

**“Make a Difference” Day
Educational Materials
2009
Health and Wellness**

By Shira Hammerman and Sharon Stahl

Additional copies of this document can be downloaded at:
www.areyvut.org

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Introduction

On March 20th, the “A Kindness a Day” Calendar encourages people to:
“Try to be totally unselfish today.”

On behalf of Areyvut, I welcome your help in bringing this powerful suggestion to life by participating in Areyvut’s fifth annual “Make a Difference” Day. The “A Kindness a Day” Calendar unites Jewish communities across the country in an effort to inspire acts of kindness through its 365 suggestions of how to incorporate *tikkun olam* (social justice) into everyday life. On “Make a Difference” Day, we will strengthen this effort as thousands of schools, synagogues, families and community organizations dedicate Friday, March 20th as a time to turn the calendar’s suggestions into action.

The 2009 “Make a Difference” Educational Material presented here focus on Health and Wellness, an important undertaking that can positively impact our lives on a physical, emotional and spiritual level. It includes a project planning unit to guide preparation of social action projects; detailed resources and activity ideas for projects that fit under our main theme; and a list of additional themes to spark your own creative thinking. The activities are arranged topically with suggested age ranges, but all activities can be easily adapted to meet the needs of your audience. For additional resources to use in your classroom, please see the texts, and websites that are listed following the activity list. Certain links provided in these resources will launch Internet sites that are not under the control of Areyvut. We provide these outside links solely for your convenience and do not endorse these particular sites. Accordingly, Areyvut makes no representations or warranties concerning the availability of or content, products and services found on those sites.

We hope that these educational resources equip schools, synagogues, communities, families and organizations to make a difference in the world. Please use them as a starting point to spark your own ideas and interests and remember that even the simplest act of kindness can change someone else’s life. Please share these resources widely but remember to inform all parties with whom you share them that they have been developed by Areyvut. We encourage those interested in other aspects of *tikkun olam* to “think out of the box” to create projects of their own and look forward to supporting these endeavors. For activity suggestions related to other themes, please refer to the [“Make a Difference Day” archives](#) on the Areyvut website.

We request that you please let us know what you are planning by registering on our [website](#) so that we can share your ideas with others. You will also find a registration form included in this packet.

We would like to thank our Board of Trustees, interns and staff who helped to bring this project to fruition. We would particularly like to thank Shira Hammerman, our Educational Consultant, and Sharon Stahl, our Special Projects Coordinator, for their help in developing these resources and Susan A. Abravanel, Education Director at SOLV (www.solv.org) for developing the attached project planning unit. Additionally, we want to acknowledge all those who will be participating in “Make a Difference” Day.

Good luck!

Daniel Rothner
Founder & Director
Areyvut

About Areyvut

Areyvut is a New Jersey based national non-profit organization that encourages individuals to participate in *mitzvah* projects that help them develop the core Jewish values of *chesed* (kindness), *tzedakah* (charity) and *tikkun olam* (social justice). We offer Jewish day schools, educators, synagogues and community centers unique opportunities to empower and enrich youth by creating innovative and meaningful programs that make these values a reality. This past year, Areyvut, directly worked with over 20 schools and synagogues, involved several hundred teens in social justice projects, inspired over 10,000 individuals with our “A Kindness a Day” Desk Calendar and “Make a Difference Day” programs and reached over 25,000 people through our newly updated online resources.

Programs and Resources:

“A Kindness a Day” Desk Calendar

Areyvut’s calendar features 365 ways to make a difference, each correlating to a quote from a Jewish source.

Online Chesed Center

The Areyvut site contains a comprehensive list of projects and volunteer opportunities.

Bnai Mitzvah Consultations

Areyvut works one-on-one with *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* students and their families to find or develop meaningful social action projects that best meet their interests.

Bnai Mitzvah Fair

Areyvut tailors *Bnai Mitzvah* fairs to meet the specific needs of schools, synagogues and community centers. Agency representatives present their volunteer opportunities to students and their families. Students can also participate in hands-on projects, which provide suggestions for *chesed* projects at their celebration.

Bnai Mitzvah Essay Contest

Students are invited to share their *Bnai Mitzvah* projects by participating in Areyvut’s annual *Bnai Mitzvah* Essay Contest.

Teen Philanthropy Institute

A program that teaches Jewish youth about philanthropy, the importance of giving and provides them with leadership skills so they make a difference in the world.

Project Planning Unit

Service-learning is . . .
a teaching and learning strategy that combines
meaningful community service with academic study
to enrich learning,
teach civic responsibility,
and strengthen communities. □

This Areyvut Project Planning Unit will help you:

- **Assess** your community and respond to a real community need;
- **Connect** *tikkun olam* (social justice) to in-school or classroom learning;
- **Reflect** purposefully throughout the project, to connect the service you are doing, your academic goals, and your own lives;
- **Celebrate** your success, recognizing all participants; and
- **Evaluate** your accomplishments and the process you used.



* National Commission on Service-Learning (2002). *Learning In Deed: The Power of Service-Learning for American Schools*. Battle Creek, MI: W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

Assessing Your Community

Areyvut’s Mission Statement:

Areyvut enables Jewish youth to infuse their lives with the core Jewish values of *chesed* (kindness), *tzedakah* (charity), and *tikkun olam* (social justice).

Your group’s Mission Statement:

Insert your group’s “mission statement” – the purpose why your group exists – in the space below. If you do not have one, work together to write one!

Identify the problem(s) in your community and select your project:

What problem(s) in your community does your mission statement address?	What would your community look like without these problems?	What could YOU and your classmates do to help bring about this solution?

Making your selection:

From the list of project choices, decide which ONE you will select. Evaluate your choices by asking these questions:

- **Volunteers:** Will your project attract enough volunteers to complete it as planned?
- **Time:** Will you and your volunteers have enough time to design, develop and implement this project?
- **Resources and funding:** Will your project need funding?
If so, how will you secure the needed funds and/or in-kind support?

Task Checklists:

One of the best ways to “get it all done” is to divide the tasks into the following four categories. You may choose to have four groups, each working on one of the categories, or have everyone work together through all tasks:

1. Logistics

- Estimate the number of volunteers and time you will need for the project.
- Contact community organizations you are working with on your project. Make an appointment to share your project idea and to find out whether it fits with their needs. Be prepared to discuss the following information about your project:
 - A thorough description of your project, including what you hope to accomplish by the end of the day;
 - Date and time that you are available;
 - How many volunteers you think you will have in your project group;
 - What kind of help you will need from staff at the organization;
 - What the organization may be able to provide, and what you will provide for the project (special equipment, tools, snacks, protective clothing, etc.)

Be prepared to be flexible and sensitive to the needs and capacity of the organization.

- Visit the selected project site(s) to know what to expect on “Make a Difference” Day.
 - Determine best placement for on-site coordination “staging area,” arrange for registration table and folding chairs (if needed);
 - Make arrangements for purchase (if necessary), and for delivery of special equipment, tools, snacks, etc. to the project site.

Task Checklists: *(continued)*

2. Working with Volunteers

- Contact other students and adults** who might be willing to help you with the project. Keep an accurate, up-to-date list of the following contact information for all volunteers:
 - Full name;
 - Home Address;
 - Phone number (home or cell);
 - E-mail address.
 - Emergency contact (if applicable)

- Prepare a letter to distribute project information to all volunteers.** Include information about:
 - What the project is;
 - Where and when to meet (including directions to the project site, and the availability of transportation);
 - Appropriate clothing they should wear;
 - Anything they may need to bring (for example, ID, a notepad, water, food, tools or other equipment, etc.)

- Copy and distribute volunteer waivers.** You will need to have a waiver from all participants—students and adults—for your event. Consult your teacher - as well as any community organization you are working with on your project - to see what specific waiver language they may require.

- Plan out the “Make a Difference” Day Project presentation for volunteers.** You will want to include:
 - An introduction to the project leaders for the day;
 - What you will be doing, project goals, and clear instructions (if needed);
 - Appropriate behavior and safety reminders;
 - Restroom locations;
 - A big THANK YOU for helping!!

Task Checklists: *(continued)*

3. Resources

- Determine costs (if any) for materials, equipment and services you will need as you implement your project.
Your costs might include:
 - tools or special equipment;
 - materials (such as paint, books for a literacy project, bags for a clothing drive, plants and mulch for a planting project, paper materials for advertising, etc.);
 - water and snacks for volunteers;
 - transportation; and
 - recognition/thank-you items (t-shirts, buttons, stickers, hats).

