

Foreword

Rabbi Kenneth Brander

The David Mitzner Dean, Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future

The *bracha* of *Yotzer ha'Adam*, creator of humankind, recited underneath the *chuppah* when an individual gets married, rather than at the time when they are born, highlights the additional level of *shleimut*, completion, achieved in our creation when an individual succeeds in finding their life partner. Nowhere but here, at Yeshiva University, are there roshei yeshiva, academics, s'ganei mashgichim, researchers, rabbeim, scholars, relationship-building experts, dedicated connectors and event planners all working tirelessly toward the same goal of *yotzer ha'adam*—supporting healthy relationship-building in our community. The unique composition of our Yeshiva and University puts us in a wonderful position to deal educationally with the systemic challenges in relationship development, increase meeting and networking opportunities for singles, and help our children navigate the possible twists along the road.

YUConnects is YU's Center for the Jewish Future's premier social and relationship-building program, convening the educational and research-based resources of Yeshiva University. The program initiates conversations with community leaders, mental health professionals, high school, post-high school and college educators and the greater community, focused on partnering to build healthy relationship-building fundamentals. Additionally, YUConnects offers many comfortable social and networking events for unmarried men and women, plus a growing database of singles with the help of trained and caring connectors.

Marriage is an important milestone in life, and the more time we take to prepare ourselves for this opportunity, as well as for the intricacies and challenges involved, the richer our marriages will be. This also underscores our paramount belief that education is the underpinning for success in all aspects of life. As you peruse the essays and appreciate their messages in this first-time endeavor, you will see certain themes emerge. In fact, we purposely placed the articles in a progressive thematic order, rather than in alphabetical order. Our intent is to expand horizons, broaden attitudes and hearts, and create maximum opportunities within the dating realm while simultaneously reinforcing positive relationship building-blocks. These activities contribute to the utmost happiness in the Jewish home.

The ongoing commitment of our advisory board demonstrates the importance of this holy work, and we owe much thanks to Sharon Blumenthal, Dr. Daniel Berman, Michelle Berman, Michael Feldstein, Dov Greenblatt, Dr. Naomi Greenblatt, Sharon Haberman, Charlie Harary, Dr. Tova Koenigsberg, Cheryl Nagel, Henry Orlinsky and Dr. David Pelcovitz.

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headed by the vision, tenacity and selflessness of Dr. Efrat Sobolofsky and her colleagues Mindy Eisenman, Marjorie Glatt and Tova Klapper.

We also thank Dr. Pelcovitz, Rabbi Hershel Schachter and Rabbi Mordechai Willig who serve as our mental health and rabbinic guides for YUConnects.

We owe a debt of gratitude to President Richard M. Joel; his encouragement and guidance continues to motivate and inspire us. None of this would have been possible without his support.

To our financial supporters and sponsors, we thank you for making this edition and forthcoming one possible. We are looking for more sponsors to add to the list for distribution of the second edition this winter.

We need your support to make it possible for more people to join our subsidized website, to participate in more social, networking and educational events, and to afford more communities to partner with the professional resources of YUConnects. Important additional research projects, vital to the continual development of best practices, have been proposed, awaiting sponsorship.

Please note the Sponsorship Opportunities on Page 95 and the enclosed envelope, and please consider making a generous donation to support the wonderful work of YUConnects.

Thank you,
Rabbi Kenneth Brander