



NEWS

June 2025

SARAG - Yorkshire and Humberside Asbestos Support Group



SARAG - Yorkshire and Humberside Asbestos Support Group

Unit 20, Moorgate Crofts Business Centre, South Grove, Rotherham S60 2DH

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Donor organisations



Raising Awareness on International Workers' Memorial Day: A Call for Urgent Action on Asbestos in Public Buildings

Neven Stevenson, (Head of Service and Charity Development)

On International Workers' Memorial Day, our charity was proud to stand in solidarity with communities across the UK to honour those who have lost their lives due to unsafe working conditions. This year, we took part in events held in London, Doncaster, Sheffield, Rotherham, and Leeds, where we joined others in paying tribute to workers while raising awareness about a silent but deadly threat still present in our public buildings — asbestos.

At each event, we engaged with attendees to highlight the ongoing risk posed by asbestos in schools, hospitals, council buildings, and other public spaces. Despite being banned over two decades ago, asbestos remains in thousands of structures, posing a serious health risk to workers, children, and the public alike.

We used this important day of remembrance not only to reflect but to call for the safe and urgent removal of all asbestos from public buildings. Our message was clear: no one should have to risk their life simply by entering a public space. Action must be taken now to prevent future tragedies.

A heartfelt thank you to our dedicated team for making these events a success, and special thanks to Ying, Jane, Ruth, Penny, and Jason for their powerful and moving speeches, which helped bring the message to life and inspired so many.

Thank you to everyone who joined us, shared their stories, and supported the work that we do. Together, we are keeping the memory of those lost alive – and fighting for a safer future for all.



Jane Aitchison and Ruth Davies attended Leeds



Jason Shaw attended Rotherham



Penny Partlow attended Doncaster



Ying Chian attended Sheffield

Staffing News

Well-deserved retirement:

In May we had to say goodbye to our friend and colleague Wendy Benfold as she heads off into her retirement. You will be sadly missed Wendy and I'm sure everyone will join us in wishing you every happiness in the future. Wendy wrote:

I would like to take this opportunity to say what a lovely team you are here and that it's been a real pleasure working with you all and getting to know you. I've really enjoyed my time at SARAG and I am fully supportive of the wonderful work that the charity does.



As for the service-users and their families, that's been the main part of my work and all I can say is that the relationships I have built with them, makes them feel more like friends and family and I will miss them too.

I always said I wanted to end my career on a high and the work I have carried out during my employment with SARAG delivered that. Although a little earlier than expected, I will now be slipping gently into retirement so no more early mornings for me!

Enjoy yourself Wendy!

As one door closes, another one opens and that brings us to the excellent news of our newest team member:

**New Activity and Support Worker:
Michaela Morris**



As some of you may know, Michaela is an Occupational Therapist - enabling people to deal with change. She has worked in a range of settings including palliative care and mental health and has been supporting people living with Asbestos related conditions for many years. In her previous role she attended all the SARAG social groups and knows first-hand the great value of meeting up, learning together and accessing support and advice. Michaela loves being creative, with too many projects on the go and her latest is making a blanket for Nev's new arrival in June, in of course Barnsley FC colours!

We are so lucky to have you Michaela and the whole team look forward to working with you.

Welcome to SARAG!!

Dates For Your Diary

Action Mesothelioma Day, Sheffield Town Hall, Friday 4th July (see details page 6)

Hull Social Group: June 17th, July 15th, August 19th.

Sheffield Social Group: June 24th, July 22nd, August 26th.

Doncaster Social Group: June 10th, July 8th, August 12th.

York Social Group: June 16th, July 21st, August 18th.

Bradford Social Group: June 3rd, July 1st, August 5th.

Bereavement Group Wakefield: June 3rd, July 1st, August 5th.

Bereavement Group Sheffield: June 24th, July 22nd, August 26th.

Bereavement Peer Support Zoom Meetings; Thursdays 10 – 11:30am: 5th & 19th June, 3rd & 31st July (17th July cancelled due to annual leave), 14th & 28th August

Bereavement Steering Group Zoom Meeting: September, date TBC, ask for details.

MESSY Zoom: July 11th. **MESSY Leeds:** June 13th, August 8th.