- Develop the project budget, and include any expected income (donations, fundraising proceeds or in-kind contributions) that could offset your expenses.

- If needed, seek additional support - other funding in-kind donations - for the project.

- Be sure to keep a detailed record of all donations and in-kind support you receive for the project. (Donors will want a copy of this record for their files.)

- Remember to recognize and thank all sponsors, donors and volunteers after the event. Tell them what you were able to do as a result of their support. Include what community agency you worked with or benefited, how many people you served and that volunteered, a quote from a participant or member of the agency's staff and a picture if possible.

Task Checklists: *(continued)*

4. Publicity, Media and Documentation

For publicity, you may want to:

- Prepare flyers or posters about the project to help recruit other students in your school, synagogue or neighborhood. Provide a phone number so they can call to ask questions, or sign up as a volunteer;
- Inform local business and elected officials about your project. Invite them to attend, and to support your efforts.
- Use your newsletter, bulletin, website, or e-mail update to share information about the project and how people can get involved.

For media, you may want to:

- Send a press release in advance to local media outlets informing them about your project and inviting them to cover the event.
- Write advance news releases or articles about your project for your school newspaper or other local media. Include interviews with team leaders and participants telling how they are planning to make a difference;
- Find out what other community or group newsletters (synagogue, PTA, etc.) might be willing to carry information about your project;
- Once your project is complete, announce your results to your school, the media, your neighborhood and the community;
- After the event, send a press release highlighting the project and include who it served, who was involved and a quote and picture.

To document your project, consider the following:

- Take “before” and “after” photos to show the impact of your project.
- Videotape interviews with community members, project planners and participants about the benefits of your project;

Prepare a “how-to” video or PowerPoint that uses steps from your project to show others the process that you followed

- Compile a “reflection video” in which project participants are asked to talk about their experience.
- Send Areyvut any anecdotes, feedback, picture or videos to highlight on our website.

Note: Be sure that you have permission from anyone whom you film or videotape to publicly display their images.

Reflection → Connection

What is important to you about your service-learning project?

Reflection during and after your project helps you to connect your service activity:

**To what you are learning in school;
to your community; and
to your life outside of school.**

Some Questions that Prompt Reflection:

- What did you enjoy most about what you did?
- What did you learn that you didn't know before?
- How does this connect with Judaism or with being Jewish?
- How do you think you made a difference in your community?
- Why do you think that the project you did is your responsibility?
- If you did the same project again, what would you do differently?

Try to use a variety of ways to reflect:

Write -

personal journals, group journals, stories, poems, essays, letters to the editor, an article for your school, local newspaper or synagogue bulletins, informational brochures, music lyrics.

Read -

articles, books, websites and blogs related to the project, other people's journals and informational data about the need your project addresses.

Speak -

class or group discussions, debates, presentations or skits for others and informational interviews.

Create-

collages, posters, scrapbooks, photo essays, videos, PowerPoint presentations, story boards, murals, mobiles, cartoons, puzzles, songs and dance.

Post-Project Reflection

*After your “Make a Difference” Day project, please complete and submit a **1-page reflection report** to help us document the events that took place. Please be sure to describe your project and your role in the experience.*

Please Select ONE of the following “prompts” to help you get started:

1. Discuss the problem(s) that your project addressed. How did you address these issues during your project? Do you have more, or less, understanding for the problem that you addressed than you did before your experience? Why?
2. Did this experience have any impact on the way that you see yourself, the world around you, or how you will become involved with your community in the future?
3. Choose three words that best describe your service-learning experience, and develop an essay around these words.

Special opportunity:

Areyvut invites you to submit your reflection essay for posting on our website (www.aryvut.org). Send your completed essay as a Word document attached to an e-mail, to info@aryvut.org. Please include photos and videos of your project experience.

Project Completion Report

Please return by mail, e-mail or fax to:

Areyvut

147 South Washington Avenue

Bergenfield, NJ 07621

info@areyvut.org

FAX: (201) 338-2427

Name of Teacher/Project Advisor: _____

Name of School, Youth Group, Synagogue or Agency:

City: _____ County: _____ Zip: _____

Grade Level(s): _____ Number of classes involved: _____

Project Site(s):

Community Partners for the Project (if applicable): _____

How many people participated? Students: _____ Adults: _____

What was your Group's Mission Statement? _____

How did your service-learning project connect to your Mission Statement?

Continued on next page – please complete both pages

Project Completion Report *continued*

Your project goals: _____

Did you meet your goals? Yes No

Project Results: _____

What went well?

What problems did you have? _____

What would you do differently next time? _____

Was the *Areyvut Project Planning Unit* helpful to you? Do you have suggestions for changes or additions to this unit? _____

Were the *Areyvut* Educational Resources helpful to you? Do you have suggestions for changes or additions to this unit?

Please attach additional comments or information as needed.

30 Ways to Improve Health and Wellness TODAY

The following activities can be accomplished with minimal preparation so that even those who did not have time to prepare are able to participate in “Make a Difference” Day.

1. Run an errand for someone who is sick.
2. Teach an exercise class at a local nursing home.
3. Give [healthy snacks](#) to your children.
4. Volunteer in a special needs sports class.
5. Tell [jokes](#) to people in a hospital or nursing home.
6. Pay a gym membership for someone who cannot afford it.
7. Make healthy habits [placemats](#) for children in a homeless shelter.
8. Stock shelves in a food pantry.
9. Call a co-worker and ride your bikes to work together.
10. Cook a well-balanced dinner with your family.
11. Deliver flowers to residents of a nursing home.
12. When going to the mall or supermarket, park in a spot that is further away than you normally would. It will provide you with more exercise and give someone who may have difficulty walking a shorter distance to travel.
13. Send toiletries to women’s shelters.
14. Donate money to a [cause](#) by supporting a friend in a walk-a-thon, marathon or 5K.
15. Send out an e-mail reminding your family and friends of the importance of checking your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors regularly.
16. Invite friends and family to join you for an impromptu tennis tournament.
17. Make a donation to an organization that supports research on harmful illnesses.
18. Dress up as a [clown](#) and spend time with children who are in the hospital.
19. Donate [stuffed animals](#), books and CDs to a hospital recreation department.
20. Brown bag your lunch and donate the money you would have spent on lunch at the cafeteria to a soup kitchen.
21. Plant fruits and vegetables in your yard so you can give them to your neighbors when they grow.
22. Volunteer to do outreach for a [food pantry](#) in your area.
23. Take time to talk to your friend if s/he is having a bad day.
24. Decide to [donate your hair](#) to an organization that makes wigs for women and girls who have lost their hair due to illness.
25. Write a letter to [your senator](#) advocating for improved healthcare legislation.
26. Take your dog for an extra long walk.
27. Bring [healthy snacks](#) to your local police station or fire house.
28. Send an [uplifting note to a soldier](#) recovering in a hospital.
29. Serve dinner at a soup kitchen.
30. Offer to make dinner for someone who could use a little break.

Maintaining Good Health

Values Discussion:

- Is the human body holy?
- Are we allowed to treat our body in any way we please?
- Is exercising and maintaining good nutrition a *mitzvah*?
- Do we have a responsibility to seek medical treatment when we are ill?

Background Information:

The choices we make regarding our body have the potential to drastically influence our health and wellbeing. Being attentive to what we ingest, how active we are, what we do to protect ourselves, and how we care for our body is a necessary part of a healthy lifestyle. In addition to monitoring our own physical wellbeing, we have the ability to improve the lives of those around us by teaching others to make healthier decisions and engaging them in an active lifestyle. Though the importance of these lessons for people of all ages should not be underestimated, they are often neglected in our fast-paced society. The decision to spend one day focused on physical wellbeing can resonate across a lifetime.

Relevant Texts:

Deuteronomy 4:9

Take heed to thyself and take care of your lives.

Deuteronomy 4:15

Be extremely protective of your lives...And you shall guard yourselves very well.

Maimonides, Hilchot Daot 4:1

Since maintaining a healthy and sound body is among the ways of God -- for one cannot understand or have any knowledge of the Creator if he is ill -- therefore he must avoid that which harms the body and accustom himself to that which is helpful and helps the body become stronger.

Maimonides, Hilchot Daot, 4:1

The body being healthy is of the ways of the Lord, for it is impossible to understand or know the knowledge of the Creator while unwell. Therefore, one should keep away from things which destroy the body, and accustom oneself to healthy and curing matters.

