

Briefing for entry into a more harsh environment.

People often talk about what you can't take home after a *SEA Semester*. You can't take home the sails--they have no place in your daily life. You can't take home the gimble table, and if you did, your friends wouldn't want to eat with you. You can't take home the ocean. All your connections to this place and our experiences here we seem to have to get rid of.. It's frustrating, and it can be depressing.

This essay is about what you can take home. What you can take home and what, if you work at it, can be more important than any of the things you are leaving behind.

Let's look at what we've really been doing out there. We've been organized. We lived outside of our comfort zone pretty much the whole time and, mostly, we knew where everything was. We have been thorough, we plotted our route on the chart and kept track of the log and we took care of our environment, keeping it clean. We have been prepared--watching the weather thoroughly, and we always knew where our foul weather gear was. We have taken care of ourselves. We have been in touch with basic survival tasks. We did our drills regularly. We have taken chances with other people, entrusted them with our lives and have seen no reason not to grow close to them. We have persevered and put our minds to things that never seemed to end. We have used new tools and techniques. We have taken care of things we had with us. We have lived simply.

These are the things you can take home. Let's look at them a little bit closer...

1. **Organization:** The sea can be harsh, so you need to be organized. But that other world is far more complex and even more harsh in ways less tangible than sun, cold, wind, rain, waves. Being organized will help you weather the storms.
2. **Thoroughness:** On the ship, it is pretty easy to see the consequences of leaving things only half done. That other world has so many distractions, interruptions and stimuli that it is even easier to leave things only half done. Before long you will find yourself buried under a pile of ongoing projects without direction.
3. **Preparedness:** out there--you've only had to be prepared for every eventuality of weather, but in that other world, you have to be prepared for every eventuality-- period. There are no rules, shit happens, and only the prepared are able to maintain their balance.
4. **Take care of yourself-** and do it even more aggressively than you've done it on the ship. The environmental hazards in that other world are even greater: crowding, noise, schedules. Take time to be alone and still. Never underestimate the healing power of being near beauty--be it a flower, music, a person, or a well prepared meal.
5. **Stay in touch with basics.** Continue to cook your own food and consciously select the place where you sleep at night. Take care of your own minor injuries and of those of your friends. Learn about how the complex vehicles and tools that you use work. The other world is far more complex and seeks to draw you away from the basics.
6. **Keep taking risks with people.** Your own aliveness is measured by the aliveness of your relationships with others. There are so many more people to choose from in that other world, and yet, somehow, we are less close. Remember, that the dangers are still present: Anytime you get in a car with someone, you are entrusting them with your life. Reasons, which crop up, that tend to suggest that we should not grow close to others, should be examined very carefully.
7. **Remember, you can let go of and do without seemingly critical things.** On the ship, it has only been movies, sleep, and steady tables. But you can do without almost anything. Eventually, for us all, it is a person we have to do without--and then, especially, it is important to remember, that doing without does not rule out joy.

8. **Persevere at difficult things.** It may not be as concrete as sailing the ship, or using the sextant, or, as immediately rewarding as cinnamon rolls--but the world is given to those who persevere. Often you will receive no support for your perseverance, because everyone is too busy being confused.
9. **Continue to learn to use new tools and techniques.** Whether it is a computer, sextant or an ice cream maker, you know, that simply because you haven't seen it before doesn't mean that you can't soon be a pro. Remember that the only truly old people are those who have stopped learning.
10. **Take care of things:** in that other world, it's easy to replace anything that wears out or breaks, and the seemingly endless supply suggests that individual objects have little value. Be what the philosopher Wendell Berry calls "a good materialist." Build things of quality, mend what you have, and throw away as little as possible.
11. **Live simply.** There is no substitute for sanity.

These eleven things are some of the lessons you have really had at SEA, and they will serve you well in any environment of the world. They are habits to live by. So if anyone asks you what your *Sea Semester* was like, you can tell them: we were organized, thorough and prepared. We took care of ourselves in basic ways. We entrusted people with our lives. We learned to do without and persevered at difficult things. We lived simply.

And--if they are perceptive, they will say: "You don't need the SEA to do that."

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