

Our Community

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and staff a Happy New Year.
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sweet and prosperous.



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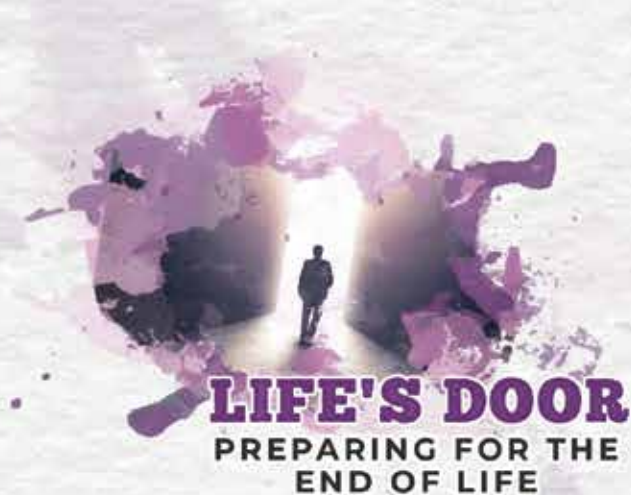
A MESSAGE FROM OUR
LEADERS





COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

WITH KIDS



LIFE'S DOOR

PREPARING FOR THE
END OF LIFE



SOUL MATE

OR CELL
MATE

THE RISE AND RISE OF **LIVING COSTS**



WESTPARK CEMETERY

RENOVATIONS



BRAIN TERRAIN

LEARNING DISABILITIES AND WHY
SOME KIDS STRUGGLE TO LEARN



HOME BUT NOT ALONE

HOME BASED CARE SERVICES
FOR OLDER PEOPLE



SCREENAGERS

RAISING KIDS IN
A TECH WORLD

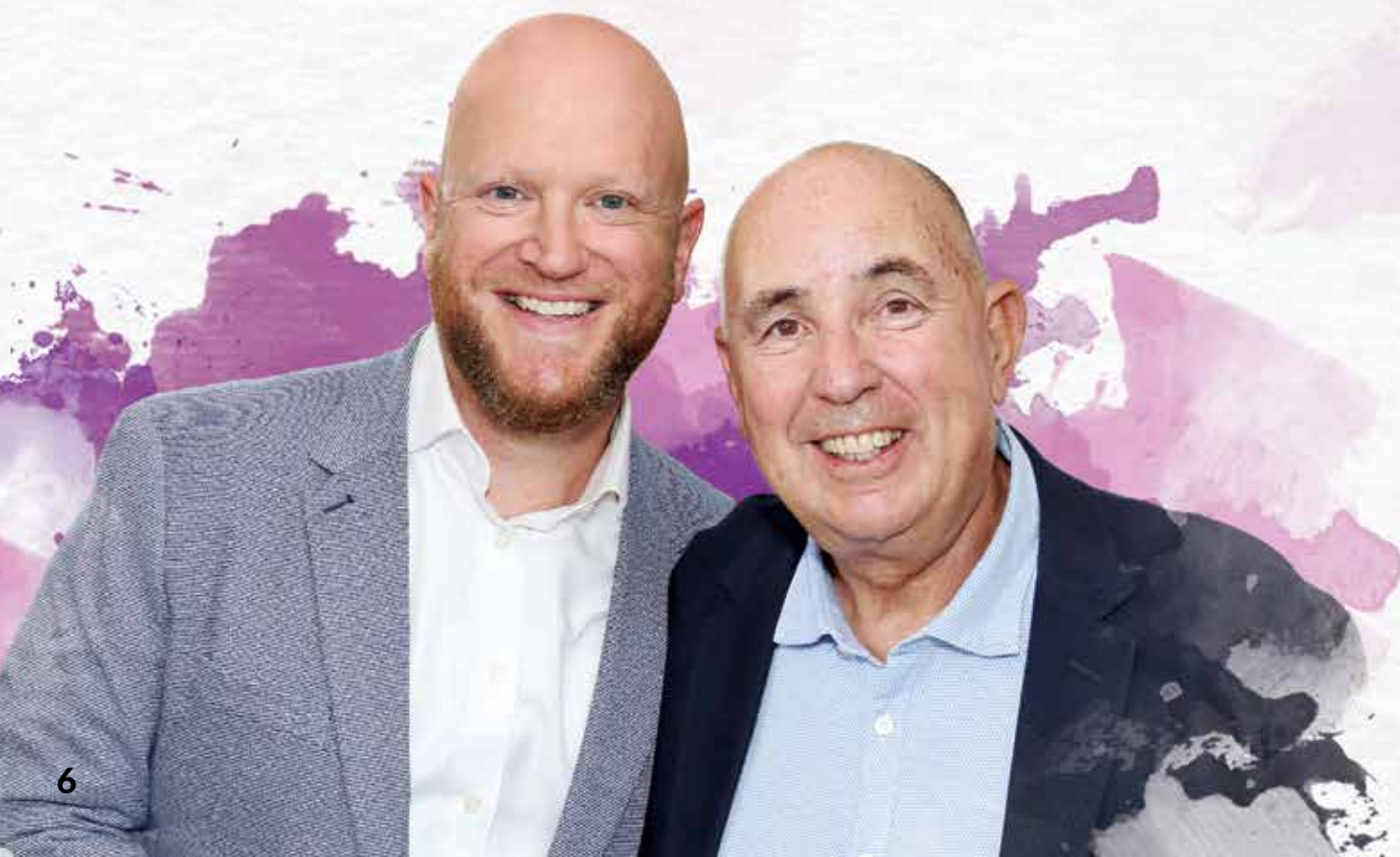
A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERS



We are delighted to present the sixth annual edition of **Our Community** magazine. When we launched this publication in 2018 it was difficult to imagine how warmly it would be received and how quickly the years would fly by. We are pleased to have received feedback about the relevance of the contents in relation to issues facing our community and, in fact, the world in which we live. That was always the intention.

But of course SA has its own unique challenges and for the Chev this has translated into many of our local donors emigrating and many more of the people left behind requiring welfare assistance - accommodation, healthcare, educational support - and sometimes all of that, and more. But our commitment to the Jewish community is that as long there are Jews here who need us, we will be here to provide them with the help they need.

As you read the articles in this magazine - particularly the thought-leadership ones - we hope they will provide food for thought, enjoyment and encouragement. Here is a sample selection of our contents.



Technology is developing at an alarming rate and our teens and tweens are fully immersed. They don't know how to live in a world without it. In **Screenagers** you can read about finding balance and maintaining safety while raising kids in this ever-changing tech landscape.

Many children suffer with Learning Disabilities like dyslexia that make learning difficult for them. **Brain Terrain** unpacks some of the most common obstacles to learning, how they manifest and how to tackle them.

The Rise and Rise of Living Costs is something that affects most people these days, wherever they live around the world. This article offers valuable lessons on budgeting, cost saving and common sense.

Home, But Not Alone outlines the Chev's fairly recent Home Based Care offering that helps to care for older people who prefer to maintain their independence by living in their homes rather than moving into retirement facilities.

And of course, there's much more. Please don't hesitate to share your thoughts with us on: feedback@jhbchev.co.za

Once again we are deeply grateful to our editorial, design and marketing teams, as well as our generous contributors and advertisers who have made this publication one we are proud to present.

In closing we salute the hardworking and dedicated staff across our organisation and express our appreciation to our Board of Governors for their commitment to the Chev and the community we serve.

As this magazine is published and distributed prior to Rosh Hashana, we take this opportunity to wish each of you, and your families, a Shana Tova u'Metuka. May the year ahead be filled with joy and blessings for all of us.

Colin Datnow

Chairman
Chevrah Kadisha Group

Saul Tomson

Chief Executive Officer
Chevrah Kadisha Group



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SCREENAGERS

RAISING KIDS IN A TECH WORLD

Tzivia Grauman



It's 2023 and parents and teachers may be in a tough spot. With technology developing at a dizzying speed all around us, how can they embrace its brilliance without sacrificing the safety of children and the integrity of education?

Dan* is a 17 year old who describes himself as a 'gamer'. He is Generation Z and very aware of what that means. Gen Z were born between 1995 and 2012 and are now between the ages of 11 and 28. They are digital natives who were raised on social media and have always had the world at their fingertips. "We are the first generation to be born into a technologically connected world. We have short attention spans, we're multitaskers and we're addicted to technology and prefer it to face-to-face interactions", he says. According to new Stanford-affiliated research, Gen Z are not coddled. *'They are highly collaborative, self-reliant and pragmatic... the first generation never to know the world without the internet value diversity and finding their own unique identities'*. Parents of these teens face some challenges.

The Generational Divide - Meeting Kids Where They Live

Gabor Maté is a world-renowned physician, speaker and author who is sought after for his expertise on trauma, addiction, stress and childhood development. He was asked how it is possible that children born into the same home and raised by the same parents can possibly be so different from each other. He answered that no child is ever born into the same home or to the same parents as his or her siblings. "Nothing is static - parents change, relationships change, financial realities change. No two children are ever born to the same parents. Each child's experience is unique".

How much more is this true of generational changes?

Every generation of parents shakes their heads in confusion as they watch their children's behavior. "In my day we would never..." But the world as it is today has never existed before and children are living an entirely different reality from the one their parents and previous generations lived. While generational gaps have always been natural, nowadays, like everything else, they're on fast-forward. Little children - each permanently attached to a device of some sort - can seem a little alien, and that's not surprising.

According to a study by the Pew Research Centre, an American think tank that provides information on social issues, public opinion, and demographic trends shaping the United States and the world, "Establishing when one generation ends and another begins is not an exact science, but it is a way of understanding how global events and technological, economic and social changes interact to define the way a set of people see the world.

Every generation of parents shakes their heads in confusion as they watch the children's behaviour. "In my day we would never..."



It is also a way of making comparisons between generations. Technology, in particular the rapid evolution of how people communicate and interact, is another generation-shaping consideration. Baby Boomers grew up as television expanded dramatically, changing their lifestyles and connection to the world in fundamental ways. Generation X grew up as the computer revolution was taking hold, and Millennials came of age during the internet explosion”.

Generation Alpha (born 2013 – 2025) is the youngest generation in the world with the oldest of them being only nine or ten years old now. They are the first generation of kids who will never know a time when social media didn’t exist; will never know a world without the internet, cell phones and tablets. They are more technologically adept than any generation that came before them.

Ibedrola, a global renewable energy leader wrote in their newsletter, “The technological advances that humanity has been experiencing throughout the 21st century are changing the planet and its inhabitants, both socially and economically. New technologies set our pace of life and, to a certain extent, mould our personalities. Generation Alpha, the generation that will succeed Generation Z, is the ultimate expression of this change and you only have to take a look at them to see for yourself: **they live through screens.”**

Generation Alpha is destined to lead a digital world.

Are Online Friendships Real?

Children are naturally curious and the internet is quite literally a universe in the palm of their hands. It gives them answers to every question they might have and guided tours to every place on the planet, and way, way, beyond. It brings learning to life in a visual and exciting way. More than that, it gives them endless entertainment and opportunities for socialisation, though often in a way that’s unfamiliar to parents.

Dan admits to spending a fair amount of time online playing games like Minecraft, Roblox, Fortnite, Destiny and Rocket League, amongst others. A “fair amount” can mean anywhere between four and eight hours a day, or night. “Teenagers like me are nocturnal. But during the term I’m at school for many hours of the day and then there’s homework and prep for tests and exams, and meals with the family, so there aren’t a lot of hours left”. He often plays, depending on the game, with groups of people from other countries - the USA, Germany, Australia and the UK. “It’s quite social”, he says, “we get to know each other, we become friends”.



I asked if he thought these were real friendships, as good as real life ones. “Oh they’re real, for sure and I don’t have real life friends. I’m shy and have social anxiety. Socialising online removes 90% of the pain and strain of real life socialising. And it’s good, because I can relax, improve my communication skills, share ideas with others and learn about their lives. There are privacy rules though. Each person will probably set their own rules to protect their identities but generally for me and my friends it’s high level. We don’t share real names, addresses, phone numbers or the names of our schools and family members”.

The Guardian published an article in September 2022 by Yasmina Floyer, a London-based writer, entitled, ***“I was lacking deeper connection”: can online friends be the answer to loneliness?*** She writes, “There is a certain ease in making online connections that can’t be replicated offline and it’s this ease that appeals to the time-poor, emotionally guarded side of me... As an introvert, I value the ability to connect with like-minded people without the strain of social gatherings... Being online undoubtedly makes it easier to be inauthentic (just look at catfishes) but sometimes the distance that is built into our online interactions gives people the courage to express themselves more freely and honestly. As therapist and author Emma Reed Turrel says, *you have the opportunity to show up online as yourself, so there’s real permission that comes for online friendships to automatically self-select the groups you want to follow and be there in ways you want to be there.*

I’ve curated my social media feed so it is filled with content that reflects my values and interests. Online I’m privy to a person’s political views, family values, sense of humour, taste in music, etc. and based on that I can gauge the amount of common ground this person and I may share”.

Socialising in this way is a paradigm shift for many of us but how much, after all, do we know about the people we call face-to-face friends? Given that there is a huge difference between privacy and secrecy, I think we can accept that there’s a natural tendency among human beings to retain areas of privacy, individuality and personal space even in the closest relationships. For Dan, and many others, online socialising is a richer, more real experience.

Mich Robb, Clinical and Educational Psychologist and MD of Mental Wellbeing Interventions (Pty) Ltd, cautions that while this social value may be true for some, the danger is that for the socially inhibited person their comfort lies solely in the domain of their screens. “While this can, and does, offer some comfort, the insecurity of real face-to-face interactions remains”. He points out that there is a developmental element that is concerning. “Adolescence is a time when individuals begin the task of establishing their own identities. This is achieved by a subtle interplay between how they want to be and how their peers see/respond to them. Social media embellishes reality and individuals are left feeling inadequate or not as good as their peers. This feeds into social anxiety and generalised anxiety - both of which are becoming increasingly endemic”.

Socialising online removes 90% of the pain and strain of real life socialising



Is Education Under Attack?

When I switch on my phone in the morning and check Google news for global headlines, there are often tech reports on the latest developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI). Having long been a fan of science fiction (and also because politics is so terribly depressing) I'm drawn to those stories, wondering what Elon Musk has been up to while I was asleep. The world we are living in is ingenious, exciting and fast-moving - validating the imaginations of great writers like Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, H G Wells, Jules Verne, Arthur C Clarke and many others. **What was once fantasy is now reality.**

Today, AI is being deployed to places that mankind cannot access yet in order to explore and gather information for us. AI is involved in deep sea exploration on our behalf and on Mars, measuring, filming and collecting samples to send back to earth. AI is performing intricate, precision surgeries; developing and testing new medications in laboratories much faster than we can; is used in agriculture, farming and forestry; in security, manufacturing, packaging and transportation; in self-driving vehicles and certainly in education. Robots are acting as care-givers and company for aged people.

With the recent advent of ChatGPT and the excitement it has generated for its abilities to write text and code and **think**, it is becoming clearer every day that there will soon be no area of our lives that is not AI-infused - with all the dazzling and troubling repercussions that come with that, including job losses and the impact on education.

I met with Mr Rob Long, Principal of Yeshiva Boys High School, and was expecting to hear a litany of problems and challenges with regard to technology in education, but was encouraged to hear just the opposite.

"Technology is not going away. We need to learn to use it to our advantage and teach our students and teachers how to adapt to this new world and make the most of the skills and opportunities it offers", he said. To that end, he explained, the school hosts workshops by tech experts for parents, teachers and staff. "We embrace technology where it is productive and have found many ways in which it can stimulate thought

and discussion and raise the level of learning for students". He used the war in Ukraine as one example, amongst others. Students were asked to research the war at home from the Ukrainian point of view, and also from the Russian perspective. In class they discussed all the issues and developed their abilities to think critically and analytically and to debate and exchange complex ideas. "What is important is that they need to understand their research in order to be able to discuss it intelligently in class. This is not rote learning, nor is it superficial". The same process can be applied to solving a quadratic equation. ChatGPT can be asked to show its step by step workings and offer explanations.

This teaching methodology is known as the **flipped classroom** where students view digitised or online material as pre-class homework, then spend in-class time engaged in active learning experiences such as discussions, peer teaching, presentations, projects, problem solving, calculations and group activities. "In these scenarios the internet is not outlawed, it is encouraged. A lot of the work is project-based and multi-disciplinary. Students learn to understand, analyse and synthesise. It's a higher level of learning and students can delve far more deeply into topics. They learn to become critical thinkers", he said.

Mr Long explained that another positive result of technology is that it can be a valuable time-saver for teachers when they're planning their lessons. "AI can put together a lesson plan in minutes given the right information and then instead of spending 80% of their time planning lessons and only 20% of their time teaching, teachers can reverse that ratio and everyone benefits. Lessons become interactive and more interesting".



Many reports are emerging about the failure of chat bots to provide true and accurate information. Rather than seeing it as a negative, Mr Long finds misinformation a valuable teaching tool. “Students are taught how to critically analyse the information they acquire, learn to check the authenticity and credibility of sources and amass conflicting points of view for consideration in the classroom. Not only are they learning HOW to research information, they are learning to question what they read and hear, and that’s healthy”.

This is a valuable skill to acquire because most information is subjective. I wonder if we human beings have a capacity for objectivity at all. This is not a criticism as much as an observation and applies equally to journalists, authors, even scientists as we saw during COVID when there were so many conflicting scientific opinions. To illustrate the point Mr Long mentioned syllabus-subscribed history text books when he was a child at school. Just because those sources were compulsory did not ensure they were truthful. Many historians argue that true objectivity (or the ability to be completely unbiased) is theoretically impossible. They say that every historian has some kind of personal viewpoint or bias that shows through in their research and writing.

This is similarly true of topics beyond history. Honest, unbiased, professional media reporting is a long-lost dream and there are agendas everywhere we look. Journalists no longer even pretend. The Babylon Bee is a satirical Twitter site with the by-line, “Fake news you can trust”. Less amusing is the question of how, in a world full of misinformation, people can access the truth? Education must involve actively teaching children to be sceptical and discerning and to question what they read. They must ask, “Who wrote this? Is it true? Does the writer have a specific agenda? Can this information be objectively fact-checked and are there other points of view?” And statistics, while they look impressive and well-researched, need the same kind of scrutiny.

Not only are they learning HOW to research information, they are learning to question what they read and hear



Not All Screens Are Equal



In short, the world as it existed when today's parents were growing up, no longer exists and it is no longer reasonable to expect that the same rules will apply. But there's comfort in knowing that there is so much that is magnificent about today's world. **Screens are here to stay, what matters is what's on them.**

Essentially, not all screen time is equal. There are many life-enriching skills that technology can teach kids. We have always acknowledged that games can develop critical thinking and strategic skills in kids and are often recommended as a way to help older people keep their brains active and healthy.

A recent study, *Association of Video Gaming With Cognitive Performance Amongst Children*, has revealed that children who play video games show altered brain activity that suggests improved cognitive abilities.

Last year **Ditch the Label**, one of the largest global youth charities in the world dedicated to helping young people through a range of issues, such as mental wellbeing, bullying, identity, relationships and digital literacy, published an article entitled *Five Gaming Skills That Will Make You Successful In The "Real" World*:

"You may hear that playing games is a waste of time and that your time would be better spent outside with your friends, but it turns out that playing games can teach you a lot, and a lot of these skills can be used in 'real-life' circumstances too. Whether you are just playing

to relax or grinding hard to become better at a competitive game, you are learning transferable skills that will be useful in your academic studies or in a future workplace. There are loads of skills that players learn during gameplay and we've come up with five nearly all gamers will develop that will help you to be successful in life".

A recent study, Association of Video Gaming With Cognitive Performance Amongst Children, has revealed that children who play video games show altered brain activity that suggests improved cognitive abilities



Five Gaming Skills That Will Make You Successful In The “Real” World:

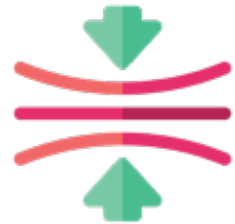


Creativity

Gaming can be a place to build, explore and design. Games such as Minecraft help players to foster creative skills like thinking outside the box and using their imaginations to generate new ideas. Scientists have discovered that games like Minecraft may help to get those creative juices flowing. Games where there is freedom to explore unique worlds, expand vision, and face challenges can help foster creativity.

Resilience

Games can be tough and powering through a game without quitting and having temper-losing urges will help players to build their resilience. It is known that gamers spend roughly 80% of their time failing, so through repetitive trialling or moments where they finally lose a game after playing for hours, gamers are developing positive qualities that will help them to build back stronger and better. Playing games helps develop patience, confidence and determination skills, which combine with resilience.



Communication



Everyone who plays games knows that communication is key if you want to complete a mission with teammates, finish last in a Battle-Royale or win a 5v5 match. For introverts, gaming is a helpful way to develop social and communication skills that feel awkward and challenging in real life. Gaming allows people to develop new friendships with people all over the world.

Teamwork

Teamwork is an important part of most games today, and will help players improve their own gameplay. There are almost no situations in which teamwork is not important in life, be it at work, in relationships, in families, sports or hobbies.



Problem Solving

Playing a game typically forces you to quickly analyse situations and decisions, or alternatively plan long-term strategic decisions. This, coupled with the under-pressure nature of gaming, allows players to try out different strategies and test new ideas. Gamers are out-of-the-box problem solvers. Gaming can help improve the brain cells connected to memory, critical thinking, retention and learning.

Safety First

According to Dan the social media platform of choice for teens is Discord. He showed me that Discord has built-in security features and will immediately block bad language and anything that might look risqué. “Discord is always open on my screen and I speak to about nine friends almost daily, and double that number when I’m not busy at school”. He talked about how lonely many teens are and the high rate of suicide amongst them - and quickly Googled the latest stats for me. I asked if he thought having online friends was a positive step toward preventing loneliness and depression and he answered, “It depends on who you befriend. You have to be selective. Some people can be really dark and make it worse, so you have to be careful to avoid them”.

Being careful online is a recurring theme, and possibly the most important lesson for all of us. When kids reach dating age, start going to parties or learn to drive a car, parents teach them how to stay safe. They give them rules to follow and explain what can hurt them, and how. The internet is not necessarily a dangerous place if kids know how to use it responsibly and how to recognise and avoid the dangers.

Can the solution really be that simple?

It would be foolish to underestimate the proven dangers of social media and the internet which include exposure to inappropriate content such as pornography; cyberbullying; privacy and data breaches; grooming by ill-intentioned strangers; catfishing; invasion of privacy and identity theft.

Mich Robb points out that social media content is also sensationalistic and forces reality into the mundane. While exposure to a virtual world certainly broadens experience and knowledge, reality consequently becomes increasingly unexciting. “Levels of depression globally are on the increase and this may be due to the fact that people are inclined to view their world as inferior to the virtual world. Similarly, social media acts as a forum where people only expose the best parts of their lives (an embellished reality). Viewers then compare their reality with the embellished reality of all their friends and judge their lives as uneventful or negative”.