Maimonides, Hilchot Daot 4:1, 2, 14

It is Darchai Hashem to have a healthy body since it is most difficult to develop spiritually when one is sick. Therefore, one must refrain from activities and foods, which harm the Guf (body), and perform activities that strengthen the body.

Exercise and a proper diet help preserve the Guf, while idleness and an unhealthy diet harm the Guf.

Maimonides, *Shmoneh Perakim*, *Pirkei Avoth*

The purpose of his body's health is that the soul finds its instruments healthy and sound in order that it can be directed toward spiritual growth.

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 32:1

Since a healthy and fit body is required by G-d, one cannot understand or know any matters from the knowledge of the Creator if one is ill. Therefore, one must keep oneself away from things which damage the body and accustom oneself to things which heal and make the body well. Therefore, it is written: 'And keep well your souls.'

Activity Suggestions:

Activity 1: Family Day at the Gym

Description:

Encourage families in your community to exercise together by creating the first annual Family Day at a local gym or park. The program can include sporting events, [exercise classes](#), [obstacle courses](#) and more.

Helpful Tips:

1. Find qualified referees and coaches to plan events or work with a volunteer committee
2. Arrange for space in your local synagogue, school, community center or park.
3. Advertise in the local paper; through synagogue, school, or community center mailings; networking sites; newsgroups and e-mail lists.
4. Purchase [healthy snacks](#) to sell at the event.
5. Continue to offer the event on an annual basis.

Variation:

1. Incorporate an [educational component](#) to the events that instructs participants about the benefits of regular exercise.
2. Charge money for concessions and donate the proceeds to a [charity](#) that deals with healthcare.

Suggested Age:

Everyone

Activity 2: Put Your Keyboard to Work

Description:

Create a [blog](#) to raise awareness on the importance of exercise and good nutrition. Share useful facts about [exercise](#) and [nutrition](#), tips on how to make the most of exercise time and unique meal ideas.

Helpful Tips:

1. [Gather interesting tidbits for your blog and create a list of topics for several of your first postings.](#) It may be helpful to write several postings in advance so you do not feel pressed for time later on.
2. Create a blog. You can use services such as <https://www.blogger.com/start>.
3. Invite friends, family and community members to read your blog and set up a listserv of readers who are interested in receiving posts through e-mail.
4. Recruit guest bloggers to help in writing the postings.

Variation:

1. Make this into an interesting and educational class or group project.
2. Create a hard-copy version for community members who do not use computers on a regular basis.
3. Highlight articles on the school or synagogue bulletin board, newsletter or link to them on the website.
4. Create a blog that focuses on other aspects of health and wellness, such as depression, addictions, infertility or illness.
5. If you already blog about a different topic write about this issue and your participation in Areyvut's 2009 "Make a Difference" Day.

Suggested Age:

Upper Elementary +

Activity 3: The "Active" Fundraiser

Description:

Plan a [dance-a-thon](#) that provides an opportunity for volunteers to exercise their bodies while raising money for a good cause. Donate the proceeds to a [charity](#) that works to improve the health and wellness of others.

Helpful Tips:

1. Set a date, time and location for the event that is convenient for community members.
2. Make sure to arrange for any necessary permits in advance.
3. Find a DJ and order healthy food to sell at the event.
4. Choose a charity and create a document, slideshow, or video to demonstrate to others why they too should support this charity. You can also invite a representative from the organization to speak briefly about their work at the event.
5. Advertise through flyers, word of mouth and newspapers.

6. Invite a representative from the charity to speak at the event.
7. Publicize the success of the event in the local newspaper.

Variation:

A [jump rope competition](#), [walk-a-thon](#), bike-a-thon, obstacle course, [basketball tournament](#), sports competition, or swim-a-thon is a great alternative option.

Suggested Age:

Upper Elementary +

Activity 4: Wellness for All

Description:

Raise awareness and change the discourse in your community by organizing an event that highlights challenges to wellness that are often not discussed in the community at large. [Topics](#) may include anxiety, depression, suicide, domestic violence, eating disorders, drug use, alcoholism, and other conditions.

Helpful Tips:

1. Invite experts to talk about the topics you have chosen and ask them to incorporate information about how to detect signs of a problem and how to reach out to those in need.
2. Include a personal component to the program in which people who have personal experience with the issues at hand share their stories. Encourage community members to share their experiences if any are willing, but be prepared to find non-community members with experience sharing their stories with large groups.
3. Engage participants in a discussion on how the community can become better equipped to deal with the challenges that have been addressed. To help in this discussion, find examples of community programs that your community may wish to emulate.
4. Provide resources for participants to take home that can guide them toward when their action when dealing with these conditions in the future.

Follow-up:

1. Follow through on suggestions as to how to make the community more supportive of difficult challenges.
2. Organize additional programs to continue the discussion and support change efforts that have been enacted.

Variation:

Programs can include audiovisual productions, speakers, panels or less frontal activities such as dialogue groups or book clubs.

Suggested Age:

Upper Elementary + (though programs should be modified to fit the developmental stage of participants)

Activity 5: Cooking for Your Life

Description:

Create a [class or community cookbook](#) that includes recipes for healthy meals and a special section that explains the basics about [nutrition](#). Sell the cookbook as a fundraiser and donate proceeds to a good [cause](#).

Helpful Tips:

1. Recruit contributors for your cookbook.
2. Select a charitable [cause](#) and gather some literature on the organization to include in your advertisements and in the cookbook itself.
3. Set up a committee of people to edit the cookbook.
4. Find a publisher that meets your budgetary needs. For a class cookbook, in-house publishing may be a good option.
5. Advertise the cookbook through your local community organizations, schools, synagogues and newspapers, and arrange to sell at bookshops and fairs.
6. Create a plan to distribute the cookbooks in an orderly fashion.
7. Donate all proceeds in a timely fashion.

Follow-up:

1. If you receive a letter of thanks from the recipient of your funds, distribute it to all contributors.
2. Thank people for participating, attending and submitting recipes.
3. Let people know how much money was raised, where the money went and what impact it made.

Variation:

1. Host a tasting party and accept pre-orders of the cookbook.
2. Have a bake sale featuring the items in the cookbook.

Suggested Age:

Elementary +

Activity 6: B-ball for All

Description:

Begin a community wide basketball league. Charge participants an entrance fee and donate proceeds to the [charity](#) of your choice.

Helpful Tips:

1. Decide whether participants will sign-up as individuals or as teams and make sure that all participants are assigned to teams.
2. Create rules for the league to follow.
3. Invite members of your community to join the league through listservs, synagogue announcements and school newsletters.
4. Create a schedule for the league so that every team plays each other at least once in the season.
5. Reserve a court for all scheduled events.
6. Congratulate the victors in the local newspaper or at a small community-wide banquet.

Variation:

1. Choose a different sport such as football, baseball, hockey or tennis.
2. Begin a community-wide sports league in an area that does not have the resources to create one on its own.
3. If starting a league is too difficult organize a weekly pick up game.
4. Host a three on three basketball tournament to raise money for a cause that is important to you.

Suggested Age:
Elementary+

Activity 7: Nutrition for Sale

Description:

Organize a bake sale of [nutritious](#) products. Include recipes with whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and minimize the amount of processed sugars and hydrogenated fats. Donate all proceeds to a [charitable organization](#) that promotes health and wellness.

Helpful Tips:

1. Recruit buyers, bakers and sellers, and assign each volunteer a specific project so you can keep track of selection.
2. Gather healthy recipes to share with bakers.
3. Advertise through your synagogue, school, community organization, or local press.
4. Charge a relatively nominal fee for the baked goods to accomplish widespread participation.

Follow-up:

1. Distribute copies of the recipes that were used to encourage buyers to bake healthy deserts in the future.

Variation:

1. Have a community dinner where nutritious foods are served.

2. Encourage your place of work to replace all junk food in vending machines with healthier alternatives.
3. Hold a community-wide cook-off where competitors are required to cook a balanced meal.

Suggested Age:
Everyone

Activity 8: Donate for Better Health

Description:

Collect exercise equipment and donate it to either a local community center or a recreational center in a low income area. Equipment may include stationary bicycles, elliptical machines, treadmills, weights and sports equipment.

Helpful Tips:

1. Contact community centers and agencies in local low income areas to determine what type of equipment is needed.
2. Set up a central collection site for equipment that is easily transportable.
3. Arrange a date for pick-up of large items. Create a schedule of approximate pick-up times and ensure that donors will be home at their scheduled times.
4. Gather volunteers to help with pick-up and drop-off.
5. Borrow or rent a truck or van for pick-up of large items.

