

Jess Lloyd-Mostyn

The phrase 'I don't like change' is a common one and is uttered ever more frequently as we grow older. Yet blue water cruisers have to learn to embrace and enjoy the 'dot dot dot...'

When asked why it is that we are still sailing, now in our 12th year of what was meant to be only a two year trip, I often say "it's so fulfilling". By which I mean that our way of life is one of constant learning and stimulation. And probably the single greatest thing that I have learned in this time is the art of flexibility, not only accepting but positively embracing change.

I am often told in an offhand way that "people dislike change" a phrase so clichéd and tabloidesque that few doubt it's fact or accuracy. But change in itself is nothing to be fearful of. Fear of change really comes about when the reason for the change is not understood or is disliked, which causes resistance.

People also stress to me the importance of routine, as though the sailing life must be a kind of ceaseless chaos. An acceptable routine for children is somehow only synonymous with an extremely limited one of endless repetition, bath-times like clockwork and staying in one place. Yes, our children have travelled the world, experienced a wide variety of different cultures, races, religions, languages and food. Yet the family home, despite being a cruising sailboat, has been one of remarkable stability and consistency. Their routines are linked to tides, sunrise and sunset, the sound of call to prayer drifting out over the anchorage, provisioning trips ashore or when cyclone seasons are as opposed to the time their parents return from work or the toll of the school bell.

Any way of life intrinsically linked to the weather and seasons encourages an increased awareness in the power of the elements as a factor for change. I used to try to apply the same determined organisational control that I'd adopted in my previous working life to our sailing plans and quickly found myself constantly changing and re-writing our sailing routes and schedules as each passage or stop would inevitably take longer than I'd allowed time for.

And why is that? A forecast may not ring true and a trip that looked to be only five days' sailing can stretch into nine when the wind turns against you; a short stop at a fishing village may be so delightful that you decide



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to linger; you could awake with a splitting headache, or a child has a stomach ache; winds and tide may push you towards a different port or even country from where you intended. It's a crucial part of sailing full-time to be aware of this changeable nature to your planning and make allowances for it.

I also consider it a vital aspect of crew and boat safety to have an adaptability to any plans, rather than adhering rigidly to a set agenda. And we've learned the hard way that there are always ways of working with changes rather than against them. A sudden shift in the weather could often result in the choice between a tough passage in high winds that would undoubtedly put stress on the equipment and crew, or to stay longer in a sheltered harbour. It always amazes me how many cruisers still opt for the dreadful sail option because

they had made plans that they didn't think they could alter. And often it's connected to visitors flying in.

Surely nothing could have polished all our skills in enduring and tolerating change quite like the coronavirus pandemic, when cancelling plans, unexpected test results, new regulations and shut borders made us all learn a thing or two about adaptability. And as far as the effect on our children might be, I think that cultivating a healthy understanding and compassion in relation to change can only help to equip them practically for the future.

The whole family routinely discusses our plans in quite an open-ended way; "we could just skip that country and sail to the next one"; "our plan was to stop here and here and visit our friends here"; "if the weather doesn't line up we might be waiting in that harbour for several weeks". Flexibility gives us the power to better hear one another's choices and desires, allowing us to make concessions and detour in order to be able to find our son's favourite roti canai stop in Malaysia, to visit the monkey forest again in Bali that our youngest adores, or simply allowing enough time to send a postcard to our daughter's best friend in New Zealand.

So our plans these days are often ended with a dot dot dot, not knowing or trying to overplan what may come next. It seems rather fitting that it's our sailing that helps keep us so fluid.



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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