



This is a transcript of the video “AFC Connection Blog 10”
from Alec at in8.uk.com

See: <https://www.in8.uk.com/2019/10/sinking-my-narrow-boat/>

Sinking my narrow boat

Hi again. In this short video, I'd like to share with you a story from a few years back after I got divorced when I was living in Oxford. And this story is about how I sank the narrow boat that I was living on. I'll explain why in a moment.

And, I'm also going to link this to one of our superpowers. One of our innate resources on this is one that's often overlooked. It's our ability to connect with other people. And... You might think, Well, that's just a skill that we can develop. But no, it's actually, we are born with it. It's built into our DNA. Babies will stick their tongue out in order to mirror, mimic and match their carer in order to survive. It's something we're born with, and it's a tool that we can use and rely on.

This is the 10th video in a short series in which I'm picking specific episodes from my own life and using them to illustrate how I've achieved a position now where I feel quite emotionally strong and resilient. It doesn't really matter what life throws at me. I seem to find a way to cope with it nowadays. Maybe that comes with old age. I don't know. Um, but, yet,

So the card that I'm going to be using is the card "Rapport". I'm also going to be referencing a few others, but I'm doing this whole process, really so that you, too, can live a life that's relatively free from anxiety and stress.

So why on earth would I want to sink my boat?

Well, let's just set the context, um. I got divorced. I'm living on a narrow boat because it's cheap and it's an easy way to be near my children. Who I see on weekends. It has no running water. It has no engine. It's a very primitive way to live, but it does have mains power and a telephone. I absolutely love living there because I can open my curtains in the morning and I can see ducks and swans and, uh, moorhens and river life and it's just an absolutely beautiful way to live.

But why would I want to sink it? Well, this boat is wonderful, but it has a problem, and the problem is where it is located. Um. I've lived on it for six years and I want to sell it. I've got to a position now where I can consider moving back to dry land. And, as much as I love living on the boat, it is pretty small. You know, it's as wide as my arms outstretched and it's as tall as that. It's like living in a corridor, Um, but the mooring that I have it moored on has a condition, and that is that you can't sell a boat on the mooring unless it's had a current water safety survey.

That's kind of normal practice, but my boat is on a mooring that it can't move from. Not only does the boat not have an engine, but there are two great obstacles to getting the boat away from the mooring.

The first is an open weir which is upstream of where the boat is moored. No way you can get the boat up that open weir. And the second obstacle is a very low foot bridge, which is just downstream of where the boat is moored.

So you might think, How did the boat end up there?

Well, as far as I can tell, it had been delivered by crane, probably in the middle of the night, about 10 or 12 years before. And I'd bought it knowing that it had this kind of liability. So I needed to get the boat off the mooring. And, I couldn't sell it unless I could get it off the mooring. I needed to get it to the boatyard. So could have a survey the bottom could be blacked. um. There was some real issues, some real problems to how this might be done.

So I looked. I've been thinking about it for several years while was living on it. Um. I'd looked at lots of options and the obvious one was to get a crane to crane it out of the water. So I looked at booking at one of these huge, huge cranes. And, realised I'd need to hire hire a low loader lorry as well. Then I discovered that I'd need to close the road on, on the foot, on the road bridge, which was very close to the boat - and that was going to cost me hundreds of pounds.

And I found out that that actually have to have a survey done to make sure that the road and the bridge that the road passed over, was strong enough to support not just the weight of my boat, but the crane supporting my boat. And it was all becoming really crazy complicated and expensive. So that wasn't going to work.

So what were the other options?

Well, one of the other options was to sink the boat. Um, to move it down in the water so that it will be low enough to get under the footbridge. But that's very low in the water. That means taking the boat right to the limit of what would actually allow it to stay as a boat rather than a hunk of metal at the bottom of the river bed.

So I did a lot of research, um. I looked at different ways that we could get the boat low in the water. I surveyed the riverbed. I spent a summer with my children on a little punt, mapping out the depth of the river 50 foot upstream and 50 foot downstream of the little low footbridge, and I also dived to the bottom of the river, and I removed about five bicycles that had been thrown in under the footbridge. And this was a kind of a major project for me. I spent many, many hours working out how I could get my boat low enough in the water to get it under the footbridge.

One of the ideas - I used to work at Harwell and they had many, many tons of radiation shielding. There is a bit like lead blocks, but it wasn't lead and I didn't have the right contacts to be able to get hold of it. But it was such a dense material, it would have been really good. It wouldn't have needed a lot of it to take the boat really low in the water.

I also looked at the railway track, a contact with company in Birmingham who were prepared to sell me 12 tons of steel bar. This is railway track that have been cut with oxyacetylene torches. It had very sharp edges, so we would have needed heavy duty gloves and a team of half a dozen young men. To, um, have a kind of chain gang bringing the steel bars onto the boat.