He explains that the notion of screen addiction is also an unfortunate reality which becomes increasingly difficult to define. “Is four to eight hours of screen time normative behaviour or is it a sign of addiction? If you try to take away the screen time and there is a cataclysmic reaction, is that a sign of addiction or are you simply denying an established form of social interaction? These questions are important. There is an undeniable shift in modes of communication but the reality of face-to-face interaction and real (not virtual) engagement with the world is infinitely more powerful and long-lasting than the virtual”.



But we know that for the majority of pre-teens and teenagers, their digital life is their social life and vice-versa.

So how do we bridge the divide, find balance and keep kids safe without depriving them of what, for them, is like breathing? Everyone will agree that a lot depends on their ages. Teenagers are more difficult to contain and it's virtually impossible to impose limits as they are more tech-savvy than their parents and can usually find ways to over-ride any restrictions. The common sense approach advocated by professionals is to engage in communication with them early and often to impress upon them the dangers and how to be safe, and why. When it comes to younger, Generation Alpha kids there are thankfully a number of filters that can be installed on their devices to block harmful content and alert parents.

Gil is the father of a six-year-old and told me, "Being a single parent, the challenges of raising my son well with all the pressures of work and the upkeep of my home are real. There is a strong temptation to use technology as a babysitter so that I can get my work done, but in good conscience I cannot do that often. I need to monitor and balance the amount of time he spends online and approve what he is watching at all times. I will often watch an educational show with him and then we both learn something. I was always outside with my friends playing as a kid. While it's hard to accept that the world we live in now is no longer the one I was raised in, it doesn't mean that the values I was raised with can't be implemented in this day and age. I will always make sure that my son is not damaging his mind with nonsense that will ultimately cause greater issues down the line".

Balance and caution are wise objectives when it comes to young children. Parents want kids to be outdoors, exercising, breathing fresh air, playing with their friends and communicating face to face - and incidentally, many Generation Alpha kids love sport and they would rather be on a soccer field than anywhere else. But when they're not on the field...

The Family Protection Services Unit at the Chev deals with many problems caused by the misuse of digital communication. Social worker Jaime Deetlefs says it's traumatic for young people when harmful or private content about them is captured and distributed. This can include hurtful comments and images of them in vulnerable positions. They have no control over the distribution and are left feeling violated, exposed and helpless. "This type of digital communication is often used as a weapon or source of manipulation when there is any form of conflict between teenagers, and it's deeply emotionally damaging". Jaime says that the numbers of cases of cyber bullying are growing and that approximately 80% of initiators are school boys between the ages of 12 and 15, with the highest number, interestingly, in the younger age group. "There are even boys as young as nine who are initiating cyber bullying and 80% of the victims are girls. The type of cyber bullying that our Unit deals with are primarily messages with unwanted sexual content".

Unfortunately, she says, most parents have limited control over the digital communication of their children and they only become aware of problems when harm has already been done or the child is caught up in a difficult situation. "In our Family Protection work we give parents and children guidelines and caution them not to misuse social media and to avoid exposing themselves to bullying and abuse. **Open communication is always key.** If this is practiced in all aspects of daily life, it is easy for it to flow over into talking about digital-related topics".



It may not be possible for parents to have full control over who their children engage with, what they share online or the content they expose themselves to, but they are advised to try to share their children's cyber world so they can detect and deal with exposure timeously.

"There are many applications that allow parents access to their children's phones to monitor their digital devices, for example Google Family Link, Bark, FamiSafe, Canopy and Kids Zone" says Jaime. "These can easily be used to give parents peace of mind. Setting boundaries can also keep children safe and this should be negotiated from the outset when first allowing them to use digital devices. Teenagers may be offered benefits when they use social media responsibly, respectfully and safely".

Family Protection social workers help kids who have been exposed and humiliated by providing support and guidance to all the children involved - including those who initiate bullying. "Work is done with a positive approach toward helping victims rebuild their self-esteem. After incidents, our social workers provide containment to mitigate the impact of exposure and will then refer affected children for counselling and therapy if that is needed. Those children who initiated bullying may also be referred for assessments, suitable therapy and educational sessions," says Jaime.

In cases that must be reported to the SAPS, Family Protection Services social workers offer information and support to parents and victimised children who are opening cases.



Back to Basics

Can we assume that despite the changes the technological world has wrought, basic human values, fundamental principles and morality still apply?

Can we agree that parenting competency counts and modelling the right behaviour is important?

Can we trust that meaningful relationships with family still matter?

Paige Clingenpeel, a licensed mental health counsellor who specialises in working with teenagers, and a mother of four, thinks we can.

“I have worked with teens and their parents for the past 10 years”, says Paige, “and what a blessing that is. My heart is for teens, they are awesome. We want to empower them to make good choices so that they can one day lead this world with wisdom”. She acknowledges though that technology has altered the landscape and that parenting styles have changed. Teens are spending more and more time alone which can lead to an increase in anxiety, depression and suicide. They are ignoring the rites of passage so common in earlier generations, like dating, getting driving licenses, partying and focussing on academics. Technology has impacted brain development and brought about a need for instant gratification; constant brain stimulus; and craving affirmation from followers in the form of likes and posts, which elicit feel-good chemicals.

“It’s a problem that teens identify these affirmations with their intrinsic self-worth, identity and value as human beings”. She is concerned that without face to face communication, for which humans were designed, there can be a decrease in empathy and an increase in the objectification of people. “They would not tell someone, in person, *you’re fat, stupid and ugly, you should kill yourself*. But they do that online, I’ve seen it. They don’t see the impact of their words on others and words have power, and consequences”.

Paige believes the answer to these challenges is to stick to **core human values** when parenting as these never change, regardless of technology.

Again, communication is key and parents can transform teens by addressing these three different basic needs: **to be loved, to be safe and to have purpose.**

Paige Clingenpeel



1. To be Loved

Real love looks like boundaries, structure, being held accountable and being disciplined. It does not look like indulgence or no consequences. She differentiates between discipline, which is teaching, and punishment, which is just hurting, and unnecessary.

In her experience teens do not like being left to their own devices and allowed to do whatever they want, regardless of how they may protest to the contrary. They interpret that as their parents not loving them, or caring about them.

2. To be Safe

Teens need to feel physically and emotionally safe. The best way parents can help them is to encourage and support them as they explore their identities, find out who they are and celebrate their uniqueness.

Parents should explain that it's ok to have failures and make mistakes and it's not something they should fear because it's an imperative step toward success.

3. To have Purpose

We are all gifted with personality, strengths and weaknesses and we should embrace that and share it because it's impactful. Parents should help their kids see their own uniqueness, their purpose in the world. "The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches (not only monetary) but to reveal to him his own", says Paige.

Teach teens that success is not equal to power, prestige, wealth or image. True success is pouring out your giftedness onto others. True success is having integrity; being truthful (even when it's hard); and giving when you're not going to get anything back.

"I have great faith in the potential of our teens", Paige concludes. "We have to guide them, equip them, empower them, and love them well".

When we worry about the negative effects on kids and teens of excessive hours spent on their screens, we also have to ask ourselves how realistic it is to expect anything else, considering that this is the world into which they have been born and there seems no escaping it. **The big question is, should we want to escape it?** Should we be making peace with the pace of the inevitable instead? Should we be exploring the many positives that tech offers and the endless possibilities for learning that kids can find online?

Should we talk more about safety and teach more about balance?

Tips for Parents



Safety

Install a safety app for young kids that blocks unsuitable content and alerts you.

Teach kids well that their self-worth is not dependent on social media likes and comments.

Teach kids about stalkers, catfishes and stranger danger – make them aware.

Kids should never share personal details - where they live, real names, schools, etc. They don't know who they're talking to online, even if they think they do.

If they sense darkness or depression in people online, rather disengage - it can be infectious.

Tell them anything they post lives on forever and can pop up when least expected - like when they're looking for a university or a job.

Teach kids about the legal dangers of posting content that is malicious or discriminatory. Publishing laws apply and there can be real legal consequences.

Teach kids to be sceptical and cautious online to protect themselves.

Careless posts of pictures and comments will live long after online relationships have died. They should not expose themselves.

Anything compromising can be used to hurt, humiliate or blackmail - they should not be trusting.



Balance

Be an example – switch off your own phones during family time. Kids don't listen to what you say as much as they watch what you do.

Encourage sports, hiking, walks, picnics, family outings - exercise is healthy.

Guard your mental health – you don't have to be available 24/7 on your devices. Emails and text messages can wait.

Spend lots of time communicating with kids - not only about tech, about everything. Discuss new ideas, inventions and tech developments - pros and cons. Communication is key.

Have rules and/or contracts regarding the use of phones at the dinner table. Everyone must adhere to them.

Encourage extracurricular activities, hobbies, school clubs, healthy group activities.

Encourage reading of hard copy books. Read to young kids from books, recommend books to older ones. Visit libraries.

Keep screens and technology out of the bedroom at night if possible.

Encourage social arrangements and friendships – too much alone time can be problematic.

Encourage healthy sleep patterns. Teens can be insomniacs, especially if they're online at night.

COURAGEOUS Conversations with Kids

Helping Parents Talk and Listen

Paula Levin



I don't know about you, but over the last 17 years of raising kids, I've often complained that they didn't come with a manual. So whenever I was at a loss for how to deal with an issue, I would turn to friends, family, therapists, the peanut gallery, parenting books and Google (and sometimes all of the above) for sage advice on tantrums, feelings, boundaries, the "talk", teen years, keeping my children safe and so many other important issues. If only there was a one stop shop of brilliant, curated, vetted advice for parenting, from toddlers to teens. Well now there is! "Courageous Conversations" is the manual we've all been searching for.

A parenting e-book put together by the Chev, **Courageous Conversations** draws from the vast experience of the Chev's own social workers, as well as experts who work extensively with our community and understand its unique context. The book is aimed at parents though it contains practical and fun exercises you can print out for your tween or teen, to enrich their self-awareness and resilience. It's made up of stand-alone pieces that you can either read chronologically or ad hoc, as they apply to specific challenges you may encounter. Undoubtedly, you'll want to come back to its wisdom and tips time and again.

17 years ago, I believed my role as a mother was to make sure my kids were happy. And if they were not - well, clearly I was doing something wrong. Boy was I off the mark! Every single article in this book explores and builds on the nuances of the parenting relationship. With wisdom and insight, we begin to appreciate the gravitas of raising humans and **the unfathomable impact our relationship with them will have on the relationships they will have** as well as their ability to deal with life's inevitable challenges.

"The relationship that you have with your child is the single biggest influence on them," writes Rebecca Eanes of The Gottman Institute, in the book's opening article. "Your relationship sets an example for how relationships should be throughout the rest of their lives. If you have a healthy relationship based on respect, empathy, and compassion, you've set a standard. They will grow to expect that this is what a relationship looks like and will likely not settle for less. If, however, your relationship is based on control, coercion and manipulation, well you see where I'm going with this." In

addition to that, your influence comes from a good relationship. "Children are more likely to listen to and cooperate with an adult who they are connected to," she emphasises.

Additionally, Rebecca says that the single, most important thing that you can do for your children is to do everything in your power to have the best possible relationship with your spouse (I would even add to this, your ex, or their other parent). "If they see the two of you getting along and supporting each other, they will mirror you and will likely get along with each other and their friends. Every single ounce of energy that you put into your relationship will come back to you tenfold through your children."

Perhaps it's the escalation of academic and life pressures as well as the intrusion of adult themes on their screens and circumstances in their lives, but our kids are growing up faster than ever. And while we can't always prevent bad things from happening and keep them safe wrapped in a bubble - we can build resilience. Research shows that crucial to a child's resilience is the presence of at least one positive and caring adult to help develop good coping skills. This could be a relative or teacher. Armed with the wisdom within this book, it could be you!

The relationship that you have with your child is the single biggest influence on them



Kids Under 8

For parents of children going through the terrible twos, traumatic threes or infuriating fours, the book includes a very useful guide to distinguishing between meltdowns and tantrums and the different responses they require. Written by Ashley Jay, a qualified educational psychologist, she says that ultimately most kids are impossible to communicate with when they tantrum or meltdown and what they are actually looking for is connection with you, not correction or rejection. Your response should communicate **“No matter what you do, I am here. Even in your hardest moments, I am here.”**

Abuse

According to UNICEF, in South Africa 35.4% of children had experienced some form of sexual abuse in their lifetime. This alarming and horrifying statistic explains why the book explores what we can do to protect our children. Dalya Erster is a clinical social worker at Torah Academy and facilitates its ongoing dynamic safety and abuse prevention program. She points out that abuse thrives in a community that tolerates or allows it. Daliah Shein, a social worker in private practice with a special interest in abuse and statutory cases, tackles the difficult subject of when a child is either a victim or an offender and the sensitivities and legal protocols needed to tackle both scenarios.

Social worker and logotherapist, Trudy Friedland, outlines how to do all that we can to prevent our children becoming victims of sexual abuse. As parents, we need to help our child realise something obvious to us, but possibly not to them, and that is that their bodies are their own. This means we should not ‘force’ them to kiss or hug someone against their will. Honouring their personal boundaries in this innocent context can save them from future trauma in far more sinister scenarios. “In life we teach our children different ways to keep themselves safe. We teach them to stay away from the boiling kettle, to look both ways before crossing the road, to tie their shoe laces to avoid tripping, but more often than not, safety issues around their bodies are not discussed until our children are much older - until sometimes ... it is too late,” points out Jacqui Yates, counsellor specialising in trauma related situations with families and children.

“You don’t have to scare your children in order to keep them safe,” writes Tova Goldstein, a practising social worker and Three Principles practitioner who focuses on building resilience in teenagers and adults. Tova believes children are at a much greater risk without talks with parents about sexual abuse. “Knowledge is a powerful deterrent to child abuse – especially with young children who are targeted due to their innocence and ignorance in this area. Have these discussions often. One discussion is not enough. This is a topic that should be revisited again and again.”

Tova suggests finding natural times to reiterate these messages – such as bath time or in the car. The book’s first few articles define safe and unsafe touch, body boundaries, good and bad secrets, private parts, grooming and many more essential topics. Tova, Jacqui and Trudy’s practical tips should be required reading for every parent who wants to do all they can to keep their children safe. Maria Beider is a clinical social worker and psychotherapist who works with survivors of trauma and abuse and offers hope and practical steps for healing in case the unthinkable happens.



Tweens, Teens and Puberty

The tween years are a life-stage in and of itself, and the book's next section offers thoughtful advice on how to navigate the issues it brings. Larry Hirshowitz is a psychologist who has worked with children and adults in the areas of emotional wellbeing and learning for over 20 years and writes about the need for boundaries from parents. "As ships need anchors to prevent them getting swept away with the current, children require parameters to enable them to navigate the world safely and productively," he explains. But, these boundaries are not one size fits all. Larry advises parents to control what children watch on their devices. "Be mindful that a child's first exposure to (traumatic) sexuality through pornography is not easily undone." Perceptions of gender, sexuality, violence and a whole host of social issues which were traditionally mediated by responsible, loving parents, should not be influenced by random profit-driven internet sites!

A big part of the book focuses on emotional intelligence, and helping our children become literate about their feelings and how to express them. Melissa Janet is a social worker with the Chev's Community Social Services, working with children and their families. She writes that helping your child to identify their feelings is the first step in helping them to manage them. "Children who can identify, understand, express and manage a wide range of feelings experience longterm benefits to their mental health. Good communication allows children to build trust, self-esteem and healthy relationships, which ultimately act as protective mechanisms for them."

Belinda Krasner is an educational psychologist who writes about helping children self-regulate and feel in control of their world. This article outlines how we help them determine what they are feeling, why they are feeling that way and what to do about it. These emotional skills empower our children. We must learn to connect to our children to help them feel that their feelings are valid, then guide them to label their feelings, helping them to feel more understood. Create safe spaces for them to express their feelings and don't forget the most vital step, which can only come last - helping them identify a solution or a choice they can make.

Nicki Mirkin is a social emotional therapist who facilitates group and individual therapy for all ages. She points out that social-emotional skills are a stronger predictor of success in life than is IQ. And of course the sign of an emotionally healthy person is to accept help.

Pinchas Shiel is a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist and points out the definition of childhood and adolescence is fluid and often depends on society's needs. So we have ironies like the fact that in some countries teens are seen as too young to watch an under 18 movie but are old enough to hold a rifle and shoot to kill in a war. (In America they are responsible enough to drive a car at 16, but not to drink until 21.) These contradictions highlight the confusion adolescents experience in these years and the confusion adults in society have about understanding what happens to young people during this developmental stage. With a little guidance about what changes to expect to their bodies, we can save our tweens and teens much emotional distress and confusion.

"The general view amongst most theorists is that this phase of life is about the individual finding themselves and this is achieved through exploring different behaviours, different beliefs, different attitudes and different values." Bear in mind that the last part of the brain to mature is the frontal lobes which are responsible for reasoning, attention, memory, organising thoughts, impulse control and problem solving, he writes. "The adolescent relies far more on the midbrain region than an adult does. This is the part of the brain responsible for emotional responses, and impulsive responses. Adults mediate this with their fully developed frontal lobes, adolescents still have to mature to that point. Teenagers base much of their reasoning in emotional thinking."

Children who can identify, understand, express and manage a wide range of feelings experience longterm benefits to their mental health...

So the teen years can be extremely tough for parents (and tougher for teens) and a little knowledge can go a long way toward protecting the all-important parent-teen relationship through these trying times. Above all, don't react to your teen like a teen, says Pinchas!

"I always remind the parents of teens I see in my practice, adolescence is not a permanent condition!" writes Serenne Kaplan, a psychologist who has a keen understanding of complex teen issues that face our 13 - 19 year olds today. "Teens push against the system," she says. "They can be defiant, oppositional, rebellious, rude, challenging, hostile, moody, aggressive, self-absorbed and generally successful in hijacking the overall peace and normality in a family."

Today's teens are facing unprecedented anxiety and childhood is shrinking, writes Serenne. In times of conflict, model the art of rupture and repair, forgive and move on. Recalibrate the relationship and let it go." Wise words are to review how much of your communication is negative versus positive. Aim at least for a 3:1 ratio in favour of the positive.

Dr Hanan Bushkin is the founder of the "Anxiety and Trauma Clinic" and specialises in the treatment of anxiety disorders and trauma related conditions. He suggests connecting with your teen by finding a common activity that you can both enjoy together - playing family games, bike riding, painting, etc. "The moment your children feel connected to you through the activity, their defensive guard naturally comes down and they will feel more comfortable being vulnerable and opening up." The book's teen zone features David Lorge, a Cognitive Behavioural Coach who uses the techniques of Rational Emotive Behavioural Coaching with his tweens and teens. He explains why teens don't talk to their parents and how we can open up the dialogue.

Brenda Lasersohn is a practising psychologist and valued member of the Chev's Board of Governors. She also provides supervision for registered practitioners. She writes about the impact that we as parents have on our children's developing brains. "Interpersonal neurobiology explains that through a loving gaze (which does not have to originate with the mother), mirror neurons in the premotor cortex and other areas of the brain, are triggered. These neurons enable us to reflect

body language, facial expressions and emotions. They play an essential part in our social life. They are also key for the child's development as well as relationships and education. This triggering allows humans to learn through imitation and at about six weeks after birth, the baby responds with its first wonderful smile." So our relationship with our children actually influences the structure of their brain. While absolutely critical in babyhood and early childhood, this is also true during the tween, teen and adolescent years. When it comes to adolescence, we do not need to wait out or endure these years. By actively engaging, we can help them wire their brains and develop character traits that will see them through life.

Sex and Sexuality

"Sexuality is made up of much more than just 'sex' - it includes self-esteem, body-image, our degree of comfort in our own skin and our attitudes towards general pleasure," writes Yael O'Reilly. Yael is a clinical psychologist with a special interest in parenting and women's health and wellness. Her article busts some myths and tells you how not to have 'the Talk' with your teen.

Leonard Carr, clinical psychologist working in private practice, points out that sex education should be the contextualisation of the biological into a spiritual, psychological framework. And he does so beautifully in his piece, suggesting that if you are uncomfortable talking about these issues, then rather than avoiding them, just be comfortable with your discomfort.

"Western society is becoming progressively more open and permissive. Traditional values have all but disappeared. Individuals are encouraged to decide for themselves to do whatever "feels right" to them in terms of sexual activities and choices. And yet, ironically, the world is seeing unprecedented and ever-increasing levels of relationship breakdown. According to research, they are becoming more isolated and having less satisfying sexual lives than their grandparents did!"



“Sex without intimacy deadens and desensitises a person because they need to cut off their emotional life and become just a body to cope with the meaningless superficial interaction of one sided or mutual exploitation. Leonard illuminates the Torah perspective on sex writing that “the quality of the sexual bond lies in the values, attitudes, and approach that people bring to the relationships. It is in this arena that parent’s attitudes, approach, modelling and guidance are crucial to the child’s healthy sexual development. “

His article also unpacks the significance of shame. “Many educators have no idea what the difference is between toxic shame and healthy shame. Toxic shame is about feeling bad, defective, broken, worthless and less-than. Toxic shame mitigates against having healthy relationships. Healthy shame is having sensitivity to boundaries and cultivating the qualities that protect your own and other people’s boundaries, like modesty, internality, tact and discretion. Healthy shame is a prerequisite for healthy relationships and deep intimacy.” Leonard concludes with a word on sexual orientation saying, “...if you don’t want a child who is different, don’t have children.”

The book also covers such topics as teen self-esteem (by Jaydon Immerman - psychologist and healthcare practitioner), as well as the risk that drugs and alcohol pose - written by Dan Wolf, an addiction focused psychologist and a director of the Houghton House group of treatment centres. Dan emphasises that both the research and his years of experience dealing with substance abuse indicate that the most important tool a child has today is a sense of belonging to a family unit. The book concludes with a piece by Talya Gottlieb, a social worker at the Chev, offering tips for parenting children of all ages on how to be present, listen and communicate with our children.

Parenting is the most demanding (and rewarding) job we’ll ever do and what I’ve realised 17 years into the parenting journey, is that as we raise our children, we are also raising ourselves - our consciousness, our empathy, our self-awareness, our behaviour and our character! Rebecca Eanes reminds us to invest in our own wellbeing. “Your cup. How full is it? You have to take care of you, so you can take care of them. If your cup is full, you are more patient, more empathetic and have more energy. Not only that, but a child who sees his parents respect themselves, learns to have self-respect. Put yourself back on your list.”

Becoming an effective parent takes work and awareness, and **Courageous Conversations** is a magnificent resource in this quest. Senior Social Work Supervisor at the Chev, Pam Gillingham explains why the Chev invested so much time and expertise in creating this resource and offering it free to the community. “Our goal is to build, empower and promote healthy relationships within the family. Our Family Preservation services provide families with guidance, counselling and psycho-education during challenging times, while also ensuring that the children are supported and safe. **Courageous Conversations** provides parents in the community with direct access to fundamental skills and knowledge for effective and holistic parenting,” she explains. “Today’s children, tweens and teens are exposed to so many external factors that put them at risk, it is imperative that parents enable their children to make informed choices. They can do this through becoming more aware and knowledgeable about what these risks are, and developing skills to confidently navigate life’s challenges with their children. We are blessed with the incredible calibre of professionals in our community and thankful for how supportive they are of the Chev’s vision to provide educational resources that help families thrive.”