Variation:

1. Plan a sports night for members of your community to interact with members of the community that received the equipment.
2. Visit with them a few weeks later to see how they are doing.

Suggested Age:
Middle School +

Activity 9: Lunch is on Us

Description:

Volunteer at a [local soup kitchen](#) and prepare a nutritious meal for those in need. You may be given the opportunity to help set up, cook, serve or clean up after the meal and interact with the clients.

Helpful Tips:

1. Contact a local soup kitchen and arrange an evening for your group to take part in dinner preparations.
2. Take care of all logistics, including transportation, permission slips and chaperones.

3. [Prepare participants](#) for the experience by discussing some of the scenarios they might encounter. Explain that the people they will meet will be diverse; some may appear disheveled and unkempt and others will not. Instruct them to treat all whom they encounter with utmost respect and review guidelines for appropriate behavior with your group before entering the soup kitchen.

Follow-up:

1. Provide participants with an opportunity to debrief and discuss their experiences.
2. Arrange for volunteers to return to the soup kitchen on an ongoing basis.

Variation:

1. If there are no soup kitchens in your area, consider starting one of your own. You will have to contact a local government agency to find out what this entails. Alternatively, volunteer at a local [food pantry](#).
2. If you are not able to visit a soup kitchen as a group, spend the afternoon preparing sandwiches for distribution at a local soup kitchen or through an organization that delivers food to the homebound and have one group member deliver them before dinner time.
3. Create packets with guidelines about basic [exercise](#) and [nutrition](#) to distribute to diners.

Suggested Age:

Everyone

Activity 10: Enriching the Lives of Others through Exercise

Description:

Organize an [exercise program](#) for children and teach them about [guidelines and benefits](#) of exercising regularly.

Helpful Tips:

1. Contact an elementary school, either in your neighborhood or in a nearby low-income area, and arrange a time for this program to take place.
2. Consult a local aerobics teacher about the project and ask for help in creating simple but effective routines for students.
3. Train volunteers to teach the routines.
4. Consider the logistics of the program including arranging transportation and obtaining permission slips.
5. Prepare volunteers to work with younger children by discussing possible issues that might arise and how these issues can be resolved patiently and efficiently.

Variation:

1. To cover your costs, you can ask for donations from your volunteers, hold a [fundraiser](#) or seek a sponsor to fund the project.
2. Even if it is not possible to organize a class at a local school, it may be possible to sponsor an after-school program at a community center in a low-income area that provides [nutritious snacks](#) for students.
3. Consider creating classes at a local community center that are tailored to other audiences in the community, such as [adult](#) or [elderly](#) residents.
4. Create an ongoing program through which volunteers visit the school on a regular basis to provide additional classes coupled with friendly smiles.

Suggested Age:

High School +

Activity 11: Enjoying the Fruit of Your Labor

Description:

[Plant a garden](#) and donate your produce to a local [food pantry](#).

Preparations:

1. Determine the best place to plant on your property.
2. Rope off the area and prepare the soil for planting.
3. Purchase a variety of seeds and/or plants to increase the odds that some will grow successfully.
4. Contact local food pantries and other organizations that devote their time and energy to feeding the hungry to determine where you might donate your produce.

Follow-up:

1. Maintain your garden as long as possible so that your efforts can continue to make a difference.

Variation:

1. If you are not able to plant a garden of your own, set aside a day to visit a [local farm or orchard](#) and pick berries, apples or other produce. Donate your crop to a local food pantry.
2. Partner with a local [Community Sponsored Agriculture \(CSA\)](#) to provide fresh crops to a local food pantry.
3. If you cannot find a local organization to help distribute the produce, sell the fresh crops and donate the money to a [charitable organization](#).
4. Plant a garden at a senior center or community agency for members to enjoy.

Suggested Age:

Upper Elementary School +

Activity 12: Curtain Call

Description:

Create a puppet show or short play to teach children about the importance of exercise and nutrition. Make the program interactive by incorporating some [stretching or low-impact aerobics](#) into the script. Sell [nutritious snacks](#) at a concession stand.

Helpful Tips:

1. Recruit creative minds to help write a script; create puppets, scenery, and other essentials; and act. For an example of a script that teaches about nutrition, click [here](#).
2. Find a location for the show.
3. Advertise in local papers and through community newsletters and listservs.

Follow-up:

Take your show on the road by performing at other venues.

Variation:

1. Invite students to create their own puppet show or play as part of an educational program about health and wellness.
2. Record the show and sell it as a fundraiser for a charitable organization.
3. Charge for entry and donate all proceeds to a [charity](#) of your choice.
4. Use this medium to explore other issues related to health and wellness including domestic violence, alcoholism, anxiety and eating disorders.

Suggested Age:

Everyone

Activity 13: Creating a Place to Play

Description:

Give children a better place for active play by building or [refurbishing a playground, sports field, or community center](#) at a school, synagogue, or community center in your community or in a low-income area. Volunteers may have an opportunity to help with clearing the area, cleaning, painting, building, beautifying and other important tasks.

Helpful Tips:

1. Contact organizations, community centers and recreational departments, both locally and in nearby low-income areas, to determine where your help is most needed.
2. If real construction is needed, contact a local contractor to manage especially difficult or dangerous aspects of the project. See if s/he will donate some or all of the time spent on the job.
3. Select a date and time for the refurbishment.

4. Recruit volunteers to help with the project. Make a schedule to ensure that the site will not be too crowded with volunteers at any given time.
5. Solicit funds to help cover the cost of the refurbishment, either by asking directly for money or by holding a fundraiser. Alternatively, try to partner with local agencies that do similar work, such as [Bonim Builders in Bergen County, NJ](#).
6. Order supplies in advance.
7. Supply water and light refreshments to volunteers throughout the day.
8. Provide volunteers with an orientation of what they will be doing, who they will be serving and why it is important.

Follow-up:

1. Take pictures of the finished product, preferably while in use, and send them to all volunteers and the local press.
2. Give volunteers an opportunity to reflect on their achievements.

Variation:

1. If there are no refurbishment projects in your area, raise funds to donate to a community center in a different town.

Suggested Age:

Though elementary students may be able to help clean garbage from an area, plant flowers or paint a mural, real construction should be restricted to high school+.

Activity 14: Hold a Health Fair

Description:

Organize a [Nutrition and Physical Activity](#) at your local synagogue, school or community center. Plan activities that encourage exercise and educate the community about the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Helpful Tips:

1. Select a venue with ample space for a large amount of people and lots of activity.
2. Ask local hospitals or other health related businesses and organizations about the potential to partner on this program. They can either take part in the planning of the event or set up a booth related to their industry.
3. Sell useful products such as exercise videos or cookbooks stressing healthy eating to encourage ongoing attention to healthy living.
4. Advertise far and wide.

Follow-up:

1. Be sure to thank your sponsors before, during and after the event.

2. Build on the relationship you have with the agencies and businesses that attended, sponsored and publicized the fair. Plan other programs with them to address these areas.

Variation:

1. Choose a different [health-related topic](#) for the theme of your fair.
2. Allow your students to host a fair for younger students. They will enjoy planning activities and running the booths.

Suggested Age:

Everyone

Activity 15: A Food Pantry of Your Own

Description:

Encourage your school, synagogue or community to collect nutritious non-perishable foods. Donate these foods to a [local food bank or food pantry](#). Include a letter to recipients that describes the importance of maintaining good nutrition

Helpful Tips:

1. Contact a food pantry or food bank to find out what products are needed and what restrictions may be placed on donations.
2. Decorate bins to gather food and distribute them to classrooms, schools, synagogues, community centers and stores around your area (depending on the scope of your target audience).
3. Advertise at local synagogues, schools, community centers, on listservs and in newspapers.

Follow-up:

1. Separate the food which you have collected by product type and box it in an organized fashion.
2. Have volunteers write thank-you notes to all schools, synagogues, community centers and stores that served as collection sites. Let them know how much food was collected, where it was distributed and how many people it served.
3. Write a short article for the school or local newspaper to explain the project and to share your achievement with your community.
4. Send out a joint press release with the agency you donated the food to highlight the importance and power of communal partnership.

Variation:

1. Visit a local food bank to donate these items in person. Volunteer to help the staff of the food bank in unpacking donations, restocking and organizing shelves and repacking food for delivery.
2. This can be done as a pre-Pesach drive.

Suggested Age:
Elementary School +

Activity 16: Prevention from the Podium

Description:

Bring in a [speaker](#) to talk about the importance of maintaining health and wellness as a means of preventing disease.

