

Staying Connected

A Jewish Care Interact Guide

Staying connected

Are you into mental challenges like chess and crossword puzzles? Perhaps you want to find out more about your family by researching your ancestry. And once you've done the research, maybe you'd like to create your own memory book, digital photo album or audio memoir. Do you finally have the time to write down (or gather up) those treasured family recipes and make a cookbook of a lifetime? These kinds of activities can be great family projects that can bring everyone together.

And if you really want to exercise your creative options to their fullest, you can express yourself through the arts. Whether it's a sketchbook, paintbrush, diary, musical instrument, or another "crafty" outlet, this may be the perfect time to let out the inner artist in you.

It's all about staying active and connected.

Clubs and groups

It is never too late to make new friends, grow your social circles and meet new people.

Activity-based clubs

If you're interested in getting out there and getting physically or mentally active (or both!), then here are some options you can explore.

Book clubs

This is a good option if what you're looking for is some inspiration on new reading material. It's especially nice when you make friends who look forward to discussing themes and ideas...maybe over a nice cup of tea or a glass of wine!

Book clubs are really easy to join as they're so popular. There are usually a few groups, even in remote areas.

There are several websites available that will offer listings of all kinds of reading groups. Some can be quite specific in their focus, such as crime genres or classical literature, but you'll probably find that most groups are general in their content, and often members take turns choosing titles for upcoming meetings.

[Reading Groups for Everyone](#) has a great online directory where you simply need to type in your postcode and a very extensive list of nearby groups will be offered to you.

You could also log on to a general online search engine (such as [google.co.uk](https://www.google.co.uk)) and type in key words such as "book club north London" and see what comes up. Contact any club you plan to join ahead of time to make sure they are still active and meeting when and where their directory listing says. Also, to stay safe, only meet at a public place, not at someone's house, unless you are sure you know and fully trust the people attending.

Alternatively, think about starting your own book club. If you have a few people in your local community who share your interest in literature, why not figure out a way to get together regularly to discuss a chosen book?

You could also contact your local library, synagogue or community centre to see if they'll help you to recruit members. Just ask if you can put up flyers that advertise your group.

For more help on things to consider when starting your own book club take a look online.

Bowls

If you're feeling sporty, then a bowls club is a great option. It's a very sociable activity, although you will need a certain level of physical fitness if you wish to take part. You may discover it's a wonderful way to spend time outdoors, as most of the bowling greens across the UK are based in parkland. You can find a good list of bowls clubs along with a map of locations via the bowls.org.uk website. Another good directory is on the Find a Club portion of the Bowls England website. There you can simply type in your postcode, and you will get options for clubs nearby.

Bridge

A game of memory, communication and strategy, bridge is also a great place to meet new people and make friends—and sometimes enemies!

Non-Jewish bridge clubs

[Acol Bridge](#) is London's most famous teaching club and provides a complete bridge education, including classes and supervised sessions for all levels—from beginners through to advanced players.

[Andrew Robson Bridge Club](#) invites all to join this group, whether you are a complete beginner or a skilled player.

Chess

A game of strategy and cunning, chess is very competitive, but it also keeps the mind active! Here is a list of chess clubs throughout the UK:

- [Chess Corner](#) is a website that offers a good general overview of chess clubs around the UK.
- The [English Chess Federation](#) has a detailed directory of chess clubs and groups around England.

Discussion groups

If you're interested in joining a group to discuss current affairs (or other more general subjects), think about contacting your local council or community centre.

Knitting

Never thought you'd pick up those old knitting needles again? Well this sociable activity has once again become a very popular pastime!

Most knitting groups will require a certain level of ability (although some accept absolute beginners), but you can always embark on a short course first to get to know the basics.

Here are some directories that list groups around the UK:

- [UK Handknitting](#): In addition to explaining why you should belong to a group, this website features information on joining workshops and self-help videos.

Theatre

Always had a penchant for a live performance? Whether it's going to see a play or getting on stage yourself, there's a whole world of opportunity out there in theatreland!

Attending shows

Trips to the theatre are great to take with friends, because there are several websites where you can buy discounted tickets for groups. A couple of reputable ones to try might be:

[Groupon](#) is a website dedicated to offering discounts on all kinds of experiences, from big London West End productions, to circus shows and cabaret. You'll find events all over the UK.

[Ticketmaster](#) is another well known website with discounted group tickets for a wide range of shows.

