

Spotlight

Newsletter
May 2020
Issue 4



Over the last two months, the world as we knew it turned completely upside down, as the coronavirus pandemic spread into every corner of our lives. We were left dumbstruck, as shuls and schools closed their doors, law officers enforced regulations, and we were left at home to cope with the new normal.

Here at Yedei Chesed, we suffered the loss of our dear leader, R' Gershon Sabol ע"ה. His leadership, guidance, decisiveness, strategy and courage made Yedei Chesed the incredible agency that it is today. He was a source of chizuk and inspiration to all those who were privileged to know him. It is hard to be maspid R' Gershon because he had so many roles, and he excelled in each. He was a support system for the families, the quintessential businessman in all the organizations he was involved in, an excellent supervisor and mentor to his staff. But wherever he was, his desire to do chesed with others predominated; he sincerely cared for those around him, ברוחניות ובגשמיות.

R' Gershon was a person who lived with a higher order. He didn't live for himself; he understood that life is a gift from ה', and every precious moment of it should be used to go in ה' ways of chesed and tzedakah. He felt that our world is an עולם חסד, and that we are here to carry out that mission of chesed. He frequently looked for ways to help people and would never stop until he was sure that every possible option was looked into. He would demand of us to think out of the box and find creative ways to help those who were struggling.

However, he would never take credit for his actions. He would often tell others "We're doing ה' work. Don't be concerned with all the problems, let ה' do His part." He didn't need to hear praise. When someone would try to thank him for all the help that Yedei Chesed provides, he would politely explain that he is not the one to thank! He did not look for fame or fortune, he simply gave and gave, without ever expecting in return.

Another great מעלה that we learnt from R' Gershon was his unending adherence to yashrus. His perspective was broad and deep; his clarity and foresight went beyond what others could see. Time and again, staff members would find themselves coming back to his office and saying, "you were right again." He was a stickler to the truth and would not budge from what is fair and just. As the leader of an organization that handles government money, he was always scrupulous to follow the law, down to the finest detail.

Why did ה' take such a great person from us? The פסוק says "לא מחשבותי מחשבותיכם ולא דרכי דרכיכם". Don't expect to understand My ways. I understand, says ה' to us, what's good for the world and its far from your capability to understand and appreciate. But you just must believe that I know what I'm doing and it's right and it's good. ה' decided to take him now to his ultimate reward, way before we would have liked to see him go! But these thoughts and feelings are beyond us, part of the infinite world of ה' Himself.

R' Moshe Shapiro, Z"TL, told his talmidim before his passing: When a teacher is here, we can go to him for advice, we can observe and learn from his ways. But once the teacher leaves, he leaves behind a clear mission and the tools that are needed to carry on without him. Such can be said of R' Gershon, who left behind a glorious legacy of חסד and ישרות, and אמונה פשוטה. The sun sets, yet the sun rises, and we are all a part of that rising sun. May ה' bless each of us to continue in his path, to attach ourselves to ה' path of kindness, of giving selflessly, and to find fulfillment therein.

May the עליה of ר' גרשון בן ר' אברהם ז"ל of נשמה have an.

יהא זכרו ברוך



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Although our programs are greatly limited by the OPWDD COVID-19 regulations, we are trying our best to focus on what we can do to make a difference. Over the last two months of quarantine, the FSS department was busy sending beautiful and thoughtful gifts, organizing wonderful programs over Zoom/teleconference and arranging for an ice cream truck to go around town delivering delicious frozen treats לכתוב ל"ג בעומר!



Much care and consideration went into putting together useful gifts for the whole family. The packages included all sorts of games and activities to entertain the kids. The day is long, and many children are struggling to cope with the lack of structure and stimulation that school usually provides. The gifts were organized based on what we thought the kids would most appreciate, with the hope that it will keep them gainfully occupied for many long hours.



On Wednesday, April 29, mothers received a delicious Glauber's delivery with an invitation to a special teleconference with Shevy Weinberger! Over 50 women joined together to hear words of inspiration and encouragement from Malky Weingarten, producer of Molly Productions, and Fradel Goldberger, renowned speaker. Ladies, stay tuned for exciting erev Shavuot programs!



