

An activity for staff in care settings

Try these two experiments. Both involve spending time sitting quietly, listening or observing in the care home in which you work. Sample different times to see when the issues really arise. Of course, prepare for the exercises with your manager and the whole care team.

1. Sit down in a corner where you won't be in the way. Close your eyes and listen, and then write down all the noises that you hear in the course of an hour.
2. Arrange to be in your care setting at night or when darkness has fallen in the late afternoon, and sit down in a corner. Write down all the lights that you see in the course of an hour.

Meet as a team to share with colleagues what you've experienced, seen and heard. Together try to work out if any extraneous noises could be lessened or stopped. Discuss any ideas arising about the lighting – some areas may need more lighting, others less.

If these exercises prove helpful, consider having one member of the team spend a night sleeping in a bedroom at the home. It may be that more lessons can be learned from experiencing the care home over one whole night and from the position of a typical resident's bedroom. Again, meet to discuss the findings and to plan what improvements could be made as a result.

An activity for home care staff

Having read this feature on relaxation, consider how the issues apply to a person you are working with at the moment.

- Are you able to describe how this person appears, or what they do, when they are stressed?
- Could you say what is most likely to trigger their stress?
- Have you worked out some good ways of helping the person relax?

Suggesting changes to a person's private home may not be appropriate or necessary. Even so, it may be that you could suggest small practical changes based on this material or, if the person's needs are more substantial, refer the person for specialist input from an occupational therapist.