Yorkshire Three Peaks Fundraiser: Sunday 29th June (see details page 10).

Save the dates (more details to follow in next edition or get in touch):

Christmas Lunch: Monday 8th December 2025

Annual General Meeting: Thursday 2nd October 2025

Bridge Abseil Fundraiser: Friday 12th September (will you join us?)

Social Media links (please follow us):

LinkedIn: **Yorkshire and Humberside Asbestos Support Group (SARAG)**

X: <https://x.com/yorkshireSARAG>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/YorkshireSARAG>

Facebook (private bereavement group):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/saragbereavementsupport>

Action Mesothelioma Day

Will you join us on Action Mesothelioma Day this year? Tickets are just £20 each and we have a limited number of free places, kindly sponsored by our solicitors: Leigh Day, Thompsons, Irwin Mitchell, Asbestos Law Partnership and Slater & Gordon. Please get in touch with us ASAP to reserve your place. Details below:



ACTION MESOTHELIOMA DAY 2025 FRIDAY 4TH JULY 2025

[HTTPS://LOCALGIVING.ORG/FUNDRAISING/2025-AWARENESS-CAMPAIGN](https://localgiving.org/fundraising/2025-awareness-campaign)

CONTACT US TO BOOK YOUR TICKET

Asbestos hasn't gone away:

- It's still present in 85% of schools, 90% of hospitals and many other public buildings.
- More people die from exposure to asbestos than die in road traffic accidents every year.
- Over 2,700 people a year are diagnosed with mesothelioma, a type of cancer that is entirely preventable.

Action Mesothelioma Day is on Friday, July 4th, 2025, and is a national event to raise awareness about asbestos and mesothelioma, support research, and remember those affected by the disease.

Join us to to show your support at Sheffield Town Hall. Contact us to book. Tickets are just £20 and lunch will be provided.

JOIN US

Time

10.30 am - 1.00 pm

Sheffield Town Hall
S1 2HH

TO BOOK:

01709360672

penny@saragasbesto
ssupport.org



Thank You to...



Our very own Nev Stevenson raised over £800 for our charity by running the Sheffield Marathon in April and Michael Wolstencroft of RWK Goodman Solicitors ran the Barcelona Marathon for us in March, raising over £800 too!

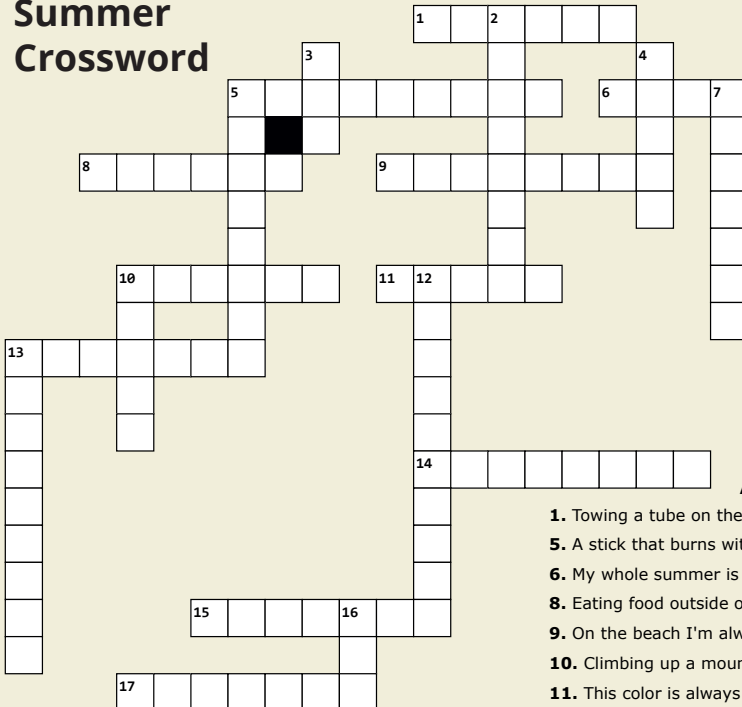
You are both amazing and your hard work will allow us to support many more people affected by asbestos related conditions. – THANK YOU SO MUCH NEV AND MICHAEL!!