I reckoned it would have taken us three or four hours to load it, and then we we could move the boat downstream under the footbridge and then three or four hours to unload it again. And then the idea was to sell the steel back to the supplier who gave it to me, or sold it to me for about half the price. But we're talking about two and a half thousand pounds worth - just for the steel. So yeah, difficult. Not really an easy plan.

So then I looked at different ways of doing it. Could I put oil drums and fill them full of water on

the boat? But when you do the calculations, it turns out that the entire boat would have to be full of oil drums. There wouldn't be any room for anything else. Um. It would be a very difficult thing to organise.

Eventually I came up with a plan, which was to contact the people who make the curtain sides for these articulated lorries. You see them on the motorways. They have big plastic sheets down the sides of the wagons, which are usually secured with straps. And the people who make those curtains have an ability to cold weld sheets of plastic together.

So I designed two huge tanks. And we're talking tanks that are six or seven foot long, six or seven foot high. And the idea is to put one tank at the front of the boat. One tank at the back of the boat. Pump water into the tanks thereby sinking the boat. Not too deep, but deep enough to get under the footbridge. And then to pump the water out again afterwards.

And in fact, that's the method that we eventually used. But how does this relate to the Rapport card that I mentioned? Well, I want to point out that over the years that I was planning to make this change. Make this, to get the boat out of the water. I'd done a lot of this. I'd use a lot of rational thinking. I'd made plans, had done calculations, I'd surveyed the riverbed. I had done a lot of head scratching and a lot of thinking.

I also had a vision. I used my imagination. I kind of thought: "Well, you know, if I could get to a place where this problem was solved, everything will be easy". I could sell the boat. I could move on in life. I could do other things, so I'd used that. I'd also used my memory and used everything I've learned about physics, about water displacement, about making a 3D map of the riverbed. Lots of this stuff going on.

But the thing that I haven't really used and that I needed to use was the Rapport card or the Rapport superpower, if you like. These are all super powers. These are things that were born with that we can tap into. Because I was stuck. I kind of knew how to do it, but I didn't know how to make it happen.

And this is where talking to Bindi. And this is before we were married. It's before we decided to join our families together and I was just sharing my thoughts about this topic, and she introduced me to a very simple idea, which was to set a date and to plan backwards from that date.

Now you might think that's so obvious. Why would... Why would a relatively intelligent person struggled to even think of that? Well, it didn't really occur to me until someone else, until talking to someone else came up with the solution. So I set a date. We set the date of the 15th of April 2003. Gave myself about three months to put the plan into action, and I worked backwards.

And I worked out what had to be done, by what date, in order to make this plan a reality. I hired water pumps. I made, I got the bags made and tested. I got a team together. I plugged the holes in the boat that might have caused problems like the sink had a drain out into the, into the river. I'm ashamed to admit it - not very green, but that's how it worked. There were also drains from the bilges, which had to be plugged because I didn't want water coming into the boat from the river. So there were a whole load of things to be done.

And on the 15th of April, we got the team together, and we slowly started to assemble the bags, put them in place and fill them full of water. And... The boat, the boat went down and down and down in the water until it was just enough. Just low enough to get under the footbridge. In fact, I believe it was scraping along the bottom of the river bed and the bottom of the footbridge at the same time. So we're probably within half an inch of it not being possible. But we got to the other side. We pumped the water out of the tanks. Only took about half an hour. The boat came back up. And it was time to celebrate. Open a bottle of champagne and the job was done.

And so it was really just an illustration for me, of the power of talking to other people.

So often we try to solve problems ourselves. We use our rationality, we use our imagination. We use all the things that we could think of. But we somehow fail to do the obvious thing which is actually get two heads together and ask somebody else their opinion, and... I think this is a mistake I've made several times in my life because when I've actually shared my problem with other people, talk to them and got their views. Um, some of them will make sense and some of them won't work.



But once I start to kind of open out and ask the universe. Ask other people for their input. Then the solutions always come. And I think it's just so easy to get stuck in using the things that we think were good at. You know, I had a powerful imagination. I had a powerful, rational mind. I've learned some valuable stuff, but it wasn't until I actually spoke to other people and got their Input that I found a solution to this problem. And the boat was eventually sold off the morning, as it turns out, and Bindi and I, Within a year of that time, we moved together in a house in West Oxford and combined our families. And, there'll be more in the next video about what happened next.

So please let me know what you think about this. If this story makes sense to you, if you find it in any way helpful, please interact with it in some way. Share it like it. Comment on it below. My work involves talking to people who are struggling, and if you can interact with this video, it will allow me to reach more people and help more people. So thank you very much for watching.



And the summary is that I had a problem. I worked on it and I realised I wasn't using all my resources. I used the "phone a friend" card. The rapport resource and that helped me to get the problem solved.

So thank you very much for watching. And whatever else you're doing, don't forget to keep breathing.

Alec