



## A Global Hub for Building Community Resilience

Global webinars are our bread and butter, but there was something novel during the one conducted in the wake of the Covid 19 pandemic. In the past, when we gathered to support a community in crisis, we focused on a specific matter be it a war in Israel or Ukraine, a terror incident in France, an earthquake in Mexico or a hurricane in Houston. This time, the 23 Jewish Community Center leaders from around the world shared a similar challenge; the untrodden grounds of dealing with an invisible new virus that wreaks havoc all over the world.

Our goal was to present lessons learned from a senior expert but perhaps, more importantly, to create a safe space for sharing challenges and concerns and for learning from each other how to cope, innovate and strengthen communities.

We invited **Talia Levanon**, the Executive Director of the [Israel Trauma Coalition](#) to speak about the psycho-social individual and community aspects of the COVID19 pandemic. Talia spoke eloquently about some principals that can help leading a community in times of crisis. Some recommendations may have seemed obvious but discussing them in the context of current day to day realities was extremely relevant.

We heard a moving personal testimony from **Claudia de Benedetti**, Board of Trustee member of Maccabi World Union who resides in Turin, Italy. She spoke about her personal experience of being locked down. She described the frustrations of a medical system that is unprepared to handle the magnitude of cases, where doctors sometimes have to play God and choose who will live and who will die. She also complimented the Jewish Community of Italy that provides on line hourly educational sessions to the children who are confined to their homes. When asked, what would you have done differently? She answered: to consider the situation a serious matter from the start. She described how at the

beginning many people thought it was a joke or were defying the need to stay away from crowded places. This message was especially relevant to countries that were just beginning to feel the brunt of the pandemic. We heard and compared the situation in Ukraine, Poland, USA, Mexico, Greece, Italy and Israel. We marveled at the problem-solving solutions that each one had to offer.

Some recommendations that resonated well were:

1. Preparing for a long haul and developing a thought-out plan
2. Utilizing the social network that the Jewish community has built over the years to look after the elderly, the lonely, the marginalized and the sick.
3. Trying to keep as much as possible a routine, with anchors of meaningful experiences, be it personally or for community members
4. Providing support to the community but also not shying away from asking for help when needed
5. Mobilizing volunteers and engaging them in communications and programming
6. Letting members of various age groups design their own solutions and finding out how they would like to continue their lives
7. And for all those who need to cancel or postpone activities and events that were planned for a long time- to know that you are being responsible and sensible. Instead of feeling disappointment, know that you are caring for the health of your loved ones, members, lay leaders and staff.

There was a lively discussion on how to continue the operation of the institutions when parts or all are closed; how to provide on line programming, what to do when income drops down, when staff is home bound and the list went on. There were some very good suggestions on how to address the situation; from online study programs, to virtual meetings of various cohort groups, to visiting the elderly at their homes and also a request to share programs in the future. A great idea from the JCC of Warsaw was an online “*shuk*”, or time bank, where members may give an hour of their expertise on line and receive an hour in return. There was a lot of interest to find out what are the guidelines and procedures in each community and we are going to gather and share this data and try to provide it in several languages.

At [JCC Global](#) we are mobilizing all our resources to provide and facilitate this important exchange:

1. Launching the **Dr. Mark Ramer JCC Global Hubs** starting with a virtual global Hub on **Building Community Resilience**.
2. Accessing a wide array of opportunities for virtual study/engagement/recreation/support via our affiliate organizations and many partners
3. Continuing group webinars and personal consultations
4. Assembling a body of knowledge of best practices and guidelines that can be shared and duplicated by all

We promise to enable/ facilitate/ connect/ consult/ initiate/ manage/ supervise/document/train/provide content and continue to lead the thriving network of more than 1000 JCCs and we offer to open our doors to anyone who may benefit from these resources. **Menachem Revivi**, JCC Global chair, often says that the strength of a chain is measured by its weakest link. Let's ensure not to leave any weak link in the global network of Jewish communities the world over.

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