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Daily life



“What’s happening today?”
 “What shall I do?”

An important part of your role is to help the people you care for to enjoy their daily life and take as full a part in it as they can.

A shrinking world

A world that once involved holidays in distant places, visiting friends and family, facing challenges and enjoying all sorts of social and cultural pursuits is shrunk to just these four walls. Is that how it feels to someone moving into the home?

Declining physical and mental powers can make it hard to join in. But there are many ways to fight that shrinking world and keep opportunities open and alive for residents.

SUPPORTING DAILY LIFE IS A LEGAL REQUIREMENT

Care homes must ensure that they meet the care needs of residents including their emotional, mental and physical wellbeing. *The Health & Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014: No 9 Person centred care, No 10 Dignity and respect, No 14 Meeting nutritional and hydration needs*



GOOD PRACTICE

Where do your own interests and residents’ interests match? In one care home residents and carers all shared ideas on how they liked to spend their spare time. The result? A TV Critics Club, led by a carer, where they plan programmes residents might like to watch in the coming week. (NAPA, see www.napa-activities.co.uk)

Getting to know you

The care plan can tell you about ways in which people might like to spend their days, matching their abilities with their interests. It tells you about their past and present life and their preferred routines. Do they like a particular newspaper? What hobbies and activities could they still enjoy?

Getting to know the person will help you see them, rather than just the tasks you are assisting them with, so that everyday help becomes a shared activity, rewarding for you both.

Look and listen

Find out what they might fancy doing today. Don’t assume you know. What would they like to wear? What about make-up, jewellery? Is it time for a haircut or a shave?

Suggesting a sweater and comfortable shoes might encourage that walk in the garden.

Do they have all that they need? Is their walking aid in reach and sight? Do they have their glasses; are they clean? Are they wearing their hearing aids, with working batteries?

They may want a change from routine or to avoid someone pestering them. They may opt out of joining a group because their hearing or sight is deteriorating or they feel unwell or upset. Listening to residents and acting quickly can stop people from becoming isolated and prompt the help they may need.

Try sitting down and joining in, rather than standing and watching, even if it is only for a few minutes. Watch to see if people need support to include

Keynotes

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NEVER WALK ALONE

If you are heading for the laundry or kitchen, invite a resident to come too. This simple activity can meet mobility needs and give a sense of purpose, as well as offering the chance for a chat.

them in conversations or activities. A small group session, just reading out stories from the day's newspaper, can encourage discussion.

Be spontaneous. Not always easy, but doing something different, like eating outside when it's warm, can make a person's day.

A helping hand

Involving residents in everyday activities can keep interest and independence and bring pleasure. They may like to tend raised flower beds, plant indoor bulbs and herbs or help prepare for mealtimes. Support and encourage them to help themselves to snacks, make their own tea and coffee, or for their visitors. At mealtimes, when you can, sit with people, particularly those with dementia, as this will encourage them to stay interested in eating and drinking.

Let's get moving

However much support a person needs, it helps to keep moving. Just a short walk around the home can provide stimulation, delay further deterioration and help prevent possible pressure sores. A chiropodist can help with foot care. A physiotherapist will advise on individual programmes, while group sessions can be fun, a challenge and something to look forward to. Help in the garden, kitchen, a trip to the local shop or pub can mean effort, responsible risk, but a real boost to morale.

ONLY TWO MINUTES

A study found that 76% of residents assessed with dementia had daytime activities recorded as an unmet need (Hancock et al, 2005) while care workers, on average spoke to residents for less than two minutes a day outside of personal care giving. (SCIE Research briefing 34, November 2010).

Keeping connected

Residents may lose the ability to write, use the telephone or modern technology, so they may look to you to help them remain connected to family and friends, perhaps helping them to send birthday cards and short notes.

Some people may have no visitors or can't go out, so do welcome the community in. Whether a rare treat or a regular date, it will be a pleasure to see local leisure providers, libraries, schools, musical societies, entertainers, pet owners as well as volunteers who may like to read to them, befriend them and add life to the home.



The Relatives & Residents Association
1 The Ivories
6-18 Northampton Street
London
NI 2HY

Tel 020 7359 8148

info@relres.org www.relres.org