marianne Williamson

The Figurehead

The Figurehead, also refers to your physical face, the person you see every day looking back at you in the mirror.

People respond to you by how they see you. If you scowl, or frown, you’re projecting anger and fear and people won’t trust you. **People will be more trusting and accepting when you express calm, strength and confidence.**

Even when you don’t feel brave, just by trying to be, you’re more likely to get there because of the responses you’ll get from other people. Instead of avoiding you out of fear, they’ll be more likely to talk to you and treat you with respect. You’ll become more confident with more experience. With more confidence, you’ll feel calmer and stronger too. Bravery comes from doing the best you can, despite the struggles ahead. Think about how you express yourself, how you’d like people to respond to you and try to put your best Face forward.





The Crow's Nest

The Crow's Nest represents Forethought while the Flag represents Influence.

These are both supported by the Mast, which represents Strength. Climbing up into your Crow's Nest to look ahead gives you a chance to plan for what may lay over the horizon. Although you'll need Strength to make the effort, taking time to plan ahead actually gives you a chance to relax later on and be more fully in the moment. It allows for more 'flow'.

The Crow's nest also refers to taking a "higher" perspective, by focusing on compassion, grace, faith, bravery and joy, instead of criticizing, complaining or judging. You may think you have the right to bitch, moan and complain, but realize what Flag you're flying when you do. Think ahead to what you want your Influence to be. If you're flying the skull and crossbones, people will be afraid of you. You'll have a difficult time making friends and no one will want to work with you. They could even make you walk the plank of their Boat. You'll end up lonely and resentful, and that's no way to live.

Remember, the experiences you create today are the moments that define your life. Live well, love much and laugh often so that other people will too! They may even be inspired to try it for themselves. Your ideas and influence live on in the experiences you have with other people.

The Buoy

The Buoy represents the people and things in your life that reassure you.

Hopefully you have someone or something in your life that helps you feel up-lifted. (If not, take some time to find one. It could even be a song, or a piece of art.) When you're lost in the fog, scared and turned around, it's great to have something to help you get your bearings. Someone or something that helps remind you of where you are and what you have to offer. It's good to know the purpose of a Buoy and although everyone needs a little help sometimes, you can't keep sailing with it all the time. Reassurance is important to help you get back on course, but like a Buoy, if you don't move past it, you're likely to hit the rocks beneath. Although Buoy's serve a purpose and have their place, your voyage happens out beyond that.



Telescope

Up in the Crow's nest is the Telescope, representing your Imagination.

Looking out past where you are takes time and focus. When you use your imagination, you give your Captain a chance to inspire you! (After all, that's how this whole book has been written). You'll be able to imagine a life worth looking forward to! Use your imagination to see how your difficulties can actually be opportunities for growth and adventure. The only things really meant to be are those things you decide upon. So imagine the best kind of a life you want to live and decide to live it!

While it's important to spend time dreaming about happiness and adventures to come, too much time behind the Telescope and you'll miss out on what's right in front of you. Landlubbers well know this cliché, "Can't see the forest through the trees." Sometimes you need to see that tree before you walk into it! Balance what you're looking forward to with what you've already got.



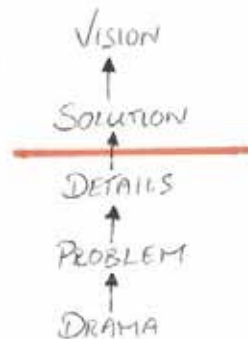
Life Preserver

On the door of the Bridge is the Life Preserver. The Life Preserver represents the Vision of your goals.

The Life Preserver saves your life by giving you something to hold onto if you fall overboard. It supports you and gives you hope. Aiming for your ultimate destination, whether it's a happy family, healthy body and mind or a successful career, allows you to make short term course adjustments without worrying about becoming thrown off course.

I didn't have a Life Preserver in my original Boat. One of my friends suggested my Boat needed one when she attended one of my You're the Boat workshops in town. After my presentation, she asked why there wasn't a Life Preserver? I immediately realized I already had one, I just hadn't put it on the Boat yet.

When I first saw this drawing on Steve Errey's website, www.theconfidenceguyonline.com, I immediately saw waves where the red line is.



I even drew a picture of a life preserver above the word Vision. His blog post, “*What to do when you’ve lost your confidence*” (find it on-line at this link (<http://tinyurl.com/3ogwghn>) inspired me to let go of struggling with the details, problems and drama and instead focus my energy on the solutions to my problems and my Vision of a happy life. I’ve kept this chart up above my desk ever since and have shown it to many friends and family.

The Life Preserver in your life is your vision for the very best life you can live. It’s the direction upon which to focus your energy if you’re not really sure of your current surroundings.

