

# NEVER ALONE NEWS

by CPJ Field



*Connecting communities  
a cuppa at a time...*

News — Wellbeing — Recipes — Mindfulness, and more

# Loneliness and how to manage it – especially during the festive season

While loneliness can affect us at any time of year, the winter months and festive season often intensify feelings of isolation. When the world appears filled with celebrations, lights and togetherness, those who are grieving, adjusting to life changes, or simply feeling disconnected may find this season particularly difficult.

Feeling lonely is completely normal, and many of us will experience it at some point. Loneliness means something different to every person, and it can surface for many reasons bereavement, a change in work or relationships, moving home, or even subtle shifts in routine.

As a tenth generation family funeral director, at CPJ Field we witness first hand the emotional impact that loneliness can carry. It is unique to each individual. That is why we created our Never Alone programme to support people in practical, emotional and community-centred ways, especially at times of year when connection matters most.

Never Alone provides a hub of resources offering information on local groups, advice on emotional and physical health and how to boost a greater sense of wellbeing. We also run a number of community initiatives of our own in the local communities in which we serve. By providing the links to support tools we hope to make a difficult time a little easier.

Visit [www.never-alone.co.uk](http://www.never-alone.co.uk) or visit the QR code below to find out more about Never Alone groups in your local area.

We hope you find information, ideas, community and connection through this newsletter as nobody should ever feel alone.

**Jeremy, Emily and Charlie,**  
Co CEOs, CPJ Field



# The Book Nook



Studies have found that 30 minutes of reading can lower heart rate, reduce blood pressure and feelings of psychological distress, just as effectively as yoga. What more persuasion do you need to stop scrolling and pick up a good book? To help get you started, self-confessed book worm and much loved CPJ Field colleague, Emma Packer, has written a review of her current favourite read, *The Nightingale*, by Kristin Hannah.

This historical fiction novel by Kristin Hannah (my current favourite author) is set in German-occupied France during World War II and is a beautiful portrayal of two sisters, Vianne and Isabelle as they struggle to survive the Nazi invasion.

Their very different stories run parallel throughout the book and are full of suspense and emotion and kept me riveted from the very start. Through the dynamics of their relationship, you witness their struggles first hand as Vianne, the older sister tries to contain her younger and impulsive sister Isabelle as she sets to join the resistance movement.

Vianne is naïve, not wanting to draw attention to themselves whereas Isabelle's defiance in the face of the enemy takes her down a different path. They both try to survive in the best way they can, fighting the invasion in very opposing ways.

There is romance along the way, but this takes a back seat to the real story of the sisters survival during this precarious time.

This gripping and inspiring story is beautifully written, I couldn't put it down. It gives us a real insight into two women surviving in desperate circumstances, showing great bravery, humanity and rebellious courage.

Kristin Hannah's powerful writing captures the devastation inflicted by the Nazi's on local communities in France. The story is well researched, tough, heart-breaking and respectful. I highly recommend it.

Have you read any good books recently that you'd like to recommend? Or perhaps you'd like to share your own review with us? We'd love to hear from you. Please email [Emily.hendin@cpjfield.co.uk](mailto:Emily.hendin@cpjfield.co.uk)



**C.P.J. Field.**

More than a funeral director since 1690.





Our various Never Alone groups in action: Communi-tea gatherings; a group of Knit & Natters enjoying a well-earned break, and a festive session of bingo!



Members of our community choir enjoying a trip to the local garden centre, where they sang carols at Christmas.



Members of our games group enjoying some board games.



## Slow Cooked Ginger Chilli Beef

As a family, our 'go to' comfort meal growing up was always a slow cooked ginger chilli beef recipe, of Delia Smith origin, but tweaked to family tastes; a little less chilli for father, heavier on the ginger for mother and 'as we were given' for us three children!

Our mother enjoyed cooking it, as it's a one-pot wonder that lovingly slow cooks in the bottom oven or slow cooker all day. You can batch cook and freeze it, and it tastes just as delicious reheated, with a large dollop of mashed potato, or if really pushing the boat out or entertaining, with rich indulgent dauphinoise potatoes.