How to download the E-Book

1. Visit the official Chev website: www.jhbchev.co.za/courageous-conversations/
2. Fill in your details to download the E-Book via a link sent to your email





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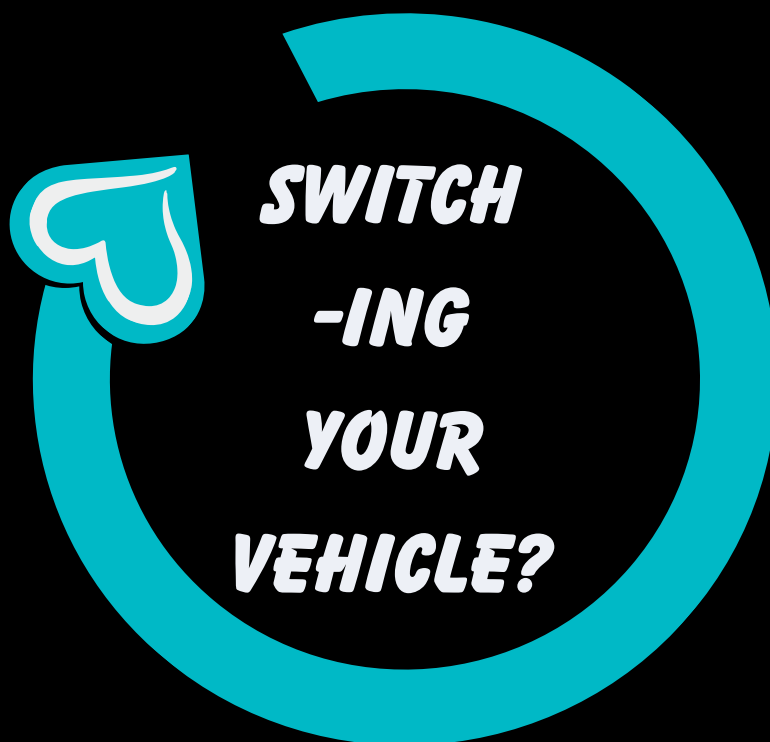


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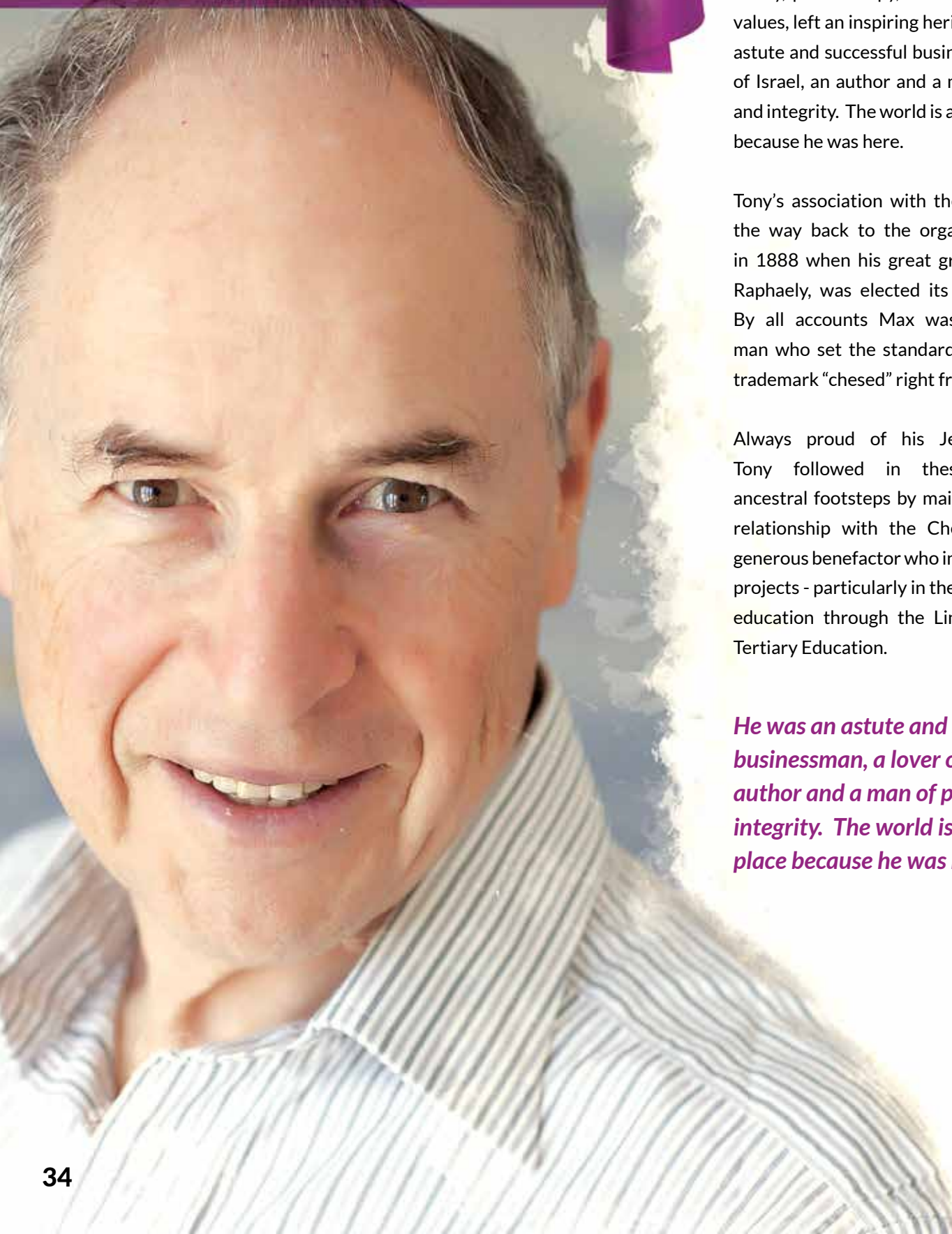
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TRIBUTE TO THE LATE

Tony Raphaely ע"ה

TZIVIA GRAUMAN



Tony Raphaely passed away in September 2022 at the age of 83 following a long illness, and chose to be buried in the Holy Land. This remarkable man, whose life prioritised family, philanthropy, humanity and Jewish values, left an inspiring heritage. He was an astute and successful businessman, a lover of Israel, an author and a man of principle and integrity. The world is a far better place because he was here.

Tony's association with the Chev goes all the way back to the organisation's birth in 1888 when his great grandfather, Max Raphaely, was elected its first President. By all accounts Max was a remarkable man who set the standard for the Chev's trademark "chesed" right from the start.

Always proud of his Jewish heritage, Tony followed in these honourable ancestral footsteps by maintaining a close relationship with the Chev. He was a generous benefactor who initiated valuable projects - particularly in the field of tertiary education through the Link-SA Trust for Tertiary Education.

He was an astute and successful businessman, a lover of Israel, an author and a man of principle and integrity. The world is a far better place because he was here.



Max Raphaely

Tony understood the enormous need to educate a new generation of South Africans and was the Link-SA Trust's sole fundraiser for almost 25 years. "He advocated on behalf of students whose names he never knew and who never knew his, and put tens of thousands of underprivileged students through university. Many have gone on to senior positions in business, law, engineering, and medicine", his son Mark said in an interview with the SA Jewish Report after his passing.

For over 20 years, through the Chev, the Trust provided tertiary education opportunities to hundreds of Jewish students too. Karen Carpel, Student Loan Administrator at the Chev, worked closely with the Link-SA Trust and Tony's office. She said, "There was greatness in Mr Raphaely. He was a giant of a human being and it was always an honour and a pleasure to communicate with him. His humility and the way in which he spoke to people revealed a true gentleman. He commanded deep respect. I'm sorry I never had the privilege of meeting him in person".

Tony worked as a commodity trader until his retirement in 1995. Mark said of his father, "His professional life and achievements paled in comparison to his real passions, which were his family, the Jewish community and his charitable work,"

Ever conscious of the plight of impoverished Jews in Johannesburg, in 2014 Tony implemented a Travellers Project to finance travel for residents in Sandringham Gardens. This would allow them to visit their families overseas who they may not have seen in years. He knew that there were many aged people who had no family left here in South Africa and realised how much it would mean to them to have this opportunity to reconnect with their loved ones abroad. For some of them this was truly a dream come true, but for others there were obstacles in that they were not well enough to travel. The purchase of tickets, costs of visas and passports and even some spending money for each week they were away, were taken into consideration. As the perfectionist that he was, Tony oversaw the project personally, examining each application for feasibility.

He was a very proud Jew, and faced each day with courage and strength

Ultimately 25 elderly people flew to Israel, the USA, the UK, Canada and other destinations over the following few years. Tony raised the money from a number of donors who were more than happy to contribute. While the funds he generated were measurable, the joy that he brought to residents with this incredible project was unquantifiable.

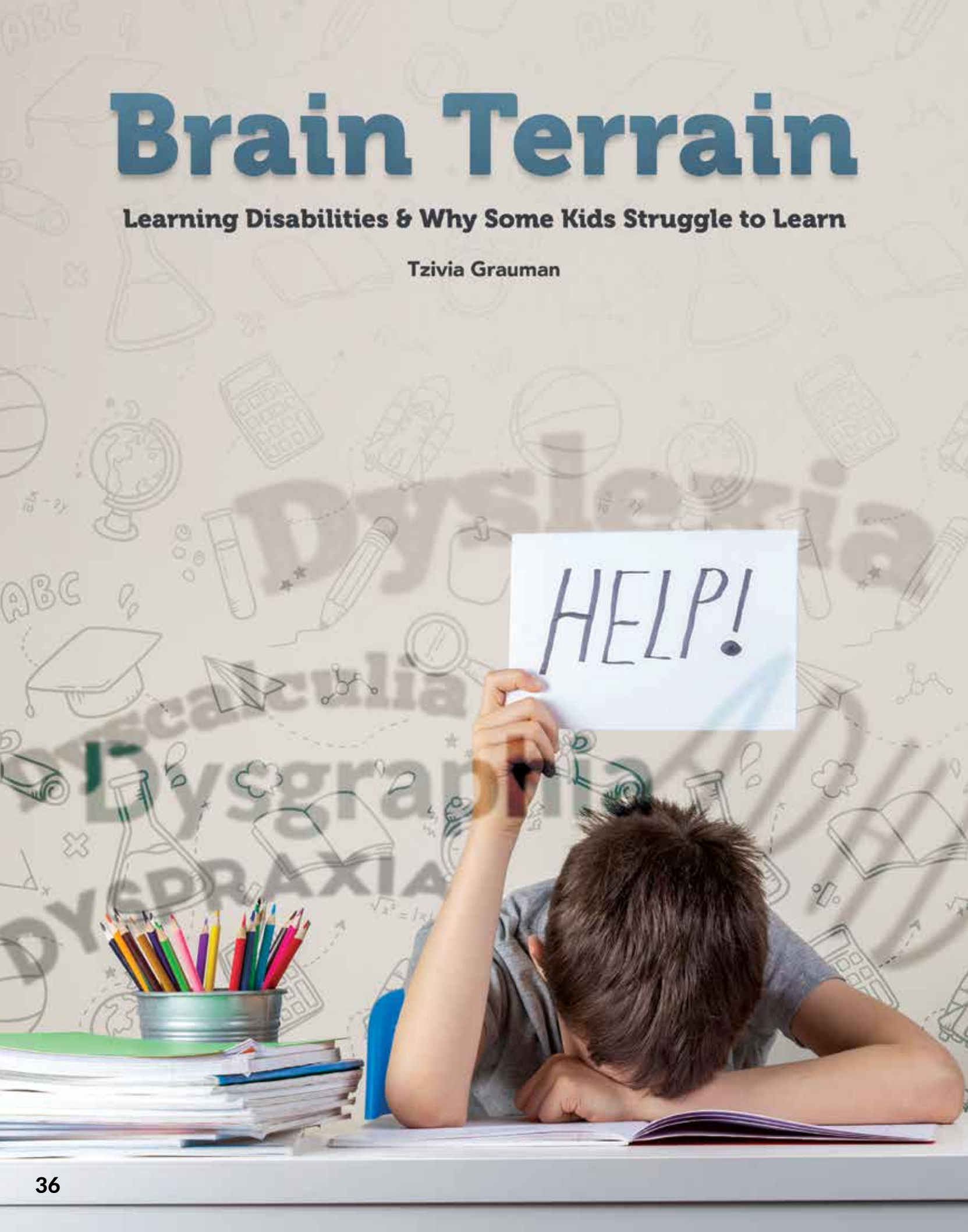
Tony served as Chairman of the Great Synagogue in Johannesburg, forging close friendships with Chief Rabbi Casper and later with Rabbi Dovid Hazdan. On his passing, Rabbi Hazdan wrote, "The Raphaely family has been builders of our congregation for generations. Tony was a past chairperson of our community in the challenging closing years of the Great Synagogue in Wolmarans Street. His strength, tenacity, and determination kept our community alive and enabled our new Great Park campus to materialise. While others spoke about what needed to be done, Tony simply got it done. When the Shul moved in 2000, Tony was incredibly proud to re-lay the foundation stone that his great uncle, Siegfried, had laid when the original Shul was built in 1913. He was a very proud Jew, and faced each day with courage and strength."

Tony is survived by his loving wife, Penny, and his four sons, Mark, Andrew, Adam and Nick. Tony and Penny were married in 1968, for 52 years, until his passing.

Brain Terrain

Learning Disabilities & Why Some Kids Struggle to Learn

Tzivia Grauman



If you were ever a kid who believed you were stupid, lazy or just not trying hard enough, because you couldn't do what others in your class could do; or if you've ever had a kid who came home from school and told you, "I'm just stupid, everyone knows I am and they tell me every day..." then you'll recognise that children with learning disabilities suffer terribly from being misunderstood and mislabeled. Their self-esteem can take the kind of beating that may follow them throughout their lives, lead them to make poor choices or give up on learning altogether – this despite the fact that their struggles have nothing to do with intelligence or lack of motivation or effort. Their challenges are caused by variations in the way their brains process information. What they require is specialised, structured and carefully targeted support.

Dr. Sheldon H. Horowitz, Senior Advisor of Strategic Innovation, Research and Insights at the National Centre for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) in the USA, points out that within the Learning Disability category, the vast majority of children will have significant difficulties in the area of reading. "People with learning disabilities are 'wired' to do things differently, and their struggles are not due to preferences or differences but rather real brain-based disorders. This does not mean that learning disabilities are a prescription for frustration or failure. Quite the opposite. **But it would be unfair and inaccurate to presume that they can push past their differences if they just tried harder or tried to be more flexible in their approach to learning**".

I believe it was Socrates who said, "The more you learn the more you realise how little you know". In researching learning disabilities I began to get an appreciation of just how poorly understood this topic is by the lay community.

This remains true even in this day and age when giant strides have been made by educationalists and therapists who have put strategies and accommodations into place to help these bright children thrive and to nurture their self-esteem.

Dr Horowitz explains that individuals with learning disabilities do not struggle because of low intelligence, poor teaching or lack of motivation. **Their underachievement is unexpected and unexplained**, which is why the term is often misunderstood. Learning disabilities do not include intellectual disabilities, emotional disturbance, or autism spectrum disorders, although children who fall within these diagnostic categories can also have learning disabilities. Learning disabilities are not caused by cultural, environmental, or economic factors. They are not contagious, but can be genetic, meaning that they can be passed down in families through the genes, like many other traits inherited from parents and grandparents. Someone with a learning problem probably has other family members who have had some learning troubles, too.

Dr Sheldon H. Horowitz



What Are Learning Disabilities / Disorders?

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) defines Specific Learning Disorders (SLD) as neurodevelopmental disorders that are typically diagnosed in early school-aged children, although they may not be recognised until adulthood. They are characterised by a persistent impairment in at least one of **three major areas**:



1. Reading



2. Writing Expression



3. Mathematics

The statistics are surprising:

- An estimated 5 - 15% of school-age children struggle with a learning disability.
- An estimated 80% of those with learning disorders have an impairment in reading in particular (commonly referred to as dyslexia).
- Dyslexia is highly prevalent affecting 20% of the population and affects male and females equally.
- There is a high comorbidity of specific learning disorders with other neurodevelopmental disorders (such as ADHD) as well as anxiety. Learning disorders are categorised as mild, moderate and severe. Accommodation and support services align with the severity to facilitate a person's most effective functioning.

A note on terminology from the APA: "Specific Learning Disorder is a medical term used for diagnosis. * It is often referred to as 'learning disorder'. 'Learning disability' is a term used by both the educational and legal systems. Though learning disability is not exactly synonymous with Specific Learning Disorder, someone with a diagnosis of SLD can expect to meet criteria for a learning disability and have the legal status of a federally recognised disability **to qualify for accommodations and services in school.**"

*Specified in the DSM-5, The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th edition), which is the handbook used by health care professionals in the USA and much of the world as the authoritative guide to the diagnosis of mental disorders.

The Five Most Common Learning Disabilities / Disorders:

1. A Specific Learning Disorder (SLD) in **reading**, known as **Dyslexia**, is the number one learning disability and affects people of all ages, impacting a person's reading and language processing skills. It results from deficits in phonologic processing, the skills necessary for reading, decoding, phonics, the ability to produce sounds, and proper auditory capabilities.

Some characteristics of dyslexia may include:

- Reversing the position of letters
- Difficulty with phonological awareness (the ability to break down words into their constituent sounds)
- Delayed speech
- Difficulty learning auditory processing, new vocabulary or rhymes
- Difficulty with visual processing - may have trouble understanding directions
- Difficulty with spelling, copying from text, proofreading, reading and comprehension



2. A Specific Learning Disorder (SLD) in mathematics, otherwise known as **Dyscalculia**, affects math skills. It can make it difficult for a person to understand math concepts, perform arithmetic calculations, and solve math problems. Lots of people dislike math, but they're eventually able to understand it with enough practice. Dyscalculia is more severe because it's a learning disability that makes it challenging to understand even the most basic math concepts. Since math builds upon itself, children with dyscalculia often fall behind and struggle for years to catch up.

Some characteristics of dyscalculia may include:

- Difficulty understanding math concepts and basic arithmetic operations (such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division)
- Difficulty with more complex math skills such as algebra and geometry
- Difficulty with mathematical concepts such as measuring, understanding time, and making estimations
- Difficulty following the order of operations
- Finding it challenging to count and group numbers together
- Difficulty applying mathematical concepts to real-world situations



3. A Specific Learning Disorder (SLD) in written expression, otherwise known as **Dysgraphia**, is a learning disability that affects a person's ability to express themselves in writing. It can manifest as difficulty with spelling, poor handwriting, or trouble putting thoughts on paper. Dysgraphia can be caused by a variety of factors, including neurological conditions, developmental delays, or difficulty with fine motor skills.

Some characteristics of dysgraphia may include:

- Difficulty with written expression - organising thoughts and ideas in writing
- Difficulty organising pages, chapters, books
- Struggling to express thoughts in clear sentence structures
- Taking a long time to write
- Messy handwriting
- Poor grammar



4. ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects both children and adults. ADHD is the second most common learning difficulty and is most often diagnosed in children. The CDC, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention in the USA, estimates that **six million children aged 3–17 were diagnosed with ADHD between 2016 and 2019** and that boys are twice as likely to be diagnosed with ADHD as girls. It can be characterised by two main types: **inattention** and **hyperactivity-impulsivity**. Many children with ADHD are disciplined for misbehaving, but they often can't control their actions. If not treated, ADHD can interfere with a person's ability to succeed academically and socially, and may lead to challenges in relationships and employment.

Some characteristics of ADHD may include:

- Inability to sit still
- Difficulty staying quiet
- Difficulty being attentive
- Being disorganised or forgetful
- Having mood swings or emotional outbursts



NB - A special note about ADHD:

Although ADHD is not classified as a Specific Learning Disability, research indicates that 30% - 50% of children with ADHD also have a Specific Learning Disability, and that the two conditions often interact to make learning extremely challenging. For that reason, ADHD regularly appears on the list of the top five learning disabilities - the big difference being that ADHD can often be treated with medicine; while learning disabilities cannot.

5. Dyspraxia, otherwise known as a Developmental Coordination Disorder, is a neurological disorder that affects a person's ability to plan and coordinate movement. It can affect fine motor skills, such as writing or tying shoelaces, as well as gross motor skills, such as balance and coordination, making the person appear clumsy. Dyspraxia can also affect a person's ability to process information and perform tasks in the correct order. Dyspraxia can be diagnosed through a combination of medical and educational assessments, and treatment may involve physical therapy, occupational therapy, and specialised education services.

10 Damaging Myths about Learning Disabilities

Devon Frye is an award-winning journalist based in New York. In a recent article for ADDitude Magazine, (which offers Strategies and Support for Attention Deficit and Related Conditions and advertises its collaboration with leading medical experts), she listed the following 10 myths:

Myth 1: Learning disabilities are more common in people with low intelligence.

False! By definition, a learning disability can only be diagnosed in someone with average or above-average intelligence. Those with learning disabilities often have a high IQ - however, the learning disability is holding them back from demonstrating their true intelligence in daily achievements.

Myth 2: Learning disabilities are only a problem in school settings.

Not true! While learning disabilities certainly make school more difficult, their influence can extend beyond the classroom. Difficulties expressing yourself verbally can lead to social problems, and learning disabilities can hold people back in the workplace - particularly if their job is heavily linked to reading, writing, or math.

Myth 3: Dyslexics read backwards.

This is a common myth, but it **simply isn't true**. Dyslexia comes in many forms, and while some people may experience word reversal (seeing "bat" as "tab," for instance), not all dyslexics experience this. Some struggle with single letter reversal (reading "does" as "dose," for example), while others have difficulties telling single letters apart or stringing multiple sounds together to form a word.



Myth 4: Children with learning disabilities are just lazy or unmotivated.

This myth plagues children with ADHD, too. **A learning disability is not a character flaw**, and children who struggle with learning disabilities are often trying as hard - or harder - than their peers. It's important that parents and teachers offer support and understanding; otherwise, children with learning disabilities can develop low self-esteem or set low expectations for themselves and become apathetic about school and their future.

Myth 5: Accommodations give kids an unfair advantage; that's why many claim to have learning disabilities.

Accommodations for learning disabilities mirror those for any other legal disability - they exist to **level the playing field** and help children with learning disabilities stand eye-to-eye with their peers.

Myth 6: Lack of parental involvement causes learning disabilities.

While researchers aren't exactly clear what causes learning disabilities, they know what doesn't cause it - and parental involvement in early childhood is **not a factor**. Other mythical causes of learning disabilities include vaccinations, bad teachers, or too much television.

Myth 7: Learning disabilities affect more boys than girls.

This one is tricky. While more boys are diagnosed with learning disabilities (66 percent of children receiving accommodations in the United States are boys), experts believe that they actually affect both genders at the same rate. **Girls may be flying under the radar**, and may require closer observation and more proactive intervention.

Myth 8: Glasses can help fix learning disabilities, particularly dyslexia.

Learning disabilities have **nothing to do with vision**. Many parents assume that their child struggles with reading because he can't make out the letters - and certainly vision tests should be conducted on all children to rule out potential problems - but dyslexia is a brain-based disorder, not a vision-based one.

Myth 9: People with learning disabilities can't be successful.

This is far from the truth! Many successful people have learning disabilities, including some famous folk like Whoopi Goldberg, Jennifer Aniston, and Steven Spielberg. Success stories like these prove that learning disability challenges need not preclude a person from achieving the highest levels in society.

