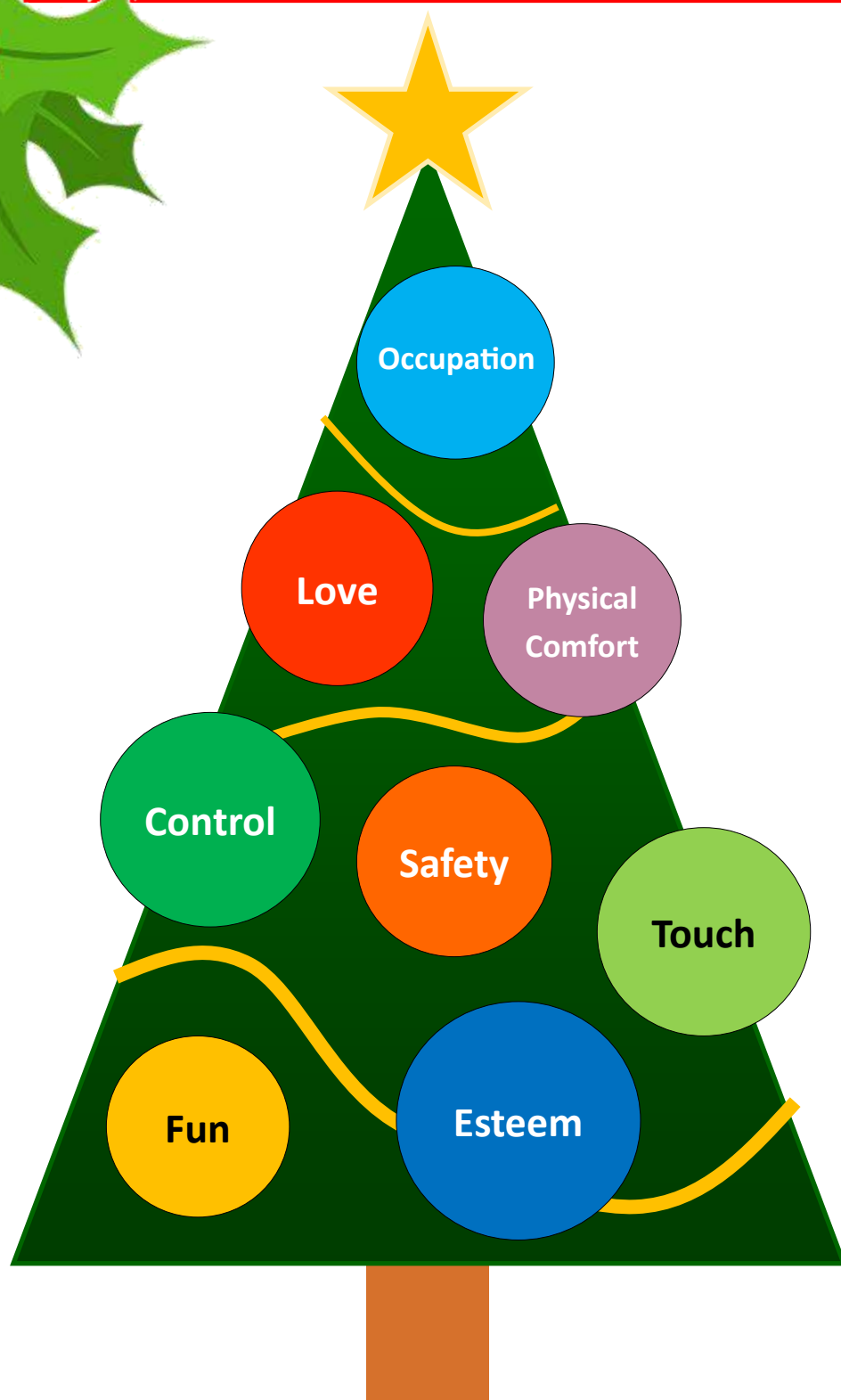


Tackling the Impact of Covid-19 through Meeting the Needs of Older People



A Family Guide to the Festivities

Welcome to this Guide

This guide has been developed to meet the needs of older people over the Christmas period, particularly for those difficult times both before and after the short time-window in which government rules are permitting greater social contact.

