**OKC CARING CONNECTIONS**

Opening communication

These are extraordinary times that we are living in. As we grapple with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the recent surge in civil unrest, many of us may be feeling overwhelmed as we navigate an array of emotions and reactions. The rhythms of our lives have been disrupted, and we have had to adjust to a new normal that impacts every aspect of our daily experience from work and school to life cycle events, daily habits and travel.

Each of us is bound to process and respond to these recent events through the lens of our own past experiences and therefore is impacted in different ways. Some may feel overwhelmed and vulnerable, while others may find themselves feeling stressed, lonely, anxious, worried, depressed, grief-stricken, irritable or even traumatized. We might find we lack the motivation to do our usual activities, or we may find it hard to begin or complete tasks. We might feel excessively tired or lacking in energy. We might have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep or may have unusually vivid or disturbing dreams. We might notice our appetite for food has changed –perhaps we seem to have no appetite or find ourselves overeating and/or craving certain foods. We may find ourselves crying more easily and frequently.

You are not alone. It is important for you to know and understand that these experiences and reactions are very common under stressful circumstances.

We are a diverse group of mental health professionals and clergy within the Ohr Kodesh community, who have partnered with our own Ohr Kodesh clergy team to offer support and resources during these challenging times. The goals of this initiative include providing help and support where it is needed, giving voice and context to what you may be feeling, providing helpful resources, and offering strategies to help navigate what is happening.

We are in the process of developing a resource page that will be posted on the Ohr Kodesh website, and plan to send the congregation periodic emails about these issues. We are, of course, interested in hearing what would be helpful to you – we invite you to share topics or concerns you would like to have us address. Please feel free to reach out to me with your ideas, questions and concerns via email at meaphd@hotmail.com or leave a message on my work phone (301-593-6194).

Of course, if you are in need of pastoral care and/or have more pressing concerns about how you are coping, our clergy team continues to be available to you. You can contact Rabbi Fishman via email at ravlaf@ohrkodesh.org or by phone/text at 301-233-9478. Cantor Labovitz can be reached via email at cantorlabovitz@ohrkodesh.org and by phone/text at 240-650-6042.

Maxine Ellenberg Arnsdorf, Chair

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