Helpful Tips:

1. Choose a speaker who has experience working with your target audience and carefully check references to ensure that s/he is a good fit. It is best to get a reference from someone who has heard the speaker address a similar crowd.
2. Select a venue with good acoustics and make sure it has a microphone and sound system.
3. Advertise broadly and ask people to reserve seats so you can keep track of attendees.
4. Introduce and thank your speaker before inviting him/her to the podium.
5. Time permitting, offer a question and answer session after the presentation.
6. Reach out to local community agencies and businesses that relate to the topic and ask them to cosponsor the program and to help publicize it.
7. Hold a [nutritious reception](#) that precedes or follows the presentation.

Follow-up:

Create a network of small, informal support groups for community members who are struggling with maintaining healthy eating habits and physical activity. Groups may meet to discuss different topics including: regular exercise, unhealthy relationships with food, healthy cooking, etc.

Variation:

1. Write your own thoughts on the topic and ask to share them at a staff meeting, in your classroom, at the next PTA meeting or from your synagogue's pulpit.
2. Hold a viewing of a film on a related topic.
3. Hire a nutrition counselor or therapist to speak with students or community members on an individual basis.
4. Create a [book club](#) that focuses on literature – both fiction and non-fiction – that relates to different aspects of health and wellness.

Suggested Age:
Upper Elementary+

Activity 17: Mobilize Against Childhood Obesity

Description:

Advocate for [school policies](#) that target childhood obesity such as improved physical education programs, healthier lunch plans and removing snack machines from schools.

Helpful Tips:

1. Do [research on policies at your local public and private school to see how they compare to federal guidelines](#) created to curb childhood obesity.
2. Draft and lobby for policies that will best serve the needs of local children.
3. Have a [fact sheet](#) or [recent article](#) available to help illustrate how critical this issue is.

Follow-up:

At the conclusion of the event, distribute a sheet with a list of local agencies and businesses that people can contact to help them in their efforts.

Variation:

1. Research how your [congressmen](#) voted on legislation to fight childhood obesity. Contact his/her office to share your thoughts about that vote.
2. Invite your local elected official to speak at the event and to officially launch the campaign together.

Suggested Age:

Upper Elementary+

Activity 18: Break for Holistic Health

Description:

Plan a [community retreat](#) devoted to relaxation of the mind and body. Include discussions on healthy eating, family bonding activities, [spa treatments](#), [yoga](#) and exercise sessions, [spiritual renewal workshops](#), and any other activities that encourage participants to take a break from their busy lives.

Helpful Tips:

1. If possible, find space at a retreat center that is located outside your immediate community and, preferably, in a peaceful setting.
2. Recruit community members to run sessions when possible but supplement with professional instructors and therapists.
3. Require participants to reserve space in advance.
4. Arrange transportation, food and other logistics.

Follow-up:

Schedule regular downtime during the work week to devote to helping your family, your friends and yourself.

Variation:

1. If you are not in the position to plan a community event, organize a day trip to a renewal center for your friends and family.
2. Invite a massage therapist, nutritionist, and yoga instructor to your workplace to offer relaxation and useful information to your employees or co-workers.
3. Spend time with your family and friends focusing on how you can help one another improve your respective work-life balance.
4. Incorporate learning of [Jewish texts](#) related to health and wellness to add a spiritual dimension to the event.

Suggested Age:

Everyone

Caring for Those Who are Not Well:

Values Discussion:

- What is Judaism's approach to illness in general and to terminal illness in particular?
- What is Judaism's approach to holistic healing?
- To what extent is it an individual's responsibility to care for those who are sick?
- To what extent is it a communal responsibility to care for those who are sick?
- Does Judaism place limits on the actions that we can take to cure those who are ill?

Background Information:

Though we strive to prevent illness to the extent that we are able, we must also devote time and resources to helping those who are in poor health – whether their illness manifests as physical, emotional, or some other form. By taking care of their needs, offering emotional support, and supporting the research for cures of serious illnesses, we can increase the odds that those who are not well will have a speedy recovery.

Relevant Texts:

Genesis 18:1

Hashem appeared to him in the plains of *Mamre* while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day.

Rashi on Genesis 18:1

And *Hashem* appeared to him- To visit the sick: Said Rabbi *Chama* the son of *Chanina*: It was the third day from his circumcision, and the Holy One, blessed be He, came and inquired about his welfare.

Proverbs 15:4

A healing tongue is a tree of life, but the devious one makes for a broken spirit.

Talmud Baba Metzia 30b

Whoever visits the sick removes one sixtieth of his illness, while one who ignores a sick person hastens his death.

Talmud Sotah 14a

G-d visited the sick; so should you visit the sick.

Avot DeRabbi Natan 30

Comforting mourners and visiting the sick and acts of kindness bring good to the world.

Talmud *Bava Kamma 100a*

“And you should show them the way” - This means acts of kindness; “in which they should go” – this is visiting the sick; “to it” – this is burial.

Talmud *Nedarim 39b*

Whoever visits the sick removes one sixtieth of his sickness.

Talmud *Nedarim 40a*

One who visits the sick causes them to live.

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Mourning 14:4*

Whoever visits the sick, it is as if he removes part of his sickness and makes it easier on him, while one who ignores a sick person is like one who sheds blood.

Eliezer b. Isaac, *Orhot Hayyim*, c. 1050. (Hebrew Ethical Wills, JPS, 1926)

Visit the sick for sympathy lightens pain . . . Fatigue him not by staying too long . . . Enter cheerfully for his heart and eyes are on those who come in.

Activity Suggestions:

Activity 1: Save a Life

Description:

Arrange a blood or bone marrow drive in your community to benefit those in need of healing. Volunteers can help recruit participants, organize sign-in sheets and help care for participants as they recuperate after donating blood.

Preparations:

1. Contact organizations such as the [American Red Cross](#) or [Gift of Life](#) to arrange a community drive.
2. Find a synagogue, school or community center that is able to host the event.
3. Advertise at local synagogues, schools, community centers, on listservs and in newspapers.
4. Instruct volunteers as to how to care for participants who feel ill or faint after donating blood.

Follow-up:

Give volunteers an opportunity to discuss their experience with one another.

Variation:

If you are not able to arrange a blood or bone marrow drive of your own, contact a local hospital and volunteer to make a donation.

Suggested Age:
Middle School +

Activity 2: Visiting the Sick

Description:

Spend an afternoon at a hospital. Visit with the patients and interact with them on a personal level. Add joy to their day by bringing them gift baskets, cards, plants or flowers to help make their rooms more cheerful and spend time talking with them, reading aloud, playing board or card games or tutoring younger patients.

Helpful Tips:

1. Contact a local hospital to arrange a visit. Be sure to discuss the number and ages of volunteers and ask about any of the institution's policies and scheduling restrictions that may affect your visit.
2. Take care of all logistics, including transportation, collecting permission slips and finding additional chaperones.
3. Gather supplies and create any items that you wish to distribute to residents and patients, such as gift baskets, Pesach goods or cards. You can divide the list among volunteers, hold a fundraiser to pay for supplies or look for an individual or company to fund the activity.
4. Prepare your volunteers for the experience by discussing what they might encounter at the hospital and how they are expected to act during the visit. Answer all questions and take their concerns seriously. Click [here](#) for a guidelines and conversation starters to share with volunteers.

Follow-up:

1. Debrief volunteers by giving them the opportunity to share their reactions to their experiences.
2. Write thank-you notes to the staff of the institution that you visited.
3. Maintain contact with the patients that you met through letters, e-mails or phone calls.
4. Arrange to visit on a regular basis.
5. Arrange a local [Bikur Cholim](#) group in your synagogue, school or community that maintains an ongoing effort to care for the sick and their families.

Variation:

1. Prepare a special performance to entertain the residents and patients that you are visiting. You may choose to perform a skit, sing songs, dance to traditional music, play instruments, put on a talent show or dress up like clowns. Performances need not be scripted or well-rehearsed to be appreciated.

2. Arrange a “virtual” visit with patients who are too sick for face-to-face contact using a web-based computer program.
3. Consider becoming trained as a chaplain and using your skills to help patients at your local hospital.

Suggested Age:

Upper Elementary School +

Activity 3: Create a Keepsake

Description:

Work as a group to create keepsakes that would be appreciated by people who are sick. Some possible [projects](#) include creating knit blankets, quilts, stuffed animals, Judaica, artwork, picture frames or cards.