A Reminder of the Rules

Please note these rules may be subject to change. Please ensure you check the rules in your locality prior to meeting with other households.

Go to <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> for more information.

Three households are able to meet indoors between December 23rd and 27th, but not in pubs, hotels or restaurants.

Scotland has a cap of eight people over 12 years, maximum of 3 households.

Hugging will be allowed in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Scotland recommends people remain two metres apart unless you are part of a household.

Northern Ireland is suspending some travel rules for seven days to permit movement. Travel is allowed between December 22nd and 28th.

Religious services in places of worship are permitted—check local guidance.

Some care home residents under the age of 65 may spend the festive period with one other household in England. Check guidance across the UK.



Despite these greater freedoms, people may still struggle due to the social restrictions. Many people are likely to feel isolated and alone.



Welcome to this Guide

In this guide, we would like you to think through the sort of things older people might need. We are making some practical suggestions about offering support, which are designed to help you think creatively about how you could meet the needs of older people, in particular your family members.

The advice is based the psychological principle:

“Nourishing Needs”

During the pandemic, many of our fundamental needs have been difficult to meet. This wellbeing pack will outline these needs and serve as a guide to encourage younger family members to be creative in attempting to meet the needs of the older generation.

It is worth noting that the principles are based around eight universal needs that relate to us all, and so the ideas can apply to anyone, at any age. So it’s important to look after your own needs too!



The Impact of Covid-19 on Older People

2020 has been an incredibly challenging year. Reports from AGE UK and the Centre for Ageing Better revealed a large impact of Covid-19 on older adults, with 43% of people over 60 saying their wellbeing has been badly affected. Here are some of the most common difficulties:

Physical Health

- 1 in 5 older adults reported a decline in their physical health since the pandemic started
- Not being able to go out has led to reduced mobility and more falls for some, which has impacted on their ability to be independent.
- Lockdown has meant some people are snacking more and eating more unhealthy foods. Others have eaten much less than usual and lost weight as a result of reduced support or motivation for preparing meals. Others have also been smoking more and drinking more alcohol than usual.
- Some people have found it more difficult to access the healthcare they would normally, and feel their physical health has deteriorated as a result.



Mental Health



- Over one third of older adults have reported feeling more anxious and depressed. Many have felt less motivated during the pandemic, particularly those with pre-existing health conditions and those who have been shielding.
- Loneliness has been a wide-spread issue during the pandemic. Even though friends and family have been in touch via phone and the internet, many are missing meeting face to face and hugging.
- Understandably, many older adults are worried about the future and their health.
- Not being able to go out has meant many older adults have lost confidence in their ability to be independent and socialise.
- Bereavement and loss has also taken its toll on people's mental health.

The Impact of Covid-19 continued...

Cognitive Difficulties

- Many older people have reported worsening memory and concentration since lockdown, again impacting on confidence and independence.



Other Difficulties

- Some people have become dissatisfied with their homes and the space they have. Those without access to outdoor spaces and nice places to walk have found lockdown particularly frustrating.
- Many people are fed-up of hearing about the pandemic and feel it is the only topic of conversation with friends and on the news.
- Spending more time in the house with family has caused friction in some families.