### Ingredients:

25g flour  
Salt and pepper freshly ground to season  
2 tsp ground ginger  
¼ tsp chilli (if desired)  
675g stewing / braising steak  
1 can chopped tomatoes  
175g washed and halved button mushrooms  
1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce  
2 tbsp muscovado or dark brown sugar  
2 tbsp white vinegar  
2 garlic cloves crushed  
(Option to add in kidney beans or any other tinned beans if your family are a fan – add for last 30 mins of cooking)

### Method:

Mix the flour, seasoning, ginger and chilli if using, in a large zip-lock bag. Add the meat and seal and then shake the bag ensuring all the meat is coated in the flour mixture.

Add some olive oil to a casserole pan and when heated, add the meat and flour mixture and cook until browned, moving to ensure it doesn't burn.

Once lightly browned, add tomatoes, mushrooms, Worcestershire sauce, vinegar, sugar and garlic to the pan. Bring to the boil and then simmer gently for 5 mins.

Put in a slow cooker or in an oven on a low heat for anywhere up to 6 hours – checking to ensure the mixture hasn't gone dry. You can add some water if needed during the slow cooking.

Serve with mashed potato, rice, new potatoes or dauphinoise and steamed veg – the perfect comfort, easy cook supper.





# KNIT AND NATTER

Aside from being an incredibly useful skill, the art of knitting boasts several health benefits. It's a proven antidote to depression, as focusing on the task in your hands can help to pull the mind from negative thoughts, refocusing on a sense of achievement as the stitches form. It's also a powerful tool for processing grief and difficult emotions as the repetition of the needles takes up part of your attention, while still allowing you to dwell upon other things. It is also a fantastic activity that helps connect people and communities, as it's a solo activity that can be done in a group, whilst avoiding awkward or uncomfortable eye contact if so desired.

Such is the power of knitting for creating connections, that we run a series of Never Alone Knit and Natter groups, which aside from the social aspect, generates a huge amount of beautiful handmade items which we donate to neonatal units across the south east.

If you are a keen knitter, or know of someone who is, why not join one of our local knit and natter groups, or contribute your creations to someone in need. Here are the patterns needed to get involved. If you've not knitted before but are keen to learn you're most welcome to come along. All it takes is a little enthusiasm and some needles and wool!



## Never Alone buddies

Originally created to bring hope to children in war-torn regions, Izzie dolls continue to symbolise love, connection and support. Inspired by Master Corporal Mark Isfield, each doll is uniquely handmade, just like the lives they touch.

We have taken inspiration from the Izzie Dolls to create 'Never Alone Buddies', which members of our knit and natter groups have been lovingly knitting and which we are hiding around local communities, for people to find, bringing a little happiness to their day. We welcome donations in any of our funeral homes, or we can arrange collection if you email [Emily.hendin@cpjfield.co.uk](mailto:Emily.hendin@cpjfield.co.uk) when you have a stock ready to be shared.

Begin at the foot and knit a rectangle. The head is stuffed and the neck formed by tying a thread. The arms and legs are defined by stitching through all layers after the doll is stuffed. The number of rows in each part of the doll can be increased or decreased depending on the individual design. Finished, the height of each doll is approx 5 inches.

### You need:

- Small quantities of 4 ply or similar weight yarn
- 1 pair of 2.25 mm needles or maybe larger depending on wool
- Tapestry needle
- Polyester filler

### To make:

- Work in stocking stitch throughout
- Cast on 32 Sts
- Work four rows for feet – change yarn
- Work 14 rows for trousers – change yarn
- Work 12 rows for sweater – change yarn
- Work 8 rows for face – change yarn



• Work 11 rows for hat as follows:

- Row 1–4: Work evenly in stocking stitch
- Row 5: Decrease 5 Sts evenly in stocking stitch across row
- Rows 6, 8 and 10: Knit across row in stocking stitch
- Row 7: Decrease 5 Sts evenly across row
- Row 9: Decrease 5 Sts evenly across row (17 Sts)
- Row 11: (K1, K2 together) 9 times.

