



MAKING PEACE SPACES

Sukkot is a weeklong Jewish festival following Yom Kippur, observed by the building of and living (eating and sleeping) in a temporary tent-like structure called a sukkah and the waving of **arba minim**, or “four kinds” of plants, including a citron (etrog), a palm frond (lulav), three myrtle twigs (hadassim) and two willow trigs (aravot). These traditions symbolize a reconnection with nature as a means of recognizing the many ways God provides for and protects us after the intense experience of Yom Kippur. The holiday also highlights Jewish unity, as our collective gatherings in temporary dwellings remind us we are all cared for equally by God, and the waving of the arba minim symbolizes bringing together the many personalities that make up the Jewish community of Israel.

Of course, the concept of recognition of our unity and God’s protection is not a unique one. Every Friday night, in our Kabbalat Shabbat liturgy, we even reference Sukkot when saying:

ופרש עלינו סכת שלוםך

Spread over us a sukkat (shelter) of your peace.

The difference is that throughout the year, when we think about that **sukkat shlomecha** — that **shelter of peace** — it can feel distant and intangible. When we build a sukkah and wave the arba minim on Sukkot, however, we make those ideas tangible, actively drawing on that shelter and unity to bring peace into our lives. The sukkah is a tangible representation of God’s love and care for us, and within that love and care, we can wave the arba minim, bringing every member of the community closer together.





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This balance between building these dwellings of peace for ourselves and bringing different members of the community together reminds us self-care and community care go hand-in-hand. We need self-care to help us build that sukkah of peace, reminding us God is protecting us. Only when we have the stability of self-care can we begin to support others.

Different areas of our lives might require self-care, whether physical, psychological, emotional, social, professional, environmental, spiritual or financial. Examples of self-care include:

- Going for walks (physical)
- Seeing a therapist (psychological)
- Doing something enjoyable to improve your mood (emotional)
- Visiting with friends over coffee or a meal (social)
- Taking a lunch break (professional)
- Decluttering your home (environmental)
- Attending services on Friday night (spiritual)
- Budgeting for expenses that bring you joy (financial)

Thinking about shelters and the roles they play in our lives, is there a shelter of peace we can build for ourselves throughout the year? What does that shelter look like when being a caregiver for someone living with a mental health diagnosis? How can we take the love and care from our individual shelters of peace and share them with our communities to support caregivers and their loved ones?





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ACTIVITY - BUILD A SUKKAH FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

For each of the three walls, identify one self-care practice you can take on in one of the eight areas.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____



For each of the “four kinds,” identify four things you and your community can do for one another.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