Girls and boys were invited to join virtual sibshops over zoom this month. Sibshops girls learned how to make their own ice cream, using milk, salt and ice! Sibshops boys were privileged with a captivating story by the master storyteller Rabbi Avi Frank, followed by a special session with Mr. Kertzner, who taught the boys how to draw cartoons. Over 75 participants were treated to a special ice cream treat, delivered straight to their door!



Lichvod lag ba'omer, families were treated to delicious ice cream and slush, specially delivered by Cones Ice Cream Truck! Women and girls were also invited to join a live concert, featuring Nechama Cohen. Nechama led the girls in a beautiful kumzitz, in addition to singing some of her own stunning compositions.



HELPING OUR CHILDREN COPE

by Mrs. Robin Goldstein, LMSW and Mrs. Natana Grossberg, LMHC

As parents, we all want to be available as much as possible to our children. During this very challenging time, we have been tasked with assuming many new roles. At times, it can be overwhelming. Everyone is struggling emotionally to cope with the "new normal." It is vital for your children's mental health that they maintain a modified routine with daily structure, as well as socially distant friendships. Try to maintain an upbeat atmosphere in the home.

It is imperative that parents reassure their children of their relative safety and well-being. Children, too, are struggling with anxiety, loss, fear, helplessness and are questioning what is taking place around them. As parents, it is okay not to have all the answers. It is most important to encourage your children to express their thoughts and feelings. All children want to feel heard and understood. It is advisable to mirror their words; validate how they feel and empathize with them. When they are ready and feel understood, try to help them focus on the positive aspects of what they can do in their lives, homes and with their friends. For example, a child may be upset about having to spend a lot of time with family members with whom they find it difficult to be around, or not being able to have the Bar Mitzvah they were expecting or possibly not being able to have a graduation. After discussing and validating their feelings of disappointment, parents should try to help them focus on the positives in their lives.

It's important to note that your children are reading your body language and facial expressions. Address your own anxieties and fears before you attempt to address theirs. Reassure yourself and your family that in the past there have been similar types of pandemics - this will not last forever.



Respite



Teen Girl's Night Activity continues to meet twice a week over Zoom/teleconference. Mrs. Shevy Weinberger joins on Tuesdays for Social Skills. She demonstrates the importance of being independent and not needing the help of others to keep entertained. The girls discuss what they can do to keep busy, and how they can handle their emotions and feelings in this difficult time. During each session, the girls do a craft together, which is delivered beforehand.



Yeshiva Bachurim Mishmar group is thriving on the structure and routine that the nightly conferences create. Every night, they get on the phone with the coordinator, R' Weil to learn mishnayos and chumash. We are happy to announce that many of the bachurim will be making siyumim on what they have learnt so far! This set-up also gives the boys an opportunity to discuss any challenges they are facing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Com-Hab

The Com-Hab coordinators have greatly multiplied their efforts to be of assistance during these challenging times. They are working tirelessly to recruit new workers and are constantly reaching out to parents to ensure their satisfaction.

The Com-Hab department is also sending thoughtful gifts, based on people's specific needs and requests.

"Thank you Yedei Chesed for bringing so much light and happiness to my home during a time of such darkness..."

-parent



HELPING OUR CHILDREN COPE (cont.)

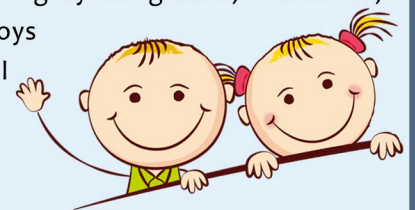
Depending on the age of your children, they will understand what's taking place on their own level.

◆ **Pre-school aged children** only need minimal explanations because they are used to adults insisting on their cooperation even if they don't understand why. Teach them the proper hygiene techniques in a playful way using coloring books/sheets or songs. Practice proper hand washing techniques and reinforce them through praise or rewards. At this age, children use imaginative play to express their thoughts and feelings. With continued structure and routine, young children often adapt easily.