Myth 10: Medication can be used to treat learning disabilities.

Many people wrongly believe that learning disabilities can be treated with stimulant medications, much like ADHD. However, **medications have no effect on learning disabilities**. If the child also suffers from ADHD, stimulants can help control attention-related symptoms, but it's important for the learning disability to be separately diagnosed and treated.

By definition, a learning disability can only be diagnosed in someone with average or above-average intelligence

Diagnosing Learning Disabilities

Dr Horowitz says there is no quick and easy way to know whether a child has a learning disability. "There's no blood test or x-ray that can be done as part of a child's annual physical. And even our most sophisticated brain scanning technologies and genetic studies can't (yet) predict learning disabilities. What we do know is that learning disabilities run in families, and that a family history of academic difficulties could be an indication of risk. **Determining whether a child has a learning disability is a process that unfolds over time and must include information from multiple sources.** Parents need to provide their impressions and family history information. Educators need to offer detailed information about the child's progress and how well they respond to instruction. Specialists need to document performance on assessments designed to tap academic skill and the ways that the child processes information. And other factors such as attention, behaviour, and medical history need to be considered.

Are there some early signs of learning disabilities to look for? Sure. In the area of reading, for example, watch for slow or limited vocabulary, difficulty rhyming, trouble mapping the sounds of letters to their corresponding shapes - these might all be early warning signs of dyslexia...."

While on the topic of diagnosing learning disabilities, I spoke to Courtney Thom, an educational psychologist employed at the Chev. She provides psycho-educational assessments for students whose families are not on medical aid or who are unable to afford the costs of assessments. "Learning disabilities don't go away, they're not curable and will be with a child throughout life, so early intervention is important", she says. "The sooner children can get assessed and placed into the right environment, the sooner they can learn and develop the skills and strategies needed to succeed.

Research has found that 40% of kids with learning disabilities drop out of school, but children who receive early intervention are more likely to succeed, graduate from high school and pursue careers that align with their strengths and interests”.

While the price tag for specialised remedial education is high, and can be prohibitive for families who are struggling or just managing to break even, the human cost of failing to provide it to students who need it, is far higher. Last year the Chev made remedial education available to 90 Jewish children at a cost of R7.5m.

“Individuals with learning disabilities may struggle with academic tasks which can lead to frustration, low self-esteem, anxiety and even depression” says Courtney. “If a teacher or social worker picks up on these challenges, they should refer the child for appropriate support. Once I receive a referral the parents/guardians are required to fill in an in-depth intake form and attend a detailed background interview.

I then carry out a battery of tests which will give an indication of the child’s strengths and weaknesses. Since I cannot base any results on tests alone, I get information from teachers and look at school work and previous assessments, reports and any earlier interventions. I look at each child holistically”.

The assessment process involves an IQ test (the one Courtney uses is UK-normed), scholastic assessments: reading, comprehension, mathematics and writing; and an emotional screening. “Research finds that one in ten children have comorbidities with learning disabilities, which is the presence of two or more medical conditions at one time. ADHD is a common comorbidity, but so are anxiety and mood disorders, as individuals with learning difficulties have a high risk of increased emotional and behavioural challenges”.



“With the results of the assessment we can help with identifying academic strengths and weaknesses, school placement, exam concessions and possible diagnoses”, says Courtney. “We can further assist with medical referrals, if necessary, for example, to an audiologist if the child displays hearing difficulties or a behavioural optometrist if the child displays tracking difficulties.” She points out that interventions which provide extra support occur not only at primary school level but at high school level too and with the right diagnoses accommodations can be made for, as an example, typing instead of writing.

Courtney’s psycho-educational assessments run for an average of six hours over two days on children aged four to eighteen years old and she provides a full feedback session with the parents/guardians. She also assists with subject choice assessments for Grade 9 pupils and career assessments and/or guidance for teenagers and adults. She offers play therapy and counselling for children from toddlers to young adults.

Help and Support Are Available

“Imagine how you would feel,” said Dr Horowitz, “if every time you read something new you needed extra time to sound out each word, re-read each sentence more than once to retain its meaning, and struggle to remember details and take notes. Now imagine the stress of the school day, worrying about whether you will be called upon to read aloud or write on the board, in effect being asked to put your learning disability on display. And the same goes for the workplace. The key is to help those with learning disabilities to circumvent the challenges of their learning disabilities so they can share what they know in ways that demonstrate strength, levelling the playing field so their difficulties don’t define who they are and what they can accomplish”.

Providing exactly that kind of support and outcome is King David Ariel in Victory Park. I visited the Principal, Andrea Ben, at the school. “Ariel is a Jewish remedial school which opened five years ago and has grown exponentially over the years,” she told me. “The school runs from Grades 1 to 7. Most of the children at Ariel experience learning difficulties in the areas of reading, writing, spelling and math that co-exist with barriers to learning such as ADHD, dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder, dyspraxia and emotional factors”.

Ariel’s goal is to mainstream children through teaching them skills and strategies as well as providing a nurturing Jewish environment to accomplish this. “We have many children that have mainstreamed to date and are blessed to have outstanding resources and the highest quality of remedially-trained teachers and therapists with state-of-the-art programs, strategies and facilities”.



The staff members consist of a multidisciplinary team of teachers, remedial therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, educational psychologists and a Clinical Director.

“We understand the child holistically,” Andrea explained as she showed me around the Art Room, the Music Room, the Snoezelen Room - a multi-sensory environment which is a relaxing space that helps reduce agitation and anxiety - and the Self-Regulation Station. “We teach students to identify their emotions and to speak up for themselves. This is part of our social and emotional learning incorporating growth mindset and resilience”.

In remedial settings like this, support, targeted professional assistance and an understanding of the child is paramount. Learning is harder work for the children with learning disorders and a nurturing environment helps to ensure that they emerge from school with confidence and with their self-esteem intact. They don't get teased, bullied or labeled. They're given, as Dr Horowitz says, *every opportunity to demonstrate strength, leveling the playing field so their difficulties don't define who they are and what they can accomplish*. And that's as it should be.

Upon application each child must have had a full Psycho-Educational assessment which includes their cognitive, academic, social and emotional functioning. “But once enrolled, they also get an internal assessment and then an annual one to reassess their results and see how their needs may have changed”, said Andrea.

Based upon those an Individual Support Plan (ISP) is drawn up for each child and discussed with their parents. The plan will identify individual areas of strengths and weaknesses and sets goals for the year ahead.

FOCUSSING ON DYSLLEXIA

Considering the disproportionately high number of people affected by dyslexia: 20% of the world population and 80% of all children with learning disabilities, it seems appropriate to focus on this Specific Learning Disorder.

Cracking the Reading Code

As a speech therapist, Dr Tali Frankel says she often encountered young children who were finding the process of reading challenging and who seemed to have difficulty integrating literacy skills. “Unlike speech and language, which given a sufficiently stimulating environment will naturally develop, reading is an arbitrary system of symbols imposed on the brain. I was used to working with preschool children as they negotiated the developments needed to gain pre-literacy proficiency. This important basket of abilities prepares children for the ultimate tasks of reading and spelling. They are incorporated in the umbrella term ‘phonological awareness’ and include the ability to discriminate between similar sounds, appreciate that words can be separated into discrete units including syllables and individual sounds (auditory analysis), blend sounds together to form whole words (auditory synthesis) and recognise and generate rhyming words”.



Despite her best efforts in applying evidence-based practice towards honing these skills in her five and six year-old clients, she was finding a growing number of children struggling to come to grips with the relationships between letters and the sounds they represented. She was also feeling increasingly helpless to intervene in a meaningful way and that her therapeutic tool kit was lacking some critical implements, so she decided to embark upon additional studies. Bellavista offers a three part continuous professional development Award in Literacy and Dyslexia.

The three modules, presented over the course of roughly two years, tackle theory, assessment and intervention for dyslexia. Specific strategies which include routines, guided discovery, the use of problem solving and metacognition, verbalisation of material, revision and review, games and independent learning are used throughout.

Dr Frankel says, “The overarching aim of the programme, and others that are founded on similar principles, is to provide cumulative practice and overlearning [overlearning is the process of rehearsing a skill even after you seem to have already learned it - the continued practice helps to lock in hard-earned skills] to allow learners to begin to automatise the relationships between sounds and symbols - or more simply, letters and the sounds they represent. When this happens fluently and more automatically, the reader is able to access meaning from what they have read and has ‘cracked the code’. Individual differences in genetic predisposition, timing and efficacy of intervention, personality variables and severity of the presentation along a continuum, will inform how well readers with dyslexia respond to intervention”.

With a better understanding of the challenges that young readers face when trying to crack the literacy code, more advanced research on how to intervene timeously and effectively and programmes that upskill professionals, there is more hope than ever for struggling young learners.



The Superpowers of Dyslexics

“The Industrial Revolution dovetailed with the invention of the printing press and **when the first benchmark for intelligence became the ability to read, that locked the door on 20% of the population**”, said Dean Bragonier, Founder and “Executive Dyslexic” of NoticeAbility, a non-profit dedicated to helping students with dyslexia. “People used to learn by observing, which is the wheelhouse for dyslexics. All of a sudden those of us with dyslexia realised we had a very hard time doing what our peers could do effortlessly. We failed on day one, on day two, three, and failure became commonplace and we felt shame”.

Dean is dyslexic himself, the son of a dyslexic and the father of a dyslexic son. But Dean is also a successful social entrepreneur in the EdTech space and a person who advocates passionately for dyslexics.



Dean
Bragonier

By looking at the unique mind-set of dyslexics as a strength, Dean reframed a perceived weakness as a powerful tool. Shaped by the challenges associated with his dyslexia, Dean became an advocate for learning and disability equality and has founded, managed and served on the boards of organisations working to create systemic change in this field.

Dean leads a collaborative team from Harvard University, Tufts University and the Carroll School that is building curricula designed to offer authentic inquiry experiences in vocational subjects that cater to the neurological strengths of the dyslexic mind.

Did you know, for example, that exceptionally intelligent students often have learning disorders? Current US research suggests that 14% of children who are identified as being **intellectually gifted** may also have a learning disability. This is compared to about 4% of children in the general population. **No-one has been able to explain this discrepancy.**

The Commonwealth Learning Centre published an article in October 2021 entitled, **Famous Dyslexics who Impacted the World**. “Many of the people who we consider as changing the course of history for the better were dyslexic. These people were not only able to think outside of the box, but they had the ability to shatter the limitations of the current thinking of their day. They were visionaries who gave birth to ideas that have impacted history in remarkable ways. These revolutionary thinkers are not limited to one area of pursuit, but have contributed to the world in all areas. They were inventors and scientists, political leaders, writers and journalists, filmmakers, actors and entertainers, athletes, artists, designers, architects, lawmakers, military heroes, and musicians”.

Many of the people who we consider as changing the course of history for the better were dyslexic

Amongst the long list of famous dyslexics in the article are **George Washington**, the first US President, who had great difficulty with spelling. **Albert Einstein**, the most influential physicist of the 20th century, loved mathematics and science, but he disliked grammar and always had problems with spelling. "The headmaster of Albert's school suggested he should attend a trade school and his teachers reportedly declared him as borderline intellectually impaired". **Steve Jobs** revolutionised the technology field by developing the Macintosh computer, iPod, iPhone, and iPad. As a child, Jobs was recognised as highly intelligent, but he experienced frustration with formal schooling.

Movies helped the famous filmmaker, **Steven Spielberg**, cope with dyslexia. In a rare interview with the website, *Friends of Quinn*, Spielberg discussed having been diagnosed with dyslexia as an adult and understanding that he had had it his entire life. "It explained so much about why I had hated school and dreaded being called up to the board in front of the class. I wish I had known then how common the condition was, that I was not alone and that there are ways around it. It doesn't have to hold you back. It was like the last puzzle part in a tremendous mystery that I've kept to myself all these years...I never felt like a victim...movies really helped me...kind of saved me from shame, from guilt...making movies was my great escape."

He learned to read two years later than his classmates and hinted at this experience in the 1985 movie, *Goonies*, a movie about being friends with a group of fellow outcasts. "I was a member of the Goon Squad", Spielberg said. He candidly shared that it takes him twice as long as most peers in Hollywood to read books and scripts, "...although my comprehension is excellent".

When Time Magazine asked **Richard Branson**, founder of Virgin Atlantic Airlines, whether dyslexia hindered his business abilities, he replied, "*Strangely, I think my dyslexia has helped.*"

It explained so much about why I had hated school and dreaded being called up to the board in front of the class. I wish I had known then how common the condition was, that I was not alone and that there are ways around it...





Dyslexics Miss the Trees, but See the Forest

NPO Talk Dyslexia describes nine areas in which dyslexics excel:

Seeing the bigger picture - They miss the trees, but they see the forest. It's as if people with dyslexia use a wide-angle lens to take in the world, while others use a telephoto.

Finding the odd one out - There are so many people with dyslexia in the field of astrophysics that it prompted research at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. Findings confirmed that those with dyslexia are better at identifying and memorising complex images.

Improved pattern recognition - People with dyslexia have the ability to see how things connect to form complex systems, and to identify similarities among multiple things. Such strengths are likely to be of particular significance for fields like science and mathematics, where visual representations are key.

Good spatial knowledge - Many people with dyslexia demonstrate better skills at manipulating 3D objects in their minds. Many of the world's top architects and fashion designers have dyslexia.

Picture thinkers - People with dyslexia tend to think in pictures rather than words. Research at the University of California has demonstrated children with dyslexia have enhanced picture recognition memory.

Sharper peripheral vision - People with dyslexia have better peripheral vision than most, meaning they can quickly take in a whole scene. Although it can be hard to focus in on individual words, dyslexia seems to make it easier to see outer edges.

Business entrepreneurs - Did you know that one in three American entrepreneurs has dyslexia?

Highly creative - Many of the world's most creative actors have dyslexia, such as Johnny Depp, Keira Knightly and Orlando Bloom. Picasso painted his subjects as he saw them - sometimes out of order, backwards or upside down. His paintings demonstrated the power of his imagination, which was perhaps linked to his inability to see written words properly.

Thinking outside the box / problem solving - Those with dyslexia are well known for having sudden leaps of insight that solve problems with an unorthodox approach. This is an intuitive approach to problem solving that can seem like daydreaming. Staring out of the window is how dyslexics work, letting their brain slide into neutral and ease itself around a problem to let connections assemble.

Some Final Words of Wisdom

“Learning disabilities do not go away - they’re with you for life,” says Dr Horowitz. “The sooner people learn to talk about their learning disabilities and how to be effective self-advocates, the better. There’s some really interesting longitudinal data that shows success attributes among children with learning disabilities. **Studies tell us that even more important than early recognition of learning disabilities, overall intelligence, or how many years of special education help they received, the thing that had the biggest impact over time was how well they could articulate their learning disability to others.** Starting in elementary and middle school, students should become really good at explaining their learning disability to teachers. By the time they’re in high school, they should know the rights and protections they have and be able to share the details ... that specify the services and supports they are entitled to receive.”

“Let me tell you about a first-grader who had trouble learning to read.

He entered first grade in 1955 in a public school in a small town on Cape Cod. He had trouble with Dick and Jane and letters, sounds, and words. His teacher, a kindly woman with white, curly hair, wore lots of powder that sprinkled down on her students as she walked by. She was a human sugar doughnut. Her name was Mrs. Eldredge, and while she was firm in preserving order in the classroom, she never ridiculed or embarrassed anyone.

During reading period, as the students sat at round tables and took turns reading aloud - “See Spot run! Run! Run! Run!” - Mrs. Eldredge went from table to table, listening and correcting pronunciations, sprinkling powder on her students as she passed by. When she came to the boy who struggled with reading, she pulled up a chair and sat down next to him. As he stammered and stuttered, unable to produce the right sounds, Mrs. Eldredge hugged him to her. None of the children laughed at his clumsy reading because he had the enforcer next to him.

I was that little boy. At the end of first grade, I was still a poor reader, and, to this day, I’m painfully slow at getting through a book. I would have benefited from an Orton-Gillingham tutor back then.

The intervention I needed most, though, I got. It was Mrs. Eldredge’s arm, which took the fear out of trying to read. When her arm encircled me, I felt no shame in having my kind of brain. I have a dyslexic brain, a disordered brain, call it what you will. But if it

Weren't for Mrs. Eldredge, I wouldn't have come to enjoy my poor old brain. My brain got me through Harvard as an English major and a pre-med minor. I graduated magna cum laude and went on to medical school, residency, and fellowship. I write books.

None of this would have happened without Mrs. Eldredge's arm. Even though Mrs. Eldredge now resides in heaven - perhaps sprinkling powder on clouds as I write - she continues to help me. I remember to thank her almost every day.

If you have dyslexia, I would say, "Lucky you!" You have untestable, unmeasurable potential. You are a surprise package; no one knows what you can do, including you. But I can tell you from years of experience you can do special things. You have many talents that can't be taught, and a brain that eludes the predictive powers of our wisest sayers of sooth. But I would also say, "Watch out!" You need a guide, one who has been down these trails and can show you how to get through the desert and over the mountains. You need someone who will never let you give up, someone who can make you know that there's more to you than you can show or tell right now...."

Dr Edward Hallowell, renowned expert on ADHD
ADDitude magazine 2022

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②

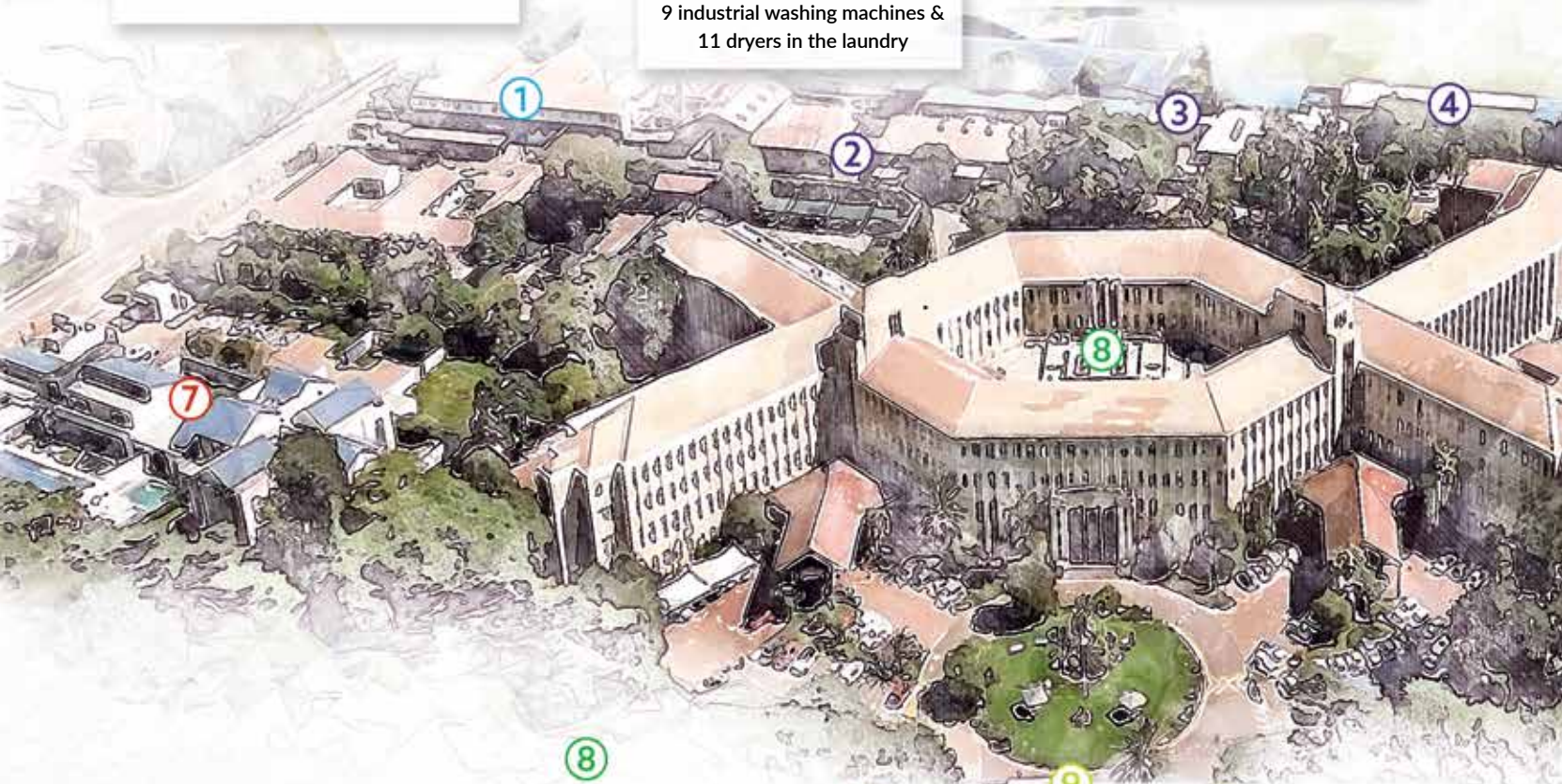
Workshop & Laundry

8 generators run the campus
5000 litres of diesel weekly
2 Boilers /30 tons coal per week
10,000 repairs annually
500 residents' laundry weekly
9 industrial washing machines &
11 dryers in the laundry

③

Oster Tahara Room

Tahara and Shmira facility
80% of all Taharas
(preparing the deceased for
burial) are carried out here



①

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Arcadia



17 children in residence
19 join Day Care Centre
8 young adults in After Care
22 staff

Sandringham Gardens



348 residents
53 nurses / 133 care workers
Social workers & Life Enrichment
Refurbished Shul, dining room,
library and Nosh Cafe'

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Our Community

④

The Datnow Centre

Offices of Human Resources,
IT and Central Services

⑤

The Donald Gordon Centre

Chev Group Head Office houses
senior management, finance,
marketing and fundraising teams

⑥



94 residents with physical & intellectual disabilities
2 protected employment workshops:
Kadimah / The Junction
Individual therapeutic programmes for each resident
100 staff members - nurses & careworkers



⑩

The David Lopatie Centre

Newly completed donor-funded
legacy project houses
Community Social Services
30 social workers
JWBS 2nd hand clothing shop

