



## Losing Sight of Shore Discussion Guide

Director: Sarah Moshman

Year: 2017

Time: 92 min

### You might know this director from:

The Empowerment Project: Ordinary Women Doing Extraordinary Things (2014)

## FILM SUMMARY

Back in 2011, a group of female rowers began to dream of rowing the Pacific ocean, a trek never before completed by a team of four, nor a group of women. By 2013, the Coxless Crew was formed with aspirations to complete the first four-person team expedition from America to Australia. Over the next two years, funds were raised, a custom-made pink ocean row boat (lovingly named Doris) was built, and several of the original team members had dropped out of the project to be replaced with ambitious new faces ready for the challenge. After years of planning, as well as months of physical and mental preparation, the Coxless crew set off from San Francisco in April of 2015, bound for Hawaii, the first checkpoint on their three-legged journey across the Pacific.

With *LOSING SIGHT OF SHORE*, Emmy-winning director Sarah Moshman documents their trying and triumphant expedition, occasionally catching up with the crew at their scheduled checkpoints, while mostly allowing the team to film their own experiences with a stock of weather resistant GoPros along their journey. The result is part emotionally charged video journal, part visually stunning wilderness doc. We witness the team ride waves of heart-wrenching, awe-inspiring challenges, from dangerous storms, extreme heat, and utter boredom to power outages and lack of food. In addition, they must battle the mental strain of unending repetition and the physical abuse of constantly rowing and sleeping only one or two hours at a time.

The Coxless Crew's journey, passionately encapsulated within *LOSING SIGHT OF SHORE*, is a deeply inspirational example of what can happen when average people dream big, join together, and persevere through thick and thin. In short, incredible things can be achieved.

## FILM THEMES

Taking on such a physically and mentally challenging experience as rowing across the largest ocean on the planet is something only the most adventurous dreamers would dare attempt, but when banding together with one another, the seemingly inconceivable task is not so impossible.

### DREAM BIG

Some people dream of running the Inca Trail Marathon. Some people dream of climbing Mount Everest. Some people dream of competing in the Tour de France. And some people dream of merely staying home, safe and sound. The Coxless crew, however, dreamed of rowing an ocean. But not only that, they put in the work, raised the funds, and then actually embarked out on that open water, fulfilling a long harbored ambition with multiple world records and an unforgettable, life-changing experience.

### WEIGHING THE VALUE OF ONE'S CHOICES

Throughout LOSING SIGHT OF SHORE the members of the Coxless crew are forced to contemplate whether or not they've made the right decision to attempt this expedition. What if something happens to a family member while they are away? What happens if they're forced to choose between their beloved career or the completion of the row? What would they be losing if they were to abandon the row midway through? Each of them is forced to heartbreakingly contemplate whether to forge ahead or abandon ship for not only their own well-being, but that of their family members as well.

### HUMANS NEED VARIETY IN THEIR LIVES

As is evidenced by the mental fatigue and exasperation experienced by each member of the Coxless crew at various stages of the row, people can only withstand so much repetition before existential angst and despair begin to creep in. The human body is not made to live in confined spaces without a regular sleep schedule and little to do besides rowing or reading. Thus, people tend not to stick to strict routines in our daily lives. Instead, we seek out new experiences, even if just to subtly vary our own daily habits.

### TOGETHER WE CAN PERSEVERE

Attempting to row 8,446 miles seems like an impossible task, but with the help of several teammates who all wholeheartedly believe in the challenge, the trek becomes conceivably achievable. Together, they are able to switch off the oars every two hours, while one member of the six women crew is swapped out for each new leg of the row. And on top of that, the act of completing the record-breaking row as an international team of women is immensely symbolic in these times. We are stronger and wiser when we are able to work together.

**“You can never cross the ocean until you have the courage to lose sight of the shore.”**

Christopher Columbus

**“Everyone has their own Pacific to cross.”**

Natalia Cohen, Coxless Crew

**“You only have one life, so you might as well make the most of it.”**

Lizanne Van Vuuren, Coxless Crew



## FILM FACTS:

- The Coxless crew, though a four person rowing team, actually consisted of six women: Laura Penhaul, Emma Mitchell, Natalia Cohen, Isabel Burnham (rowed 1st leg), Lizanne Van Vuuren (rowed 2nd leg), and Meg Dyos (rowed 3rd leg).
- Named after the coxless four competitive rowing boat, in which four people with single sweep oars propel the boat forward, the Coxless crew's boat was a 29-ft-long and 7-ft-wide custom-built ocean row boat, made mostly of carbon fibre. Emblazed in bright pink, they named her Doris.
- In the wake of their ocean rowing expedition, the Coxless crew now spends much of their time taking part in motivational speaking engagements around the world.
- Covering 8,446 miles over the course of what would become nine months at sea, their route began in San Francisco, took them to Hawaii (over 84 days), from Hawaii to Samoa (over 97 days), and finally on to Cairns, Australia (over 77 days).
- On January 25, 2016, the Coxless crew became the first all-female team to row the Pacific Ocean and the first ever four-person boat to row the Pacific Ocean. Their route had only ever been completed by solo and pairs teams.
- Before directing LOSING SIGHT OF SHORE, Sarah Moshman worked as a field producer for ABC's "Dancing with the Stars" for 10 seasons as well as shows on NBC, MTV, Bravo, Lifetime, and the Food Network, which she quit to work on her own passion project, the Emmy-nominated documentary "The Empowerment Project: Ordinary Women Doing Extraordinary Things."
- As part of their mission to help women facing especially challenging crossings, the team made their expedition a fundraiser for two U.K. charities, Breast Cancer Care and Walking With The Wounded. As of July 2016, they had raised more than \$75,000.
- Of the six women who make up the whole of the Coxless crew, only Emma Mitchell had any significant rowing experience prior to their voyage. Instead, the team relied on a shared spirit of adventure and extensive backgrounds in general athletics and travel to keep them moving forward.
- In May of 2016, the Coxless crew, along with Doris, was invited to Buckingham Palace to take part in the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Awards, a program for young people providing a challenging and rewarding outline for personal development.

## WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. **Find** your "Pacific" and make plans to cross it. We all have challenges to overcome and goals we want to achieve. Identify yours, start your journey, and share your experience with #MyPacific and #WeLoveDocs.
2. **Team Up!** Find partners and collaborators who share your passion toward a common ambition. The best teammates are often ones whose strengths and skills compliment your own, and the greatest achievements are often made together.
3. **Participate** in sports charity events, such as those put on by the Coxless Crew's official charity [Breast Cancer Care](#), as a way to help raise funds for extraordinary causes in your community.
4. **Donate** to [Walking With The Wounded](#), another of Coxless Crew's official charities, which funds the re-training and re-education of our servicemen and women.

## We believe a good documentary is just the beginning...

In a world of sound-bites, documentaries provide an opportunity to think, understand, share, and connect with the world.

They are controversial, divisive, fascinating, unexpected, and surprising. They can be thrillers, dramas, comedies, romance, tear-jerkers, and horror films.

Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

**Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.**