• Draw yarn through remaining Sts and pull up.

### To finish:

- Sew sides together to form a centre back seam.
- Stuff head. Weave a strand of matching yarn across the first face row.
- Draw up to form neck and secure ends.
- Repeat for body, drawing in at the ankles – stuff.
- Stuff feet and sew up bottom.
- With matching yarn, form arms with tiny backstitches through all layers, from the waist to 2 rows beneath the neck.
- Define the legs in same way from bottom to a little below the waistline.
- Embroider hair and facial features as desired.



# What is Self-care?

The term 'self-care' gets thrown around a lot, and very often in a kind of 'woo-woo' way which puts many people off – so let's take a look at what self-care really is, and how to do it in a way that really helps.

## A quick definition

Firstly, we need to know exactly what self-care really is. In a nutshell it is a collection of habits that support and strengthen your mental health and wellbeing. In other words, self-care is your personal programme for taking care of yourself, especially your mental and emotional health.

Self-care is about consistent habits, not quick fixes. Most people talk about self-care as if it's a thing you do every once in a while, like taking a day off to veg-out in front of the TV, or remembering to book a massage every now and then. Don't get me wrong, a massage or Netflix binge can be very relaxing, but self-care isn't something you do every once in a while, it needs to be a daily part of your life.

Suppose you asked someone, "Do you exercise?" And they said, "Yeah, I go for a run a couple times a month." Well, that's fine, but it's not really what we mean by "do you exercise?" Someone who is committed to exercising does it consistently, not occasionally. You should think of self-care in the same way. It's not something you occasionally remember to do whenever you get stressed out. It's what you do consistently to prevent getting stressed out in the first place!

**Self-care isn't mysterious or complicated.** Self-care has gathered the unfortunate association of being a little mystical or 'out there', but in fact self-care is remarkably ordinary.

Most people understand that there are certain things we should do consistently to stay physically healthy like exercising, eating healthily, brushing our teeth, etc. Similarly, self-care is something we should do consistently to support our mental and emotional health, like making time for genuine relaxation, getting quality sleep, spending time with friends and family etc.

**Self-care isn't narcissistic or selfish.** A common response to the idea of self-care is that it's somehow self-centered or egotistical. The quickest answer to this idea is the pre-flight speech we all get before the plane takes off: "Remember to put your own oxygen mask on before helping others with theirs."

While a little counter-intuitive, we all see the logic here: you're not going to be able to help others very well if you haven't helped yourself first. The same is true of our mental health. If you're not taking care of yourself, it severely limits your capacity to be helpful to other people in your life. Self-care is the opposite of selfish. The best way to be genuinely helpful to other people is to do your best to maintain your own mental health and wellbeing.

**Self-care is for everyone.** Another misconception is the idea that self-care is just for people with too much time on their hands. This is the 'self-care-as-spa-day' idea, and it's completely wrong.

Self-care is something everyone can and should do in whatever way makes sense for them. You don't need lots of money or even time to do self-care well. In fact, many of the stereotypical self-care activities people think of – treating yourself to a massage, taking a few days off work, buying yourself something nice because, well, just because – only really help in the short term.

Of course a massage once a month feels nice, but what would be a lot more helpful for your stress levels is using your lunch break each day to actually disconnect and take a break from work instead of just working while you eat. The point is, often the most effective forms of self-care are simple, inexpensive, and relatively brief. They're things anyone can do.

“Mental health is not independent of physical health. In fact, your brain depends on your body being healthy.”

## How to do self-care well

Now that we have a better idea of what self-care is let's look at how to actually include self-care in our daily lives. Important: there's no set formula for self-care. We are all unique and have different lives and circumstances so it needs to be customised to your own needs. So you won't find any specific practices for self-care here, instead here are a few principles that can be applied by almost everybody when it comes to creating and building a healthy self-care regime.