⑪



A kosher, family-friendly tea
garden open to the public

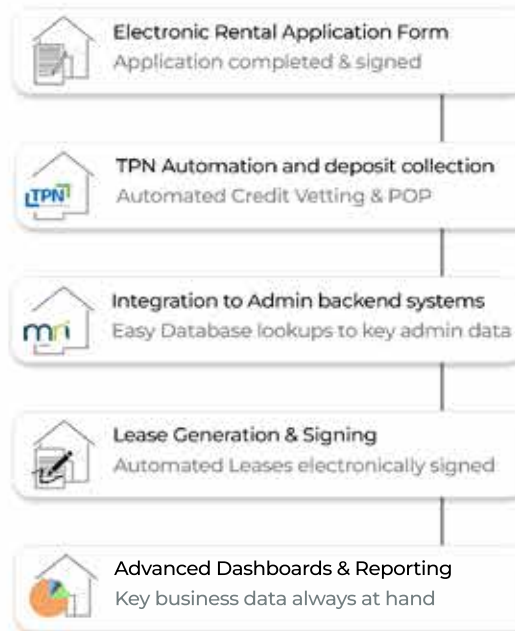
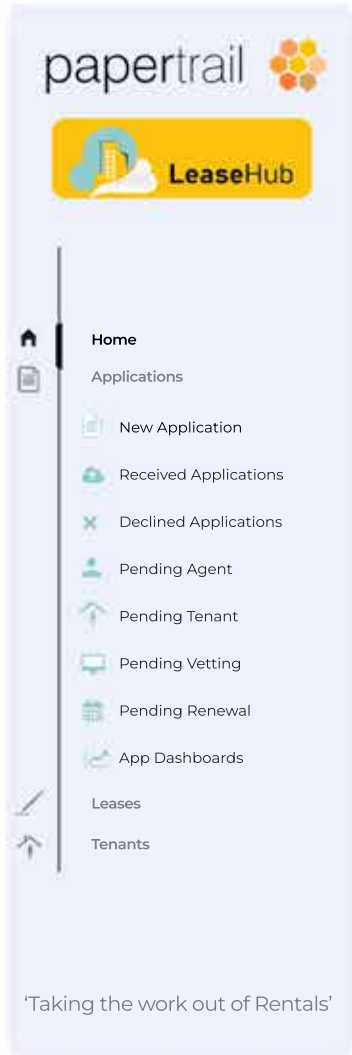
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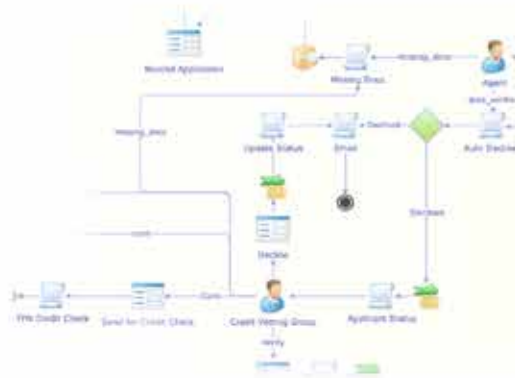


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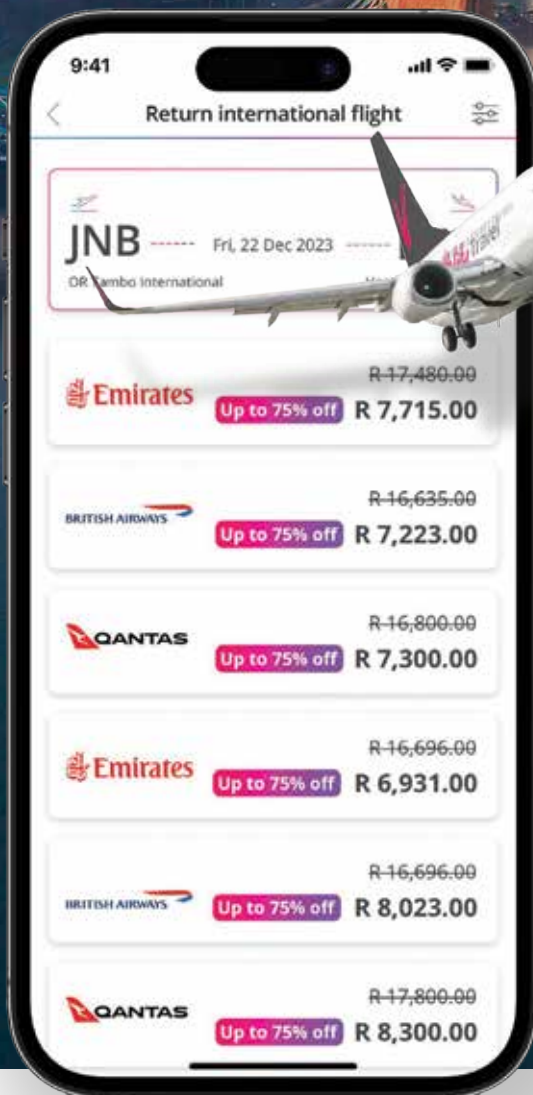
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Home, But Not Alone

G-d's Gift of Old Age

Tzivvia Grauman



Honouring the aged and taking care of them is a fundamental Jewish Law, an essential part of Jewish culture and integral to our values. “Honour your mother and father so that your days may be long upon the land which L-rd your G-d has given you” is the 5th commandment and the only one that offers a reward, the reward of longevity. In psalm 71, King David beseeches Hashem: Do not cast me away at the time of old age; when my strength fails, do not forsake me. **Judaism teaches us to value our elders and views them as leaders and as repositories of knowledge.** They must be held in high esteem and treated with respect. Older people have gained from their life experience and have much to share with the next generation.

The Torah tells us, “In the presence of the elderly you shall rise, and you shall respect an elder; you shall have fear of your God; I am Adonai.” Caring for the elderly is a commandment for all, not just children.

The scripture insists old age is one of G-d’s gifts. King Solomon, the wisest man ever to have lived, wrote “The glory of the young is their strength; the gray hair of experience is the splendour of the old.” Every day is a gift from G-d, and the accumulation of days, months and years is the cumulative gift of G-d.

Yet many old people, who are trying desperately to cling to their independence by continuing to live in their own homes - as opposed to moving into care facilities - are struggling. Independence leaks away with the passage of time, with fading strength, waning health, reduced financial resources and diminished freedom of movement.

Yet many old people, who are trying desperately to cling to their independence by continuing to live in their own homes - as opposed to moving into care facilities - are struggling

Their desire to maintain their independence is understandable and should be encouraged as it gives them dignity and control over their lives, but we know that running a home is labour-intensive. There is always something that needs repairing, maintaining, upgrading or replacing - which invariably requires an investment of energy and money. Who could fix it? Who can be trusted? How much will they charge? How do I reach them? What will it cost to replace it? Sometimes that can be overwhelming for an older person and too exhausting or confusing to contemplate, so they don’t. They just learn to live with the imperfections, their homes fall into disrepair, their problems accumulate and each day gets a little harder.

We also know that maintaining personal health, hygiene and grooming can be costly and labour-intensive too. They need to see the doctor if they don’t feel well, or visit for routine check-ups. Their hair needs washing, their nails need grooming, their medication prescriptions need to be refilled and they must remember to take their meds daily. Getting in and out of a bath or shower can be tricky if they’re not steady on their feet. And laundry is hard work for older people. Keeping their homes clean and tidy is physically demanding and shopping and cooking can become too onerous, so perhaps they don’t eat much - they couldn’t be bothered.

And then there’s the transport issue. What if there’s no car, or no longer the ability to drive one? They don’t want to impose on others or become a nuisance. Security is another major concern and older people may feel defenceless, afraid and distrusting.

Failing eyesight, diminished hearing, growing frailty and a determination to manage alone can be a deadly cocktail for many old people in our community. Depression and despair can easily set in.

Over time and through embarking upon home visits, Chev social workers began to identify a large number of isolated aged Jewish people living on their own and badly in need of support. For a number of these aged people it is quite dangerous for them to be living alone with no resources and no access to help. In order to promote their care, safety and quality of life a proposal was formulated and a programme of Home-Based Care (HBC) was instituted as a dignified alternative to residential care living. Excluding the many months of research that preceded it, the project was officially launched in April 2022. After just six months the team had reached 100 aged people and is expected to reach 200 beneficiaries by the end 2023.

HBC operates under the Chev's Community Social Services. The target population served by this programme are older people from 60 years of age. Welcome Services consultants at the Chev or social workers at the Community Family Support Services (FSS) facilitate an initial risk assessment of the older person to see how they are coping with their Activities of Daily Living (ADL's) such as, but not limited to, bathing, cooking, housework, shopping, administration of medication, mobility and self-care. They also assess the older person's mental health, including psychiatric concerns and cognitive and sensory functioning, environmental safety and the involvement of the family in the older person's life. Lastly, they assess their ability to manage their finances. The social worker will create a care plan for the older person which outlines goals or behaviour change of most relevance to the person.

The Home Based Care programme now employs 17 staff members:



Jolande Erasmus, a qualified social worker with extensive experience in programme management, is the Programme Co-ordinator. She says, "The HBC programme promotes quality of life and care for older people and advocates for their dignity and rights. We support them in their quest for independence, self-esteem and privacy. Referrals to join the programme come through our Social Services, existing Chev clients over 60, or through family members, community leaders, community members and by word of mouth. If people become aware that an older person is having difficulty with Activities of Daily Living - whether physical, mental or emotional - they will contact the Chev and share their concerns".

The initial assessment is carried out by senior HBC social worker, Ingrid Woolf, who undertakes a home visit. "Health concerns may accelerate the situation", explains Jolande. Each situation and case is unique, as some of the anonymous stories below will illustrate, but in the normal course of events once the assessments have been made a personal social worker is allocated to offer emotional support and recommendations for ongoing care are made going forward. A care plan is drawn up. If the older person is a man and would prefer to be visited by a male caregiver, that is arranged and the same applies to women.



Jolande Erasmus

Ingrid Woolf

“At this time our team is finding ways to meet the growing demand for services and from the time of referral there is currently a waiting period of about two weeks, unless, of course, there is a health or other kind of urgency”. The frequency of visits is dependent upon the needs of each individual.

Jolande says it's a graduation process of a kind. “When people need full time care and are at high risk of being injured by weekly falls or severe mental deterioration - when they can no longer put the kettle on, they get reassessed. There will inevitably come a time when our HBC is no longer enough, when the time for independent living has passed.

At that time clients are moved to an aged facility of their choice, but it's a gradual, delicate and sensitive process, handled with care and dignity”. If people have children and the family chooses that the parent move in with them, HBC will continue to provide all necessary services.

A Letter to HBC from a daughter

My Dad

My dad was at the Charlotte Maxeke Hospital for five weeks earlier this year as unfortunately he is not on a medical aid. He has been diagnosed with galloping cancer. I was trying to manage alone and get meals to him. I tried to assist with washing him but it was uncomfortable for him to have his daughter do that. Had I known all that the Chev offered, and realised that it was done so efficiently and confidentially, I would have asked sooner.

The Chev's Home Based Care has been a game changer and a lifeline for our family and given my dad the will to carry on, knowing that assistance is accessible, that he is not alone and that the entire burden of his care is not on my shoulders.

As soon as my dad was out of hospital, the Chev Home Based Care team got wind of my dad's condition and assigned an excellent team to him and they exceeded all expectations. Someone from The HBC team was at his home the very next day assessing his needs. Their aim was to assist him in every way possible. They helped complete the documentation required and took care of the admin so they could contact any other necessary organisations e.g. Hatzolah, Hospice.

This first home visit/assessment, included a complete safety check to ensure that there were no dangers in his living space – cords he could fall over or electrical equipment that was faulty. They arranged a new microwave for him as his was damaged and pointed out how this would help with warming up the meals they would arrange for him. Nutrition was important, they said. They replaced his ancient mattress which will hopefully assist with his back pain. The HBC offered someone to come in and clean whenever necessary so that my dad could live in a clean home and with dignity.

The following week rails and a hand-held shower were installed around his bath, so that it was possible for him wash himself (it's very difficult to keep sparkly clean when you cannot get into or out of a bath tub).

A care worker is on offer to assist with washing his hair, clipping his nails, helping to wash him and maintain his dignity.

A walker was brought in to assist him with walking and an amazing Occupational Therapist was sent to see him. A Podiatrist made a home visit too – his feet were affected from the cancer so even though his overgrown toenails could have done with a clip, which the Chev organised too, they made sure his feet were seen to by a professional.

Before the Home Based Care came in I had taken my dad for a follow up appointment to the Charlotte Maxeke and it was traumatic. We arrived just after 5H45, had to find a wheel chair as he's battling to walk and the divisions at the hospital are miles away, and we had to wait in line for three hours before seeing the doctor.

We then got sent to another section and had to wait hours to get his catheter changed, which going forward, our Home Based Care nurse will be able to do. We were given a prescription to fill and to my huge relief, Home Based Care were able fill it at the Sandringham Gardens pharmacy which relieved us of another three or more hours of waiting, when my dad is in terrible pain and nauseous.

It is truly such a relief to have this incredible support and assistance. In our Government facilities, nobody remembers or knows your name. At the Chev every person matters.

For me it is the biggest relief as I felt like that duck who looks calm on the surface and is frantically paddling under the water. I was actually beside myself and trying to keep it together and be calm, so my dad would not know what a toll this was taking on me.

My dad was devastated as he felt like he was getting me into debt and taking up a great deal of my time. Also it was very humiliating for him.

A heart breaking and emotionally draining situation has been alleviated beyond expectations, and life has gone back to some kind of normal for me. Thanks to the Chev, my dad is able to live in his flat, avoid the very long hospital queues and exposure to 1000's of sick people as he can get meds, catheter

changed and meals. The HBC team has a counsellor who visits him often and he trusts her and is so grateful to have someone to share his feelings with. They have also offered to arrange lifts where necessary.

My dad has asked me to tell you, "It is so heart-warming to know what a wonderful community we have. It is life changing for our family and I cannot believe how caring, kind, efficient and amazing the staff are, considering, I am just a nobody in our public system. Thank you for granting me dignity, comfort; for making my well-being a priority and alleviating the pain and stress of not being on a medical aid. From the bottom of my heart, I feel immense gratitude and relief".

Jolande told a story about a widow of 86 who lives alone in Sydenham. Her primary need when she started with the Chev was financial as her pension was inadequate. She also needed help to reapply for her pension. "She believes she is able to be independent, but in truth, she cannot manage," said Jolande. "It took the team eight visits simply to gain access. The nurse and caregiver went with each time and were not allowed in – that's how afraid she was. Eventually, one was allowed in. Only on her third visit was the caregiver allowed to touch her, to cut her nails and wash her feet. It took several more weeks before she agreed to allow her to help her shower. Eventually, through patience and gentle persistence, she allowed the team to clean herself and her home. The HBC team sees her weekly now and the nurse sees her monthly. She didn't have basic appliances and the Chev organised a bed, fridge and washing machine for her. She suffers badly with arthritis. Her tenant makes sure she has food, and cuts her food for her. For now, with HBC supervision and help, she's coping. Her house is clean, she is clean".

I'm a 93 year's old man. I live in a Bachelor flat, I do my own daily maintenance chores as well as prepare my own meals. The only assistance I get is from the Chev's Home Based Care Organisation which is a wonderful innovation. The Team come to my Flat once a month and spend an hour with me. Cleaning personnel, who clean areas at my request. A Medical Sister who checks my Blood pressure and Sugar levels, also a lady who cuts my toe nails. I look forward to their visit, they are a great Team!

CHAG SAMEACH to all at the CHEV

I AM A 73 YEAR OLD FEMALE LIVING BY MYSELF IN A FLAT. HOME BASED CARE IS ABSOLUTELY LIFE CHANGING FOR THOSE IN NEED. THEY ARE SYMPATHETIC TO ONES NEEDS WITHOUT MAKING YOU FEEL AWFUL HAVING TO APPROACH THEM FOR HELP NEEDED. THEY HAVE OFFERED ME LADIES TO HELP KEEP MY FLAT CLEAN TO HAIRDRESSERS, DOCTORS, FOOD AND GENERALLY SOMEWHERE TO TURN WHEN NEEDED. THE WORK THEY DO IS UNBELIEVABLE AND THEY ARE ANGELS FROM HEAVEN. THEY WILL BE HELPING ME WITH A NEW BED. CUSHIONS TOWELS AND NEW SHEETS. THERE ARE NO WORDS TO DESCRIBE HOW GRATEFUL I AM AND FOR THE ASSISTANCE I AM RECEIVING FROM THEM.

My parents 79 and 94 have been with the homebased care for only a short period. Since our first meeting with you up until now my parents have been treated with kindness, respect, and dignity from everyone involved. All queries have been dealt with immediately, and both my parents are very happy.

Once you heard that my mom was stressing because she had not been able to afford a mammogram in a long time, it was arranged for her to have the testing done. Also, when you found out that their bed was getting old, a new base and mattress were gifted to them. Both my parents have been very happy with the services offered from the staff that come in and spend time with them checking their blood pressure to checking my mom's sugar for her diabetes.

They are always courteous and patient and listen to them. Even when my dad repeats himself over and over. My mom received a mini manicure the last time and this put a smile on her face for a very long time as she has only had her nails done like this very rarely.

They are also happy with the 2 ladies that come in to give their room and bathroom a good cleaning. They always carry out the tasks that are asked of them and do not complain. They also felt privileged to have the podiatrist over to do their feet, as they had both been talking about finding the funds to get their nails cut, and I'm sure my dad appreciated it the most as my mom accidentally nicked his toe when she cut his nails.

Last week both my mom and dad went to Karen to have their hair cut and they both have said that she did a very good job and will be happy to go there again. As you know my father was a barber for many years and this compliment is very high indeed from him. There is not one department or service that you have introduced us to that have not been amazing in taking care of my parents. This is also a relief for me as they both are living with me, and I am unable to help them in any way financially and I can't offer them these services that they are now receiving. It has been a pleasure having your teams come to my home to do these things I can't do for my parents. I am also sure; in time we will start to remember the names of the wonderful ladies that you are sending over.

Keep up the good work.

I am a 84 year old female. Thank you so much for everything you do for me. I really appreciate your care and help. Please say thank you to Jolande and the HBC team as well. I cannot tell you how much it means to me. Shabbat shalom!

I am a 70 year old female living with my pets that are so close to my heart. I'm beyond chuffed!! Gone are the days of battling to turn on the hot tap with pliers and resorting to washing dishes in plastic basins in the bath. Kevin and Clive from The Brigade Plumbers have just installed a brand new mixer and it works so easily. Thank you for putting me onto the home assistance programme. Thanks to Yolande for approving and organising this and thanks to The Chev for funding it.

I am 59 and living with my mother who is 83. My mother has various health challenges. To all at HBC thank you so much for referring Jaime the podiatrist for my mom. He was kind and caring and gave a complete evaluation before he started treating her feet. Both had our hair coloured and cut thanks to HBC. Both feel good. To all at HBC thank you so much for affording us this beautiful fridge. We are truly grateful. To all at HBC you all are so kind and caring and we are so thankful to have you in our lives. Once again many thanks.

Social Worker Case Study – Mother and Son

██████████ was a teacher. She got divorced after being in an abusive marriage for many years. She then had a partner who died. Her son returned home after getting divorced. ██████████ is estranged from two of her five children who never forgave her for leaving their dad. One son is at the Lodge. ██████████ has lost most of her sight and hearing. She currently lives with her 68 year old son. He lost his job as a mashkiag just as Covid started. ██████████ has lost most of his eye sight too and cannot drive. Their garden is like a jungle and is so overgrown that has become a security risk. Their home had leaks and was flooded after the storms. They became even more isolated during lockdown.

██████████ had let his hair and beard grow so long that he looked like a person living on the street. His spirit seemed to have been broken. After some time with counselling, team visits and lots of care, they both have had lovely haircuts done by our mobile hairdresser. Their transformation was unbelievable. The podiatrist has seen to their feet which were in a bad state. ██████████ is benefitting from Biokinetics. Our nurse and cleaners visit every second week. Recently their rescued cat dug his claws into ██████████ thin skin and our nurse has gone every few days to dress the wound to prevent infection. Our handyman has been in to fix the leaks on the building.

They no longer have to worry about transport as they are taken to the Charlotte Maxeke hospital for their Doctor appointments. They both got new beds. They got a washing machine as theirs had broken down and their washing had piled up for months. They also got a battery operated radio so they could benefit from loud classical music during loadshedding.



Dear Ingrid

I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude to the entire team of the Home Based Care (HBC) program for the excellent care and support that was provided to my parents in the comfort of their home. The regular visits provided an extra layer of personal care and connection, which was invaluable during the challenging times they were going through. The team's commitment and compassion was apparent, and my parents felt very comfortable in their presence.

The nurse was extremely knowledgeable and always ready to answer questions and address any concerns we had. The driver was always punctual and friendly, provided safe and comfortable transport, and assisted my dad greatly. The team leader/manager always responsive and tried to accommodate any day date changes where possible.

Thank you Ingrid for your involvement with the program, and please extend my sincere thanks to the HBC team for their wonderful service.

Best



Re the home based care team

The HBC team have been such a help and support to both of my parents - both practically and emotionally.

From lifts for dad to have his infusions and good company on the way, to cheer blankets and warm pjs and gowns for both during lockdown, to beautiful and thoughtful welcome, birthday and Jewish holiday gifts, to knowing that the home would also get to be cleaned and looked after, to pedicures/haircuts for mom that made her feel special and cared for, to photos of memories full of smiling faces, to always having kind, caring, thoughtful, generous, warm, compassionate and considerate people around to talk to and share smiles, laughter, joy, pain, sorrow, grief, loss and the good, bad, happy and sad times with.

The HBC treated both of my parents as cherished elders, and respected and understood their individual needs, stories and likes and dislikes. They felt heard and listened to.

Thank you to the HBC for being there for both my mom and dad. You also helped my siblings, families and I feel supported too, by your presence and assistance with our parents.

With warmest wishes



THE FULL RANGE OF SERVICES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE FROM HOME BASED CARE

Social worker

Provides counselling and case management to older individuals/beneficiaries and their families in the community who are registered on the HBC programme. The social worker will conduct group work, collaborate with a multi-disciplinary team, provide bereavement and grief counselling, manage crises, complete administrative tasks and relevant reports, hold case conferences and family meetings, supervise volunteers and students, and promote active aging programs. The social worker promotes and maintains the psychosocial functioning of beneficiaries and their families while ensuring that social services are delivered according to care standards. The social worker will also provide emotional support, help navigate life transitions, adapt to changes, and provide guidance and resources to cope with evolving circumstances, enabling individuals to maintain their independence and quality of life through changes in health or mobility.

Social auxiliary work

The primary responsibility is to provide emotional and practical support to the older persons registered on the HBC programme in the community. They offer emotional support, help the older persons cope with life transitions and adapt to changing circumstances, provide practical guidance and resources, facilitate successful transitions to different levels of care or housing, and enable the older person to maintain their independence and quality of life through changes in health or mobility. They also assist to facilitate SASSA grants and renewals.

Caregiving

The caregiver's responsibilities include personal care, meal planning and mobility assistance. This involves tasks such as feeding, bathing, and toileting, as well as helping with the preparation of meals. Additionally, the caregiver helps the older person move around the home safely and comfortably, performs stretches and exercises to improve strength, balance, and coordination, and ensures proper positioning to prevent falls and promote physical functioning and independence.

Drivers

They deliver assistive devices, transport older persons to appointments, to do banking, to SASSA, to collect medication - any transport required.

Doctors

In-practice or home visits are done by our sessional General Practitioner upon referral by the nurse.

Enrolled nurse

The nurse oversees caregivers and provides basic health care. She monitors vitals and provides caregivers with daily care routines for the older person. She is responsible for referrals to the doctor and for packing and monitoring medication.

Physiotherapist and Biokineticist

They provide extended mobility, muscle agility, and rehabilitation.

Occupational Therapist

The OT assesses environmental safety, required assistive devices and improves dexterity and mobility.