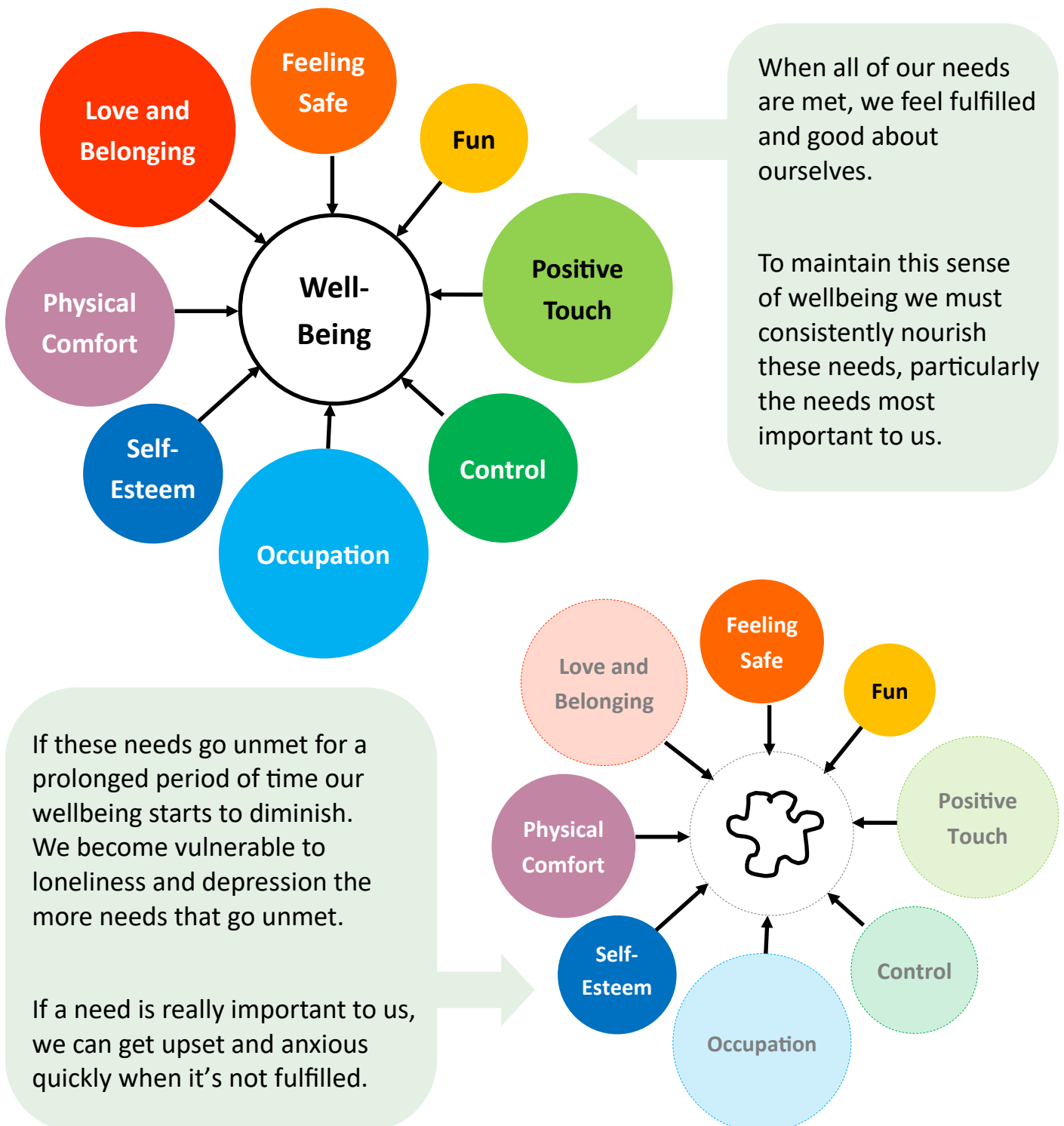


A Psychological Perspective of Needs

We can understand the impact of lockdown through the perspective of:

Unmet Needs and Nourishing Needs.

Our research on needs, and in particular the needs of older people, suggests there are eight fundamental needs which maintain wellbeing in all people (see the diagrams below). We are all unique, which means that different needs will have different levels of importance for each of us - the relative importance can be indicated by the size of the circles.



Meeting Needs During the Pandemic

Nourishing needs has become very challenging during the Covid-19 pandemic. The restrictions brought in to tackle the virus have had a big impact on our ability to do many of the things which would ordinarily keep us and our needs fulfilled.



Not being able to leave the house and the closure of leisure, entertainment and community facilities have made it difficult to fulfil people's needs for **Occupation** and **Fun**. Restrictions around gatherings and meeting loved ones has had an impact on people's sense of **Love and Belonging** and need for **Positive Touch**. Physical health has declined for many, causing **Physical Comfort** to go unmet. Physical, mental and cognitive decline have diminished some older adults' **Self-Esteem**. Understandably, the virus has left people feeling scared and fearful for their **Safety**. All these restrictions and the sense of uncertainty have prevented people meeting their need for **Control**.

With all these unmet needs, it's no wonder older people's wellbeing has been deflated during this time.



