



The two enemies of human happiness are pain and boredom “Arthur Schopenhauer”

We find ourselves in a situation where we are asking our residents to stay put, not have any visitors and remain somewhat content. The fear of becoming ill remains high in all of their minds. This fear also resides in the minds of our team members as well. So what can we do to create an environment where all feel a sense of comfort and feel that the basics are being met. What can we do to add to this level of comfort? Basically, create an environment that feels “just like home”. Here are some ideas to consider making the meal periods fun as well as to offer some additional services to make their life comfortable.

### **Meal Periods:**

1). **Expand the meal periods slightly** to allow for a more relaxed dining experience. By doing so allows for those who may have had a poor night rest a little longer to get ready and come to the dining room.

2). **Create more “comfort foods” on the menus.** These foods actually contribute to our overall health as when stressed we tend to go for the high fatty type foods. This gives them a sense of being at home. Foods traditionally served at home that bring a sense of comfort. Why exactly are these comfort foods so, well, comforting? A study published in the journal *Appetite* found that there is a “social” component to foods that provide us solace: A food is comforting because of the memories they evoke, and the emotions and relationships that we associate with them. If your grandmother served you chocolate chip cookies as a child that may be why you make a pit stop at the bakery on your way home from the office after a particularly stressful day. “Comfort foods are often the foods that our caregivers gave us when we were children. As long we have positive association with the person who made that food then there’s a good chance that you will be drawn to that food during times of rejection or isolation,”

These can include variations of the classic grilled cheese sandwich and tomato soup. Entrees such as pot roast, whipped potatoes, spaghetti with meatballs, chicken noodle soups all bring a memory of early days where we felt safe.

3). **“Reimagine” the Buffet Concept: “What’s on Your Menu?”:** Take a look at how you can create menu items that allow for them to pick and choose from your menu what they would like to have and to create a meal that soothes them. Consider a served buffet if staffing is low in terms of servers.

3). **Create a daily snack station.** As our residents are limited in their abilities to travel freely about, have an area where during the day or in defined periods of time offer fresh baked cookies, health treats and beverages. Change these items daily to provide interest. These items can be prepackaged to lessen any chance of infection to spread. Create a “tea station” within this area. A nice cup of hot tea can go along ways to soothing frayed nerves.



- 4). **Develop your own “Pikes Street Market”**. For those communities with a strong independent living population with full kitchens and limited meal plans, offer a “marketplace” in a meeting room that features easy to cook food items that can be assembled from your storeroom items. These items can include fresh produce, pre cut lettuces, prepackaged staple item such a pasta, rice and other dry foods. Certain protein, items pre-portioned packaged and stored on ice would also be beneficial along with limited dairy items such as butter, cheeses and milk. Special arrangements with your vendors could include some of these items they may carry.
- 5). **Create a “Community Personal Shopper”**. If a marketplace is too cumbersome create a daily shopping list for residents to check off items needed. This can be a limited list with defined drop off and pick up times. These can be items from your storeroom and coolers that do not require a trip outside. Make it fun with baked items and pre portioned products. Your team could assemble and have ready.
- 6). **Have daily “Table Games”** at each dining table. This can create a way for residents to have fun interacting with each other and not have periods of silence and worry about the current conditions. Allows also for a sense of vibrancy in the dining room. Simple games such as trivia, modified Jeopardy, Family Feud and others.
- 7). **Create a “Resident Recipe Night”**. Allow residents to submit favorite recipes or food items to be featured on your daily menus. Insert their name along with the description and a statement as to why that recipe was important to them.
- 8). **Create a “Restaurant Night Out”**. Feature modified foods from favorite resident residents. Reach out to these restaurants for recipes and ideas on how to implement. Gives the residents a different experience.
- 7). **Take care of the dining team** as well during these difficult times. Providing nutritious meals and snacks to them will also calm their nerves and give them a renewed sense of energy. Even if meals are not included or they are pre-paid, take extra effort to ensure they are taken care of as well.