The **Blakemore Foundation** also made a donation this quarter, towards the cost of providing our social groups, support we are very grateful for and will enable us to keep providing this valuable activity for our service users.



Summer Crossword



Down

- 2. Meal cooked outdoors
- 3. I want to always be
- 4. I can't wait to
- 5. When its hot out I love to go
- 7. I wish summer was
- 10. Summer makes me
- 12. Summer is so
- 13. The sky is always
- 16. cream A cold treat on a hot day

Across

- 1. Towing a tube on the water
- 5. A stick that burns with a lot of small bright sparks
- 6. My whole summer is spent on the
- 8. Eating food outside on a blanket
- 9. On the beach I'm always walking
- 10. Climbing up a mountain
- 11. This color is always around
- 13. Sleeping in a tent
- 14. When your out in the sun for too long you get
- 15. Worm on a hook
- 17. What you roast marshmallows on



SARAG Social Groups 2025

Friendly support and social groups for anyone affected by asbestos related disease; family members, friends and carers are also very welcome to attend.

Our groups provide the opportunity to have a good chat and to share experiences and advice with people who understand, in an informal setting. SARAG staff, and other professionals will be in attendance to offer support and to answer any questions you may have. We also have speakers on relevant subjects at some of our meetings.

A complimentary lunch and hot drinks will be provided at each of our venues and accessible parking and public transport links are close by.

Our online group is currently running every fortnight, 2-3pm. Full support is available to use Zoom.

If you'd like to join us on any of our groups, please email michaela@saragasbestsupport.org or text/call 07783510265.

Cottingham Civic Hall,
1 Market Green,
Cottingham, **HULL**,
HU16 5QG

Time: 12-2pm

Third Tuesday of each month:

21st Jan	15th July
18th Feb	19th Aug
18th March	16th Sept
15th April	21st Oct
20th May	18th Nov
17th June	16th Dec



Our Zoom Online group meets regularly but dates vary throughout the year, please get in touch for the details.

ZOOM

The Burton Hall,
The Burton Street
Foundation,
57 Burton Street,
Sheffield, S6 2HH.

Time: 12-2pm

Fourth Tuesday of each month:

- 28th Jan
- 25th Feb
- 25th March
- 22nd April
- 27th May
- 24th June
- 22nd July
- 26th Aug
- 23rd Sept
- 28th Oct
- 25th Nov
- 23rd Dec



Second Tuesday of each month:

Flying Scotsman Room,
Danum Gallery,
Library and Museum,
Waterdale, **Doncaster**,

DN1 3BZ
Time: 12-2pm

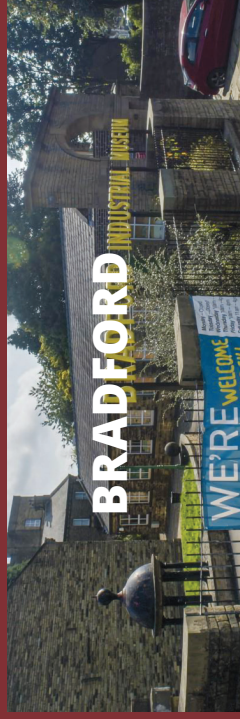
- 14th Jan
- 11th Feb
- 11th March
- 8th April
- 13th May
- 10th June
- 8th July
- 12th Aug
- 9th Sept
- 14th Oct
- 11th Nov
- 9th Dec



Bradford
Industrial Museum,
Moorside Mills,
Moorside Road,
Eccleshill,
Bradford, BD2 3HP
Time: 12-2pm

First Tuesday of each month:

- 7th Jan
- 4th Feb
- 4th March
- 1st April
- 6th May
- 3rd June
- 1st July
- 5th Aug
- 2nd Sept
- 7th Oct
- 4th Nov
- 2nd Dec