What can we do to Nourish Needs?

When talking to older people about how they are coping during the pandemic, we can ask them how each of their needs are being met and which needs are most important to them. If there are some needs which are not being met, you could help them to think of practical ways to meet them.



A lot of our suggestions have a Christmas theme, but many of these ideas can still be relevant for people who celebrate other holidays over this seasonal period. We hope you find this guide inspiring no matter what holidays and traditions you celebrate, and find ways to nourish each other's wellbeing through what will undoubtedly be a very strange holiday season.

We hope you use these ideas as inspiration to come up with your own ways of meeting needs. Everyone will have different personalities, interests and holiday traditions, and the more personalised your support is, the better!

Love and Belonging



This a need for a sense of belonging within the home and from family. It is the need to feel loved, to be able to give and receive affection and feel part of a group and community.

Why has it been difficult to meet this need during the pandemic?

Humans are very social animals so feeling part of a family, friendship group and community is very important to us. The pandemic has restricted our ability to meet in person and nurture the bonds we have with our loved ones. Community centres, places of worship and other places which foster a sense of community, have also had to close, leaving people feeling isolated and alone.



Meeting Love and Belonging



HELP THEM KEEP IN TOUCH

Supporting older adults to maintain their relationships with family and friends is essential. Think about how you could support them to stay in touch with loved ones by phone, letter, video call, etc.

SEND ROUND ROBINS

Christmas cards and Round Robins are a great way to reconnect. Even if we haven't done that much this year, it can still be good to share some funny stories and important events from the year and encourage them to do the same.



VIRTUAL GATHERINGS

Even though households can meet at Christmas - and places of worship are open - some older adults may still be wary of attending. See if there are virtual gatherings they can be a part of, such as carol services and family video calls.

REMINISCENCE

Looking at old photos and sharing stories of Christmases past can foster a sense of love and belonging. Listen to their favourite Christmas music, talk about traditions and the meaningful gifts they've received over the years.



BE PREPARED

When having more regular phone chats, one can soon run out of things to say. So it can be helpful to prepare conversation topics prior to the call, which may involve chatting about family memories, TV soaps, sports, listening to music together, etc.

Feeling of Safety



We have a need to feel safe and secure in terms of health and emotional safety, and to not feel scared or vulnerable.

Why has it been difficult to meet this need during the pandemic?

Understandably, many of us are fearful of Covid-19 and what it means in terms of restrictions, our health and our future. Many people will know someone who is very ill or has died. This may be particularly true for older adults, who are more vulnerable. Due to restrictions on meeting people, many of the people and places that used to give us a feeling of safety are now unavailable. As we move into the winter, long nights, dark homes and the worry of a lonely festive period has brought a sense of worry for many.



Meeting Safety

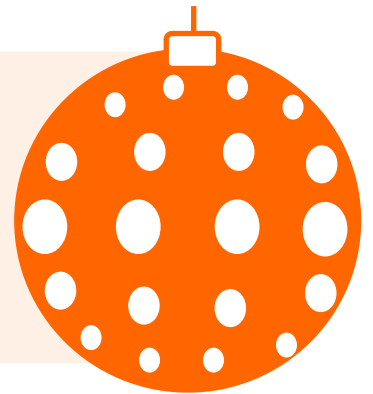


IT'S OKAY TO NOT BE OKAY

It might be a bit of a cliché, but it's important to remind loved ones that 2020 has been incredibly difficult. With the added worries of winter, it's understandable to be feeling low, anxious and frustrated at the moment. It will get better again.

TAKE A BREAK FROM THE NEWS

It's important to keep up-to-date on the current rules and restrictions, but the news can sometimes be overwhelming and make us worry. Encourage taking some breaks from the news a few times a week.



CREATE A COSY ENVIRONMENT

Homes can feel scary as we head into dark, cold months. Decorating rooms with fairy lights or nightlights and providing loved ones with cosy blankets and hot water bottles can make people feel safer in their homes.

CONNECTING AND RECONNECTING

Check out what people and places bring your loved one a sense of safety; for example religious services, friends, and family. Is there a way for them to still feel supported by these? If so, encourage and support them to reconnect.



