

## Long-Term Care Survey Alert

### Clip 'N Save: Quality Of Life - 5 Simple Ways To Really Improve Quality Of Life In Your Facility

Want to make an instantaneous improvement in how residents and staff enjoy life in your facility -- and also survey-proof yourself against residents' rights F tags?

You don't have to wait to make a major culture change or renovate your building to pull it off. "Small things can make a big difference in quality of life," says **Megan Hannan**, consultant/trainer for Milwaukee-based **Action Pact**, a company that works with nursing homes to improve care for elders. Below experts share some ideas:

**1. Turn off the overhead paging system.** This change can immediately improve the facility's ambiance and quality of life, says **Paul Hollings**, executive director for **Neville Center at Fresh Pond** in Cambridge, MA. His facility now only uses its intercom system for fire drills and "stat" pages. "Overhead paging systems can over stimulate residents with dementia and interrupt their naps and conversations," agrees **Mary Lucero, NHA**, president of **Geriatric Resources Inc.** in Radium Springs, NM.

**2. Implement a resident volunteer program where residents can channel their own needs to care for others and find meaning in life.** Residents who sign up for the program can read to or visit other residents, for example. One facility actually provided a training program to help residents learn how to visit or otherwise comfort other residents, reports **Steven Littlehale, MSN, RN**, chief clinical officer for **LTCQ Inc.** in Lexington, MA. "Seeing the satisfaction a resident derives from helping another is heartwarming," he says.

**3. Treat residents as individuals and not as a set of symptoms or functional abilities.** A change in language is important to promoting a culture that supports quality of life, says Hannan. For example, "the whole idea of 'feeders' and a 'feeding room' should be changed to 'residents who need assistance with eating,'" she says.

**4. Place a great deal of emphasis on daily sensory pleasures, such as music, fresh air, baking bread and children laughing.** "These can be enjoyed regardless of a person's cognitive levels," suggests **William Painter**, an activities therapist and activist in Boca Raton, FL. Include residents who are withdrawn at the level at which they feel comfortable participating. "Music is a life line for people with dementia and other kinds of brain injuries who can still sing even though they cannot communicate verbally," says Lucero.

**5. Offer massage as a regular resident activity.** "Residents can give each other a back rub, or people with moderate dementia can give a person with later stage dementia a hand rub with lotion," suggests Lucero. "Of course, you want to do the massaging in a controlled environment," she emphasizes, "but the need for touch is a part of normal human life."