

Time



Autumn 2020

Together

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Bringing generations together

Welcome



Firstly, I'd like to thank those of you who sent in your nominations for our volunteer awards. Your entries are so touching and inspiring. We look forward to announcing the results in our Christmas issue.

What a strange and difficult time this is! I know many of you have recently joined our call companion service. I really want to welcome you to Re-engage and hope the phone calls are bringing you some comfort.

As we continue to grapple with the pandemic, it feels incredibly poignant to be marking the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War this year. It's also a timely reminder of the Blitz spirit we need to help us through the current crisis.

In this issue, we mark this special anniversary with a wartime account from our cover star, Frank, who's been attending our tea parties for almost 10 years. His tea party group recorded their memories to celebrate VE Day, and they make for fascinating reading.

I'm sure it must have sometimes felt as if the war would never end. Likewise, we don't know how long this crisis will go on, or when it will be safe to resume our tea parties. But, at some point, we **will** meet again.

In the meantime, we share tips for keeping your spirits up and a candid interview with 82-year-old Pat about how life has changed. We also have a wonderful story about new call companions Pringle and Craig, who are getting to know each other in the lockdown.

If you would like a call companion for a weekly chat over the phone, please let us know by calling **0800 716 543** (calls are free).

I hope you enjoy the read!

My very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meryl Davies'.

Meryl Davies
chief executive, Re-engage

We'll meet again



Irrepressible Londoner Frank, 92, shares some entertaining memories of growing up in wartime.

“When the war started, I was evacuated twice. The second time wasn't very happy. The man of the house took me fishing but told me not to talk to him because it would frighten the fish!

Back in London, I was allowed to leave school on my 14th birthday. My first job was at Selfridge's. Everyone there was given a company name – mine was 'Kane'. Several times I remember meeting the founder, Gordon Selfridge.

One day at work, I heard a familiar American voice asking: 'Can you tell me where the restaurant is?' Quick as a flash, I said: 'Certainly Mr Gable.' I hadn't needed to look up to know it was the famous Hollywood star, Clark Gable.

My eldest brother, Harry, worked for the Fire Service. Part of his job was defusing incendiary bombs – and he came home with one once. 'Hide it, Frank,' he said. 'And don't let Mum see it!'

Under the bed it went, but our mother soon found it, thought it was a live bomb, and made me take it to the ARP office. Harry really got it in the neck...

I still live in the same area of London. During the lockdown. I've spent my time playing the piano, and I chat to other guests in my tea party group over the phone almost every day.

I'll be glad when the lockdown's over, but until then, I'll just make the most of every day.”

“I'll be glad when lockdown's over, but until then, I'll just make the most of every day. ”

As told to Re-engage volunteers Carl Gardner, Jean Chippindale, Emile Farhi and Sally Pitel, who recorded the wartime memories of guests in their north London group to mark VE Day. You can read all their stories on our website at www.reengage.org.uk

Quick quiz Can you name eight items worn or carried by ARP wardens in the war?
Answers at the bottom of page 8.

Five things I appreciate more since Covid came along

Self-confessed chatterbox Pat, 82, has been yearning for more trees, more talking – and a better grasp of technology.

1. Seeing family (in real life)

My niece bought me a phone on my birthday so we could video call on the day. I didn't know how to use it but, all of a sudden, there she was on the screen. She was very impressed I'd done it, but it was a total accident!

2. Keeping up with technology

I know some people don't want to know about technology, but I'd love to be able to use it properly, even if it's just the basics. I'll never be a whizz with phones, but I don't like feeling left behind.

I used to be able to catch on quick and I was first in almost every subject at school. Being good at sports, I used to have to demonstrate the long jump for other classes. To be honest, all I'd do was throw myself in the air and land on the other side!

Nowadays I'm longing to get rid of my walking stick. How I'd love to just throw it away and walk out the door. I was sporty all my life. I wonder to myself what happened, but I suppose you just get older, don't you?

3. Volunteering in my local charity shop

Before the pandemic, I'd been working in my local charity shop. I worked there all through the nineties. When my brother passed away from cancer three years ago, I went back. I felt like I was doing it for him and everyone else like him.

I'm only there for two hours but I love it. I say to customers: "You'll have to excuse me, I know I talk a lot, but I live on my own so I have to catch up." It always makes them laugh.

4. Enjoying nature

I love nature and trees, so being indoors so much this year has been hard. I spotted some trees on my way back from the hospital the other day before I got in the cab. The leaves were all shiny from the rain and looked so lovely.

5. Being a chatterbox

I've lived alone for over 20 years. You do get fed up with it, but it would be hard to change after so long.



“ Just hearing someone ask me: ‘How are you doing today, Pat?’ does my heart so much good. ”

I’m naturally a chatterbox. If I went to the supermarket and saw an older man on his own, I’d start a conversation because he might not have a chance to speak to anyone all day. It’s such a shame.