If you like the idea of going on some regular theatre outings with a local group, the best way to get involved is to contact your nearby synagogue, community centre or even your local library. If you can't find anything through these avenues, you could always try asking whether anyone is able to set a group up, and perhaps you could help them to get it started.

Performing in amateur dramatics

If it's being on the stage that really takes your fancy, then have a look into joining a local amateur dramatics group. If you live in a large city, it's likely there will be a nice variety of groups that meet near where you live. However, in more remote areas you might have to do a little more research to find something. If you don't have any success, you could even consider starting your own!

Definitely take a look through local newspapers and ask at nearby community centres and libraries. These will often post flyers for amateur dramatic productions in your area.

Sometimes pubs hire out their upstairs spaces. You can often see flyers displayed on windows, so keep an eye out.

Once you have identified a group, simply contact them directly. Ask if they're recruiting new members or if they're happy for you to come along to a rehearsal. You can easily find contact details for them via an email address or phone number on a poster. Many even have their own websites.

There are also some nice websites with directories to local amateur dramatics clubs around the UK. For example, Drama Groups or the Amateur Theatre Directory both have pages with links to groups. But do make sure to contact any group you are interested in before dropping by (just to make sure they are definitely still active).

As previously mentioned, always contact the club you plan to join before visiting to make sure it is still running. Online directories rely on administrators to keep an eye on this, and they don't always check information is up-to-date on a regular basis.

If you can't find a club near you, why not consider starting your own? Contact your local synagogue or community centre and see if they'll help to provide you with a space to meet...and get busy!

Preserving your legacy

Do you sometimes wish you could hear friendly voices of family members from the past? Do you remember an uncle telling stories of the war? Maybe you recall your grandmother sharing how she and her sisters used to make all their own dresses and hats—even their own wedding dresses! Of course they never bought any clothes in the shops.

Can you recall instructions on how to make chopped liver or concoct some secret formula for home remedies to get rid of coughs and colds?

Many of us never get around to recording these voices or memoirs. Sadly, so many stories are lost. In almost every home, there are stacks of boxes of photos of family members and friends. The faces can barely be identified or remembered, but each picture tells a life story. It may be a story that shows what it was like to experience rationing and frugal living, or it could be one that captures the experience of growing up in the 1950s.

There are also often special handwritten recipe books filled with cuttings and jottings from many decades. These books will be part of your legacy; they are books to be treasured. What seemed like average, normal and daily activities at the time will be part of history for your children.

It is never too early to think about how to keep these memories alive. Best of all, we are lucky to live in an age where the resources are endless for preserving our legacy. Check out these articles for some general ideas on how to preserve your legacy:

- [6 Ways to Preserve Your Family's Living Legacy, by Jeff Anderson with Senior Living Blog](#)
- [Other Creative Ways to Capture Your Legacy, by Margarita Tartakovsky, associate editor at Psych Central](#)

Now that we've whet your appetite, here are some instructions to help you get started.

Write or record your story

Who were your parents? Where did they meet? Where did you grow up? What are your early memories?

Scan through the different periods of your life—childhood, teenage years, early adulthood and so on—then highlight the special moments, incidents or experiences that you would like your family to remember. Perhaps you have a message to pass on about what you have learned along life's journey. Your memories are a personal gift to your loved ones and those who will remain behind.

For ideas on writing your memoirs go to

- [Leaving a Written Legacy, by Margarita Tartakovsky, associate editor at Psych Central](#)
- [Leaving Your Enduring Legacy on EasyFamilyHistory.com](#)

[If you prefer the idea of creating a voice recording of your life history, then StoryCorps could be for you.](#) You can record an interview directly onto this website, where it will become part of the StoryCorps library. Available for all to access on the web, StoryCorps is an amazing collection

of personal stories and histories. There is even a free StoryCorps app you can use to create your own treasure trove of memories.

If you want to keep it personal, then sit down with an old friend or relative and interview each other. Or ask some family members to interview you and record your memories.

Is that still too formal? Then simply have a conversation about your memories with someone who is interested in listening. Just make sure to have a list of questions you'd like to cover.

Digital photobooks

Do you have piles of photos at home that never made it into albums? What about hundreds of digital photographs on cameras, computers and ipads that are rarely looked at? Sifting through the photos and selecting the best may be a mammoth task, but it's one well worth the effort, especially if they are then made into a beautiful, hard-backed photobook.

There are several websites to help you make your photobook. Try Blurb.com for a web-based option. If you have an Apple computer, there is an [Apple website dedicated to photos books](#). Read more about [The best and worst photobook making sites for you in this article by Jessica Dolcourt from Cnet](#).