SUPPORT ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND OTHER SERVICES

You may want to offer your support to help them navigate electronic appointment services for healthcare and provide them with resources for accessing other types of support, e.g. emotional and spiritual.

Fun



***This is a need to be entertained, to laugh and have fun.
We need opportunities to be playful and enjoy ourselves.***

Why has it been difficult to meet this need during the pandemic?

As leisure, entertainment and community centres have closed, and we are no longer allowed to meet in large groups, many of us are missing the things we used to do for a sense of fun. Some people are also finding it harder to stay positive and enjoy themselves as restrictions have continued through the year.



Meeting Fun



YOU MUST BE HAVING A LAUGH

What makes your loved one laugh? What's their favourite comedy? Who do they spend time with, who makes them giggle? Sharing funny memories and anecdotes is a great activity and everybody loves a good Christmas cracker joke!

CHRISTMAS CREATIVITY

What hobbies does your loved one have that they can make festive? For example, making Christmas cards and decorations, knitting some winter hats and scarves, or baking mince pies. See page 25 for some Christmas activity resources.



FESTIVE FUN ONLINE

What activities does your loved one like to do over Christmas? For example, maybe they like to go carol singing or enjoy the annual pantomime. Lots of festive activities like these are online this year. Support them to join in.

LOOKING FORWARD

Encourage them to make a list of things to look forward to over the festive period, or when the restrictions ease. These don't have to be big things, maybe a friend they'd like to see, a place they'd like to visit or an activity they'd like to do.



DO SOMETHING FUN EVERY DAY

Make a list with your loved ones of all the things they enjoy doing or you enjoy doing together. Encourage them to do something from that list every day.

Positive Touch



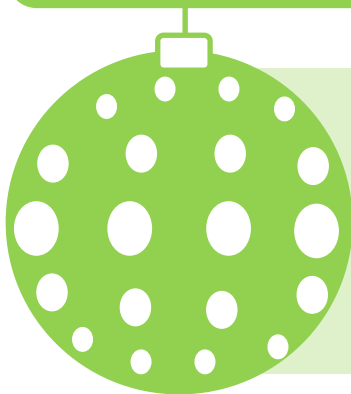
We have a need to connect and gain pleasure through meaningful physical touch. This is a need for sensory comfort and reassurance.

Why has it been difficult to meet this need during the pandemic?

Social distancing guidelines have prevented us from sharing usual meaningful physical touch like hugging, holding hands, or a reassuring arm around the shoulder. At a time when people may need comfort, security and connection the most, we have been prevented from this much needed physical contact.



Meeting Positive Touch

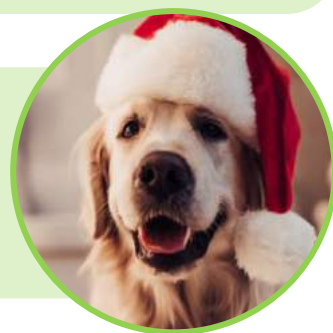


MAKE A SENSORY BOX

Fill a box with things that feel good to touch. This might be soft blankets, woolly jumpers, fluffy make-up brushes, smooth pebbles, teddy bears, sand, playdoh or anything that feels good to touch and explore.

STROKE A PET!

Encourage your loved one to fuss a furry friend, real or a toy. Weighted toys and animals can be very comforting.



MASSAGE

Hand and foot massages can be delivered in a socially distanced manner, and the use of perfumed oils can enhance the experience.

HOT WATER BOTTLES

Hot water bottles, hand warmers and heavy blankets can provide some enjoyable physical sensations that meet a need for touch. When we wrap up warm and tightly, it can offer some of the comfort we seek from a hug.



YOU CAN STILL HUG AND TOUCH

Remember you are allowed to hug the people in your home and bubble as normal. Whilst we don't recommend hugging people outside your bubble, there are some hugs which are safer than others. A safer way to hug is to: wear masks, point faces away, don't talk or cough, hug quickly, move to 2m away when the hug is finished.

Control



***This is a need to feel control over our lives, possessions and the environment.
It is important for us to make our own choices and have them respected.***

Why has it been difficult to meet this need during the pandemic?