## Take care of your physical health

Mental health is not independent of physical health. In fact, your brain depends on your body being healthy, and for it to function well you need to take care of your body – this means getting regular exercise, quality sleep, and eating well. These are the foundations, and if they're not solid, good luck building anything on top!

## Take care of your social health

People are social creatures, and even the most extreme introvert needs some social interaction to maintain their emotional health and wellbeing. The trick is to find the right kind of social interaction. An outgoing extrovert might thrive on meeting new people and spending time with groups of friends, whereas a more reserved introvert might prefer a quiet coffee with their best friend.

The point is, everybody needs some social interaction for their mental health and wellbeing. A big part of self-care involves figuring out the right kind of social interaction given your preferences, and making a specific plan to get that interaction consistently.

So, a good self-care routine would involve regular, consistent meet-ups with the people in your life that you enjoy the most. Don't just intend to call your best friend more often, set up a calendar appointment that you each agree on and do it consistently!

“Everybody needs some social interaction for their wellbeing.”



## Practise being gentle with yourself

Most of us are quite compassionate with our friends, family, and loved ones, but struggle to be compassionate with ourselves.

Most of us default to being hard on ourselves when we feel upset: we criticise ourselves for being weak, reprimand ourselves for self-pity, or try to scare ourselves with fears of what will happen if we don't 'get it together'.

The problem is, this combative relationship with our own emotions only makes our emotional struggles worse. In addition to feeling sad, now you're feeling guilty for feeling sad. Instead of just feeling anxious, now you're angry at yourself for feeling anxious!

The solution is to try to start a habit of being more gentle with yourself. This doesn't mean self-indulgence; it simply means treating yourself like you would treat a good friend who was struggling.

A big part of self-care is simply how we respond to our own struggles. Rather than attacking yourself when you're already down, why not learn to give yourself a little encouragement instead?





# What is Self-care?

“One of the best forms of self-care is to intentionally add some white space into your life. This means deliberately leaving some room for free-time in your days or weeks.”



### Make time for ‘pleasure-mastery’ activities

The idea of pleasure-mastery activities originated in an approach to the treatment of depression called behavioural activation. The basic idea was that by encouraging people to engage in activities that were either highly pleasurable, or led to a strong sense of mastery and competence, those activities would improve their mood and motivation.

When we make time to do projects or activities that we genuinely enjoy and do them for their own sake, we’re tapping into the same spirit of play that children use so effortlessly. Unfortunately, as adults, we often lose the habit of playfulness, and along with it, more than a little of our zest and enthusiasm for life.

Similarly, as adults, we’ve often reached a level of proficiency in our work that, while comfortable, isn’t really exciting anymore. When you stop learning and being challenged on a regular basis, it can lead to a sense of ‘flatness’ or ‘staleness’ in your life. The antidote is to deliberately make time for activities that genuinely challenge you and give you a sense of accomplishment and mastery. What’s more, these types of activities also lead to a sense of pride and boost our self-esteem.

So ask yourself:

- What are some activities I really enjoy for their own sake – just because they’re fun or pleasurable?
- What are some activities that lead to a genuine sense of accomplishment and mastery?

Pick one or two and make them a regular addition to your routine so that they don’t just become forgotten items on the someday-maybe list.

### Make sure you have enough ‘white space’ in your life

White space is a term that refers to space in a design that isn’t occupied by anything else. And far from just empty, unused space, white space is actually a key element of a visually pleasing design. This principle of white space also applies to mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Many of us unintentionally cram our lives full of events and activities and obligations and to-dos, leaving almost no breathing room. Every inch of ‘space’ is occupied and taken up, and like a big wall of text with no spacing, it makes just getting through the day stressful.

One of the best forms of self-care is to intentionally add some whitespace into your life. This means deliberately leaving some room for free-time in your days or weeks.