Helpful Tips:

1. Research guidelines at local hospitals to find out if there are any restrictions on what items can be delivered to patients.
2. Gather supplies for your project. You can divide the list among volunteers, hold a fundraiser to pay for supplies or look for an individual or company to fund the activity.
3. Make sure all volunteers have the skills needed to complete the project. If they don't, invite an expert to come teach them.
4. Leave sufficient time for creativity in completing the project.

Follow-up:

1. Deliver the keepsakes.
2. Take pictures of patients enjoying the keepsakes to share with volunteers.

Variation:

1. Hold a [fundraiser](#), such as a read-a-thon, charitable event, or bake sale to raise money to buy special mementos for people who are sick.
2. Invite people who are sick to participate in the creation of the keepsakes.

Suggested Age:

Elementary School +

Activity 4: Race for Research

Description:

[Create a team](#) to take part in a national event to raise money for research on serious illnesses, such as [AIDSWalk](#), [Race for the Cure](#), or [March for Babies](#). For a list of other medical research efforts that are supported by national walk-a-thons, please click [here](#).

Helpful Tips:

1. Rally as large a team as you can gather and register for the cause in which you plan to participate on the organization's official website.
2. Send an e-mail to family members, community members and colleagues explaining your goals and asking for donations on your behalf.
3. Prepare yourself physically for the event with regular stretching and exercise.
4. Invite friends and family that are not on your team to cheer you on!

Follow-up:

Send a personalized thank-you note to each person who supported you, acknowledging the importance of their gift and sharing your total contribution to the cause.

Variation:

If you are not able to take part in an established walk-a-thon, [create one](#) for your local community and donate the proceeds to the cause of your choice.

Activity 5: Welcoming the *Shabbat* Queen

Description:

Plan a program at a local hospital to help patients celebrate [Shabbat](#). This [program](#) can include lighting *Shabbat* candles, singing traditional prayers and songs and joining in a communal meal of traditional *Shabbat* foods.

Helpful Tips:

1. Contact a local hospital to arrange the program. Discuss with them how food can be prepared that meets the individual dietary needs of patients.
2. Arrange for transportation and permission slips as needed.
3. Gather supplies such as candles, prayer books, *kippot* and other traditional items that may enhance the experience.
4. Review traditional songs, prayers and rituals with volunteers before the day of the event.
5. Prepare volunteers for the experience of working with those who are sick by discussing possible scenarios they might encounter.

Follow-up:

1. Instruct volunteers to write thank-you notes to the staff at the home for the elderly or hospital that you visited.
2. Provide an opportunity to debrief and discuss some of the highlights of the experience.
3. Encourage volunteers to continue their relationship with the patients they met by writing letters, sending cards or arranging additional visits.

Variation:

The activity can take place on Friday afternoon if it is too difficult to arrange for it to take place on *Shabbat*.

Suggested Age:
Elementary school +

Activity 6: Encourage Organ Donation

Description:

[Begin a campaign](#) in your neighborhood to increase the number of organ donors in your community. Invite a speaker, hold an informative parlor meeting, hang posters at popular local venues, and make phone calls or house calls to encourage friends and neighbors to join your effort.

Helpful Tips:

1. Organize a centralized event to share the importance of organ donation. This may be a panel discussion, speaker, or video/audio presentation.
2. Enlist participants to reach out to community members who could not attend the event. Create informative posters for volunteers to hang around town and prepare a few lines for volunteers to share with those whom they contact that explain the reason to donate organs and the process for arranging to do so.
3. Gather or create documents to distribute to friends and family that explain the process of organ donation.
4. Organ donation may be considered controversial among some Jewish legal authorities. Contact the [Halachic Organ Donor Society](#) for help in approaching this matter from a Jewish perspective.

Follow-up:

After some time has passed, contact those community members who agreed to become organ donors to ensure that they followed through on their pledge.

Variation:

Plan a similar activity to inform the community about other important health-related issues.

Expected Age:
Middle School +

Activity 7: Homeward Bound

Description:

Arrange for volunteers to visit community members who are homebound due to illness. Volunteers can use the opportunity to help those in need by cleaning their homes, cooking a meal, reading aloud, listening to memories, planting a garden or preparing for Passover.

Helpful Tips:

1. Arrange all the logistics of the day in advance, including transportation and permission slips.
2. Provide volunteers with any supplies that they might need, such as books, plants, food, etc. You can divide the list among volunteers, hold a fundraiser to pay for supplies or look for an individual or company to fund the activity.
3. Discuss with your volunteers what to expect, how to conduct themselves and what to do if they have any questions or need support.

Follow-up:

1. Allow students to debrief and share their experiences with one another.
2. Encourage students to maintain communication with their homebound neighbors, through letters, e-mails, phone calls or additional home visits.

Variation:

Volunteers may want to spend the time helping the elderly with grocery shopping or accompanying them on a local outing.

Suggested Age:

High School +

Activity 8: A Moment of Prayer

Description:

Arrange a special prayer service to pray for people who are sick. Choose a few excerpts from [Tehillim - Psalms](#) - (It is customary to recite chapters [6](#), [30](#), and [142](#)) and recite them along with the traditional [Prayer for the Sick](#). Read the names of as many community members as you know of who are in need of healing.

Helpful Tips:

1. Request all community members to share the names of anyone who is sick. If possible, find out the person's Hebrew name and mother's Hebrew name as it is traditional to pray for people who are ill in this manner.
2. Make a list of names where each individual is recorded as _____ the son/daughter of _____.
3. Set a specific time and location for the prayer service.
4. Teach volunteers to read the chapters of Psalms that you will recite, as well as the Prayer for the Sick and discuss the significance of their prayers.
5. Develop and actively maintain a list of people in the community who are in need of healing.
6. Listen to, teach, sing or highlight related songs, such as [Debbie Friedman's Mi Shebeirach \(The Prayer for Healing\)](#).

Follow-up:

You can make *Tehillim* - Psalms - a regular part of your prayer service or you can create a group that gathers regularly to pray for those in need. Continue to update the list of people who need prayers on a regular basis.

Variation:

1. You can request other members of your community to take part in the prayers by advertising your project throughout the community.
2. Each volunteer can agree to recite different chapters of *Tehillim* - Psalms - in honor of the sick so that more chapters are completed.
3. Psalms can be read in Hebrew or in English.
4. Contact colleagues in other communities across the country and arrange to hold prayer services at the same time.

Suggested Age:

Elementary School +

Activity 10: Give Respite to Others

Description:

Organize a service to help community members who are encountering difficult emotional times due to death, illness, loss of income or other hardships. Offer to help with errands, transportation, childcare, cleaning, food preparation and other regular necessities to provide extra time for relaxation during stressful periods in life.

Helpful Tips:

1. Set up a database of regular volunteers, including information on their general schedules, abilities and projects of preference.
2. Establish a system for those in need to sign up for services as needed and for you to contact volunteers as needed. Be particularly sensitive to the privacy of those who contact you.
3. Gently reach out to families in the community who may be in need of services to ease the difficulty that they may be experiencing in asking for help.
4. Prepare volunteers for the delicate situations that they may encounter and instruct them to respect the privacy of the individuals involved by abstaining from sharing their experiences with others.

Follow-up:

Maintain contact with those who have contacted you for help so they are not reticent to ask for additional help when they need it.

Variation:

Ask your local rabbi or a professional nurse, counselor, or social worker to serve as the contact person to limit the level of discomfort among those in need.

Suggested Age:
High School +

Activity 10: Advocate for Those in Need

Description:

Contact your representatives in the government to let them know how important community health is to you and encourage your family, friends and neighbors to do the same. You can share your opinions through letters, petitions, e-mail and phone calls.

Helpful Tips:

1. Keep informed on issues that are being discussed in Congress related to community health. For information on current bills in Congress and to find your local representatives, click [here](#).
2. Hold information sessions or blogs to keep your family and friends updated on current events related to community health.
3. When bills are being actively debated, organize a petition, letter writing campaign or lobby to Washington.

Follow-up:

Share your appreciation when representatives support your causes by writing or calling to say thank-you.

Variation:

Many aspects of community health are decided on a local level, so be sure to maintain contact with local representatives as well.

Suggested Age:
Elementary +

Activity 11: Talking through Difficult Times

Description:

Encourage your local synagogue, school or community center to [organize support groups](#) for community members to share difficult experiences that they are going through. Topics may range from dealing with infertility, eating disorders, alcoholism, depression, domestic violence and other issues that often remain unaddressed in Jewish communities.

Helpful Tips:

1. Find a professional therapist or social worker to organize and monitor these efforts.
2. Provide training to all volunteers involved in this effort to prepare them for challenges they may encounter and to ensure that they deal with all community members in a respectful way.

