

## TIPS FOR VISITING

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*Bikur Cholim* visits may take place anywhere. Mentally prepare for the environment you will be entering— the sights, sounds or smells you may encounter.

Know what you can do, and offer only what you can.

If a person declines a visit, then a phone call or a get-well card conveys caring and you can try to visit later.

Prepare yourself to be present and attentive.

- Familiarize yourself with the person's condition.
- Center yourself. Leave your personal concerns at the door.
- Maintain eye contact and concentrate on the person you are visiting.

Give control as much as possible – ask permission of the person first before you do for them.

- Touch is a powerful gesture and should be done with permission.

Let the person take the lead in conversation.

Keep conversations centered on the patient. Acknowledge their feelings with statements reflecting their comments.

Respect and follow the person's lead.

- Sometimes the person being visited may prefer to talk about neutral or external topics, such as the weather, current events or sports, rather than personal experiences and feelings.

Be aware of how you empathize.

- Express your caring by listening and being attentive.
- Avoid clichés such as “hang in there,” “don’t worry,” or “it’s all for the best.”
- Don’t be too quick to say, “I know how you feel.” You might not. We all experience things subjectively and such statements might be seen as dismissive of a patient’s feelings.
- Unless you get a strong indication that you and the person you are visiting do indeed share similar feelings, it may be more productive to say, “I don’t know how you feel but I am here listening.”

Figure out how you can be of tangible assistance.

- Drop off a newspaper, magazine or book.
- Write a kind note or send a thoughtful card.
- Bring a glass of water or help prepare a meal.
- Straighten a blanket or fluff up a pillow.

Think about simple things you can do on the visit.

- Widen their world with news from outside.
- Help them walk around their room, or further, if possible, and if medically permitted.
- Look around the room/house for cues to engage in conversation.
- Use humor while remaining sensitive to the person's situation. (“He who laughs, lasts.”)

### **A basic tenet of *Bikur Cholim*: Confidentiality – A “sacred trust”**

Those who are being visited need to know that those who visit them will keep the content of their meetings confidential. Respect patients' right to privacy. Keep information about them confidential. Emphasize this as an essential value and practice of *Bikur Cholim*.