

# 12 ways to support your local community during Covid-19

 By Yael Geffen

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In just a few short weeks, the coronavirus pandemic has turned our world upside down and as the crisis deepens, so do the challenges with a growing number of people facing unemployment, mounting debt and numerous other issues precipitated by the disruption of the virus.

Although life has undoubtedly become very stressful for everyone, we're all experiencing the effects of lockdown in different ways and to varying degrees.

For some, the impact has been far more severe. A growing number of small and medium companies, which do not offer essential goods and services are permanently shutting their doors and, with unemployment on the rise, more and more people are finding life incredibly difficult.



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But, if anything, what this lockdown period has shown us is the need for community and we have seen people coming together to do incredible things, from creating community soup kitchens to supporting essential workers.

However, not everyone can commit to assisting the larger initiatives, especially those who have young children at home or are working remotely and many of them are wondering what they can do to make a difference during this difficult time.

There are many things we can all do to support the communities in which we live and thrive and most don't even necessitate leaving home.



Oranjestad City FarmMarket - image sourced from [www.facebook.com/OZCFarm](https://www.facebook.com/OZCFarm)

**Shop at local, independently-owned businesses instead of chain stores** – It may necessitate a little more driving but,

where possible, shop at your local butchery, delicatessen, pharmacy, grocery store, boutique, etc.

**Buy something extra** – treat yourself to something or buy two of a product that you always use. Ask if they have gift vouchers which you can save for the next birthday on the calendar.

**Choose credits over refunds** – if you have to return something and are in a position to do so, opting for credit rather than cash could mean the difference between them making rent this month – or not.

**Pay for work not yet done** – many businesses like beauty salons, hairdressers, babysitters and domestic cleaners will not be able to return to work for some time yet, so if you are in a position to do so, pay for your first appointment or booking now to help them make it through lockdown the period.

**Leave a review** – the five minutes it takes to leave positive online reviews of your favourite local businesses on Google, Facebook, etc. will be time well spent. Not only could it drive new business their way, but the owners and staff will also appreciate the emotional support.

**Order takeaways for delivery from your favourite local restaurants once a week** – if your budget stretches to it, of course. And you can also buy vouchers for friends and family to support them right now and use later if they don't live in your area.



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**Don't forget the farmers** – the farmers' markets across the country are closed because of the pandemic, so many of the smaller farmers will have no outlet but still have crops and food products available. Check which ones are delivering their fresh produce to your doorstep.

**Go to the ground** – gardening can be a great way to productively pass the time during the lockdown and, if you grow veggies and herbs you can also share them with neighbours, especially the elderly and those with mobility challenges who can't easily get to the shops. Garden greens, microgreens, radishes, spinach and many herbs grow especially quickly.



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**Share your expertise** – to help struggling businesses. If you are a web designer, help them to build an e-commerce website to move their sales online or if you are adept at social media, help a business to promote their brand and product.

**Don't forget the animals** – Covid-19 is putting an immense amount of pressure on animal shelters across the country as their ability to raise funds is very limited and adoptions cannot take place. The websites of your local shelters will have information about how you can assist them.

**Donate blood** – as the number of people with coronavirus increases, there will be fewer and fewer eligible donors and it will be extremely difficult to recover from critical shortage levels.

**Spread cheer and share positive messages in your neighbourhood** – by creating sidewalk chalk art, painting kindness rocks and leaving them on your kerb and having the kids draw and paint rainbows to put up in your windows that face the street.

One of the reasons we choose the neighbourhoods in which we live is the vibrance of the community within it.

So, let's all do our part to support and save our communities; to contribute to maintaining their economies by supporting the local businesses and taking care of those who live within them.

## ABOUT Yael GEFFEN

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