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Feeling Connection and Combating Loneliness on Shabbat and Yom Tov: A Bayit Guide

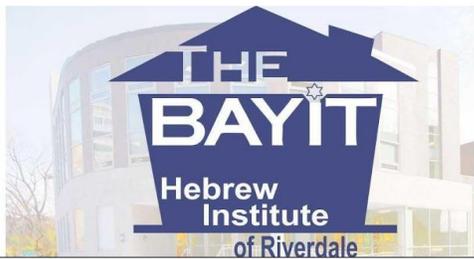
“Social Distancing”, the commitment we have all made to save lives in this coronavirus pandemic, has had a profound effect on our lives. We miss the human interaction of one-on-one connection and physical touch and of sharing space with our Bayit community and other communities. During the week we combat these feelings by connecting with others via social media and technology.

👉 There is a new phenomenon called “Zoom Fatigue”. Think about Shabbat as a real break from the non-stop chatter of technology and a time to unwind and recharge your screen-time batteries.

Shabbat brings with it an opportunity for quiet and reflection. While in many ways that can be welcome, it can also be a particularly lonely time, especially for those of us living alone. We understand the challenge of getting through this 25 hour period with no digital communication. We lovingly offer some ideas to help mitigate those feelings, and we invite you to share your ideas with us as we learn and grow together.

Pre-Shabbat Preparations:

- ❖ **Planning:** in general, setting some type of structure or schedule for your Shabbat will help the time pass smoothly and comfortably. Break the night and the day up into sections. Consider even writing that schedule out and leaving it on the fridge or the table.
- ❖ **Reading:** Shabbat is a perfect time to read books or articles, ones you’ve been wanting to read and catch up on or returning to old favorites. Perhaps choose a book to read together with a friend before Shabbat - you can discuss it after Shabbat and plan for that conversation on Shabbat.
- ❖ **Games/Puzzles:** Jigsaw puzzles are great to work on, take breaks and come back to.
Here are some suggestions for games that you can play alone:
Friday: this card game was created to play solo!
The Game: This game is for the logically-oriented or mathematically inclined
- ❖ **Music:** It is halakhically acceptable in this unique moment to leave music playing (radio or Internet) in one of your rooms. This can feel soothing and connect you to the outside world. We recommend finding a station with music that is calming such as soft jazz or soft classical music. It is about **music not radio**. It is not about listening to the news.
- ❖ **Eating:** Prepare or order yummy food for your Shabbat meals!



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❖ **Socializing:**

- If you can go outside, find a “walking buddy” and set times to walk together with social distancing. Set a time to meet at a park with a friend and find a roomy place to sit or walk.
- Get to know your neighbors. In apartment buildings you could leave your doors open and chat with each other from afar. Plan specific times you might meet up.

On Shabbat:

- ❖ **Ritual:** When lighting Shabbat candles, take the time to think about setting aside your week and moving into a feeling of Shabbat. What are you grateful for? What are you praying for? Maintain the structuring rituals of Shabbat: Setting the table, Kiddush, HaMotzi...
- ❖ **Tefillah:** Daven “together” at the times set for the whole community. If you attend shul on Shabbat, close your eyes and visualize being in shul. Look around at the people you usually see. In your mind’s eye, you can wish them Shabbat Shalom and wish them well.
- ❖ **Se’udat Shabbat:**
 - Set the table and create a Shabbat atmosphere.
 - Eat with intentionality. Savor the food, think about where it came from. There are eating meditations that can bring calm and make extra meaning of our eating experience.
 - Sing aloud - having sound in the home can help us feel less alone.
- ❖ **Emotional Health:** Practice breathing exercises to relax. Think of the people in your life who bring you strength. Send them, in your heart, messages of love and appreciation. You can share those messages directly after Shabbat.
- ❖ **Menuchat Shabbat:** Enjoy the luxury of the opportunity to sleep a little later. Go to bed early and sleep a full night. If you feel tired during the day, take an afternoon nap.
- ❖ **Connect with nature:** Make sure to sit by the window for natural light. Open your window if weather permits and wave to people you know who are walking by. Go for a walk - or more than one; bonus points for seeing greenery! The trees are starting to bud!

Sometimes when we are alone, we think that we are the only ones who are alone.

You are not alone in being alone.