Cleaning Services

They assist older persons with difficult cleaning tasks. The cleaning services focus on hygiene control, assist with general household cleanliness as well as cleaning the bathroom, kitchen, mopping, sweeping, cleaning windows and decluttering. Some houses are in such poor condition that professional cleaning services are called in before our staff can take over.

Podiatrist

The podiatrist helps the older person to care for their feet, manage pain in their feet, and monitor diabetes and other infections on the feet and lower limbs.

Gardening

Assistance is provided to older people to clean and maintain their gardens.

Beauty

Mobile hairdressers and manicurists assist the older person maintain their appearance. This builds their self-esteem which is important for their overall well-being. The programme also makes use of a full-time in-house hairdresser situated at the salon at Selwyn Segal.

Maintenance

To ensure the home is conducive for the older person to live in safely, home safety hazards are attended to.



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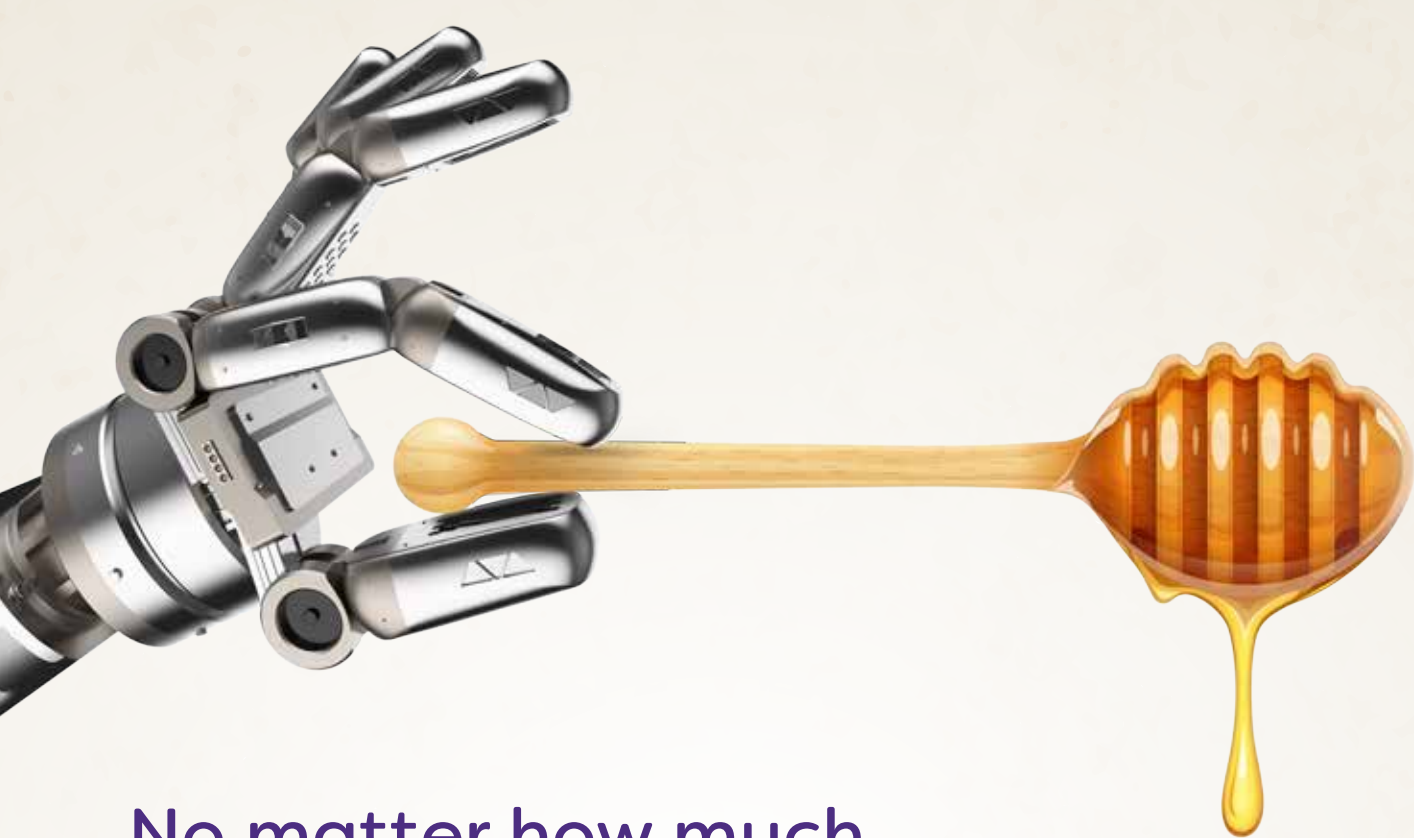
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Westpark Cemetery

OHEL UPGRADE

Tzivia Grauman



Extensive and much-needed renovations were undertaken earlier this year at Westpark cemetery with funding from three generous donors.

The upgrades were dedicated in memory of two exceptional people who devoted many years of service to the Chev: the late Hymie Datnow ה"ע, father of our Chairman, Colin Datnow; and the late Norman Stein ה"ע. May their memories be a blessing. A plaque was erected in the Ohel to represent this dedication.

The renovation was also dedicated in loving memory of Ruben Tzvi ben Ben-Tzion, Devorah bat Michel and Israel Abba ben Zalman Halevi.

A Jewish cemetery is known as a Beit haChaim - a Home of Life, which signifies our belief that death is not the end of life, but a pathway into an eternal, spiritual life. The Ohel is the entrance to the Beit haChaim and it is there that friends and family gather to comfort the mourners and to escort the deceased to his/her burial place.

The Chev's objective with this renovation, which took four months to complete, was to ensure that the Ohel provides an atmosphere of dignity, holiness and comfort symbolic of the respect due to both the community and to those who have passed on to their new spiritual home. It is a fitting tribute, too, to all those who have served the Chev in all capacities since its establishment in 1888, and to those who are currently dedicated to this holy work.

In his speech at the dedication ceremony, Group Rabbi Jonathan Fox said, "In Judaism we have different places of holiness. A shul is holy because of the davening that takes place there and a Yeshiva is holy because of the Torah that is learned there. This Ohel, in which we stand today, is possibly the holiest of the holy - because of the immense and numerous acts of kindness that have taken place here over the last 80 years. When the Gemora asks the famous question of how we fulfil the mitzvah of walking in the ways of G-d, it answers by saying that we can emulate G-d by performing kindness, and in particular the kindnesses of burial and of comforting mourners. This Holy Ohel is the place where bodies have been

prepared with such care by the mitaskim. It is a place where relatives and friends have been present to comfort the mourners and to honour the departed. It is a place where Rabbonim have delivered stirring and comforting eulogies. It is a place where people have davened and said Kaddish and it is the place where Gabbaim have called up family and friends to perform the mitzvah of escorting their loved ones to burial. It is therefore not surprising that the people who have been responsible for upgrading this holy makom shel chesed are themselves giants of kindness, who have dedicated themselves to the ideals of chesed and community..."

The Ohel was modernised and retiled, a kosher kitchen was installed and new restrooms and showers were constructed. Windows throughout the Ohel were accentuated with Magen Davids and purple glass, the colour representing royalty, wisdom and spirituality.

The offices are now open plan and visible to the community which creates a sense of transparency and inclusivity. A beautiful new mourner's room has been included in the upgrade, where the cemetery staff and management can spend time with bereaved families in a dignified manner.

External spaces too were upgraded, including paving, a new access staircase at the back of the Ohel and granite washbasins with a beautifully clad wall to resemble the stones at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. An official opening of the new Ohel was held on 31st January 2023 and community response has been extremely positive. The Chev's gratitude to the donors who made this possible is immeasurable.





A Brief History of Johannesburg's Jewish Cemeteries

Braamfontein Jewish cemetery was established in 1887 and was the first consecrated burial site for Jewish immigrants from Europe who had come to Johannesburg during the gold-rush in the 1880s. At the time of the first recorded Jewish death, that of Albert Rosettenstein on 12 May 1887, leaders of the fledgling Jewish community recognised that it was time to organise themselves since proper burial according to Jewish rites was an imperative. A small delegation travelled to Pretoria to ask President Paul Kruger to allocate a portion of ground for Jewish burial and he apportioned the Braamfontein Jewish cemetery. The Johannesburg Chevrah Kadisha – Jewish Helping Hand was formally established in 1888 with the dual purpose of attending to the departed and providing welfare support to the living. Braamfontein cemetery reflects the city's birth and history with community leaders, mayors, speculators, property developers, mining entrepreneurs, stockbrokers, engineers, geologists, soldiers and theatrical artists finding their final resting places there amongst the general Jewish population. Burials continued to take place at Braamfontein until the 1920s when the Brixton Jewish cemetery was established.



Photo by Jono David



Photo by Jono David

Although **Brixton Jewish cemetery** was established in 1912 the first Jewish burial took place there only on April 3rd 1921. Jewish people continued to be buried at Brixton until the 1940s after which most funerals took place at Westpark cemetery. Those buried at Brixton form a rich historic tapestry of Jewish SA and include pioneers, community leaders and Rabbinic luminaries. Amongst the many notable people buried at Brixton is Rabbi Moshe Friedman, a Dayan of the Beth Din and beloved scholar whose funeral was attended by 10,000 people. Brixton is the final resting place of the Tzaddik Rav Mordechai Slom who resettled his community from Lithuania to Oudshoorn; Sir Harry Graumann, first Jewish mayor of Johannesburg in 1909; Joseph Ratzker, a president and honorary Life President of the Witwatersrand Hebrew Benevolent Association; Jacques Klisser, President of the Chevrah Kadisha in 1898 and numerous other prominent people.

Rabbi Fox concluded his speech with the following words: "In Chapter 16 of Tehillim King David asks G-d to bless him in the merit of 'the holy ones who are buried in the ground'. Every person in our community has a profound connection to the holy ones who passed through this very space on their way to burial. Each neshoma has been an integral part of our Johannesburg Jewish community and a link to our proud history. On the 14th of June 1942, Rebecca Israelstam was the very first person to be laid to rest in this cemetery. Her lineage goes back to Rabbi Hirsch Israelstam who was born in Latvia in 1765 and the reason I know this is because her great, great nephew is part of my family. Since Rebecca's funeral, so many of our loved ones have also passed through this very space and we pray that in their merit, our Chevrah Kadisha and our community will continue to thrive and be blessed".



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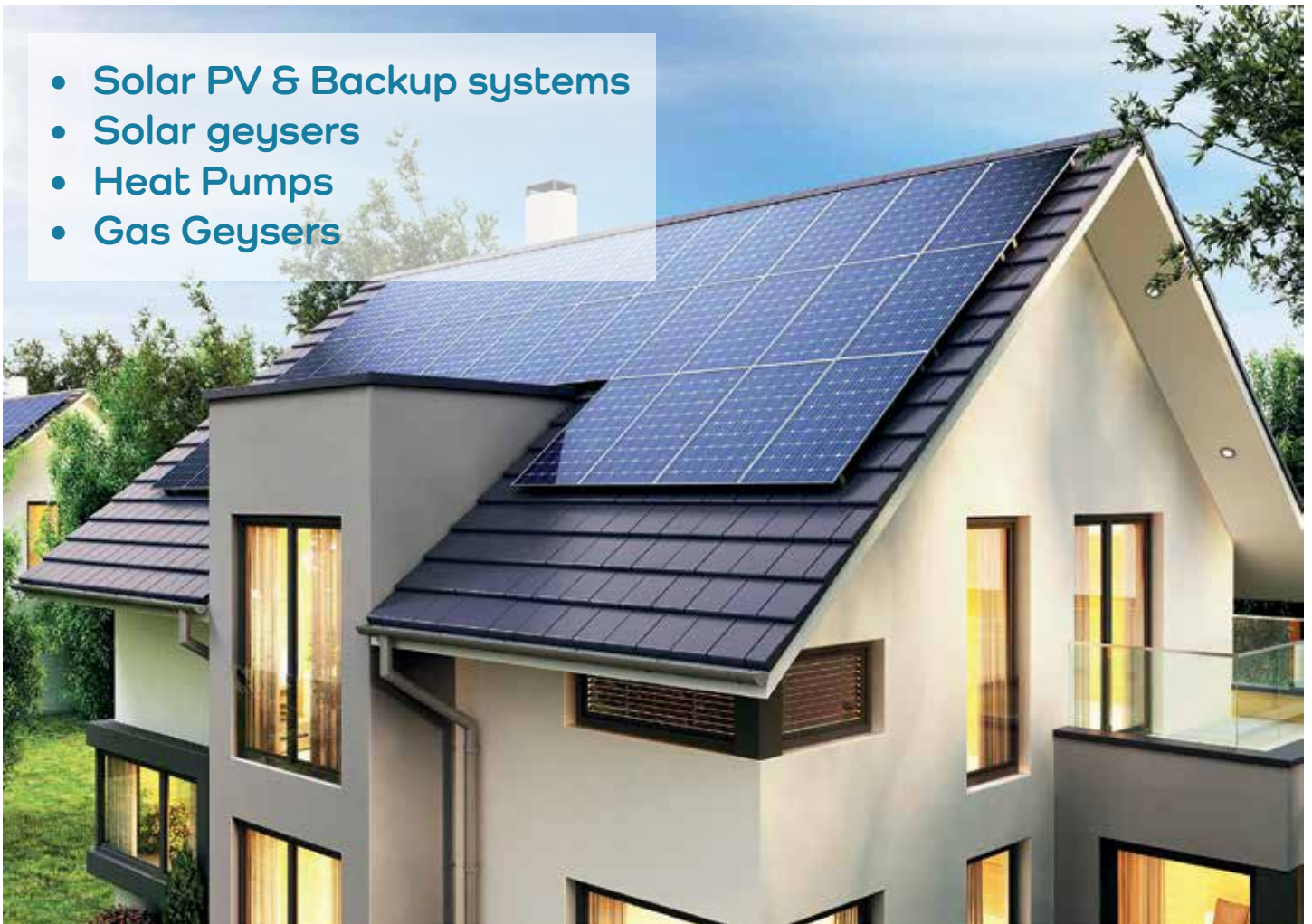
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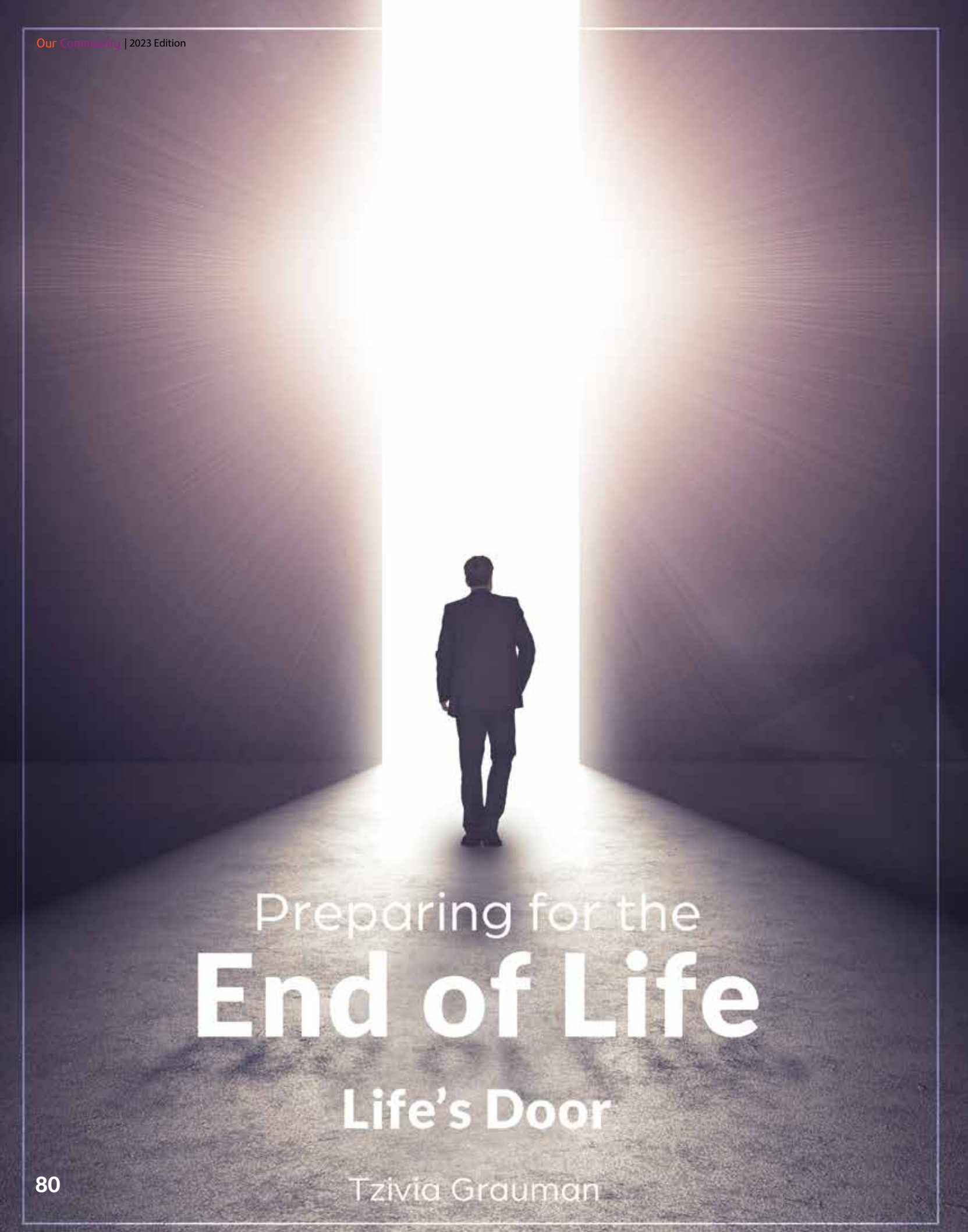
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L'Shanah Tovah

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A person in a dark suit stands with their back to the camera, looking out from a dark, narrow corridor into a bright, glowing doorway. The light from the doorway creates a strong silhouette of the person and illuminates the floor of the corridor. The walls of the corridor are dark and textured.

Preparing for the **End of Life**

Life's Door

Tziviv Grauman

Have you ever wondered why it is that people are so reluctant to talk about death? That it's a natural, inevitable part of life is undeniable and none of us will escape it. So why does thinking about it, planning for it and talking about it make so many of us uncomfortable?

There are difficult, but necessary conversations that have to take place throughout life (like the birds and the bees one) but it appears that death is the most difficult to face. Perhaps because there are so many unknowns - we don't know what to expect and that frightens us; we don't know how, or when, death will arrive. But professionals, including doctors, tell us it's better to plan for our demise when we can because we never know when the ability to share our wishes might be taken from us.

The Chev recently ran a course for its Senior Care and Social Services teams with **Life's Door**, an Israeli socially-driven NPO with divisions in Israel and the USA. **Life's Door** was established in 2004 by internationally recognised Oncologist, Dr Benjamin W. Corn, and his wife Dvora Corn, a family therapist. Dr Corn is an MD Professor, Chair of Radiation Oncology and Deputy Director of Helmsley Cancer Centre at Shaare Zedek Medical Centre.

The goal of **Life's Door** is to empower people with hope, meaning and quality of life throughout illness and aging, and at the end of life. Having studied the course material, Chev senior team leaders will then train their own staff, strengthening them in areas of palliative and care work that can otherwise induce burnout, cause depression and be draining and debilitating. In this way they hope to fortify them with purpose.

The goal of Life's Door is to empower people with hope, meaning and quality of life throughout illness and aging, and at the end of life

The Life's Door course deals primarily with **two aspects of care**.

The first aspect is **The Conversation** - the importance of learning end-of-life communication skills and how to talk about death: with ourselves, with our families and with patients. It addresses the reticence people have about discussing death and dying by encouraging them to confront their fears and concerns. Many people don't think or talk about those issues but Life's Door emboldens people, at whatever stage of life they are, to engage in this kind of preparation and discussion with their loved ones. Of course it's not a once-off conversation and can change as many times as it's discussed, but talking about it can be deeply comforting to patients and their family members when the end nears. Knowing whether they want heroic efforts to be made to save them; whether they want to be put on life support; to be tube fed; to pass away at home or in a hospital are all important questions. Knowing what frightens them most about dying and what plans can be made to reassure them is helpful.

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, it has often been reported that a difficult part of ageing and dying for patients is their family's refusal to acknowledge and discuss their situation. Loved ones often prefer to (pretend to) be in denial - but that can be a lonely space for the patient.



The second aspect addressed by the Life's Door course is the concept of providing hope for both patients and staff through setting small, short-term goals and mapping the practical pathways that can lead to achieving them, while acknowledging the obstacles. Hope is not to be confused with optimism in this context, but rather with purposeful routes to achieving manageable goals. "Giving people something concrete and attainable to work toward - giving them purpose and some control over their situations, especially in structured institutional living where all decisions are made for them - can be tremendously helpful in fostering a sense of agency," said Dvora Corn.

Judaism teaches that life is the integration of soul and body - the self and its physical vehicle - into a single entity. Death is the dissolution of body and soul into two separate entities - a separation of the spiritual self from that which was once a vehicle to that self.

The process of the dissolution of the bond between body and soul is not always sudden. Just as the soul enters the body in stages (conception, pregnancy, birth, etc.) so, too, it often leaves the body in stages. The person may progressively weaken; faculties such as sight, hearing, cognition or even consciousness may be diminished or depart entirely. But as long as there is any life at all in the body the soul is present within it, even if the body has lost virtually all ability to express the soul.

But the self is the soul, not the body. The body will inevitably fail and disintegrate, but we believe that the soul is eternal and indestructible. The stretch of physical time when the soul resides and acts within the body is just one phase, though a most important phase, of its existence - an existence that precedes physical life and extends beyond it.

The soul of the person we knew and loved as a physical being on this earth continues to exist after his or her death; continues to be aware of what transpires in our lives; and continues to be the recipient of our love and the positive actions we do on his or her behalf. But for the body too, Judaism teaches that death is not the end. A fundamental principle of the Jewish faith is the belief in *techiat ha-meitim*, (resurrection of the dead) - that in the future, divinely-perfect, "World to Come," the soul will be restored to a rebuilt and revitalised body.

So while the soul is the higher, more spiritual incarnation of the self, the body, too, must be accorded ultimate respect and sanctity, as befits the vessel of the soul. This is why Tahara, (washing and preparing a body for burial), is referred to as *chesed shel emet*, the highest form of kindness, because it is a kindness that can never be repaid.

But the self is the soul, not the body. The body will inevitably fail and disintegrate, but we believe that the soul is eternal and indestructible.

This understanding of death underlies the Jewish approach to death and mourning. All the laws, customs, beliefs and mystical themes related to death - its prequel and sequel, the treatment of the deceased, the approach to mourning, and the ways in which the departed are memorialised - are enormously comforting as they contradict the notion that the soul, and therefore the person we loved, is finite. It teaches us that contrary to the crushing belief that death is final, the soul is eternal and that in truth, no one really dies.



I heard a beautiful story of a Rabbi who visited a bereaved mother in order to offer her comfort. Her son had passed away some time before and she could find no solace. “How would you feel,” the Rabbi asked, “if your son had moved away to another country from which he was unable to contact or communicate with you? If you knew that he was well and at peace, just not able to be in touch, how would you feel then? Because that is where your son is now”.