Government guidelines have imposed rules on our lives and environment and restricted our choices. The rules and restrictions change often, which also brings a sense of chaos, making us feel like we don't have control of our choices or the virus. Shielding older adults may be relying on others for shopping, using new technology and other things, again impacting on their sense of control.



Meeting Control



COLLABORATE

Collaborate with your loved one. Offering choice and working together can help meet a need for control.

SHOPPING

If you are going shopping for a shielding older relative, write a shopping list together first. What are their favourite brands? Favourite treats? What would be their second choice if their first choice isn't available?



TIME OF VISITS AND CALLS

Let them choose the time of the visit. We often have such busy lives we may have limits on when we can offer people support, but offering options is a way to give back some control. For example, "Is better for me to come at 10 or 11?"

GETTING INVOLVED

Doing something ourselves may be most efficient, but promoting involvement in tasks can offer a sense of control. If family members like to cook, what would they like to get involved in? Chopping veg? Mixing the gravy? Laying the table?



'EITHER/OR' CHOICES

When options are restricted, giving a few suggestions and following the person's lead is crucial. For instance, "Do you fancy doing a jigsaw or listening to music?" "Shall we go for a walk to the park or down to the beach?"

Occupation



This is a need to be active and occupied. We have a need to engage in meaningful activities to prevent boredom and give us purpose.

Why has it been difficult to meet this need during the pandemic?

Being unable to leave the house and the closure of leisure and entertainment facilities have left people feeling unoccupied and bored. As lockdown has extended, people may have also grown tired of doing the same home-based and outdoor activities that kept them engaged in the summer. Over the winter we will need to be especially inventive if we want to remain occupied.



Meeting Occupation

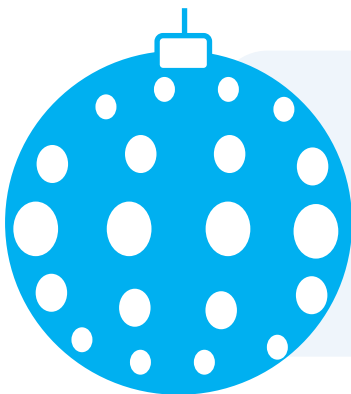


DO SOMETHING MEANINGFUL EVERY DAY

We have already mentioned doing something fun every day, but what about helping people do something meaningful too? Support them to do something from their 'to-do list' every day.

LEARN SOMETHING NEW

You're never too old to learn something new. For example, learn a new recipe, go on a virtual museum tour, research family history or watch a documentary. Think about what they find interesting and give them some relevant materials.

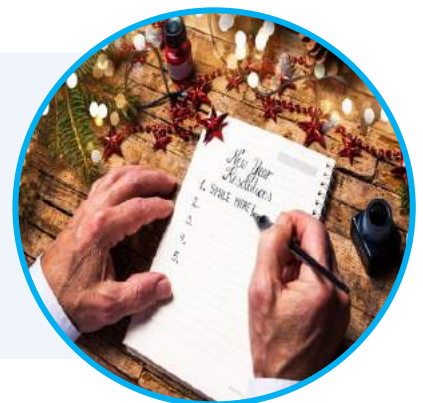


GET READY FOR THE NEW YEAR

2021 is around the corner, so why not get your loved ones to prepare for a fresh start? Whether that's organising their wardrobe or cleaning out a kitchen cupboard, or doing something which they've been putting off.

SET SOME GOALS

This year, it has been difficult for many of us to do what we set out to do in January. Ask your family member if they had any goals for 2020 they haven't yet accomplished, and assist them in preparing to tackle them in the new year.



FESTIVE TRADITIONS

The holidays are bound to be strange this year, but there are still ways to keep up with some of their favourite traditions. Ask about what traditions your loved one has and think about how you could still do them within current restrictions.

Self-Esteem



This is a need to be valued, treated with dignity and respect, and to feel good about ourselves. We have a need to feel acknowledged and listened to.

Why has it been difficult to meet this need during the pandemic?

For those who have experienced worsening physical, mental and cognitive health, their self-esteem may have suffered as a result. Interactions with others are likely now to be shorter and less frequent, and people who make us feel good about ourselves may be less available due to social distancing and restrictions. There has also been a lot of ageism present during this pandemic, which may have left many older adults feeling under valued.