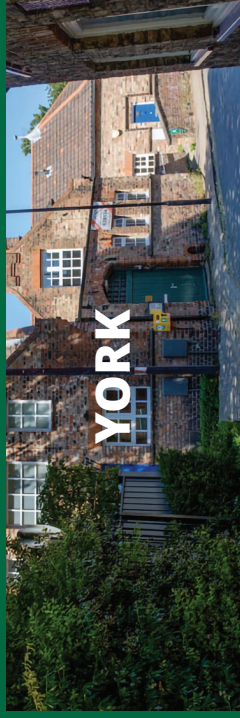


St Olave's Church Hall,
Marygate Lane,
York
YO30 7BJ

Third Monday of each month:

- 20th Jan
- 17th Feb
- 17th March
- 14th April
- 19th May
- 16th June
- 21st July
- 18th Aug
- 15th Sept
- 20th Oct
- 17th Nov
- 15th Dec

Time: 12-2pm



Fundraisers

2025 Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge.

CAN YOU DONATE TO SUPPORT OUR TEAM??

The Yorkshire Three Peaks are arranged in a triangle, with the River Ribble and two minor B roads between them. The total walking distance is 39.2 km (24.5 miles). Staff and volunteers will begin the Challenge at 6 am at Chapel le Dale and walking the route anti-clockwise, go through Ingleborough, then Pen-y-Ghent, then Whernside to finish back where we started. This should take us around 12 hours to complete.

ALL FUNDS DONATED WILL SUPPORT SARAG TO CONTINUE OUR VITAL WORK

We walk on Sunday 29th June and your support is very gratefully received!

<https://localgiving.org/fundraising/Yorkshire-Three-Peaks-Walk-2025>



Charity Garden Party - Saturday 13th September 5pm onwards - York

Will you join us for an evening of music and dancing to raise money for **FOUR** amazing charities? Rachel Oakes is holding a Charity Garden Party in remembrance of her husband Rick but tickets are extremely limited for this exclusive event, likely to be sold out by early June.

Contact Rachel quickly to reserve your place here:

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/oaklandshuby/1612208>

Invitation to

Charity Garden Party

A night of music & dancing, raising money for charities that support Mesothelioma cancer to honour the life of Rick Oakes.

Rachel Oakes has been granted permission by Mesothelioma UK to source donations/auction prizes from various companies for a fundraising event Rachel and family are holding in aid of Mesothelioma UK along with three other charities, St Leonards Hospice, SARAG and Marie Curie, that helped them along their journey.

The Charity Garden Party is to honour the life of Rick Oakes, a beloved husband, father and friend, who sadly lost his battle with Mesothelioma - an aggressive and rare cancer caused by exposure to asbestos. This illness attacks the lining of the lungs and often goes undetected until it advanced making treatment incredibly challenging. Rick had contact with asbestos at the age of 15 whilst working as an apprentice joiner, the disease was detected some 51 years later.



Despite this Rick faced every step with unwavering

strength and positivity. A man of drive and determination, he built a successful business, and outside of work, he found a great joy in golf, cars and time with those he loved. This event has been designed with touches of Rick's passions throughout, as we raised funds and awareness for Mesothelioma research and support. Through this, we hope to honour his legacy and help others facing this difficult disease.

The UK has the highest incidence rate of Mesothelioma in the world. Mesothelioma UK exists to support anyone affected by enhancing quality of life, supporting research and amplifying the patients voice.

To purchase a ticket or donate, go to [this link](#). We greatly appreciate Auction Prizes or Raffle donations as all contributions will be donated to the charities that helped us in our time of need. Please don't hesitate to contact me by phone or email should you have any questions.



Mesothelioma UK



St Leonard's Hospice



SARAG



Marie Curie



scan barcode

A: Rachel Oakes
Oaklands, Sutton Road, Huby
YO61 1 HF, York
Yorkshire

T: +44 7542 265215

E: racheloakes73@hotmail.com

Finding Our Feet

the newsletter from the Bereavement & Family Support Service

Welcome to the summer edition of our Bereavement and Family Support Service newsletter. We hope you find this section supportive, informative, and compassionate. We also welcome and encourage submissions from both our bereaved community and those facing an anticipated bereavement. This is your space to share and to support each other on the journey.

Deb Williams,
Bereavement Support Worker, writes:

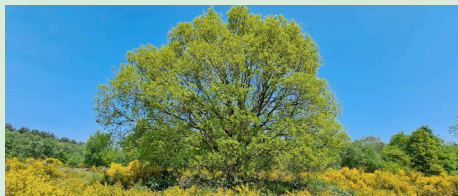
Summer! Wow! Can't believe we are here already! Where does time go?