Alternatively, a combination of photographs and recorded commentary can [bring your photographs to life through the Legacy Stories website](#). Simply upload your photographs and record something about them. Where were you? What was happening? Who are the people in the photograph? Don't let those memories fade with the photos.

Personal Desert Island Discs

If you are a fan of BBC Radio 4, you will be familiar with the Desert Island Discs programme, where well-known people select a few pieces of music that they would be happy to listen to over and over again—if they were stranded on a desert island. Music may speak louder than words, and we all have our favourite pieces that remind us of certain times in our lives or have special meaning for us. Sharing your memories through music and recording your thoughts as you hear the pieces can be a beautiful gift to leave for your family.

The journalist Jonathan Freedland made a Desert Island Discs memoir with his sister Fiona, who died in May 2014 at the age of 50. For inspiration, you can [listen to Freedland's Desert Island Disc, How My Sister Said Goodbye](#).

Scrapbooking

Despite its origins in 15th century England (when scrapbooks were referred to as commonplace books), scrapbooking is a popular hobby in the United States. If you have a creative flair it may well suit you. Rifle through old newspaper clippings, theatre programmes and mementoes you have kept from years gone by and put together a colourful visual memoir of your life. There are even digital options too.

What a treat for your family!

Bury a box

Put some of your special possessions into a box, add some personal notes, seal it up and wait for it to be discovered! Keep it a secret, and know that your family will have a wonderful surprise when they find it one day.

A family cookbook

Perhaps over the years you have collected recipes in a well-used, food stained notebook. Some may be family favourites while others were only attempted on special occasions.

Why not bring these together for future reference in your own personal cookbook, and call it something like, "Just like your Mother used to make"?

Making conversation

When was the last time you had a meaningful conversation? You know the kind—a discussion that leaves you feeling close to a person through sharing experiences or learning something new and interesting.

The best conversations are usually the ones that get you thinking and make you feel connected. And if you want to build deep, meaningful relationships (especially with people of all ages and backgrounds), a good chat can be a great way to start.

How to get the conversation started

One of the best ways to connect through discussion is to go beyond simple small talk. If you want to take the conversation to a deeper level, you can frame your question in a certain way. For example, instead of saying "How was your day?" try something like "What did you do today?"

By changing your question slightly, you're inviting the other person to offer more in-depth information that could lead to other discussions. You might find out that they missed their bus, which made them furious. Or maybe you'll learn that they did well on a project, and this made them proud.

From this information alone you could discover something more personal, and in return, you can exchange information of your own. Maybe you despise public transport, so you'll have this in common. Or perhaps you'll find out the successful project was something you think is interesting too. Sometimes all it takes is a little tweak to your approach and how you ask a question.

Need some more inspiration?

Here are a few topics that might help you on your way to interesting conversations. Try some of these discussion starters with friends, family members or carers.

- Do you have a favourite memory? Would you share it with me?
- Can you remember anything that was so funny you couldn't stop laughing for ages?
- Who is your favourite sports personality, and why?
- What was the most memorable event you ever attended? What made it so memorable?

- What hobbies do you have? Can you describe them to me or even show me how to do them too?
- Where do you like going with your friends? What do you do when you go there?
- What sort of films do you like and why? Could we watch one of these together?
- Tell me about your favourite Jewish festival; what do you like so much about it and how do you celebrate it?
- What's your favourite Jewish food? Have you ever tried to make it yourself?
- Have you ever been to Israel? If so, what did you think of it?
- If you go to religious services, how do you feel when you are there? Do you enjoy it?
- Are you any good at telling jokes? Can you tell me one of your favourites?
- Who are some of your favourite singers? Would you play me some of their music?
- What's your favourite dance move? Can you show me or teach me how to do it?
- What were your favourite subjects at school? Do you still enjoy them or use any of the skills you learned?
- Were you ever on a sports team? What was one of the highlights for you?
- Do you like animals? Do/did you have any pets?

These topics might help you enrich your relationship and create endless possibilities for the future. Good luck, and happy chatting!

Intergenerational activities

In the words of Cultural Anthropologist Margaret Mead, "Somehow we have to get older people back close to growing children if we are to restore a sense of community, a knowledge of the past and a sense of the future." It's with that philosophy in mind that we welcome you to the world of intergenerational (or multigenerational) activities!

As Mead points out, participating in activities with people of all ages—also known as age integration—can be good for the mind, the body and the soul. These activities promote exercise, a positive mental attitude and general good vibes for everyone.