I will always remember my dear friend, Wendy's, account of being present when her father passed away. She described the experience as holy, inspirational and a privilege to witness:

“My father was very prepared for his death and quite literally planned his passing in the most dignified and spiritual manner. He was a Kohen and a devoutly religious man. At 89 he had been on dialysis for almost three years and he was no longer responding to it. All his organs were starting to fail and surgery was not an option. He made it clear to his doctors and to us that he did not want to die in the hospital, but at his own home surrounded by his family. A month before he passed away he was already straddling two worlds and communicating with his deceased parents.

On his last visit to the hospital, days before he passed away, he was in High Care and I listened to him saying goodbye to people who are still alive while greeting people who had passed on, like my mother, his parents, his friends and family members, mentioning each by name as if he was looking at them. He was discharged from hospital the following day. That Shabbos was Rosh Chodesh Elul and he requested that we organise a special Shabbos - a big brocha and lunch with the whole family. On Shabbos morning he was struggling to breathe and didn't feel well. We knew he didn't want to go back to the hospital and that the end was near. Hatzolah came and put him on oxygen to make him more comfortable. It was around 11H00 in the morning while the Shabbos davening continued in his room, that everyone arrived from shul. He blessed each and every child, grandchild and great grandchild, by name, individually. He called me over and said, *I've been looking for you. I want to thank you and bless you for the way you have taken care of me.*

That was the last time he ever spoke. He went quiet and seemed peaceful and comfortable.

Throughout the day we looked in on him - he was resting peacefully and we could feel a spiritual presence in his room. We did not leave him alone at any point but were halachically advised not to touch him as his body was transitioning. Early on Monday morning my sister-in-law noticed a change in his breathing. And then he took his last breath. There was a calm, a peace, a G-dly and spiritual awareness all around us. No tears, no hysteria - it was actually a beautiful moment. It was an honour and a privilege to be there when he passed away. We gently moved to him to the floor, as is our custom, and called the Chev.”

Dr Monique Price is a full-time doctor at Sandringham Gardens where she has worked for over a decade. She has a passion for geriatric medicine and diplomas in geriatrics, anaesthetics and most recently, palliative medicine.

The World Health Organisation defines palliative care as “...an approach that improves the quality of life of patients (adults and children) and their families who are facing problems associated with life-threatening illness. It prevents and relieves suffering through the early identification, correct assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, whether physical, psychosocial or spiritual”.

“Last year I enrolled in a year-long palliative course which I found to be incredibly inspiring”, said Monique. The aim of palliative care, she explained, is never to hasten death, but to improve the quality of life - physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually - for patients and their family members, right up until the very end of life.

“Working with people who have the unspoken understanding that their move into a nursing home will most likely be their last move, comes with a tremendous opportunity to make the time they have as wonderful as it can be”, said Monique. “It is a move that can be accompanied by finding new friends; new skills and hobbies; a move that brings with it relief from isolation and loneliness and a move in which people finally find the care and love that they need and deserve.”.

Shira Rosenbaum, Group Manager of our Life Enrichment team agrees. “We believe in embracing each resident’s individuality and personal history, and we do all we can to help them create new connections and enjoy new experiences. We are passionate about finding fresh ways to enhance their wellbeing and are constantly striving to help them enjoy each day to the fullest.

Whether we are introducing exciting entertainment, new therapeutic activities, support services based on the residents’ needs, interactive social events or simply focusing on our front of house service, top of mind at all times is that the Experience Is Everything.”

Monique pointed me to a remarkable book called **Being Mortal** written by Dr Atul Gawande, a surgeon, who talks about what it means to be a doctor treating people at the end of their lives and how important it is to know when to hand over care to the palliative professionals so that the patient can have peace and acceptance. “The simple view,” he writes, “is that medicine exists to fight death and disease and that is, of course, its most basic task. Death is the enemy. But the enemy has superior forces. Eventually it wins. And in a war that you cannot win you don’t want a general who fights to the point of total annihilation. You don’t want Custer. You want Robert E Lee, someone who knows how to fight for territory that can be won and how to surrender it when it can’t, someone who understands that the damage is greatest if all you do is battle to the bitter end.”

When my own father developed prostate cancer in his 80s, he refused surgery and chemotherapy. He agreed to take chemotherapy tablets but would not do anything more invasive that might further restrict or impede his quality of life. It is reported that up to 40% of terminally ill patients agree to treatments they don’t want and believe cannot help them, because their families ask them to. My dad was not one of them.

It is reported that up to 40% of terminally ill patients agree to treatments they don’t want and believe cannot help them, because their families ask them to



Dr Gawande writes, “If to be human is to be limited, then the role of caring professions and institutions - from surgeons to nursing homes - ought to be aiding people in their struggle with those limits. Sometimes we can offer a cure, sometimes only a salve, sometimes not even that. But whatever we can offer, our interventions and the risks and sacrifices they entail, are justified only if they serve the larger aims of a person’s life. When we forget that, the suffering we inflict can be barbaric. When we remember it, the good we do can be breathtaking. I never expected that among the most meaningful experiences I’d have as a doctor - and really, as a human being - would come from helping others deal with what medicine cannot do as well as what it can. But it’s proved true...”

“During my recent studies”, explained Monique, “I learned when, and under which circumstances, palliative care is needed and what the most up to date interventions are to help manage pain. I found that there are many common misconceptions about the use of morphine, which does not, in fact, hasten death but can make people comfortable while they pass away. People can be on morphine for years to manage pain.”

One of the most central and crucial subjects stressed throughout her course is the importance of communication with patients and their families on a wide range of topics. “We were taught how to have those difficult conversations with people about their illnesses and with both them, and their families, about what they could expect in terms of its progression. I have heard that people worry that talking about mortality is admitting defeat, but have found that not to be true in most cases. Many people are open to discussion if we know how to talk to them, how to broach the subject in the right way and how to show the proper balance of respect, honesty, compassion and support. They want to understand, and so do their families”.

I have heard that people worry that talking about mortality is admitting defeat, but have found that not to be true in most cases

Dementia requires palliative care because the patient is not going to get better. It’s helpful to have conversations with family members about what they can expect and to teach them effective ways of interacting with their loved one, such as not correcting or arguing over delusions or false memories, and not quizzing them. “That’s not going to be calming for anyone, but unless we have these conversations with them, family members may not know that”.

It’s never one conversation, but an ongoing series of them and the words that are used are important. Asking patients what they understand about their prognosis; what concerns they have about what lies ahead; how they want to spend their time; who they want to appoint to make decisions for them - medical and financial - if they aren’t able to do so themselves; where they would prefer to die and who they would like to be present when the time comes, are all worthy discussions and can be enormously comforting to the patient.

“The most important thing to remember as a doctor or carer, is that each human being, each life and each passing is unique”, said Monique.

“It’s so necessary to get to know each person - which is usually very achievable in Sandringham Gardens - and to understand what is meaningful to each one. For example, one person may love music and we can make sure they have the radio on; sports on the tv for the sports lovers; visiting animals for those who love and are comforted by them; and those who are religious appreciate listening to shiurim or attending the shul for davening, if that’s possible. We involve the whole MDT (Multi-Disciplinary Team) to brainstorm about ideas that might enrich the life of each resident. Perhaps the OT knows about a passion or special interest, or the nurses. Of course family can be an invaluable resource too”.

One of the most sensitive, and unfortunately not infrequent, conversations that Monique has to have with families is to inform them of the passing of their loved one. “That is difficult and of paramount importance. There is most certainly a right and wrong way to impart that kind of information. It is never a task I will delegate”.

The Pause

Monique describes one of the activities implemented to foster caregivers' resilience in caring for dying patients, called The Pause. The Pause is a 15 to 30 second period of silence at the time of a patient's passing shared by the team at the bedside. The purpose is to honour the human life and the efforts of the team. It is initiated by the physician or any other team member and participation is voluntary. ***"Let us take a moment to pause and honour (patient's name). He/she was someone who loved and was loved; was someone's family member and friend. In our own way and in silence we take a moment to honour (patient's name). Let us also honour and recognise the care provided by our team".*** 15 - 30 seconds of silence. Caregivers find that The Pause is helpful and provides closure to the established relationship with the patient. They also appreciate it as a time to decompress and focus on the soul. When families are present, it is a way to express their compassion and empathy for the family, conveying that the team treats every patient as a valuable human being.

Darren Sevitz, General Manager of the Chev's Burial Services, talked about supporting families who have lost a loved one. After all, it is the living who must go on, who must deal with their pain and loss. He said, "Burial Services is somewhat of a misnomer. While of course we focus on the deceased and the provision of a meaningful and dignified burial, we also provide extensive focus and support to the grieving family and mourners. From the time we take that first phone call when the passing is reported, to the registration of the death at Home Affairs and everything in between (and even thereafter), we aim to ensure that the family has to do nothing other than focus on their grief. We support them with practical issues as well as emotionally and with religious matters. Providing a sense of calm confidence, I find that the pre-funeral meeting is a tremendous opportunity, not only to handle admin, but also to answer and explain all questions relating to the burial, the service, customs and laws, and that it establishes a solid relationship with the family for future engagements where we can be of service to them".

"The Rabbonim compare life in this world to a lobby before the banquet hall," says Chev Group Rabbi Jonathan Fox. ***"Prepare yourself in the lobby so that you may enter the banquet hall. Between life in this world and life in the next world there is a door, not a wall. We enter life through the door of the womb and we continue to enter doorways of opportunity throughout our lives. We believe that the final door in this life is the doorway to the World to Come. As we witness our loved ones pass through the exit door of life, we take comfort in knowing that it leads to another life, a life of eternity, a life that we work towards in this life, a life where we reap the spiritual rewards of the good deeds that we performed in this life. While we mourn the passing of a loved one and we feel the pain of losing their presence in our lives, we are consoled by the knowledge that death is the greatest of life's doors, a door to yet another, greater life"***

Between life in this world and life in the next world there is a door, not a wall





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OF LIVING COSTS

PAULA LEVIN



It's the talk of the town, the subject on everyone's lips. Not the relentless load shedding or even the latest 'koch' - it's the astronomical cost of living. Recently, my eighty-year-old father-in-law held up a plastic spoon and said to me, "When I was 10, you could buy 4 chickens for the price of this plastic spoon. I used to go shopping with my grandmother in Bulawayo, and the chickens were 25 cents each. If you bought 10, you paid 20 cents a chicken. Things have gone up 500 times since I was about barmitzvah age." It's not only the older generation talking about what things cost in 'their day', even kids are realising that their pocket money can't buy them as much as last month or last year - and it's still 'their day'!

South Africans are not alone.

Triggered by Russia's sustained invasion of Ukraine, inflation across the EU is rising, threatening to suck the middle class into poverty. In Hungary, food price inflation is a whopping 40%. Israel's rising interest rates are putting pressure on homeowners and raising rent prices and the average cost of a trolley of goods has risen by 0.8%, double what was forecast, due to importers and local companies hiking up prices. In America prices are skyrocketing because corporate profit margins are at a 70 year high, leading to what people are calling greedflation! Closer to home, 2.1 million South African families are going hungry with food inflation at record highs. Poverty is on every street corner in our communities and behind closed shack doors around the country. Our countrymen are sitting in the pitch dark, suffering from the highest unemployment rate in the world.

In our Jewish middle-class bubble - somewhat insulated from the socioeconomic chaos destroying the beautiful country in which we live - the struggle is hitting home. In the absence of government social security, we have to find money for private education, private medical care, private transport, private security, retirement and more. But everything's gone up. Everything except our incomes.

Despite earning more, we're actually becoming poorer. Something's got to give.

Theoretically, our salaries keep pace with inflation, but in reality, the 7% figure thrown around, and awarded as an annual increase, is a far cry from real inflation. Electricity rates have more than doubled in the past decade, and are set to increase even more. The cost of running diesel generators has quadrupled! Food inflation is sitting at around 14.4%. And interest rates are higher than ever - making our debt - like bond and car repayments - even more expensive. We're taking home less money than we did last year but have higher expenses. Despite earning more, we're actually becoming poorer. Something's got to give.

"In Covid, the number of families needing financial assistance increased by 27% in the 2021 financial year and 27% more in 2022. All those new families are still needing assistance," says Mariette Steynberg, Financial Aid Analyst at the Chev. "When families do approach us for help, we often find a very scary picture of runaway debt. If you're paying more than 15% of your income to debt, excluding your bond, you may face a difficult time as costs increase. You will need to make serious changes. Debt has become very expensive." With yet another interest rate hike this May, families that optimistically bought their first house, with bond repayments they could afford, are suddenly needing thousands more rands a month! They could lose the roof over their heads. But this kind of debt isn't the only problem. It's the credit cards and overdrafts that are really suffocating people - and that's where we need to start taking control.



“Start by tracking your spending for three months,” says Mariette. “It may feel hard at first, but you’ll soon find it’s actually enjoyable, because it’s empowering. Write down everything you spend. You can use an app like Old Mutual’s 22/7. You’ll see you’ll begin to think twice before tapping your card. Although many items on our monthly expenses are not negotiable, there’s still a lot within our control.”

“After doing this, and being more careful with your expenditure on extras, if you still can’t come out and you’re going into debt, ask for help,” advises Mariette. “If you don’t already have a subsidy, speak to your school. If you rent, approach your landlord. It’s in their best interest to be flexible, keeping loyal tenants, rather than trying to find new tenants in this market. If you use school transport, ask for a reduction. If you spend a lot travelling to work, see if working from home at least some of the time is an option. Look into starting a lift club for school or work and reduce your travel costs. If you’re in arrears with CoJ, approach them! If you need a small payment holiday because of a specific challenge, ask your creditor, rather than default. Face to face, you may be surprised that sometimes there’s some room to negotiate.”



Tightening our belts and asking for help wherever possible is a lot easier said than done however. Ultimately, it requires us to be ok with less. Remember the collective epiphany we had during covid, when we realised how little we actually needed? Well that realisation was short-lived! Then it was back to fast fashion, fine dining, holidays and comparing ourselves to the Jonesbergs. But the economy is forcing us all back to basics, to find happiness and meaning in what’s real - love, connection, relationships and a rich inner world - no frills, no fuss. Using store cards, credit cards and an overdraft to finance a lifestyle we think will make us happy is a bottomless pit, and a black hole.

“School subsidies are wonderful, but they do create a situation where you have children whose families really struggle in the same social setting as those who are well-off. Families go into debt for expensive overseas trips, fancy brands and family celebrations, so their child isn’t socially excluded. It’s a big problem,” says Mariette.

Mariette believes that not enough of us talk to our partners about money. And that we’re not honest enough with our children. “If you can say no to your child having takeout every week, it’s that much easier to be honest about what you can or can’t afford when it comes time to planning a wedding. I think it starts with having an honest discussion about the cost of a freezo after school.”

With growth of only 0.2% forecast, the economy is floundering. And with it, unemployment and rising costs. It’s time to think like an entrepreneur whether to create a side hustle income, or to upskill yourself so you become your biggest asset, able to trade the value you bring to others. In the short term, it’s clear we need to curb our debt and slash our spending. And ultimately, we need to build a mindset of true wealth, as described in Ethics of our Fathers, “Who is rich? He who rejoices in what he has.” It will take time, but eventually, this power crisis will be resolved, the economy will grow, creating more jobs, more demand for goods and lower prices. By then, maybe we’ll finally have learned that the best things in life are actually free.

A Simple Budget

If you have short term debt:

Pay back your debt as much and as quickly as you can.

Make sure each debt has an end date - i.e that you are not servicing the interest, but are paying back the capital.

If you don't have short term debt:

Invest 20% of your salary into

1. An emergency fund of about 3-6 months income. This is so you don't need short term debt to deal with a crisis, e.g. broken fridge, car breakdown, etc.

2. A Tax Free Savings Account, Retirement Annuity, Pension Provident Fund or Endowment Policy. The earlier you start, the better, due to compounding interest.

Fixed Expenses

Track your spending in these categories to become more aware of where your money is going



Rent / Bond



Rates / Taxes



Medical Aid



Gap Cover



Car / Home Insurance



School Fees / University / Tutoring

Discretionary Expenses



Food



Toiletries



Medicine



Petrol



Cleaning Products



Domestic Staff



Pets



Connectivity



Clothing



Entertainment

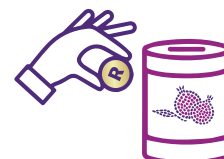


Home Improvements



Savings

Charity / Tzedaka



Practical Tips to Save Money & Cut Costs

- Make sure your home is not overvalued and that you aren't paying too much in rates and taxes
- Install a geyser timer and gas hob to save big on electricity
- Use prepaid electricity
- Install a solar geyser or get a geyserwise time switch
- Use an air fryer
- Bulk cleaning products or use vinegar mixed with water 1:1 as a general cleaner for bathrooms and kitchens. Vinegar also works as a fabric softener and on windows and mirrors.. it's very cheap compared to other cleaners and gets the job done
- Use blankets and hot water bottles in winter instead of heaters
- Speak to your insurance broker and see if you can save on short-term insurance
- Speak to your broker and see if it makes sense to change medical aid plans
- Pay back your debt quicker and cut up those store and credit cards
- Save for an emergency so that you don't need to go into debt
- If you have debt, pay that off before you invest
- Use loyalty cards for savings
- Use greywater to water your garden
- Cover your pool in winter

Save on Specials

Practical Tips from Joburg Jewish Mommies on Facebook

- Terrific Tuesdays and Ten Buck Tuesdays at Food Lovers
- 1 family 1 stockpileTM on Facebook - alerts you to specials so you can buy in bulk when the price is low
- The Apple Tree (Edenvale) has lower prices on fruit and veg
- Lyndhurst Spar is renowned for being cheaper
- Buy second hand clothes from thrift stores
- Use SnapnSave (join for free, snap your till slip, get cash back no matter where you shop)
- Shop at Best Before stores and online (they stock after *sell by*, but not after *use by*)





