



The new boat

by AfSFH Fellow and Head of IT,
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A metaphor for clients who seem more focused on problems rather than solutions

The man standing by the harbour of the small fishing village was so pleased. He was telling everyone that he had a new boat, a sailing boat, and that he was going to sail out past the island everyone could see in the distance and then come home. That this would be his first trip in his new boat.

It was already gone ten in the morning when he climbed into his new sailing boat and cast off. He was wearing his new bright yellow life jacket, and he knew today would be perfect. The sun was shining, although there were some clouds out to the west. He'd brought some lunch with him and a drink, and everything was bright and shiny. Perfect.

As he sailed out of the harbour entrance, he noticed that the sea was a little bit choppy, but that's only to be expected, isn't it? And he sailed on, steering to the left of the island. He trimmed the sails and turned into the light breeze – what sailors call tacking or coming about. He was happy using his sailing skills and working towards his chosen destination.

It was about lunchtime when he decided to skip his picnic and continue working the sails, because the wind was definitely picking up. He thought he'd sail past the island and then turn for home. He just needed to concentrate for the moment.

By one thirty, the sea was very choppy, and the weather could best be described as squally showers. Some of the waves were quite high. He pressed on. He wasn't a fair-weather sailor.

By two o'clock, he decided that he'd better turn round. The weather was getting worse. As he started to turn, water came slopping over the sides and into the boat, then huge waves washed in.

He tied the rope on the boom and went to look for a bucket to bail out the water. There was a pump, which he turned on, but there was lots of water coming into the boat. He found an old bucket – his new one was still in his car he remembered. And he started bailing out the water. It seemed that every bucket of water that he threw over the side was replaced by two more from the sea.

He was soaked, he was tired, and he realised that his bucket had a hole in it – two, in fact. His whole focus of attention was on the bucket, the bailing, and the rising water. Well, it would be, wouldn't it? He also noticed that he was beginning to feel quite tired.

What he didn't notice was that the wind had blown the boat round the island and back towards the harbour – although now it was beginning to turn the boat away from the harbour entrance towards the rocky outcrop where part of the cliff had collapsed during the storms of the previous winter.

Now, there are two ways this story could end. In the first version, he could continue bailing out the water until he became too tired, and the water filled up the boat and it sank. Or perhaps it even smashed into the rocks.

Alternatively, he could have looked at the bigger picture, taken control of the rudder and sails, and headed back to the harbour entrance and safety. Once the boat was pointing in the right direction, he might have found something to cover the holes in the bucket and continued bailing, but his focus would have been on getting to the security of the harbour.

I just wonder, as you lie there so relaxed, which choice you would have made if you'd been in his position?



About the writer:

Trevor was made a Fellow of the AfSFH last year. He is Head of IT and Social Media for the AfSFH and regularly contributes to the Journal and the website. He runs his Hypnotherapy practice in Chippenham, runs CPD sessions, and offers one-to-one Supervision sessions over Zoom.