

BACKCHAT

BY JOHN COONEY

My Small-Boat Dilemma

I SPENT A WHOLE DAY IN A SMALL boat last weekend. Which took more courage than you think. Small boats and me don't agree. Small boats make me sick. Well, they have in the past. On more than one occasion I've almost died in the midst of a vast, lurching ocean. And, in the process, I've learnt something ...

You've heard about the five stages of grieving? Well, those same five stages apply to being seasick. And if you've ever done it you'll know what I mean.

Stage 1 is DENIAL. That hollow, squeamy sensation has followed you out from the boat-ramp. Your belly's doing belly-flops, your face is turning green, and your friends have noticed you're no longer talking. But "*Nah - I'm feeling fine, guys! Honest!*" You see, denial.

Stage 2 is ANGER. The heady mixture of outboard fumes, stinky bait, and a sloppy, rolling sea has pushed your stomach past the point of no return. You're angry at God: "*Why me, Lord?*" And angry at your fellow fishermen, who won't stop laughing, and taking bets on when you're gonna chuck.

Stage 3 is BARGAINING. Your guts are now churning like a Rotorua mudpool and you have to swallow after every swell. You promise yourself, "*I'll never go fishing again!*" You beg your mates, "*Please*



stop rocking the boat." And you plead with God, "*Take my life ... now!*"

Stage 4 is DEPRESSION. The hot waves surging up the back of your throat are now bigger than the cold waves slapping against the hull. A 20 pound snapper could strike right now, but you've lost all interest in fishing. "*If only I'd listened to my wife ...*" "*If only I'd stayed in bed ...*"

Stage 5 is ACCEPTANCE. You've never felt so ghastly in your entire life. You've fought your heaving guts long enough. The time has come to disgrace yourself in front of your friends. So you lurch to your feet and lean over the side ...

You feel instantly better, of course. But chances are your fellow fishermen are now feeling Stage 1-ish themselves. So while you wipe your face and wash the side of the boat, they'll probably up-anchor and move to a cleaner, less disgusting part of the ocean. ❁

JOHN (GRAPEVINE'S FOUNDER) FELT FINE ON THE WATER LAST WEEKEND - THANKFULLY! BUT HE TENDS TO AGREE WITH SPIKE MILLIGAN: "THE BEST CURE FOR SEASICKNESS IS TO SIT UNDER A TREE."
