



## **10 Ways to Support Your (Overworked) Team**

### **1. Model, support and respect boundaries**

In a time when so many of us are working at home, parenting at home and living our full lives 24/7 in one house, it is imperative that adults and children create the spaces for different ways of being. Encourage and support your teams to indicate when their “office hours” are and only expect them to be available at those times. Using an out of office assistant may be helpful as it lets people know when it is reasonable to expect a response while creating a clear method for educational leaders to be “on” or “off” duty in ways that support their physical and emotional health.



Image source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/49328558389282268/>

### **2. Create weekly, meaningful check-ins**

The key here is *meaningful*. Planning for this can be difficult but it's imperative. There are two kinds of check-ins that we encourage:

*A personal check in:* How are you on a personal level? On a professional level? What is working? What is challenging? Keep notes and follow up! Make sure to check in with your students as well. Ask them how they're doing both emotionally and in terms of learning. Ask the teachers what they are learning and how they are growing from this process as well as any additional support they need. For example, check this out [here](#)

*Group check ins:* What have we learned, as a group, about what is working and what is not? What tips do we have from each other and from the field? What questions do people have and what supports would be of use?

*Important to note:* These virtual meetings should last NO MORE than 30 or 40 minutes so plan them well. Make sure people know how to use the messaging systems on their devices, as well.



Photo by [Andrew Neel](#) on [Unsplash](#)

### 3. **Utilize community resources effectively and thoughtfully**

In each community, there are amazing groups of people working to help; from shopping and cooking for others to sending meaningful thank you notes. Find clarity around what your team needs, what they will find meaningful and what is available in the community. Connect people in ways that they will find helpful.

Can your board members send thank yous to each educator working from home?

Check in with your guidance team to see if there are specific students and teachers for whom being at home is not a safe place and check in on those people regularly. For students of concern, make sure you and your team documents and shares internally with pertinent individuals how they are doing.

Be mindful that providing food 24/7 for a family staying at home may be a huge financial burden for some so reach out to your community to see what financial supports may be available for

your teachers, especially those who may need to hire help to cover for their own kids who are at home while they are on teaching virtually.

For teachers who have immune challenged family members or who are themselves, this time poses much more urgent potential anxiety. Make sure they are getting the emotional support they need. Can your community offer virtual therapy or support groups?



Image source: <https://www.clipart.email/download/2876782.html>

#### 4. **When you can, laugh!**

Study after study shows how laughter is often the best medicine. It is not only about gratitude during trying times, we must find ways to be together even when we are physically apart. This can be a difficult thing to manage. There are so many sensitivities, so I encourage you to know your audience well and consider ways to have fun in ways that are sensitive and inclusive.

Does your school have a sunshine committee or some sort of group who organizes fun things? If so, now is a good time to engage this group, whether it be celebrating a school spirit day and asking students and staff to send in photos of them wearing school apparel or a competition for best hats on screen, finding ways to be together in joy and celebration is as important as teaching ideas and sharing knowledge. This is a life skill. Ask your teachers to share the best line of the week or hold a caption contest for a picture and offer a prize for the one that gets the most votes. Share a daily riddle, bad joke, pun, knock knock joke of the day, etc. Very important, let's not forget to celebrate birthdays!



Photo by [Pineapple Supply Co.](#) on [Unsplash](#)

### 5. **Differentiate for Teachers!**

Differentiation is not only for kids. Offer different modalities for teachers to connect, engage and participate in activities. From how they teach to how they assess and check for understanding, teachers also need opportunities to show what they are learning in many ways. Encourage teachers to take care of themselves in ways that best support them, from journal writing and reflections to photography, yoga, exercise, meditation and dance.. Maybe even a competition, like [this podcast challenge from NPR](#).