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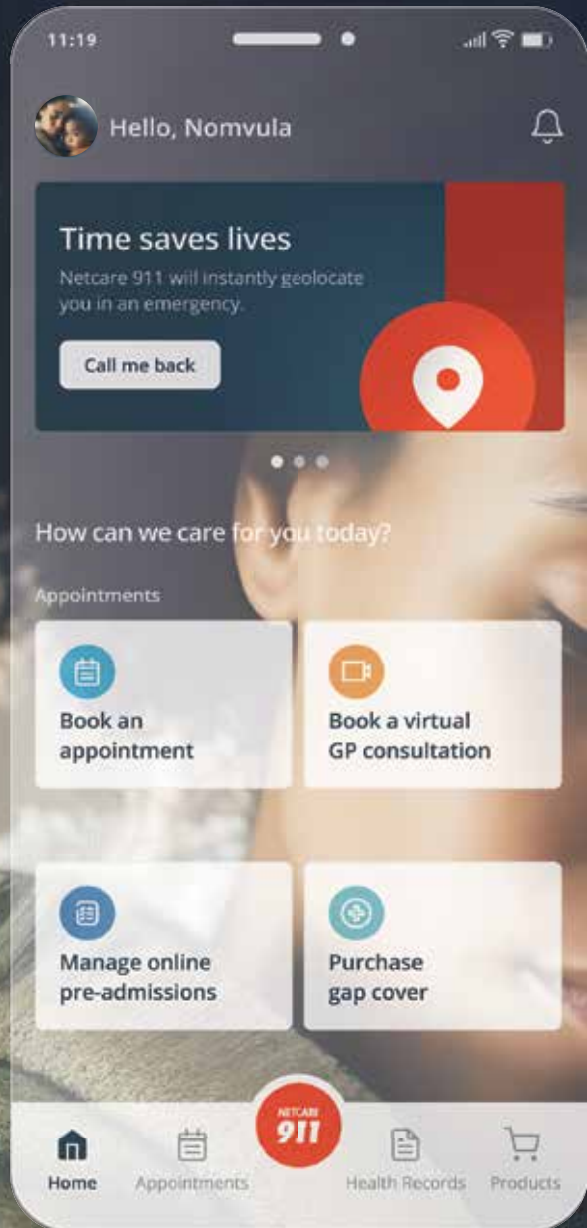
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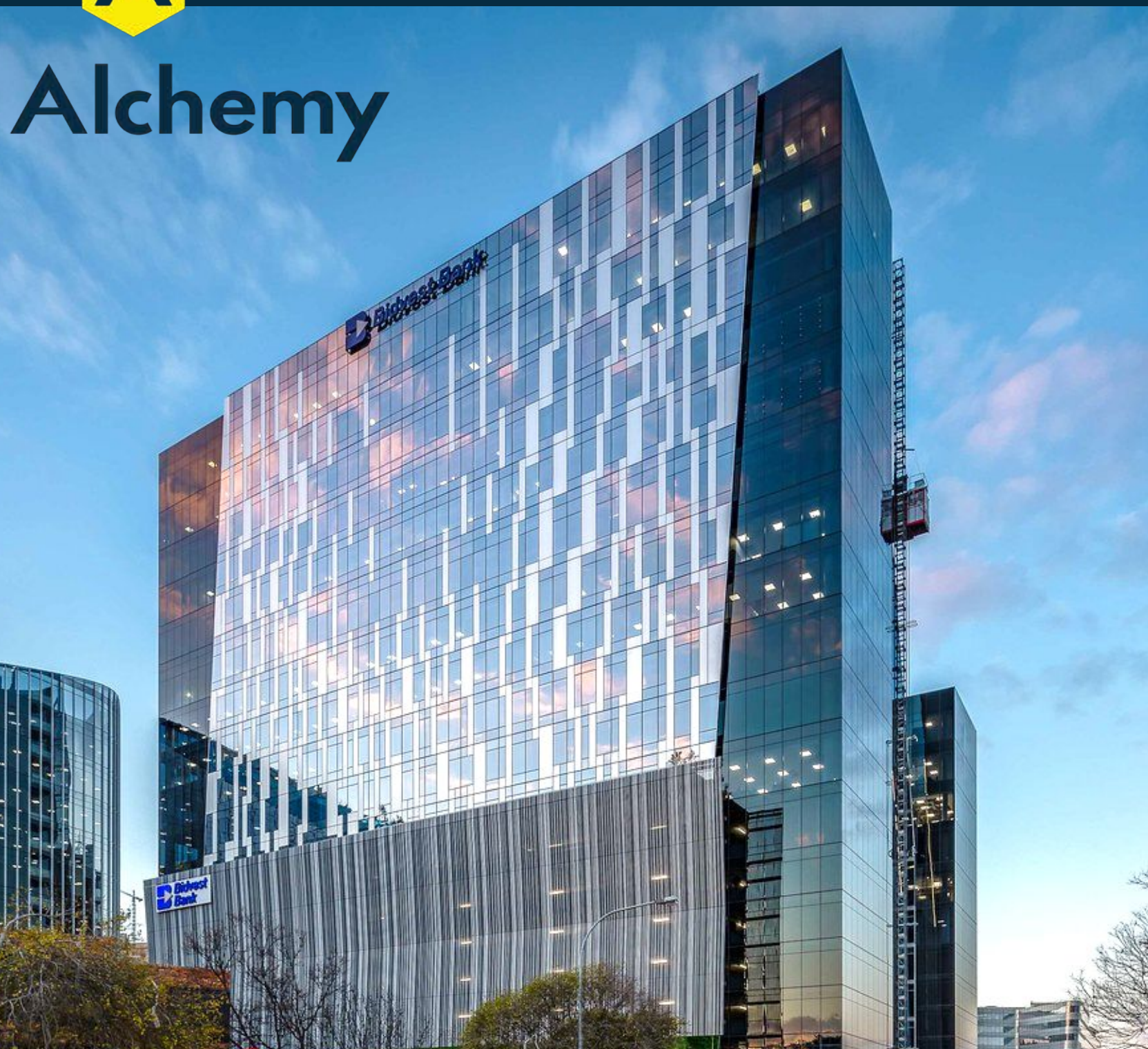
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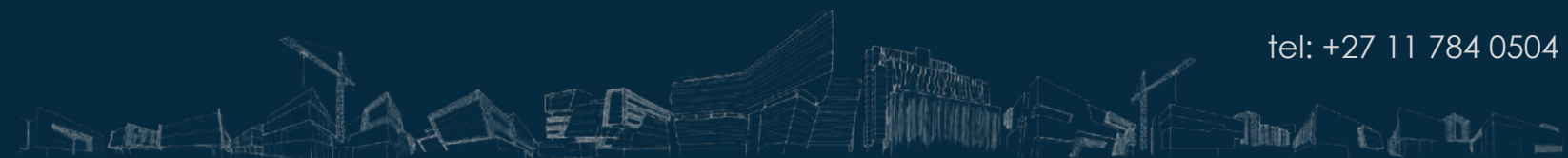
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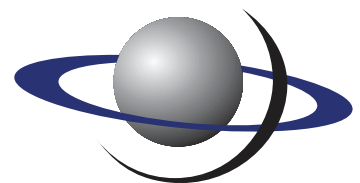
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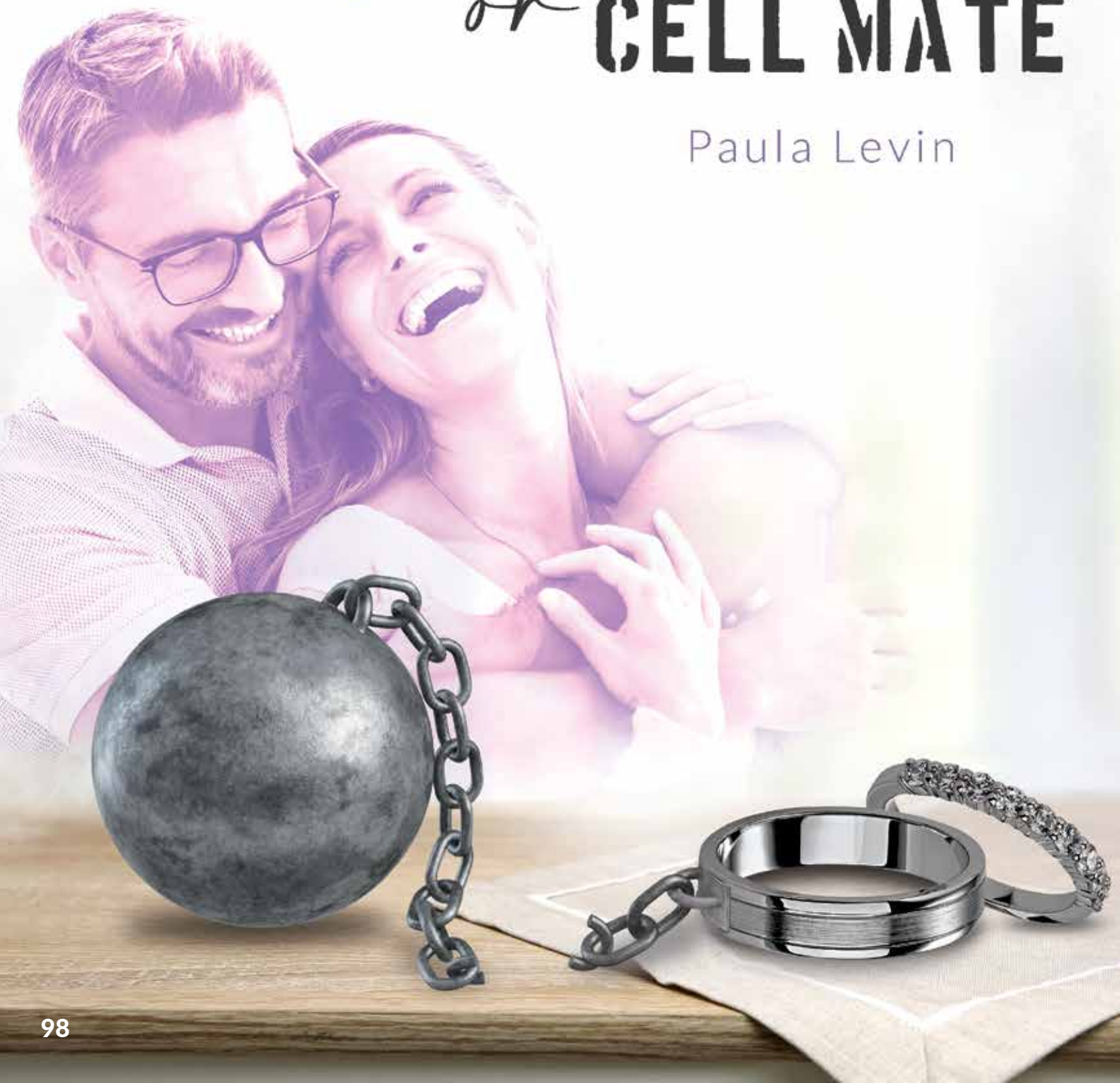
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Paula Levin



Most couples standing under the chuppah are smitten with each other, convinced they have found the other half of their soul. Though statistics say that 40% of marriages end in divorce, no newlywed couple thinks their marriage is vulnerable. But life happens. Carefree hours spent on romantic dates and endless conversation give way to stress, bills, kids, in-laws and more. Challenges arise, conflicts escalate and oxytocin, the love hormone that once smoothed over all the rough edges of their personalities, wears off. The edges are jagged and the honeymoon is over. But it's not all doom and gloom. There is so much couples can do to build a stronger bridge connecting their separate realities, to grow and mature their love and to heal the cracks that inevitably appear. The first truth to embrace is that marriages take work. Love is a verb, and in Hebrew, the verb *ahava* actually means to give.

For over 50 years, Drs John and Julie Gottman have run The Love Lab, researching what makes couples tick and love stick. Their advice on making a good marriage great and repairing a difficult marriage is borne out by clinical research on thousands of couples. They suggest seeking help early on in marriage saying that most couples wait about six years before seeing a therapist. Half of divorces happen in the first seven years, so waiting six years before dealing effectively with issues is risky! They also recommend low levels of tolerance for bad behaviour in the beginning of a relationship - for example allowing a partner to say or do hurtful things.

The Gottmans use the metaphor of an Emotional Bank Account, a barometer of where your relationship stands at any given moment. Investments into this account involve consciously turning toward your spouse through small, everyday gestures of appreciation, understanding, affection, and kindness. One small example of this is stopping, making eye contact and listening when your spouse talks. This is the very opposite of turning away, disconnecting or being oblivious to your spouse's bids for connection, which drains the emotional bank account. When the Emotional Bank Account is in the red, partners tend to question each other's intentions and feel lonely or disconnected. When in the black, they more often give the benefit of the doubt. The Gottman's Love Lab research shows that couples need a

20:1 ratio of positive to negative interactions and if in active conflict, that ratio should still be 5:1. Even with these golden ratios, the key is to notice and express gratitude for the positive, which requires a far more mindful way of life than most of us practice! It requires us to notice the gifts of having a life partner, and all the little and huge ways this enhances our lives.

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Stress is a huge barrier to mindfulness so the Gottmans advise spending 20 or 30 minutes undivided time talking with your spouse about what's stressing you out, and listening to him or her in return. This moment of connection can restore your equilibrium - provided the conversation involves actually listening, not invalidating or offering quick fixes! The Gottman's have also found that physical affection is another great way to make deposits into the emotional bank account.

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They also advise couples to invest in creating a rich climate of positivity. A climate of positivity means different things to different couples. For instance, some couples swear by dating after marriage, keeping the connection alive with regular focused time together, having new conversations and new experiences just like when you were dating. For other couples, sharing in chores, housework and cleanliness contributes to a positive climate. Think about what a positive climate would look like to your spouse, and try to do more of that! Share what your idea of a positive climate is with your spouse so they may do the same.

Don't become overly familiar with your spouse. He or she is not only the other half of your soul, but also a separate person, who must be given space and courtesy. They are not an extension of yourself, they are also on their own journey. The Jewish laws of Family Purity and modesty can protect a marriage from becoming boring and overly familiar, retaining and renewing a sense of passion and mystery. When each partner remembers to invest in self-care and enrichment of your body, mind and soul by keeping in good shape and developing their individual mindset and spirituality, the connection can remain fresh, new and a constant potential source of inspiration, admiration, appreciation and affection.

Soulmates or Cellmates - You choose

Clinical psychologist Dr Joel Shapiro has some practical, actionable homework that can transform your home life today! His model is based on Heidi and Yumi Schleifer's Imago Therapy which focuses on bridging the space between couples to create a stronger bond of empathy and understanding. Joel's model is about the courage to talk and the courage to listen - and making a practical change.

But before we explain how it's done, it's important to first bust two common marriage myths. "The first myth about marriage is that incompatibility is a problem. That difference of opinion, thinking, parenting and problem solving are a problem. They are not!" says Joel. "You didn't marry a clone of yourself. So obviously there will be incompatibility. These differences can be the greatest source of interest, excitement and love, if you learn to navigate and appreciate them. Learning about the other and making space for him or her is the biggest opportunity for self growth. If you want someone the same as you, go back home to mommy. The second myth is that life is about pleasure. It's not. It's about meaning. Happiness is for children, meaning is for adults. Self-centeredness is for children, self-transcendence is for adults. That's why marriage is for adults only."

Joel explains that the major mindshift needed in marriage is to move from an 'I - It' relationship, where the world exists as an object to fulfil your needs, to an 'I - Thou' relationship.

This is not about dependence but about mature love. It's a connection far beyond common interests and hobbies and attraction. It's about empathy, respect, care and holding your spouse safely as they share their inner world. "It's also a prerequisite to a relationship with G-d," adds Joel.

We can only truly grow as people when we make room for the other. The 'I - Thou' relationship is the biggest catalyst for the true joy, not happiness, that comes from knowing and being known. Imago Therapy is about empathy. It aims to allow couples to truly hear each other. Joel's model aims to use this empathy as a launching pad to finding a solution to the difficult feelings and situations that are expressed. "My method is communication 101, it's really simple. It's about transformation. But we must accept the premise that marriage is not only about me. In fact when I'm having a courageous conversation with my spouse, it's not about me at all. It's about otherness."



Joel points out that the world is familiar with IQ and EQ, but we have a lot to learn about RQ - relationship intelligence. He uses the metaphor of customer service, and explains that our partner is like our customer, and the customer is always king! "It says in the Torah that if you treat your wife as a queen, you will be a king and if you treat your husband as a king, you will be treated as a queen. When they share things with us, we need to connect, not correct. We need to ask, what can I do to help? How can I fix this for you? What practical change is needed? Just like the service you would offer a customer, we must remember it's not about self, it's about other. It's not what you can do for me, it's what I can do for you. The overarching principle of RQ is to be a giver not a taker. And just as in business, when your customer is happy, your business does well!"

"So I ask couples, do you want a cellmate or a soulmate? If you want your partner to be your soulmate, follow these three rules:

1. Connect, don't correct. This means not telling your partner what they should feel, like *"look on the bright side"*. It also means not criticising them. Joel admits that connection in this day and age is harder than ever. We have so many distractions and intrusions. There are the obvious ones like technology, Netflix, drugs and alcohol. But many other less obvious things that seem kosher can be an exit from connection, like shul, yiddishkeit, work, committees. "Disconnection results in passive aggression, solitary confinement, sadness, pregnant silences, aggression, acting out, violence and even murder. Keep communicating. Keep up a running commentary like Takealot keeps us updated at every step of our order. With silence, comes paranoia and distrust. So keep the lines of communication open."

It says in the Torah that if you treat your wife as a queen, you will be a king and if you treat your husband as a king, you will be treated as a queen

2. Be a giver not a taker.

3. Remember it's about other, not self.

If you want a cellmate, or to get divorced, or your partner to have an affair, or to have an unhappy relationship, do the opposite of these three things. Correct, take, be selfish."

"The world today is obsessed with individualism," Joel continues. "It's an indictment on our society." Indeed me, myself and I, is not a basis for a marriage. So, if you're ready to turn your cellmate into your soulmate, learn to have courageous conversations with the script below. "At first it will feel silly, then it becomes second nature. It's conversation hygiene. It works for any issues from Facebook, to alcohol, to your mother." Start by asking your spouse to dialogue. A dialogue is an invitation into the other person's world. Next, mirror what they said. No additions, no judgement, no criticism, no reaction, no disagreement. Just the facts. Then validate, by asking if you understand them correctly. Then say how you imagine they feel because of this issue. "Now, with the understanding that this is not about you, ask what you can do to fix their world. This fourth step is my addition to Imago," says Joel. "And couples love how it brings a solution to a problem. It's outcome based, and offers a quick turnaround. Just like any customer wants! It's in your hands whether you become and want to stay soulmates. The courageous conversation, the dialogue, is the solution."



Courageous Conversations

How to talk and how to listen in 4 steps

Mirroring

Mirror what was said, without analysing, critiquing, modifying or responding, e.g. "If I got it, I think you said..." or "So you're saying..."

"Is there more?"

"Tell me more."

Empathy

Try to imagine how your partner might feel about what has been expressed. Remember a feeling can generally be described in one or two words, like happy, excited, safe, cared for, hurt, frustrated, scared, e.g. "I can imagine you might be feeling... Is that how you feel?"

Validating

Attempt to validate what was said by letting your partner know that what they have been saying is making logical sense. If it does not, share what parts do make sense and ask for clarification on what parts do not yet make sense, e.g. "That makes sense, I can see that..."

"This part (X) makes sense, but help me understand..."

"Can you say more about...?"

Otherness

Understand that this is not about you. It's about them. So ask, "how can I fix your world? What practical step can I take to help you?"

If you need to, you can then begin a new dialogue. Here you are not starting a new topic, rather you are responding to what came up for you in the previous conversation. Follow the same steps.

Sheila Furman coordinates the Chev's Prepare Enrich programme, an internationally certified marriage course which has shown a 30% reduction in divorce! The programme is designed to both prepare engaged couples for the road ahead and enrich existing marriages.

The course is actually compulsory for couples registering their upcoming marriage with the Beth Din - though there are some who resist doing the programme. Something about ordering the roses for the centrepiece, makes couples feel that the future is rosy, and preparation is unnecessary. Couples are hyper-focused on the wedding, not so much on the marriage. But conflict is coming, and it's not a bad thing, if you know how to handle it. "We have to learn how to communicate our needs, with 'I' messages, instead of attacking the other person. Conflict is not the issue, it's about timing, waiting till emotions are less intense, not resorting to criticism and blame," says Sheila.

"The course starts with an online questionnaire which will highlight the couple's strengths and growth opportunities," says Sheila. "Then one of our experienced and trained counsellors, who receive constant supervision, will meet with the couple for four or five powerful sessions that can truly transform a marriage. The sessions are not therapy, they are about learning skills."

"The sessions focus on both self-awareness and communication. We explore attitudes towards money with a practical budgeting exercise. We facilitate sharing about one's family of origin and how differences in upbringing and values may impact the couple. We learn how to be more flexible and connected and how to set goals as a couple and as an individual. There's a session about how to manage conflict, different conflict styles and how to manage personal stress. Couples do exercises to discover their particular love language and learn how to express their needs, or wishes, in a respectful, appropriate way. Couples are even welcome to do the course again after marriage, to further enrich their relationship," says Sheila.

Charlene Mayers is a speech therapist who has been a Prepare Enrich counsellor for 20 years. “I wish more couples would try the programme and see for themselves how much it can enrich their marriages. It makes a good relationship better, and where there are challenges, it can be a game changer in learning to communicate and connect,” she says. “Many couples arrive, thinking this is some compulsory box they have to tick, and are surprised to find an opportunity to express things they may not have even been aware were affecting them. I’ll never forget the couple who had both been married before and had been together for a while before getting engaged. In one session, the woman revealed that she wished her fiancé had actually proposed to her, instead of just leaving a ring in a box next to her bed. In the session, we had been discussing that it was important to feel safe to express feelings, no matter how small or silly they seemed. She found the courage to say, “I know we’re older and have been together for many years but I wish you had asked me, instead of saying, it’s time we get married.” I said, “what’s wrong with now?” And right there, in the session, her husband-to-be, looked at her and told her how much he treasured her and loved her and asked her if she would marry him! For me, this story emphasises how the programme and the counsellor create a totally safe space for couples. Another couple I saw had the opportunity to discuss something that had never been spoken out loud. Her partner would make comments in front of his friends as a joke, which would get a lot of laughs, but which hurt his fiancé. She had never told him how she felt and he had assumed it was all in good fun.”

“I also saw a couple who had been married for many years and were struggling with a lot of conflict. I shared how important it is to talk to your spouse like you would talk to your best friend - because they are the best friend you’ll ever have. I said imagine if your best friend would tolerate being spoken to harshly. For the first time, the husband shared that his wife’s tone upset and hurt him. She told me that afterwards, before she opened her mouth, she thought to herself, “I’m talking to my best friend.” I was so happy when they told me even their children had noticed they didn’t fight anymore. In the sessions we also talk about the importance of listening and validating someone’s feelings about a problem they are facing, without suggesting a solution. A man often feels anxious if his wife is crying about a situation, and will quickly try to fix it for her, when all she wants to hear is that it makes sense to feel that way. Communication is a big emphasis in the programme.”

“I’ve seen over and over again that small changes in behaviour change the whole dynamic between a couple for the better. Talk gently and you’ll find a receptive ear. You can still say the same thing, just in a different way, and have your needs met,” says Charlene. “I think an important session is the one on finances. It’s so important to talk about who pays, how much and for what and to start your marriage with trust and openness in this area. It can avoid a lot of conflict down the line. Marriages fall apart over financial issues. We also cover topics like family, friendships, sexuality and conflict styles. The course is about empowering both partners, embracing differences, and growing the ability to share inner thoughts, feelings and needs with each other. At the start of the programme, we use certain information to create a ‘scale of connectedness graph’ that shows how connected a couple feels to each other. In the third session, we redo this scale. For me, and for the couples, this has to be one of the most rewarding moments when they see how much more connected they feel than at the start. Often the less assertive one feels significantly more connected, having learned how to express their needs and feelings. It shows how much can be achieved by making a space to listen and to be heard.”

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Marriage Prepare Enrich

Cost: R350 to fill in the online questionnaire

R850 for the remaining 4 or 5 sessions (speak to the Chev should you need a payment plan.)

Contact Sheila Furman
011 532 9653 to be assigned a trained volunteer counsellor.

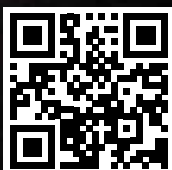




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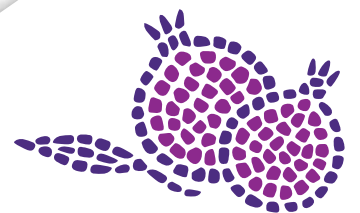
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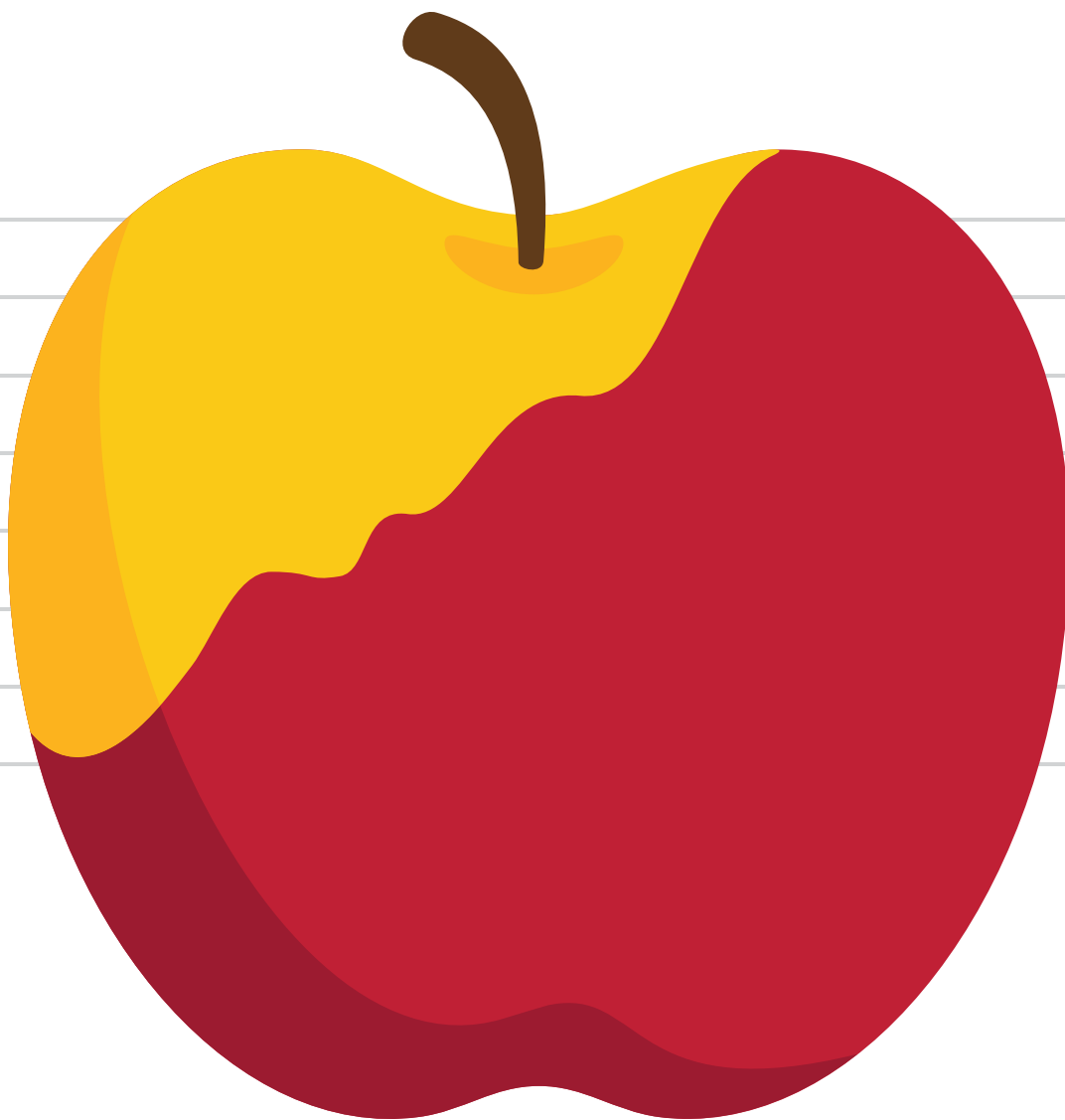


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