3. Maintain privacy and anonymity when requested.
4. Raise a special fund to cover the costs of these important programs.
5. Keep the size and format of groups flexible to meet the needs of the individuals who take part in them.
6. Contact your local [Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services](#) or [Federation](#) to see if they have a support group set up in your area.

Follow-up:

1. Constantly revisit the efforts that are being made to determine if they are meeting the needs of all community members and add additional groups as needed.
2. Maintain contact with past participants so they are not reticent to ask for additional help when they need it.

Variation:

If you do not have the resources to maintain several support groups, establish a hotline where a therapist or well-trained volunteers are always available to speak with those in need.

Suggested Age:

Adult, though high school students may be trained to work with their peers.

Activity 12: Healing through Judaism

Description:

Establish a [Jewish healing center](#) that encourages healing through Jewish tradition, community and spirituality. Programs may focus on the use of prayer, meditations, study, life-cycle ritual and stories to confront illness, loss or other difficult challenges in life.

Helpful Tips:

The [National Center for Jewish Healing](#) provides many resources and suggestions for [creating a Jewish Healing Center](#) in your area.

Variation:

If your community cannot support an entire organization dedicated to Jewish healing, hire [a pastoral counselor or congregational nurse](#) to work with members of your community.

Suggested Age:

All

Selected Related Websites

ACE: American Council on Exercise – www.acefitness.org – ACE is accredited as a certifying organization for personal trainers, fitness instructors and lifestyle/weight management consultants. Through its website, individuals can participate in online [continuing education courses](#) and [certification exams](#). In addition, this website provides excellent [information](#) on health and fitness.

American Dietetic Association – www.eatright.org – In addition to helpful [nutrition fact sheets](#) and [reading lists](#), this website provides information on [research](#), [advocacy](#), and [professional development opportunities](#) related to health and the health services industry. Some areas are restricted to members of the association.

Alliance for a Healthier Generation – www.healthiergeneration.org – Through a partnership between the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation, this organization is working to confront childhood obesity. Its website includes resources to empower children to make healthy decisions, educate parents to provide healthy alternatives for their children, advocate for school programs that support student health, and inform the country about the extensive threat that childhood obesity poses for our future.

BAM! Body and Mind – www.bam.gov – This government sponsored website provides information on health-related topics. Its graphics, music, sound effects and interactive activities are perfect for upper elementary and middle school students.

Bikur Cholim - www.bikurcholimcc.org – This organization supports *bikur cholim* (visiting the sick) programs in schools, synagogues and community groups. Its website offers [guidelines](#) for visiting the sick, suggestions for [starting a bikur cholim committee](#) in your organization or community, information on the organization's annual [conference](#) and a [directory](#) of existing *bikur cholim* programs across the country.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov – This website has an A-Z index that provides information on hundreds of topics related to health and wellness, including resources to help confront various [illnesses and conditions](#), guidelines for [physical activity](#), information on [vaccinations](#) and [statistics](#) on health-related issues.

Charity Mile – www.charitymile.com – This website lists causes that can be supported through national athletic events.

Chicago Center for Jewish Genetics Disorders – www.jewishgeneticscenter.org - This website includes [descriptions](#) of genetic disorders that are prevalent among Jews, [pamphlets](#) that describe genetic testing

and counseling procedures, an [overview of halachic \(Jewish law\) concerns](#) related to genetic testing and information on support groups for families with genetic disorders. It also offers a directory of [genetic screening and counseling programs](#) across the country.

Foundation for Wellness Professionals – www.doctorsspeakersbureau.com – This organization is an association of natural healthcare professionals who serve as motivational speakers, perform Wellness Days, blood pressure checks and spinal screenings and deliver educational workshops at no charge on health-related topics in their local communities.

Gift of Life Bone Marrow Foundation – www.giftoflife.org – Gift of Life coordinates bone marrow drives that save lives. Its website describes how you can join the bone marrow registry, organize a bone marrow drive in your community or donate cord blood.

Girlshealth - www.girlshealth.gov - This website is created especially for girls who are looking to understand more about their health and welfare. It touches on topics such as body, fitness, drugs, alcohol, relationships and illness. Additionally, it provides helpful resources and information to guide girls and young women towards healthy lifestyle choices.

Halachic Organ Donor Society - www.hods.org – The mission of this organization is to encourage organ donation among Jews. Its website provides information on the *halachic* (Jewish legal) and medical issues related to organ donation, along with a description of HODS involvement in various donation programs.

HealthierUS.gov – www.healthierus.gov – This website supports Americans' efforts to live a healthier life. It encourages better nutrition, increased physical activity, preventative care for illness and avoiding risky behavior.

Institute for Jewish Spirituality – www.ijs-online.org – This organization provides opportunities for Jewish professionals and laypeople to improve their spirituality and holistic health through meditation, yoga, prayer, text study, spiritual direction and spiritual community. Its website describes occasions for individuals to participate in the institute's programs and shares resources such as cds, study material, podcasts and reading lists.

Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons, and Significant Others - www.jacsweb.org – JACS is a volunteer organization that helps those who are dependent on alcohol and drugs in their recovery process. Its website includes information on how alcoholism and drug addiction affect the Jewish community, Jewish resources to confront addiction and listings of JACS meeting times. Its teen site includes facts about alcohol and drug use among teens and information on JACS Teen Network.

Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services – www.jbfcs.org – Located in New York City, this organization offers a variety of resources related to health and wellness. Its [directory](#) of several local programs that help support emotional health and healing including Big Brother/Big Sister, mental health programs, bereavement support groups, addiction support groups, and others. Though this organization directs its work toward families in New York, similar organizations can be found in other communities across the country. Most are accessible online under a search for “[Jewish Family Services](#)”.

Jewish Family Concerns – www.urj.org/jfc - A project of the Union for Reform Judaism, this webpage offers a variety of resources related to health and wellness. Its programs encourage [bikur cholim](#) (caring for the sick), confront [youth suicide](#) and other [mental health](#) issues, develop a Jewish approach to [eating disorders](#), respond to [domestic abuse](#) and support [AIDS](#) and [cancer](#) patients.

Kids Health – www.kidshealth.org – This website is a portal to three separate homepages that support healthy living for children and teens. The parents’ page offers information on pregnancy and parenthood that includes first aid basics, suggestions for maintaining a child’s emotional and physical health, and tips for dealing with a child’s illness. The children’s page provides age-appropriate guidance to nutrition and exercise, as well as games, recipes, and a medical glossary. The teens’ page expands its discussion on health to include sexual health, drugs and alcohol, jobs and dealing with illness.

Medline Plus - www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus - This government service is a comprehensive source of information related to health and wellness. It includes an extensive encyclopedia of health-related topics, news briefs, a glossary and a directory of local health providers. Its encyclopedia provides basic information on over 750 illnesses and conditions, as well as links to tools, organizations and websites that provide additional resources related to each topic.

Men’s Health Network – www.menshealthnetwork.org – The goal of this website is to provide men and their families with health prevention tools, advocacy opportunities, educational resources and support. It has links to databases, news reports and a speaker bureau that focuses on men’s health.

My Pyramid – www.mypyramid.gov - Providing an innovative twist to the food pyramid, this website helps individuals create personalized menu plans and activity guides. It provides resources for people of all ages, including kitchen activities for preschoolers, coloring activities for elementary schools students and weigh loss suggestions for adults.

National Center for Jewish Healing – www.ncjh.org – The NCJH advocates a Jewish approach to healing that includes prayer, study, service to others and

celebration of life. Its website shares a variety of Jewish spiritual [resources](#), lists [Jewish healing centers](#) across the country and describes “[best practices](#)” of effective healing programs.

National Center on Physical Activity and Disability – www.ncpad.org – Though this organization provides resources on nutrition and exercise that are useful to everyone, it is especially helpful for individuals with disabilities and illnesses. It offers guidance that is specifically oriented toward individuals with a variety of conditions and includes resources to other organizations that help individuals who are disabled or ill.

National Eating Disorders Association – www.nationaleatingdisorders.org – This website provides extensive information on eating disorders, with resources for [individuals](#) who are dealing with an eating disorder, [families and friends](#) who are concerned about others who are dealing with an eating disorder and [educators](#) who want to help prevent eating disorders.

National Mental Health Information Center – www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov – Sponsored by the U.S. government, this website provides information on a variety of [topics](#) related to mental health. It enables individuals to [locate](#) local health services, describes helpful program to improve mental health, and includes a list of [national toll-free hotlines](#) for people in need of support.