This is the time of year when the sun is at its highest. The days are long, and the nights are short. The beautiful spring translucent lime green leaves start to mature and become much darker in colour in a quest to soak up more of the sun's life-giving light and energy.

Grief is a complex and a hugely personal experience, one that knows no boundaries of time or season. Yet, there can be an unexpected shift in its intensity when summer arrives. The longer days can just make the days 'feel' that much longer, and the burden of loss can feel so much heavier.

During the winter, it can be easier to stay inside, avoid loved ones, and decline social gatherings. But once the weather warms up, feelings of sadness can deepen as those around you are happier, more active, and excited to enjoy all that summer has to offer.

Summer is associated with beauty, family gatherings, picnics, camping, BBQs, festivals, and many other warm-weather pleasures. But if you've lost someone you love, everything you used to enjoy about summer may be different. Very often, bereaved people find it hard to cope with sadness at a time when everyone else is out there having fun.



It is common for griever to think "The flowers don't matter. The sun doesn't matter. Everyone's celebrating but I feel so sad, so alone. Summer doesn't matter because the person I love isn't here anymore." It may be that you think that you 'should feel happy' in summer, because you don't want to spoil other people's fun, but find it hard to enjoy things that were fun in the past.

Our pain can feel like it intensifies as each new season brings new memories of the person who has died, along with the realisation that you can no longer share experiences together. Revisiting special times can be painful and difficult and may seem like a setback in the grieving process. What is important to remember: Grief is not a typical emotion, nor is it predictable.

Emotions can come like waves, and when they hit, keep in mind that grief has no timetable. It's not about moving on; it's about adapting over time and dealing with the loss in a way that helps you. It is about building resilience so that you can more easily sit with your grief without it being too painful or overwhelming. This might mean meeting with a counsellor or a support group, writing in a journal, or turning to those around you who offer encouragement and a listening ear. It might mean stepping out and letting the healing powers of nature, nurture you. Feel the warmth of the sun on your face, sit quietly under the shade of a tree, listen to the whispers of a babbling brook. Nature has a place for you, it will hold you and it will listen without judgement, without criticism and without expectation. Nature never hurries, so allow yourself to go slowly, taking one day at a time. Embody the warmth and the longer days in your own way and you too will arrive at your own summer.

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Here's a little nature exercise for you to try: **Reciprocity and Gratitude for Trees**

Bring your awareness to the many benefits trees can bring, such as visual pleasure, shelter, improved immune function or by them bearing fruit. Take a few moments to notice the reciprocal (mutually beneficial) relationship that we have with trees. The leaves of trees use sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide to make plant sugars, whilst at the same time they release oxygen into the air.

We need sunlight (for vitamin D), water and oxygen to survive, whilst at the same time we release carbon dioxide into the air through respiration.

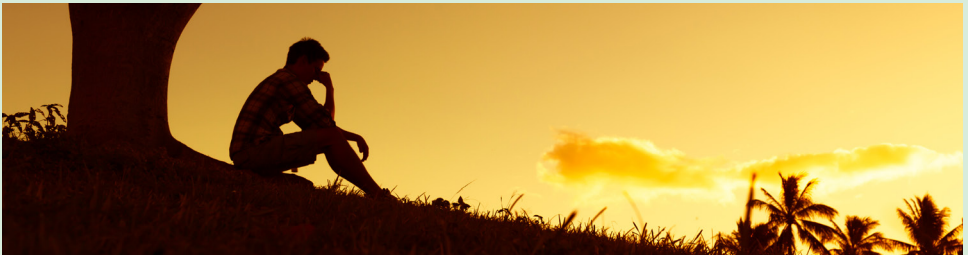
Stand or sit by a chosen tree, take a few deep, slow, light breaths in through your nose. Breathe in the oxygen that the trees have given us for life, and then gently breathe out (through your nose) the carbon dioxide that the trees need for their life. Bring your attention to this mutual giving and taking to sustain life and give thanks to the trees for being there for us.

