

Start rocking the “relationship boat” by Janelle Fletcher

Not settling for less in your relationship

How many people do you know, who are sitting in their “relationship boat” that has holes in it, and the boat is about to capsize?

Are these people trying to patch up the holes with the wrong stuff, or are they just ignoring the holes and hoping that the boat will still stay afloat with the two of them and any passengers intact?

Is that person you?

I see many women staying in their relationships, come hell or high water, and settling for a very mediocre, if not, rocky ride. They stay floating out in the middle of the ocean – a bit like being stranded without a compass, lacking the skills and resources to cope with high seas and rough conditions or not having the knowledge or crew to help them steer the boat to calmer waters. I hear women telling themselves, “This is OK but not really OK, but I’ll stay put at the moment. Things might get better one day.” They put up with the status quo, but equally hope for change.

So they continue not having their needs met and they stay stuck in the same old patterns, which leave them in “no man’s land” or get them into deeper problems in their relationship, which sends it spiralling down the plughole, taking the toy boat and all its passengers with it. They allow their partners to continue with affairs or destructive patterns of behaviour, they continue tolerating abuse or lack of communication, or they may “soothe” their own unhappiness and discontentment with an affair, an addiction to something, or they try and boost themselves up in other ways, be it retail therapy, getting busier or putting even more time and focus into work or the kids. They go about trying to patch up the hard stuff with short-term solutions and commitments or the odd visit to a counsellor, but they don’t commit to taking some actions that may make a difference.

Alternatively they may deny that their boat is about to sink or be torpedoed. They don’t want to be the one that looks “bad” or be the “one to blame” for failing in, or getting out of the partnership. They don’t want to upset the kids. They don’t want to think about how they could possibly “go it alone” or manage financially. All legitimate, yet fear-based stuff, and many women settle for the boat-ride being really tough, rather than getting themselves a life-jacket and making changes that could possibly transform their lives and put them on better shores.

If you believe your partnership is salvageable and you desire that it improves, then for goodness sake do something differently about it. I repeat, stop settling for the rough ride and enjoy a more pleasurable cruise. Start rocking the boat in positive ways.

That could be as simple as changing your perspective on a situation, responding in a different way to your partner or shutting up and listening more often and gaining your “co-skippers” point of view. You could prioritise more time to enjoy each other and do some more things together. Start being more appreciative of your partner and be thankful for what he or she brings to your own personal growth. Their “annoying habits” are simply just reflecting back to you some aspect of yourself! These are some simple ways of not only patching up the holes, but hopefully giving the hull of your boat a new surface.

What is staying on the boat in its present conditions doing to you, your partner and your family? I am not advocating that everyone “jump ship” now, but I am saying there can be benefit in rocking the status quo and no longer tolerating the present relationship as it is. For some, their present relationship is convenient, relatively comfortable and provides company on potentially lonely nights, but it is not one that they see taking them into the future. Others have the experience of knowing deep in their hearts that the relationship as such, has served its purpose and timeframe - from a deeper, more spiritual perspective - and know that that particular chapter needs to end so that another one can begin.

Having supported a number of women through the decision making process of whether to stay onboard, “jump ship” or to “get off the boat completely”, it is important either way to do this with as much calmness, common sense and planning as possible, I have observed how liberated people eventually feel when they, first and foremost, discover how to meet their own needs and desires and not depend on others for that, change what they are prepared to tolerate or not, learn new ways of relating to others and themselves and take some firm footing on solid ground again.

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