(You can use your Buoy and your Telescope to help get you back on track, too).

For example, my vision for my best life includes a happy family, so when I’m trying to make a decision about whether or not I should do something, I ask myself, “Will this help my family?” If I can envision how it does, then I’ll do it. If not, then I have to seriously consider whether or not it’s worth my time. Think about what you want most in your life and use your vision to help keep you on course.



Safe Harbor

The Safe Harbor is a place where you can drop Anchor, where you meet people, make trades and tell stories.

It's a place where you can feel accepted and interesting. You won't see this represented in the illustration because I can't tell you what your Safe Harbor looks like. **Only you can recognize where you are when you're most comfortable and safe.**

Everyone needs some place to go where they can mix and mingle with other like-minded people. Whether it's on-line, or out in public, everybody needs a Safe Harbor to go where they feel like they're a part of something bigger than themselves.

The Anchor

The Anchor is your Passion!

It's what you throw out onto the shore to hold you steady as you pull into port. Your passion helps you to feel grounded and secure. It's what you would most happily talk about, study or spend time learning more about. Whether it's your hobby, your job or your kids, your Anchor gives you some way to find common ground with other people. Your Anchor helps you bring the world together.



The Island

The Island represents your Curiosity.

As the driving force behind intellectual capital, Curiosity makes you interesting and valuable. Your Curiosity ignites your spirit and feeds your passion! And because you can't think two separate thoughts at the same time, the best part about Curiosity is that it kills fear!!

*“Don't discount the pleasure of the unknown.
There is beauty in mystery.” Albert Einstein*

Your life, your voyage is your gift! Appreciate the mystery of what lies ahead and get Curious about what you have to look forward to.



Wrap Up

So what does this all mean for you, *my friendly reader*? Well, that's up to you. I can't tell you what your life is going to look like. The Boat analogy is simply a tool to help you figure out where to start making adjustments. There will always be course corrections to make. The trick is to not give up. The only time you're going to be completely finished is the day your adventure on this planet ends. Every day, pick something to work on. Ask your Captain for guidance, clear out your Bridge, fortify yourself, stay open to learning new ideas and meeting new people, treat your Crew with kindness, respect and admiration and most importantly believe the best in yourself. In time, and with focus and positive intention, you'll find yourself feeling better, stronger and more confident. When you chart your course toward what you're looking forward to, you break free from fear and despair. You can sail off into the sunset with your Captain and Crew, full of hope for a fantastic adventure!

I would like to offer you one last thing to help send you off on your adventure. It's a prayer I wrote, inspired by Oprah Winfrey, Eckhart Tolle and Raymond Buckland.

*Stay open to the balance of energies
and show patience for time to do its work.*

Embrace the place where life happens.


By recognizing graciousness, kindness, generosity and bravery,

*We discover the power to create a better future
is contained in the present moment.*

I wish you all the best, today and always! Bon Voyage!

Xoxo Pam Belding

March 2012



How am I supposed to get through this?!

If you've been asking yourself this question then you're in the right place. This book offers you a chance to feel stronger, healthier and more stable by seeing all of the different parts of your life as the different parts of a Boat. By simply starting with a fresh perspective and a genuine desire to feel better, you can make real, obvious improvements in your life.

You'll discover how...

- Your Captain guides you toward a happy, healthy life.
- Your attitude is a lot like a rudder.
- Your responsibilities are supposed to be heavy so they can keep you stable.
- To protect yourself and your Crew.
- Facing into your challenges can propel you forward.
- To figure out what you need.
- Fun makes you stronger!

"I had the pleasure of attending a 'You're the Boat' presentation and walked away with another vehicle to help me understand me. With so many tools available today, Pam's insights and explanations are easy to comprehend, make sense and sent me home with a confidence that I can navigate through my sea of life and find peace, serenity, joy, love and laughter. I highly recommend this book to everyone." Madonna Van Fossen

"Pam may be small but her spirit and inspiration can fuel the flame in all of us. The 'Boat' is a tool we carry without weight. Her analogy can help us navigate our way through our personal lives, as well as business and community. With Pam's energy and our own desire for enlightenment, we can find our course and move forward toward a life worth looking forward to. Everyone can be helped with this analogy." Mary Kalocay

Pam Belding is a wife, mother, artist, writer, speaker, coach and volunteer extraordinaire. Born in California, she's traveled the world and lived in Mexico and Brasil. She now calls Michigan home. Pam volunteers in her community promoting its people, businesses and events. She also writes an inspirational website at www.CurrentInspiration.com because she's dedicated to having a lasting positive influence.

You have within you the ability to chart a course toward a life worth looking forward to. What are you waiting for?

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