Of course, it’s not always easy to add white space to your life, mostly because it means giving up on something else. For example, if you want more time in the morning instead of being rushed every day before work, you might have to get up an hour earlier, which means you’d have to go to bed an hour earlier, which means you’d have to give up an hour of Netflix in the evenings. It turns out, even giving up an hour of Netflix can be tough!

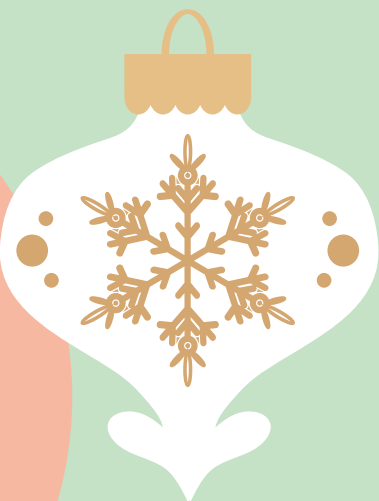
If you’re the kind of person who’s always busy, few things will make as big an improvement to your mental and emotional health as allowing more white space in your life.

### All you need to know

Self-care is neither mysterious or complex, it simply means creating healthy habits that support and strengthen your mental health and wellbeing. It’s not something you do once in a while or try to pack into your schedule when things get stressful. It means acknowledging that your mental health is as important as your physical health. To really be your best – both for yourself and the people in your life – you need to take care of yourself.

### WELLBEING TIP

Self-care doesn’t have to mean huge grand gestures or commitments, it can be as simple as picking up the phone to a friend, taking five minutes to sit down with a cuppa in a park or your garden and taking time to pause and reset. A warm shower or bath, a favourite meal or takeaway. It’s about the small incremental things you can do that soon add up to a lot.



Never Alone™  
From C.P.J. Field

### IN NUMBERS

15,000

cups of tea served at our groups since we launched in 2018!

288

Never Alone events this year.

### SMILE

Smiling is infectious  
You catch it like the flu  
When someone smiled at me today  
I started smiling too

I walked around the corner  
And someone saw me grin  
When he smiled I realised  
I had passed it on to him

I thought about the smile  
And then realised its worth  
A single smile like mine  
Could travel round the earth

So if you feel a smile begin  
Don’t leave it undetected  
Start an epidemic  
And get the world infected

Spike Milligan



new friendships



new interests



### WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

Discover what groups and activities are happening in your area this winter by scanning the QR code or visiting [www.never-alone.co.uk](http://www.never-alone.co.uk).



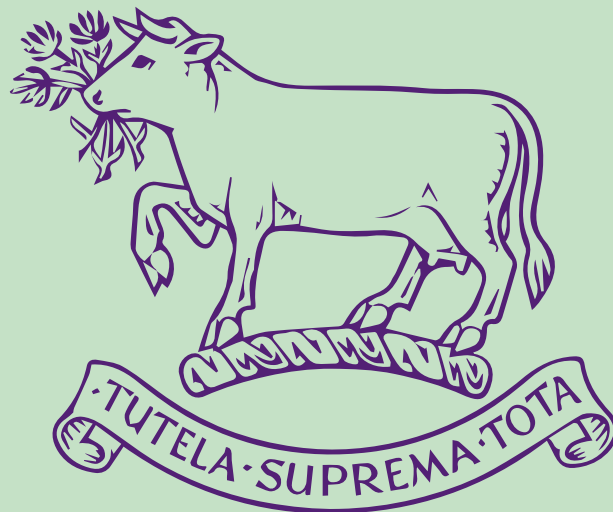
C.P.J. Field.

More than a funeral director since 1690.



# Never Alone™

From C.P.J. Field



Our family at CPJ Field are committed to caring for those that have died and for their family and friends left behind. Never Alone provides information and guidance on how to reduce feelings of loneliness. Offering emotional or practical support, and wellbeing advice, Never Alone offers useful access to local services, bringing brighter times ahead.

[www.cpjfield.co.uk](http://www.cpjfield.co.uk)