Having a call companion made all the difference for me. It helps to know that people care. Just hearing someone ask me: “How are you doing today, Pat?” does my heart so much good – and so does having a really nice natter.

If only everyone could get a phone call like that, I think it would do a world of good.

If you’d like a call companion, it’s easy to sign up. Just give us a call on 0800 716 543.

Did you know?

One in five people aged 75 or over now use a smartphone.

How to beat the lockdown blues

We asked psychotherapist Julia Rivas, who also works at Re-engage, to share her tips for keeping our spirits up in these unsettling times.



Create hope

When everything feels hopeless, it can help to consciously focus on positive things. Think about all your achievements – work, family, the times when you've helped others... and write them down. Then write down the achievements of the people around you. The more empowered you feel, the more hopeful you'll be.

Structure your day

A routine can help you feel more in control, more energised and helps avoid the sense of the hours just slipping away. It's a good start to get up and dressed at the same time each day. Doing something enjoyable like reading, creative writing or taking a stroll can also give more meaning to your day.

Treat yourself

Do you remember that beautiful crockery you put away for a special occasion? What about those fluffy towels? Take them out and make the most of them. Sometimes we give ourselves a hard time when life is tough, and that's the last thing we need. Treat yourself every day. You deserve it.

Practise gratitude

Taking a moment to be grateful can really change our perspective and give us comfort. Here's an exercise to try. Last thing at night, turn your thoughts to one or two things you're thankful for. It could be a person in your life, or even the comfy bed you're lying in. Try to make it heartfelt.

Reach out

If we've learnt anything from these past months, it's that human bonds really count. Why not pick up the phone to that friend who's going through a rough time; or write to that distant relative; or sign up for a Re-engage call companion... It can take courage to reach out but you never know, you could make someone's day – as well as your own.

Need more support? Let us know by calling 0800 716 543 (calls are free).

The personal alarm with a remarkable story



We've teamed up with Personal Alarm Watch – a social enterprise with a passion for helping older people to be more independent.

The company's young founders, Adi and Ewan, design award-winning technology for social good. They've even won the coveted 'Forbes 30 under 30' award for making technology that older people love.

Their research told them that people want a discreet alarm that works anywhere – in or outside the home – with a built-in speaker and microphone, and which doesn't need someone to come in to set it up.

After years of testing, Adi and Ewan came up with their Personal Alarm Watch in 2019, which incorporates a lot of detailed design.

Take the alarm button. It's on the front of the watch because the occupational therapists they spoke to explained that placing the button there will help someone to activate the SOS even during a stroke.

Once the alarm is set off, you speak to an experienced 24/7 monitoring team through the watch to get the help you need. The watch also counts steps and measures vital signs, a real motivator for people to stay active, especially through lockdown.

Already the highest-rated alarm service in the UK, Adi and Ewan approached us to spread the word further. They will donate to Re-engage every time an older person chooses to buy their watch.

Priced similarly to traditional alarm products, the Personal Alarm Watch has an upfront cost and monthly fee.

As this is a social enterprise with the same ethos as Re-engage, we're more than happy to share their story. So, if you do end up purchasing Adi and Ewan's product, don't forget to tell them you heard about it here first.

To find out more, call 0203 868 5575 or visit personalalarmwatch.com/reengage

A match made in lockdown

Call companions Pringle and Craig talk about their weekly chats.

Pringle says:

I'm a sprightly 80, but since my husband died, there's been a big hole in my life.

There I was in lockdown – stuck indoors, bored. The television was depressing and knitting and sewing were difficult because my concentration was terrible.

Encouraged by a friend, I signed up for a call companion. A nice lady phoned and wrote down my interests – archaeology, geology – and they matched me with Craig, an archaeologist.

We hit it off from the start. Our conversations give me something new to pass on to my family and friends. And it's reciprocal – Craig tells his mother all about me.

The call companions service is an excellent idea. Craig and I have a new friendship out of it.

Craig says:

After seeing the call companions advert on Twitter, I wanted to help out in my own small way while I was stuck at home on furlough.

It's been brilliant. I've really enjoyed the chats with Pringle – the extra bit of company has been a real plus. We talk a lot about the work we do – my career in archaeology and her charity work in the North East of Scotland. We have a shared love of history, heritage and archaeology, and both of us love Orkney.

It's been a pleasure to get to know someone else at a time when making new friends is a real challenge.

Would you like a call companion? Phone us on 0800 716 543 to sign up.



Page 3 quiz answers: Steel helmet, gas mask, overalls, ceiling pike, gas rattle, forms for reporting bomb damage, first aid kit, stirrup pump and hose.

Re-engage

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