

Jess Lloyd-Mostyn

The age of information is well and truly upon us and can be overwhelming. Yet, just occasionally, sailing allows you to leave it all behind

fifteen WhatsApp messages greeted me this morning so that was it.

There is simply too much noise in modern

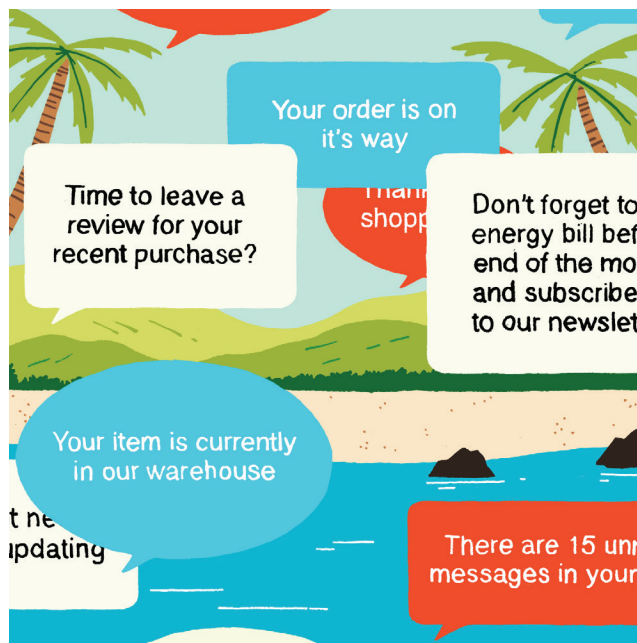
life. Noise from the phone, the TV, the well-meaning friends and family that ping up on your devices. Updates on Covid-19, unsolicited parenting advice, announcements of this that and the other.

For nearly 10 years we managed to get by without having a phone on board. Actually, that's wrong, we *did* have a phone but no SIM card. We used it purely as another form of back up navigation, using Navionics apps but never had it connected. Something has changed, we've been in one country too long, there were too many things we needed connectivity for. We used to only get wifi when we went ashore to a café or bar and now we have it on tap, on board and unlimited whenever we want.

Except it's not whenever *we* want, it's whenever anyone *else* wants as we are now inevitably contactable. Of course the offending phone object is kept on silent but still it buzzes away with endless notifications about things. "Your order is being packed... your order is on its way... your order has been delivered... please leave a review for your order". Ping ping ping away with seemingly helpful 'news' alerts.

The start of a passage can often be like this too. Getting things prepped, stowing stuff away, explaining to the kids what we're doing and why, checking the engine, removing the awnings, explaining again, less patiently this time, that we can't have marbles rolling around when we're underway. Then there's the sudden roar of the engine, the toddler braying at my knee asking for milk while I'm steering us out of harbour, the crackle of voices over the VHF, the shout from below of a child asking for yet more cereal.

Noise, so much noise, so much mind clutter that none of us want. But then sometimes, just sometimes, the initial flurry passes, the mainsail is up, the headsail unfurled and the traffic zone is behind us. The kids settle down, the sea state calms and we exchange looks of "yes, time to kill the engine". Pull the knob, turn the key, log it, turn the rotary



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switch, throttle in astern and ahhhhh.

Silence. Or almost silence. A hiss and continual lap of water at the bow, a soft billowing of wind against the mainsail, it's now quiet enough to hear birds calling faintly overhead. We are out, we are free. No pings, no alerts, no urgent constant bulletins or demands. It doesn't matter, it can all wait, the only voices are real and immediate and full of pleasure and delight. "Look at the clouds, see the turquoise colour of the water, watch the patterns the sunlight makes on the sail".

We're out of the loop now, out of signal range, able to be apart from all of it and nestled in the comforting rhythm of the swell and the wind. We are using just the elements to move us on and take us where we want to go. Who cares if we're only going at 2 knots? What's the hurry? The sails are happy and so are we. Down

below the hotness of the engine fades and the hatches are all open as the winds are mild and the sea is flat. The rush and bubble of water against the hull is a soothing soundtrack as the children draw and play at the table. It's a different background noise, natural and constant, a telling reminder of our surroundings and yet it's somehow comforting and reassuring.

It's easy to be bombarded by messages from everything and everyone around us. In our towns and cities, in our jobs and homes, there are so few opportunities to grab a snatch of mental breathing space. Sometimes just adjusting our eyes up from the screens or small print to the endless expanse of the horizon takes time. Sometimes just getting the physical space of getting out on the water is enough. And sailing at its best is able to transport us from that world of largely pointless noise to one of freedom and purpose, where the only sounds mean that something is happening or changing.

And if the wind is right and you can lose the engine and fill the sails and breathe deep and relax back in the pace and tempo of the sea and the boat talking to one another you just might find the perfect antidote to a world we've all made that's full of noise. Sometimes the very best unsolicited advice you could ever hear is simply to shut up and sail.



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Jess and James left the UK in 2011 in their Crossbow 42 and have sailed halfway round the world, growing their crew en route. Follow their journey at water-log.com

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