Meeting Self-Esteem



ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR RESILIENCE

Covid restrictions have lasted much longer than many of us expected and your family member deserves a pat on the back for adjusting and carrying on through what has been a strange, unexpected and sometimes scary time.

GET DRESSED UP

Sometimes doing our hair, shaving, putting on some perfume or aftershave, and wearing nice clothes can make people feel good about themselves. Encourage your loved ones to have a day a week in which they dress up.



DO SOMETHING THEY ARE GOOD AT

Whether its gardening, baking, art, music, or something else, encourage loved ones to do the things they're good at. Sharing these talents can also make them feel good, like baking a cake for a friend, or making Christmas cards.

PEOPLE WHO MAKE THEM FEEL GOOD

Identify who makes your loved ones feel good about themselves and encourage contact. Whether that's through cards, text, letters or the internet, support them to spend some time with the people who boost their self-esteem.



GRATITUDE AND POSITIVITY

Express thanks to your family member and don't feel embarrassed about paying them a genuine compliment. Remember to identify current attributes, and not make it all about their past ("You *used* to be so handsome!")

Physical Comfort & Freedom From Pain



This is a need to be comfortable and free from pain caused by physical health problems or difficulties in the environment, such as the cold.

Why has it been difficult to meet this need during the pandemic?

Whether during the pandemic or not, most older people will be suffering some kind of muscular, skeletal, or dental pain. During the pandemic people have been either less inclined, or have found it more difficult, to access their GPs and attend hospital appointments. Further discomfort, aches, and pains may be occurring due to reduced daily exercise. We know that some elements of pain are psychological and so people who lack occupation have had more time to dwell on their existing pains.



Meeting Physical Comfort



ACCESS HEALTHCARE IF NEEDED

If they are experiencing acute pain, or pain that is new to them, support them to speak to their GP or dentist to find out if an appointment is needed. Also, make sure they are taking pain medication as prescribed.



INDOOR EXERCISE/STRETCHING

Our joints become stiff when we've been inactive. Try some stretches and gentle exercises. See page 25 for some great exercise guides, or try something new like Chair Yoga or Thai Chi which can be found on YouTube.



GO FOR A WALK

Another activity could be to take a stroll through the neighbourhood to see everybody's Christmas decorations. You could make it more interesting perhaps by seeing how many different types of decorations you can spot as you walk around.



MOVE TO SOME CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Dancing is one of the best forms of exercise and it's good fun too. Even if all you do is tap your feet and bob your head, it's good to get moving to some festive tunes. What are your loved one's favourite Christmas songs that gets them moving?



APPROPRIATE CLOTHES

Your loved ones may not have had the opportunity to shop for a while. They may not have purchased a winter wardrobe, or may have put on a few extra pounds. Buying them some comfortable fitting clothes could be a good Christmas present.

Meeting Multiple Needs

You may have noticed that some activities meet multiple needs. For example, dancing might meet a need for **Fun** and **Physical Comfort**; spending time with loved ones might meet **Love and Belonging**, and **Safety**. Doing something you're good at might meet a need for **Fun**, **Occupation** and **Self-Esteem**.

Below is an idea for meeting lots of needs over the festive period.

The Needs Goody Bag

Use the ideas in this pack, and your own ideas, to create a 'Needs Goody Bag' for your loved one. Fill a bag with numbered envelopes and small gifts, each one containing a way to meet key needs. Get your loved one to open one everyday. The envelopes and gifts might contain photographs for reminiscing, sensory objects for touch, or an activity prompt for the day. Use your imagination and try and hit all of the needs!



Resources & Services

Here are some links to online resources and support services. This list is not exhaustive and there may be other resources more suited to your family member, so do search the web for your own resources as well as any online events that might be happening.

Creativity

- <https://www.healthworksnewcastle.org.uk/super-excited-to-launch-our-festive-fun-activity-download/>

This guide from Healthworks has a whole host of creative festive themed activities from crafts to baking, and is free to download.

- <https://shipleartgallery.org.uk/whats-on/winter-wellness>

The Shipley Art Gallery has free to download art booklets for adults and families filled with a range of festive crafts and examples from artists.