◆ **Children between the ages of 6-12** can understand the need for hygienic precautions. It would be most advisable to only share with them information that is age appropriate and limited to the specifics of their questions. Listen to what they are telling you and reassure them that they are safe and will be okay.

◆ **Teenagers** will be quite informed and knowledgeable about the importance of hygienic practices and safety precautions. Gently remind them of the importance of keeping a cautionary perspective on what they are hearing or reading to avoid a significant spike in their anxiety levels. Their exposure to social media should be limited wherever and whenever possible.

◆ With respect to **children with special needs**, they too will be struggling with the major changes in their routines. Special children thrive on routine which helps them to feel in control of their lives when they have so little control. For visual learners, it would be very helpful for them to be shown in pictures what you would want them to know and understand (i.e., through social stories or other books on their level). For auditory learners, it may be very helpful for them to be told what is happening on a level that you think they will understand, just as you would explain to a younger child. Ultimately, for children who can express themselves verbally, it would be best to allow them to share their thoughts and feelings and then to mirror and validate those feelings. For children who are non-verbal, you may have to verbalize for them what you think they may be thinking or feeling. Ask them to show you through "play" what they are feeling by using dolls, mentchies, or puppets and talk about how the toys are "feeling". This will help them feel understood, which greatly minimizes their need to act out.



Day Services

The Day-Hab and Pre-Voc programs have been committed to provide outstanding quality services during the COVID-19 pandemic. An enormous amount of energy was channeled to ensure the satisfaction of program participants.



We have been providing consistent support and empathy as people struggle to cope with these stressful times. Staff members are keeping in touch, doing an array of activities by skype, zoom, or over the phone. They are also helping out with grocery shopping, errands and providing other amenities.



Participants who were able to keep their jobs were taught the importance and appropriate use of PPE (personal protective equipment). Those who were unable to work due to the coronavirus, were assisted in securing unemployment benefits.



ASK THE THERAPIST

Q: How can I limit my child's screen time?

Now that everyone's routines have been turned upside down, many parents are concerned that their children are spending too much time using technology and for some it seems to be the only thing that keeps them calm. Some schools are using technology for classroom learning. Some children are using technology for entertainment. How much is too much?

"Everything in moderation." It could be extremely helpful to set up a visual schedule which includes not only their daily routine – davening, classes, meals, play time - but also a set amount of "screen" time. The more structured you can create their day, the more successful they will be. If necessary, set a timer when they start using electronics and then warn them in advance that when the timer goes off, they will get to do a different activity that you know they would enjoy. Hopefully, that will help them transition to something else. Try not to turn off the electronics in the middle of what they are doing. Warn them in advance when there is 10, 5 and 1 minute left and that they need to wind down what they were playing.

-Mrs. Robin Goldstein

New! Question and Answer column with our expert therapists. Do you have any questions? Have them answered here! Please email any questions or comments to spotlight@yedei.org.



The group home residents were supported in their respective homes by our dynamic staff, who took all necessary precautions to create and run a program in a safe environment. Loads of recreational equipment and activities were purchased for the staff to engage with the residents. They enjoyed many in-house activities, such as lawn seeding, cooking and baking. Creativity and enthusiasm permeated the homes, ensuring happy, healthy and safe residents.

HELPING OUR CHILDREN COPE (cont.)

We are all struggling to cope with so many strong and painful feelings. There is so much fear of the unknown, accompanied by feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, anxiety, sadness and fear of the actual disease. Train your brain to focus on positive aspects of what you can do to help yourself and your families.

Look for soothing activities to help you deal with your stress, (i.e., davening, listening to music, reading, writing, going for a walk). Incorporate positive affirmations to start your day, i.e., "Today I'm going to have a great day." Ask yourself before you go to sleep, "what went well today?"

Focus on those things that you can control – your thoughts, a positive attitude, your words, your reactions and your actions (following CDC recommendations). It is highly recommended to limit your media exposure and find fun things to do at home. Let go of those areas over which you have no control, such as predicting what will happen, how long this will last, adequate supplies in the stores, other peoples' actions and reactions. Learning to let go and let Hashem run the world will help you to develop greater peace of mind and enable you to be the best parent to your children that you can be. And remember that we can control our kindness and acts of chesed!

