

# My home life

Promoting quality in care homes for older people Issue 17

For the manager



Looking after  
yourself and  
those around you

Inside: **The importance of self care, exercise for stress relief,  
top tips for looking after the care home community**

# Hello

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We're hearing a lot from the sector that things seem to be particularly difficult at the moment.

We reached out to care homes and got some great advice on 'keeping the ship on course' during tough times. We're sharing this advice here and on our website so that everyone can benefit from this support and expertise from care homes.

We hope this is helpful to those of you in need of some support and ideas for keeping yourself and the care home feeling safe and secure at the moment.

Very best wishes, and take care,

*My Home Life Team*

**From:** Sue

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**To:** My Home Life Team

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**Subject:** Any help?

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Hi

Things are really hard at the moment for the whole team in the care home, I know my staff are looking over their shoulders for the next round of cut backs. I'm feeling the pressure myself too.

Any tips for how I can better support myself and the team to get through this tough time?

Sue

My Home Life is a UK-wide initiative that promotes quality of life and delivers positive change in care homes for older people. We work with care homes, statutory bodies, community organisations and others to co-create new ways of working to better meet the needs of older people, relatives and staff.

Our vision is a world where care homes are great places to live, die, visit and work; where care homes are:

- **Supported to deliver to their potential**
- **Valued and trusted by those who work with them**
- **Cherished by their local communities**

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## Looking after yourself

- Why self-care is important
- Stress relief technique

## Looking after those around you

- Top tips from managers on supporting those around you
- Being realistic about what you can do



## Acknowledgements

A huge THANK YOU to those who have contributed advice to this bulletin, managers in the My Home Life Movement in Essex and Wiltshire; Jude Ryan; Jackie Weston, Susan Yates and everyone else who got in touch via email.



# Look After Yourself

“Finding your own support is so important –find someone you can trust so you don’t feel so alone with all the problems.”

**“Remind yourself what it’s all about – have lunch with a different resident every day.”**

“For me, as manager, it is important to take breath, to step out of the home, perhaps tackle things in the morning with a cup of tea when things don’t feel so heavy and I have fresh energy and perspective.”

**“Recognise when you’re not at your best and you’ve stopped being productive.”**

**“When I was going through a difficult time, I took a step back. I sat down to think about what my values are, and why I wanted to care in the first place. Then I used my values to make decisions I felt good about.”**

Taking care of yourself is something to take seriously - you are better able to support and look after others if you're doing the same for yourself.

“If one thing is certain it is that care homes operate with uncertainty and upheaval every day... we've got through it before, we can get through it again.”

**“When I'm overwhelmed, it helps me to stop and think about what's triggering the stress. Sometimes just not knowing what I've got to do is what's worrying me – so I make a list.”**

**“Your time off is precious. After working in care for 20 years I stopped picking up the phone at weekends – it's transformed how much energy I have to carry on.”**

# Take a breather

There are many ways to use quick and simple techniques to decrease stress and anxiety - here is just one.

By taking a moment to **stop** and pause, to **take** a breath and to **observe** your thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations you can start to become more aware of what's happening inside yourself and you can then choose to **proceed** and respond more effectively and positively.

This quick exercise can be really helpful and revealing. You may notice that your mind is racing, or your neck and shoulders are tense. You may even notice that you've been sat at the desk for hours and missed taking a well-earned break. Or maybe it's simply time to remind yourself that you matter too and that giving yourself some self-care could be beneficial.

## How about...

- **First thing in the morning, STOP before jumping out of bed and starting another day.**
- **Mid-day STOP in time to re energise yourself for the afternoon.**
- **Just before going to bed to STOP and let the day finish and the night begin.**

Why not create a new positive habit and book it into your diary at points during the day when you know a quick break would be beneficial. Give it a go and know the more you do it, the more you will notice how it helps.

**S** = Stop and pause  
just for a moment

**T** = Take a breath

**O** = Observe

**P** = Proceed



Adapted by one of the My Home Life facilitators, Jude Ryan, from a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction technique.

# Be realistic

**If you're feeling overwhelmed, try spending some time thinking about yourself, the things which are under your control – and things that aren't. Recognise your limits – you can't change what's outside your influence\*.**

## Circle of concern

These things might be 'on your radar', but are outside your influence e.g. national trends.

