

Introduction

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YUConnects is proud to introduce this special publication as part of our long-standing “To-Go” series. This rich edition is filled with articles addressing a plethora of healthy relationship-building topics, covering everything from education and skill development during formative years, through all phases of dating, engagement, the first years of marriage and beyond. Additionally, readers can look forward to the second edition, Part II, to be released in January 2013, featuring many more essential relationship-building topics.

YUConnects turned to many of the experts we regularly consult to share their wisdom and insights. As you will read in the two publications, a number of articles present Torah perspectives and halachic guidelines, and several others are grounded in the current psycho-social literature that examines healthy relationship-building skills necessary for a long-lasting relationship and marriage. A few opinion pieces are included as well, based on extensive professional experience.

Important medical and legal information is provided, relating to selected premarital areas. Several articles refer to challenges and barriers in our way, while offering practical and positive action items for change.

A very special thank you to our impressive authors for their skillful contributions. Their words of wisdom are valuable to all readers, as we travel through various life stages of self-growth, character refinement and advancing our interpersonal meaningful relationships.

YUConnects would not have reached the 100-plus couple milestone without the diligence and commitment of so many...

First, a very special *mazel tov* to the engaged and married couples who met through the helping hand of YUConnects. May you all be blessed with beautiful marriages and families. Please continue recruiting your friends to join our programs as we work together to introduce more and more couples.

Words cannot express my personal thanks to the YUConnects staff, Tova Klapper, Mindy Eisenman and Marjorie Glatt, who work well beyond their allotted hours, investing their hearts and souls into the success of the program.

Many thanks to our growing group of volunteer connectors (matchmakers) and event facilitators around the globe who work closely with YUConnects staff to increase healthy and comfortable networking opportunities for members (singles who join YUConnects). In addition to the weekly hours connectors spend performing searches on the online database, they participate in ongoing educational training given by relationship-building experts and attend

social events, all toward professionalizing and personalizing their noble networking, matchmaking and mentoring efforts.

Special thanks to our active participants: our online members, event attendees and partnering community lay leaders who take the time to provide insight and guidance to YUConnects, enabling us to develop more educational programs and better networking venues. Please continue sharing your ideas with us!

To our advisory council and financial supporters, may you be blessed for collectively demonstrating that everyone can truly make a difference today in helping build more Jewish homes and families.

A very special thank you to President Richard M. Joel, Rabbi Kenneth Brander, the David Mitzner Dean of the Center for the Jewish Future, and Mrs. Suzy Schwartz, Assistant Dean of the Center for the Jewish Future, for their vision and ongoing support of YUConnects.

Finally, words cannot express our debt of gratitude to our Creator for enabling us to partner with Him in this very special mitzvah of bringing eternal joy and companionship into the lives of others, as we truly continue to build the Jewish future.

Sincerely,
Dr. Efrat Sobolofsky