At the most basic level, Conversations between generations can be a great way to broaden horizons. For example, you can share your history and preserve your legacy while your younger companion

can compare observations of modern society. You can even use technology together to look back on Jewish life in the UK. The end result is that you both learn and grow from the exchange. There are several different ways to explore your multigenerational options. You can get involved in these of kinds activities fairly easily.

Local intergenerational activities

Let's start out by taking a look at connections you can make right in your neighbourhood. The following ideas can help you get started.

Volunteer in your community

Local schools, libraries and religious organisations appreciate volunteers of all ages. These organisations usually need help reading to youngsters, playing basic games with children, chaperoning day trips to museums or supporting other activities that are offered. There's even a term—grand mentoring—if you volunteer to teach specific skills or help with homework on a regular basis.

[In the Saga article entitled, "Intergenerational learning takes off,"](#) Danny Scott writes, "...students with older adult tutors make some 60% more progress in critical reading skills. Older adults who regularly volunteer with children, meanwhile, have been found to burn 20% more calories, experience fewer falls and perform better in memory tests."

And if you volunteer at a charitable organisation like an animal shelter or food bank, you'll probably meet people of all ages who share your interests. To get started as a volunteer, you usually need some brief training and a criminal records check (once known as a CRB—now referred to as a DBS check). Most of the time you'll find that both organisers and recipients will appreciate any time you can contribute.

Plan activities with a family member or friend

If you have younger family members or friends nearby, there are many activities you can plan to do together. These experiences, like starting a garden or joining a theatre club, can be an enjoyable way to build stronger bonds while learning about a new (or shared) hobby.

Staying organised or asking your companion to help makes it a treat for everyone. All you have to do is think of a few appealing ideas and then get to work making the fun happen.

- **Join a class in your local area** (crafts or cooking are always great places to start). You can often find information by looking online or by calling your local authority directly.
- **Visit museums or local historical sites.** If you're interested in exploring art, you can get a quick overview of Art appreciation before you head with your companion to the nearest museum or noteworthy site. These places can be a good activity option because they tend to have toilets, wheelchair access and food. You can easily find information about accessibility on the Internet. For example, [Visit London has a useful page called Top 20 accessible London attractions.](#)
- **Attend a play, movie or concert.** Dr Gerald Lazarus, an 80-year-old retired physician states, "In my

past life, I was not much of a theatre buff, but going to a show with my granddaughters is one of my absolute favourite activities. Watching their joy and sharing an experience is priceless. After we see the show we have a shared experience that provides easy conversation and a window into how my beautiful granddaughters see the world.” Best of all, theatre and concert venues also tend to have toilets, wheelchair access and food.

- **Start or join a book group.** If you enjoy reading, discussion groups are extremely interesting when the members of the group have different perspectives. This option is a bonus because it can be a recurring event with minimal effort.

- **Schedule technology teaching time with any young people you know.** Ask a young person to help you with managing your phone, iPad, desktop computer or other device so you can find out ways to tackle any issues you may have. Using technology is second nature to the younger generation, and it is easy to find someone to help you; most of the time, all you have to do is ask. Zoe Goldstein volunteers at the Penfold Community Hub in Marylebone. She goes once a month to help the older attendees with their technology needs. Goldstein says, “I helped one woman (who loved music) with her playlist and earphones. Now she can enjoy music whenever she wants without imposing it on those around her.” Grand intergenerational adventures

According to a recent survey, more than half of families with young children plan “gramping” holidays—holidays that include one grandparent (or more). As a family experience, multigenerational adventures not only bring people together to create and share memories, they can also help to save costs.

It is easy to plan a fulfilling holiday for family members of various ages and interests, even if some of the people in the group have physical limitations. Active offerings can be selected by those who enjoy them, while other holidaymakers can opt to socialise or even just experience some quiet time if they prefer.

Practical planning

It may help to join a tour or a cruise where an itinerary has been pre-planned and where there will be plenty of staff on hand to assist you in navigating any potentially tricky situations that travelling can sometimes impose. Furthermore, if you are not up for an excursion, you can relax back at your hotel or cabin while your younger companions enjoy an adventure. Either way, you are both still sharing an experience, and you’ll have plenty of topics to discuss afterwards over dinner!

Finding assistance

Make sure to contact your travel agent, airline or train operator for assistance on anything to do with disability requirements. It’s important to plan ahead if you will require any help on the day you travel. Also, think about contacting your hotel so they can also be prepared to accommodate your needs.

