

## JUST YOU AND ME AND LOCKDOWN

It's just me and my partner at home for three weeks of lockdown!

We're a happy couple, but this is something totally new. Will we be ok?

The next several weeks won't be easy for anyone, but there are things you can do to lower the stress levels as a couple and maintain Shalom Bayit and harmony during lockdown (and maybe even have fun!)

Who could have guessed the changes the corona virus would bring to our nation, our neighbourhoods and our homes?

Within a matter of days, we've gone from business as usual to a society that practices self-isolation, social distancing and lockdown!

Some couples are enjoying the changes in routines. The corona virus quarantine means there's time to enjoy meals together and spend quality time with each other.

But it's also ok if the thought of being cooped up 24/7 with your spouse is a little daunting!

Our regular routine creates healthy spaces through working during the day, attending social functions, going to shul, working out at the gym and spending time with family and friends. Now there's none of that.

Be honest about your fear and anxiety of being quarantined together. These feelings are legitimate. The concerns are real. So, admit to them.

Talk to your spouse about them and discuss ways to best support each other during this crazy time.

Grieve the changes that are happening. You're dealing with more than a virus and a successful marriage. You're dealing with social distancing, remote work, lockdown and quarantine.

By nature we're drawn to the familiar. It makes us feel safe when we know what to

expect. Something unexpected - like the corona virus, quarantine - can make us feel helpless or out of control. It's natural for you and your spouse to grieve the loss of a familiar routine. As you process these losses, make a commitment to care about your spouse's feelings and losses.

Check in with each other daily. Chat about your good and bad moments, hopes and emotions. Care about your partner's emotions. Care about him or her as a person.

Take breaks from each other. Speak - out loud - about the type of breaks that work for you. They may be uninterrupted TV shows, reading or relaxing in the garden that helps to keep your goals realistic and keeps you and your spouse on the same page.

Practice good self-care. You are fully responsible for your well-being: spiritually, physically and emotionally. Your goal should be to recharge and care for yourself in these three areas so you have something to give to your spouse.

Make your home a safe environment. When two people feel safe, hearts seem to open up and connections happen. When people feel unsafe, hearts close and individuals disconnect. Talk to your spouse about how to create a home that feels safe for each of you. Start by asking your spouse to complete this sentence: "I feel safe when you..."

### **IMPORTANT:**

This is not the time to try to work through hot topics or long-term issues in your marriage. If you're confined to your home, set boundaries around difficult conversations. You don't have to have these now! This doesn't mean you're sweeping issues under the rug. You're just setting boundaries and leaving things for a more appropriate time.

Reach out to others. If you and a good friend regularly go out for coffee, make it a point to schedule online coffee chats, phone calls or video chats. Keep yourself connected with those that are important in your life.

Use this as an opportunity to make your good marriage better! Create a routine. Sharing routines can strengthen your relationship in a number of ways. Not only does this practice encourage you to spend quality time together, but it can also boost your overall intimacy and even potentially improve your communication skills. Best of all, routines give you something to look forward to. By implementing a regular routine

into your daily or weekly life as a couple, at least you have one habit or activity that you both can depend on in such unsettling times. Whether you're movie buffs, fitness enthusiasts or wine lovers, find something you can do together at a set time every day.

Pick some fun, outlandish things to do. Have a fancy breakfast in bed, cook together, learn to dance.

Remind yourselves that things will be a little bit different, maybe a bit strange, and possibly uncomfortable initially. And that's ok. Give yourselves time to get used to a not so normal new normal.