Image source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Think\\_different](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Think_different)

### 6. **Spiritual Support Matters**

For so many of us, the joy of praying and engaging in religious practice as a community is crucial to our identity. Now that so many synagogues are closed, this religious and social outlet creates a huge vacuum. How can we work to help people find other ways to connect? In this department there are many resources. Start simply with inspirational quotes from religious mentors, share links to shiurim and classes or perhaps ask your own team members or community rabbis to offer short online classes.. Ask your team what topics they would want to learn about and from whom?



Photo by [Tincho Franco](#) on [Unsplash](#)

7. **It's okay to take breaks and encourage creativity**

For those who do not yet know about Google's 80/20 policy, the short version is that Google has a mandate that their employees must spend 20% of their time pursuing outside projects connected to work, but not directly connected to any projects they are working on now. Encourage your team to stretch their creative muscles and explore projects, topics, etc that they have been curious about and to spend a little time each week learning about it. Create a forum for them to share what they are learning!



Photo by [Riccardo Annandale](#) on [Unsplash](#)

8. **MOVE! I'm serious.**

Not out of the community, but move your body. Staring at the screen for 8 hours a day, or even for more than an hour at a time is hard on your body. Set a timer to remind you to stand, stretch and move. Model this for your teachers and do this during a virtual meeting. Send links to stretches and movements people can do inside or go outside and take a walk. Lots of gyms, yoga studios, meditation apps, etc are offering free online classes. Don't forget to mind your posture!

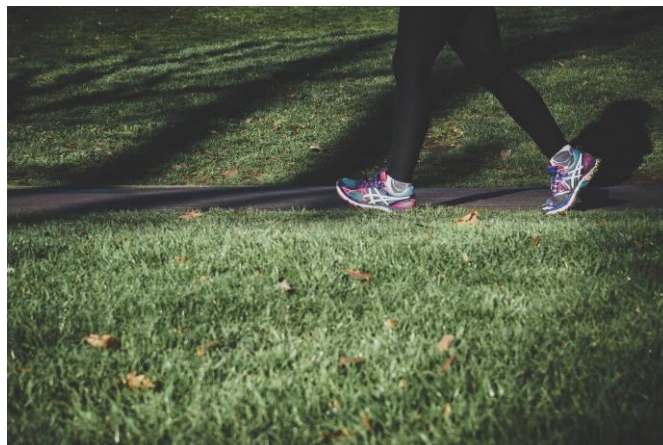


Photo by [Arek Adeoye](#) on [Unsplash](#)

#### 9. **Send notes of appreciation**

Write two notes (emails) of thanks and gratitude every day. Write to your community rabbi and board president. Write to your teachers and assistants, to your PTA volunteers and to your maintenance staff. Write to your spouse and kids. Write to your own teachers who inspired you to get into this work in the first place. Use this space to write short and honest and meaningful thank you's. Write from the heart; be real and genuine. Only write two a day so you do not get burned out. See what happens; it's magical.



Image source: [https://classroomclipart.com/clipart-view/Clipart/Email/you-have-email-on-computer-monitor-clipart-93017\\_jpg.htm](https://classroomclipart.com/clipart-view/Clipart/Email/you-have-email-on-computer-monitor-clipart-93017_jpg.htm)

#### 10. **Create your own teacher team 'YELP' Review List**

Ask your faculty members to respond to the prompt: "Today I tried \_\_\_\_, and it was \_\_\_\_" Maybe they want to "review" a virtual teaching technique or a book they're reading, a new show started on Netflix. What have you read or seen that made you think, smile, or reflect and why would you (or would you not) recommend this for your team?



Image source: <https://marketingbitz.com/how-to-get-5-star-reviews-for-your-small-business/>

#### ***Bottom line:***

You can not anticipate what your team wants, but you can start by thinking about what you would appreciate from your team during this trying time. Be creative and invite your team to try

something new and model various ways of approaching things. Actively engage in the work of being there for your team, support each other and celebrate your successes together.

Please let us know if you have more suggestions and ideas to add to our list by reaching out to [Rachel Dratch](#)!