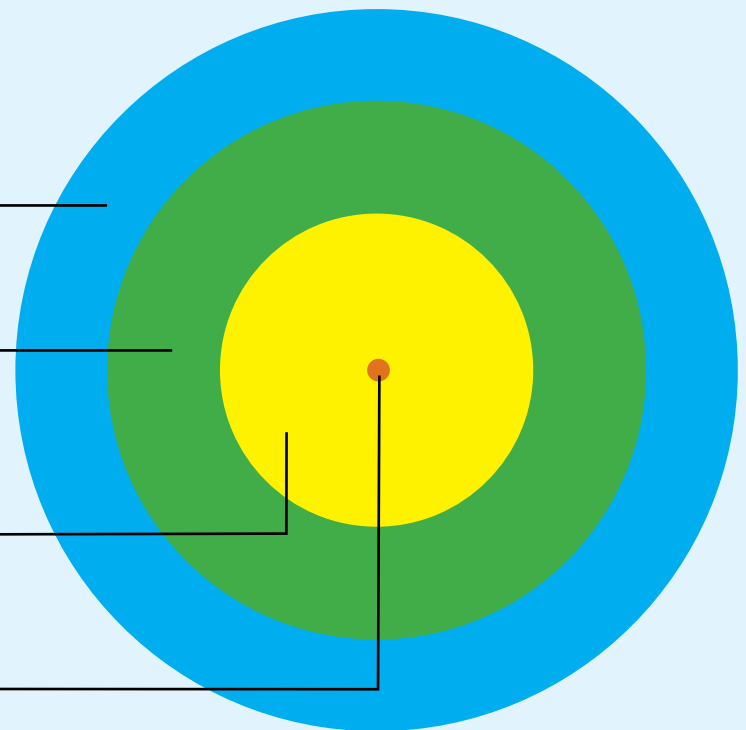
## Circle of influence

These are things that you have some influence over, but don't have day-to-day control over e.g. groups you come into contact with.

## Circle of direct control

These are things you can do something about e.g. your behaviours.

## You



## Stay connected to My Home Life with the free app

Every week those signed up to the free My Home Life app will receive a message; it may be a thought, a top tip, an action or a question.

We hope that these messages will be a source of surprise, encouragement and support to those who receive them on a Monday morning.

The app can be downloaded from the Apple store (for iOS devices) and Google Play store (for Android devices).

Search for "MyHomeLife" (all one word), from the developer is SCET.

**Download links are available on the My Home Life website:  
[www.myhomelife.org.uk](http://www.myhomelife.org.uk)**



Source: Montague, S. (2002) Circles of Influence: An Approach to Structured, Succinct Strategy. Available at: [http://pmn.net/library/Circles\\_of\\_Influence\\_An\\_Approach.htm](http://pmn.net/library/Circles_of_Influence_An_Approach.htm)

# Looking after those around you

## Top tips from care home managers

1. At times of upheaval, increase your visibility around the home and help people know that you're available for them. Don't hide away, people will feel worried.
2. Keep everyone updated on what's happening, be it good or bad news. Seek out those who may have missed an important message so they feel included.
3. Emphasise your commitment to staff and residents – when people feel weary and uncared for, they need to know that you are there for them during difficult times.
4. Bring your people (be they residents, relatives or staff) together to talk openly about the problems and concerns. Support them to consider how together you can get through and possibly make it better.
5. Stay calm – panic creates panic. Modelling courage and confidence will help those around you gain assurance, commitment and positivity from seeing you be calm in the face of stressful events.
6. Give staff small goals which focus on their strengths, so they keep achieving and building confidence in themselves and the home.
7. Look forward to better times - plan the next diary date for a care home celebration.
8. Let staff know that you trust them and their decisions, and follow through by not calling in on your day off.
9. Praise is important all the time but even more so when things are tough. Try writing personal cards for an even more powerful way to say thank you to staff. Bring in treats and celebrate birthdays.
10. Overall, be wary of setting high expectations across staff, residents and relatives from the start. There will always be difficult times. Being realistic about what is possible in the home will ensure that when things go wrong people won't be so disappointed.

