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Social Distancing Doesn't Mean Social Isolation

Yes, the requirement for everyone, and especially older adults, right now is to stay home and avoid visits with other people to keep from getting sick. That's important advice, but no doubt it's interrupting your usual social interactions — going out to events, to senior clubs and even seeing family.

By Fran Kritz

That can be disappointing, and even socially isolating. But there are things you can do to engage in a whole new way. Start with conversation. Especially if you live alone, you'll want to create time for conversations by phone.

"Now is such a good time to think about who you enjoy speaking with and arranging to talk on a regular basis," says Rabbi Jonathan Malamy, director of Spiritual Life at The New Jewish Home in New York. "You might want to talk about the news a bit, but it's also a good time to catch up on history, share some stories you haven't told before or enjoy retelling."

And listening is an especially valued skill now. When people are anxious it is comforting to know that someone is interested in engaging, so your efforts to keep up connections and let people know you need them and want to speak with them will help you both so much, says Dana Dorfman, Ph.D., a psychotherapist in New York City.

Dr. Eva Fogelman, a psychologist in private practice who works with many Holocaust survivors, suggests that people not spend too much time watching television news — perhaps once to catch up in the late morning and then

again in the late afternoon.

"After that, watch movies," Dr. Fogelman urges. If you have a computer and a library card you can download movies from your library branch website for free. Facebook member? Log onto the Claims Conference Facebook page for information on downloading movies online.

She also recommends that survivors, particularly those who don't have family nearby, might make a connection with a college student who is now home, and speak regularly by phone, and perhaps learn something together. Jewish Family Service agencies around the country are arranging innovative forms of interaction.

For those who may want to speak to a therapist, Dr. Fogelman advises speaking by phone, since in-person visits pose a risk right now. She suggests that those who are disappointed that they are unable to attend programs like Café Europa at the moment might reach out by phone to someone else from the group. (The organizers may be able to help with phone numbers.)

"Feeling isolated now is understandable of course," says Karen DeOssie, LCSW, the managing director of the Holocaust Survivor Program at Selfhelp Community Services, Inc., in New York City. But there are some great steps you can take to engage your friends and family in new ways.

"Technology you have in your home can be a good way to connect, but you don't need lots of technology to create those connections," says DeOssie. "If



you have a computer and already have video visits with friends and family, schedule some now — but not too many each week, or you could be overwhelmed."

And if you haven't done that before, and have a smart phone or computer, a friend, child or a grandchild can walk you through steps to set it up. But DeOssie, like Rabbi Malamy, says that meaningful conversations are great on the phone too.

"Put yourself in charge of the timing," she says. "Everyone's schedule has changed, and you may be taking an afternoon nap, or watching a television program you love. Figure out the best time to speak that fits your schedule, and that can change as you settle into a new routine."

As for television, non-news stations, especially public broadcasting channels, are adding to their content during the day and you are likely to find lectures, concerts and even opera performances from some of the great halls, such as Lincoln Center and the Metropolitan Opera House. The television section of the newspaper is a good guide, and you might want to find a TV buddy to help the two of you find, and then discuss, some new programs.

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Online, many museums have tours that take you through their collections and exhibitions, including the Louvre, the Guggenheim, the Getty in Los Angeles and the Smithsonian (si.edu/exhibitions/online). Aquariums including the national one in Baltimore now offer video tours online (aqua.org/Experience).

Read or reread favorite books. Listen to the music you love. If you enjoy crafts, think about knitting small blankets for babies in the ICU, or small dolls, that can be delivered to local hospitals once the pandemic passes.

And whether you're a veteran game player or not, this might just be the time to learn some new game skills. Leora Raskas, a recreation specialist for older adults, has ideas for games to play on your own and with others over the phone or via computer:

► **Word in a Word:** See how many smaller words you can make from a larger word or phrase. Letters can be used in any order, but each letter can only be used once. For example: "George Washington." Possible answers include, ton, egg, shine, shrine, hint, here, etc. "All you need is paper and pencil, though if you have letter tiles around that can be fun and work well if you're playing over Skype."

► **Categories:** The goal is to think of five items in a given category within two minutes. Examples: Fruits, names that start with the letter M, Olympic games, soda brands, Supreme Court Justices, jazz singers.

Heather Angel M.S.W., director of the Holocaust Program and Valley Storefront Senior Center at Jewish Family Service in North Hollywood,

Calif., says Holocaust survivors should also realize their importance as sources of strength during this time, especially when they speak to children and grandchildren.

"You can give perspective on facing a challenging situation," she says

And consider this a chance to learn something new. Some senior centers have call-in classes or discussions, suggests Mark Meridy, director of Dorot, an intergenerational program in New York City which offers "university without walls" online small group classes. He advises seniors to look for similar programs in their city by going online or calling Jewish Community Centers, synagogues and senior centers.

Heather Angel also suggests new



hobbies that you, or someone on your behalf, can order online including intricate coloring books and markers, crossword and multi-piece jigsaw puzzles and math games like Sudoku. "Order one for yourself and one for a friend or family member," suggests psychotherapist Dr. Dana Dorfman. "The shared experience of working on the same game or puzzle will delight both of you, especially now."

Having to change your schedule and activities is frustrating and disappointing. You may have new blocks of free time, which may turn into opportunities for new interests. Planning activities and virtual visits can help you feel connected and help you enjoy yourself right now. ►

If you are lonely and would like a volunteer to call you weekly for a personal social call, please contact the **Claims Conference at (646) 536-9100.**

If you need help and need to contact a local agency, please look on page 6 and 7.

Please note: ANNUAL LIFE CERTIFICATES FOR ARTICLE 2 FUND PENSION
The annual life certificate process for Article 2 fund pension recipients typically starts in April. This process has been suspended for, at least, 8 weeks. We will evaluate on an ongoing basis when we feel it is safe to initiate this process for 2020.

ДОРОГИЕ ДРУЗЬЯ

Если вы чувствуете себя одинокими, и хотели бы, чтобы волонтер звонил вам раз в неделю, пожалуйста свяжитесь с Клеймс Конференс по телефону (646) 536-9100.

Если вам нужна помощь и вы хотите связаться с местной еврейской организацией, смотрите на страницу

Внимание: ЕЖЕГОДНОЕ ПОДТВЕРЖДЕНИЕ НАХОЖДЕНИЯ В ЖИВЫХ ДЛЯ ПОЛУЧАТЕЛЕЙ ПЕНСИИ ИЗ ФОНДА А2

Ежегодный процесс подтверждения нахождения в живых для получателей пенсии из Фонда А2 обычно начинается в апреле. Этот процесс был отложен как минимум на 8 недель. Мы будем наблюдать за ситуацией по мере ее развития и решать, когда, по нашему мнению, будет безопасно начать этот процесс в 2020 году.