



## Secular Synagogue

### ***CHANGE THE WORLD FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR COUCH***

As a teacher and a spiritual leader/officiant, my goal is to be a force for good in the world. These are difficult times and a lot of people are lonely, suffering, or feeling helpless in the face of our society's problems. We need to be strong in order to change the world, and we need to change the world in order for us to feel like culturally-rooted, spiritual, whole beings.

In Jewish culture, we believe in the values of *Tzedakah*, which means both charity and justice, and *Tikkun Olam*, which means repairing the world. Anyone can do these five things — you don't have to be Jewish to change the world.

For those who are Jewish, know that ethics are rooted in Jewish culture and experiences, and your Jewish culture and experience are strengthened when you act as a force for good. So, let's change the world — from the comfort of your couch!

- 1) **Make a list of the issues you care about right now (some ideas: immigration reform, climate change, Indigenous rights, anti-racist action, gender-based violence, poverty).** Choose the top three.

Research an organization that works on each of those issues and then commit to supporting their work. The easiest way to do this is by making a donation. Donate \$18 to each (representing *chai* or life, for the Jewish folks doing this). For \$54 you've helped three causes.

If donations aren't your thing, call these organizations and ask if you can volunteer. Everyone needs help with the unglamorous work of setting up chairs for events, picking up coffee or gift cards for clients in need, etc. The act of the donation or the phone call is changing the world — from the comfort of your couch!

- 2) **Make a phone call or reach out by text or online to someone who is lonely or struggling.** This could be someone who you haven't seen for a while. This could be someone who is ill and can't get out much. This can be someone who has a new baby (or a not-so-new baby). Ask how they are doing and really listen to their response. See if you can make them laugh.

The act of reaching out is changing the world — from the comfort of your couch!

- 3) **Practice a loving-kindness meditation.** There are various versions of this (search online for a guided practice if you wish), but generally they start with you visualizing someone you love, and wishing them loving kindness. Move to people you like (friends, for example). Then people you don't know well but encounter (barista, bus driver, etc.). Then people you dislike or find challenging. Finally, send your loving kindness intention out to the whole world. Hold these people in your mind and wish them happiness, safety from inner and outer harm, joy, and peace.

This practice brings peace and love into your own heart. Whenever you are struggling, remember that people all over the world are sending you good vibes too! The act of remembering to honour and find love for people everywhere, and bringing that sense of connectedness to your own life, is changing the world — from the comfort of your couch!

- 4) **Apologize to someone by phone, text, or online.** This can be a big apology that has been coming for some time. It can also be a simple apology for being grouchy, or being short with someone. Ideas for stuff to apologize for: impatience, a lack of understanding when someone tried to reach out, failing to be there for someone when needed, a fight or misunderstanding you had with someone, gossiping about someone and hurting their feelings, causing someone harm for any reason.

It takes guts to apologize but it can be such a release for both the person on the receiving end of the apology and for you doing the apologizing too. The act of making amends brings people closer to each other and brings you closer to the person you wish to be. It is changing the world — from the comfort of your couch!

- 5) **Write a love letter.** Yes, a real letter! With a pen! Do this to your partner, your parent, your child, your friend, your neighbour, anyone! What is a love letter? A letter expressing your love for this person and what you are grateful for in them.

Tell it all! Don't be afraid to be cheesy! Letting someone know they've touched your life will fill them with joy and appreciation, giving them a lift and offering them affirmation of the good they bring. Telling each other that we love each other and why is changing the world — from the comfort of your couch!

That's it! You've brought joy, light, and hope into the world, including people close to you and people you don't know. You have acted to support causes you are about, and have created more peace in yourself and your relationships. You are a force for good — you are practicing *Tzedakah* and *Tikkun Olam*. You're basically a spiritual superstar. Now you can get back to your book or show. Congratulations on changing the world — from the comfort of your couch!

*For more information about how you can change the world, or engage in connected community, visit*

**[www.secularsynagogue.com](http://www.secularsynagogue.com)**