

Community Action and Support for COVID 19

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As shelter in place orders (lockdowns) occur in the response effort to stop COVID-19 there will be disruptions in work and service that will affect individuals differently and even seriously. It is also important to address social isolation and all that entails. Family, friends and community are essential support systems.

"Every hand that we don't shake must become a phone call that we place. Every embrace that we avoid must become a verbal expression of warmth and concern. Every inch and every foot that we physically place between ourselves and another, must become a thought as to how we might be of help to that other, should the need arise."

Rav Yosef



Rabbi Yosef Kanefsky of B'nai David-Judea in Los Angeles

There are multiple aspects to how individuals can build their community engagement and how an organized community can develop mutual support:

- Individuals can reach out to their friends and families, ask what help is needed and what help they can provide. Keep track of who can help with what and pass the information to others who need it. Decide who you want to be in touch with on a regular basis and put those texts, calls or video calls on your calendar. Encourage others to do the same.
- The community can create a buddy system. Small groups of 2 or 3 individuals or households are a "Buddy Pod" that checks in on one another remotely a couple of times a week. Even if everyone is and remains free of COVID 19, there will be concerns, problems, etc. Examples: collect grocery orders from buddies and rotate who goes to the store, using non-contact drop-off. Help those not accustomed to order online. Pay attention to what the needs are and be creative.
- Prioritize, with extra caution, helping senior members of the community who don't live with their children, to set up telecommunication / virtual communication, especially video. Extra caution must be taken to avoid any direct physical contact or proximity as elderly individuals are particularly vulnerable to severe disease and death.
- Within a Buddy Pod, individuals should recognize the opportunities in available time and ask each other what they are interested in doing with it. For example, "If I had some free time, I always wanted to learn ...", and help/enable/promote each other to carry them out.
- Opportunity for intergenerational interaction. Everyone is

not equally able to use the internet or to cook, mend, even read. Make buddy pods and teams diverse, so mutual help can be both more meaningful and more fun. People with grown children may love remote homework help and reading with younger members.

- Depending on the size of the community, larger sub-groups of say 5-10 buddy pods can form a "Buddy Group" that will be available to one another as additional resource to brainstorm and work together to solve problems bigger than one Buddy Pod can handle. If a buddy becomes ill, with COVID 19 or something else, how best to support and stay safe? What other resources can be called upon?
- What supplies can the community buy in bulk and have available for members? Non perishable food, gloves, cleaning wipes, paper towels, tissues. Items to have available when stores (virtual and brick and mortar) run out until they are available again.
- Community institutions can be creative about providing the activities remotely that are normally done in situ. For example, universities are conducting classes online. Houses of worship are streaming religious services and classes. Book, bridge, knitting clubs meet on Zoom?
- As the weather for many of us warms, plan small group outdoor activities that allow participants to keep their distance (more than 6 feet) but enjoy being in the same outdoor space together.
- Events—birthdays and anniversaries, weddings, graduations, welcoming new babies, and deaths—times when we gather to celebrate, mourn and lend support are all changing now. The hugs will have to wait, but how can the community support celebrating together?
- Workplace mutual support: Some people can do their jobs from home, others cannot. In some workplaces, people with a particular job need to be present, but not all at once. i.e. medical teams, supermarkets, pharmacies, nursing homes. Work together to create a schedule that is safe, and assures that if one person or team (if that's how it is set up) does get sick, the workplace can still function. Also that no one is exhausted.
- Buddy pods can also work toward mutual Closed Social Circles, opening the possibility of gathering in person.
- Building on the Community effort, individuals and the community should seek out ways to support other communities locally, or find "sister communities" globally to share information with or collaborate on projects.
- Since the pandemic is global, this is an opportunity to meet others online from the global community, speaking another language you may be able to speak a little or not at all, to share the experience of isolation, to learn each other's language, and provide and learn safety and prevention tips from one another.