The appreciation of nature and this reciprocal relationship is an important part of Forest Bathing and nature connection.

Creative Corner: Poem by Becky Hemsley

Today I said, "I'm fine", not once
But five times altogether
When people asked, "how are you?"
Then made small talk of the weather
And so, I hid behind my mask
The one I'd worn a while
I set in place my bravest face
And dressed it with a smile
And that was how the day went
All "I'm fine" and talk of rain
Until somebody asked me how I was
Then asked again
They asked if I was truly fine
And I said I was not
And they said they were sorry
That they couldn't do a lot
But then they sat beside me
Whilst I spoke the truth at last

They listened and they held me
As the tears slipped through my mask
And where before, I'd felt I should
Maintain this brave façade,
I realised there was much to gain
By letting down my guard
See, though my load was still the same
It now was not as heavy
Cause sitting and offloading it
Had helped a bit already
Today they asked "how are you?"
And I told them I was fine
'Til someone saw behind the mask
And asked me one more time
And though they may have felt
That there was little they could do
They'll never know how much it meant
To tell someone the truth



Finding Our Feet

the newsletter from the Bereavement & Family Support Service



Well-being, breathing exercises:

Each quarter, I will aim to bring you an exercise that could help with how grief/bereavement might be negatively affecting your breathing, and thus your overall well-being.

Being bereaved, experiencing grief, and/or anticipating grief, is a very stressful time. Being stressed can affect our breathing. Our everyday breathing patterns are often overlooked in the management of stress, anxiety, and panic. However, the way we breathe every day, influences how we feel and how much stress we experience. It also dictates how we breathe and how our bodies respond during high-stress situations. This breath-mind connection is not new-age 'woo woo.' It has long been accepted by the scientific community that how we breathe affects which branch of the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) - the 'fight or flight' sympathetic branch responsible for the stress response, or the parasympathetic 'rest and digest' responsible for relaxation, is activated. Our breath is a fundamental 'state changer' and by manipulating our breath and changing how we breathe, we can alter how we feel on both a physiological basis and a psychological basis.

Where possible, breathe only through the nose. Good functional, everyday breathing incorporates breathing through the nose during rest, activity, and sleep. Breathing through the nose takes practise and consistency. This will initially take conscious practice. Nasal breathing triggers the relaxation response and helps to prevent overbreathing which is a major fueller of anxiety and panic. Nasal breathing during wakefulness slows and draws the air into the lower parts of the lungs. This may help to maintain the strength and function of the breathing muscles and reduce the feeling of breathlessness.

When we are feeling stressed:

- Breathing becomes faster
- Sighing becomes more frequent
- More air is breathed with each breath
- Breathing tends to be primarily limited to the upper chest
- We tend to breathe through the mouth
- There is a sensation of air hunger or suffocation.

When we are feeling relaxed:

- Slow breathing
- More regular breathing (less frequent sighing and yawning)
- Lighter breathing
- Breathing low into the diaphragm
- Breathing in and out through the nose
- Effortless breathing with no feeling or sensation of air hunger.

A breathing exercise to help balance your autonomic nervous system (ANS) When breathing becomes faster, harder, and from the upper chest, it feeds into feelings of panic and suffocation. To alleviate this, it is important to breathe slowly through the nose and deeply into the diaphragm. The following exercise can help improve breathing efficiency and oxygenation, reduce sensitivity to carbon dioxide, improve vagal tone and calm the mind.

BREATHE SLOW (Cadence) directions:

- Sit up as straight as possible on a chair or somewhere where you are comfortable. Place your hand either side of your belly, just on your lower two ribs.

- Close your mouth and ensure that you breathe through your nose only.

- As you breathe in, feel your ribs moving outwards, and, as you breathe out, feel your ribs moving inwards.

Finding Our Feet

the newsletter from the Bereavement & Family Support Service



• To pace (cadence) your breathing, inhale for a count of four seconds and exhale for a count of six seconds.

• Breathe in 1,2,3,4; breathe out 1,2,3,4,5,6.

• **N.B** if you are new to this it is wise to start off slowly and build up to 4 seconds in and 6 seconds out. So, you may wish to breathe in for 2, out for 3, or in for 3 and out for 3, and slowly build up over time.