Exercise

These guides from Public Health England and AGE UK contain simple, gentle indoor exercises.

- <https://www.hdft.nhs.uk/content/uploads/2020/05/PHE-Active-at-Home-Booklet-21-May-ELECTRONIC.pdf>
- <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/coronavirus/staying-safe-and-well-at-home/home-exercises/>

Mental Health Support

- **Anxiety UK**—03444 775 774 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 10pm; Saturday to Sunday, 10am to 8pm), www.anxietyuk.org.uk
- **Men's Health Forum**—www.menshealthforum.org.uk
- **Mind**—0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm), www.mind.org.uk
- **Rethink Mental Illness**—0300 5000 927 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm, www.rethink.org)
- **Samaritans**—116 123 (free 24-hour helpline) www.samaritans.org.uk
- **SANE** (Emotional support, information and guidance for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers) - 0300 304 7000 (4.30pm to 10.30pm), www.sane.org.uk/support
- **Silverline** —0800 4 70 80 90 (24 hours a day), <https://www.thesilverline.org.uk/>
- [www.nhs.uk/one you/every-mind-matters/anxiety](http://www.nhs.uk/one-you/every-mind-matters/anxiety) - Useful tips on how to manage anxiety

Brought to you by the Festive Psychologists

Thank you for reading this festive family guide on meeting needs. We hope you found it useful.

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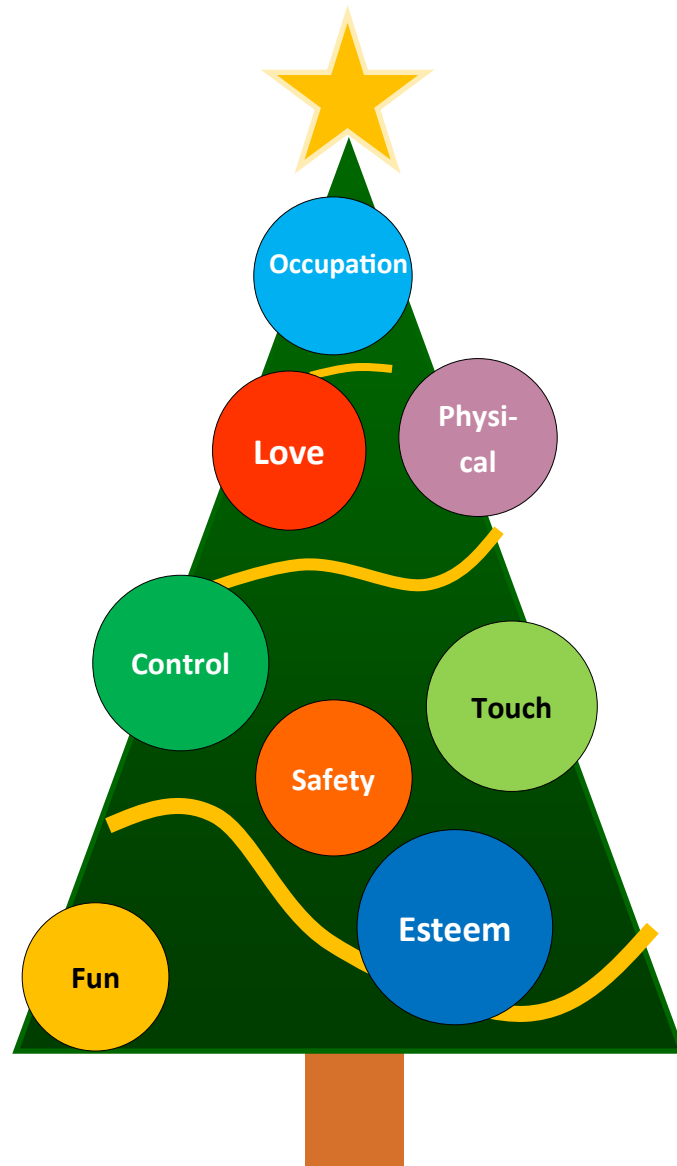
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Wishing you a happy holiday.

The editors and co-authors of the guide currently work in Newcastle for CNTW NHS Foundation Trust, but the views and thoughts expressed in the text belong solely to the authors and not necessarily to the authors' employer.