NEAT Solutions for Healthy Children – www.neatsolutions.com – This website is managed by a registered dietician who sells educational products related to nutrition. Among the items available are books for all ages, classroom resources, cookbooks, activity sets and curricular material.

Nutrition.gov – www.nutrition.gov – This government sponsored website offers information on meal planning, caloric intake recommendations and weight management. It has a [section](#) that describes how nutritional needs change depending on an individual’s life stage.

Nutrition Explorations - www.nutritionexplorations.org – Created by the National Dairy Council, this website offers tips for nutritionists, educators and parents on improving the nutrition of America’s youth. It also has a [kid’s page](#) with resources and activities for children.

Office on Women’s Health – www.womenshealth.gov – This is a government website with health-related tools and publications for women. It is useful for locating statistics on women’s health, related news articles and organizations that work to improve women’s health. The website has a special section designated for healthcare professionals that is aimed at improving women’s healthcare.

President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports – www.fitness.gov – Created by the U.S. government’s Department of Health and Human Services,

this website offers guidelines for maintaining active lifestyles, information on the work of the President's Council, links to publications on health and fitness and information on related government agencies.

PUAH Institute – www.puahonline.org – This organization provides resources for Jewish families who are encountering infertility. The website enables individuals to work with counselors and Rabbinic authorities who are sensitive to the needs of Jewish family who are having difficulty conceiving.

Sharsheret – www.sharsheret.org – Sharsheret is a network of cancer survivors who help Jewish women currently dealing with breast cancer. Its [programs](#) educate the community about the needs of breast cancer patients and connect cancer patients to one another and to survivors. Its website provides many [resources](#) for breast cancer patients.

The Awareness Center – www.theawarenesscenter.org – The Awareness Center provides resources for individuals in the Jewish community who have suffered sexual abuse, including domestic violence, rape or childhood abuse.

Tzelem – www.yu.edu/cjf/tzelem - This website describes Yeshiva University's program to improve the sexual health within the Orthodox community. It has information on the organization's "[Life Values and Intimacy](#)" curriculum that is currently being piloted in Jewish day schools, conferences that offer guidance to [chattan \(groom\)](#) and [kallah \(bride\)](#) teachers and upcoming efforts to confront the issue of sexuality among Orthodox [singles](#).

For an additional list of charities that work to improve the health and wellness of others, please see the [Areyvut website's Bnai Mitzvah project directory](#).

Sources from Jewish Texts

[Genesis 18:1](#)

Hashem appeared to him in the plains of *Mamre* while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day.

[Rashi on Genesis 18:1](#)

And *Hashem* appeared to him- To visit the sick: Said Rabbi *Chama* the son of *Chanina*: It was the third day from his circumcision, and the Holy One, blessed be He, came and inquired about his welfare.

[Deuteronomy 4:9](#)

Take heed to thyself and take care of your lives.

[Deuteronomy 4:15](#)

Be extremely protective of your lives...And you shall guard yourselves very well.

[Proverbs 15:4](#)

A healing tongue is a tree of life, but the devious one makes for a broken spirit.

[Talmud Sotah 14a](#)

G-d visited the sick; so should you visit the sick.

[Avot DeRabbi Natan 30](#)

Comforting mourners and visiting the sick and acts of kindness bring good to the world.

[Talmud Baba Metzia 30b](#)

Whoever visits the sick removes one sixtieth of his illness, while one who ignores a sick person hastens his death.

[Talmud Bava Kamma 100a](#)

“And you should show them the way” - This means acts of kindness; “in which they should go” – this is visiting the sick; “to it” – this is burial.

[Talmud Nedarim 39b](#)

Whoever visits the sick removes one sixtieth of his sickness.

[Talmud Nedarim 40a](#)

One who visits the sick causes them to live.

[Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Mourning 14:4](#)

Whoever visits the sick, it is as if he removes part of his sickness and makes it easier on him, while one who ignores a sick person is like one who sheds blood.

[Maimonides, Hilchot Daot 4:1](#)

Since maintaining a healthy and sound body is among the ways of God -- for one cannot understand or have any knowledge of the Creator if he is ill -- therefore he must avoid that which harms the body and accustom himself to that which is helpful and helps the body become stronger.

Maimonides, *Hilchot Daot*, 4:1

The body being healthy is of the ways of the Lord, for it is impossible to understand or know the knowledge of the Creator while unwell. Therefore, one should keep away from things which destroy the body, and accustom oneself to healthy and curing matters.

Maimonides, *Hilchot Daot* 4:1, 2, 14

It is *Darchai Hashem* to have a healthy body since it is most difficult to develop spiritually when one is sick. Therefore, one must refrain from activities and foods, which harm the Guf (body), and perform activities that strengthen the body. Exercise and a proper diet help preserve the Guf, while idleness and an unhealthy diet harm the Guf.

Maimonides, *Shmoneh Perakim*, *Pirkei Avoth*

The purpose of his body's health is that the soul finds its instruments healthy and sound in order that it can be directed toward spiritual growth.

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 32:1

Since a healthy and fit body is required by G-d, one cannot understand or know any matters from the knowledge of the Creator if one is ill. Therefore, one must keep oneself away from things which damage the body and accustom oneself to things which heal and make the body well. Therefore, it is written: 'And keep well your souls.'

Eliezer b. Isaac, *Orhot Hayyim*, c. 1050. (Hebrew Ethical Wills, JPS, 1926)

Visit the sick for sympathy lightens pain . . . Fatigue him not by staying too long . . . Enter cheerfully for his heart and eyes are on those who come in.

"Since maintaining a healthy and sound body is among the ways of God -- for one cannot understand or have any knowledge of the Creator if he is ill -- therefore he must avoid that which harms the body and accustom himself to that which is helpful and helps the body become stronger."

Thinking Out of the Box

“Make a Difference” Day 2009 is an excellent opportunity for your students to create a unique project that meets their interests. Below is a list of possible themes to use as a jumping-off point for their creative thinking. The planning unit included at the beginning of this resource guide is a helpful tool to structure original projects. In addition, please consult the 2009 ““A Kindness a Day”” Calendar for an index that links these themes to specific suggestions. We are happy to work with you on any idea that is of interest to your students. Please contact our staff at (201) 244-6702 or at info@areyvut.org for more information.

Themes:

- ❖ Love your fellow neighbor
- ❖ *Tzedakah* - Charity
- ❖ Community
- ❖ Character-Building
- ❖ Prayer
- ❖ Gratitude
- ❖ Israel
- ❖ Family
- ❖ Welcoming Guests
- ❖ The Power of Speech
- ❖ Fostering and Strengthening Relationships
- ❖ Learning and Teaching Torah
- ❖ [Honoring the Elderly](#)
- ❖ [Feeding the Hungry](#)
- ❖ Aiding Victims of Terror
- ❖ [Preserving the Environment](#)
- ❖ Spending Time with Others
- ❖ Collection Drives: Coats, shoes, food, clothing, toiletries, etc.
- ❖ Try something new
Remember: “Amateurs built the ark; professionals built the Titanic.”
- ❖ Spend time with your family
- ❖ Help Non-Natives learn English
- ❖ Teach Youngsters to Read
- ❖ Paint a Mural over Graffiti
- ❖ Donate books to the Library
- ❖ Donate clothes to the Salvation Army
- ❖ Baby-sit

Guidelines for Registering Your Project

- ❖ We ask that you please officially register your project so that we can continue to update you as new resources are developed. The registration form is available below or can be submitted electronically by visiting www.areyvut.org. The information that you submit on this form is for Areyvut's use only and will not be shared with any third parties.
- ❖ Please select a contact person for your project so that we can help guide your participation in "Make a Difference" Day 2009. We will include this contact person on all press releases so that the media has a point of contact.
- ❖ After you have completed your activity, we ask that you send us a brief blurb describing the experience that we can include on our website. We also ask that you include any pictures or project samples that give a sense of the difference that your actions made.
- ❖ **We thank you for your participation and hope that you will join us again next year! In the meantime, we hope that you can make use of the resources available to you on our website. Please contact us at (201) 244-6702 or at info@areyvut.org to arrange an Areyvut program at your synagogue or school.**

"Make A Difference" Day 2009 Registration Form

Name: _____
Title: _____
Institution: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____
Zip Code: _____ Phone Number: _____
E-Mail: _____
Add E-Mail to Monthly Newsletter? _____
Project Title: _____
Time & Date of the Event: _____
Target Audience: _____
(Please continue on next page.)