• As you continue to breathe, feel your ribs moving outwards as you breathe in, and, as you breathe out, feel your ribs moving inwards.

• Breathe in for a count of four seconds and out for a count of six seconds.

• Continue the exercise for approximately four minutes or build up to four minutes over time as you practise.

• Practise the exercise three times a day.

(Alternatively, you can breathe in for a count of five seconds and breathe out for a count of five. Breathe in: 1,2,3,4,5; breathe out, 1,2,3,4,5. Both options results in a breathing rate of six breaths per minute and work well in helping to improve the ANS. Remember to make the 'in' breath soft and silent so as not to take a 'big' breath in which will result in 'over breathing'. Let the out breath be relaxed and gentle).

**(Adapted from The Breathing Cure by Patrick McKeown)*

Recipe:

Meals For One - Beef stew with carrot & potato

Preparation time - Less than 30 mins

Cook 30 mins or until the vegetables are soft and the beef is tender.

Serves one

Beef stew with carrots and potatoes is a traditional warm and filling dinner, great for chilly evenings, even though it might be summer.

Ingredients:

Beef (100g, diced)

Carrot (1 small, chopped)

Potato (1 small, chopped)

Onion (1/2 small, chopped)

Garlic (1 clove, minced)

Beef broth or stock (250ml)

Optional: Cornflour (1 tablespoon, for thickening), water (1 tablespoon, to mix with cornflour)

Method

- Brown small pieces of beef in a large pot.
- Add chopped carrot, potato, onion, and garlic and cook until they soften.
- Pour in beef broth or stock and let it simmer until the beef is tender.
- If you prefer a thicker stew, mix a tablespoon or two of cornflour with water and add it towards the end of cooking.

Adapted from Alina Care Home recipes.

I hope you have enjoyed our submission in SARAG's newsletter. Please feel free to contact me directly either by emailing me at deb@saragasbestsupport.org, or contacting by phone or text messaging on 077141724126 should you wish to contribute anything to the next newsletter in September. It might be that you would like to write your own poem, share a story, or have some ideas that you think will help our Bereavement & Family Support Service, or could enhance our content in the newsletter.

Take care during the next three months.
You know where I am. Warmest of wishes
Deb

Donate to us

SARAG is only able to provide our service because of the generous donations made from our Solicitor panel members and individuals.

We would like to take a moment to thank all of you who have donated or contributed to the charity over the years. Without this support the charity would cease to exist. Best wishes to you all.

If you feel you can donate to SARAG, this is how you can help:



Ways to donate:

Donate online: Go to Local Giving - www.localgiving.org and search for SARAG

By Paypal:

- “search causes” and enter “Yorkshire & Humberside Asbestos”. Donating this way incurs no fees and SARAG receives the amount you give, in full.

By cheque/post:

- Complete the form below if applicable, making a cheque payable to “Yorkshire and Humberside Asbestos Victims Support Group” and send to: SARAG, Unit 20, Moorgate Crofts Business Centre, South Grove, Rotherham S60 2DH

Through your bank:

- Set up a regular Standing order to our bank details: YORKSHR & HUMBER ASBESTOS VCTMS SUPP GRP. Sort Code: 089299 / Acc. No: 65467785

By text: link

- Let us know how much you want to donate and your mobile number, then we can send an automatic payment link for you to use. The money reaches us almost immediately and incurs only a small fee from the provider.

Make your donations go further with Gift Aid

Through the Government’s Gift Aid scheme, SARAG can claim an additional 25p for every £1 you donate. So if you are a UK taxpayer, you can increase the value of your donations to us, at no cost to yourself! Simply fill in your details below and tick the box to confirm your taxpayer status.



Gift Aid declaration:

I am a UK taxpayer and would like SARAG to reclaim the tax on all donations I have made, and for all future gifts of money that I make. Tick:

Taxpayer Name:

Postcode:

You are receiving this newsletter because you are currently on our mailing list. If you wish to unsubscribe email: enquiries@saragasbestosupport.org or, phone the office on 01709 360672.

If your contact details are out of date, please let us know.