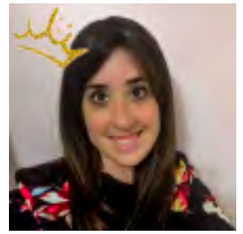
REACHING OUT WITH INSPIRATION STRENGTH ENCOURAGEMENT

Chazkeinu
חזקנו

RISE 2023 EDITION



FROM THE DESK OF ZAHAVA LIST:

TO MY BELOVED CHAZKEINU SISTERS,

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE IT'S BEEN A FULL YEAR SINCE OUR LAST RISE MAGAZINE. I WANT TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO OUR CO-EDITORS: CHAYA SARA M, FOR THE TIME AND EFFORT IN THE IDEAS, LAYOUT, AND CREATION OF THIS MASTERPIECE. SARALAH, FOR THE HOURS YOU PUT INTO EDITING AND PREPARING THE RISE FOR PUBLICATION. THANK YOU TO EVERY PERSON WHO SUBMITTED THEIR WRITINGS, ARTWORK, AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THIS BEAUTIFUL NEW EDITION OF THIS MAGAZINE.

CHAZKEINU HAS BEEN A JOURNEY OF TREMENDOUS GROWTH AND UNITY. WITH OUR THEME OF SHABBATON, WE ARE REMINDED OF HOW MUCH WE MATTER AND ARE LOVED AND ACCEPTED UNCONDITIONALLY IN THIS SAFE HAVEN. YOU MEAN THE WORLD TO US. WE ADMIRE YOUR COURAGE AND WILLINGNESS TO BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR CHAZKEINU FAMILY.

MAY WE ALL FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO EACH OTHER, TO HASHEM, AND TO OURSELVES.

WITH MUCH ADMIRATION AND APPRECIATION,

ZAHAVA

DIRECTOR OF CHAZKEINU

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR

TO MY CHAZKEINU SISTERS AND FRIENDS,

WELCOME TO CHAZKEINU'S RISE EDITION—IT'S FINALLY HERE!

YUP, THE LONG-AWAITED RISE IS FINALLY HERE AND I'M SO GRATEFUL AND APPRECIATIVE TO HAVE A SPECIAL PART IN IT. WHEN CHAYA SARA M. INITIALLY ASKED ME TO BE HER CO-EDITOR, I WASN'T SO SURE AS I TEND TO GET OVERWHELMED EASILY, BUT I'M ETERNALLY GLAD I ACCEPTED THE INVITATION.

AS THE CO-EDITOR, I MUST SHARE HOW IMPRESSED AND MOVED I AM FROM READING THE SUBMISSIONS WE RECEIVED. YOUR VULNERABILITY, AUTHENTICITY AND CREATIVITY WERE CLEARLY SHOWN AS IT ADDED DEPTH AND QUALITY. EACH SUBMISSION WAS BETTER THAN THE NEXT AND IS PROOF OF THE HARD AND COURAGEOUS EFFORT AND WORK WE PUT IN TO MANAGE AND MAINTAIN OUR MENTAL HEALTH.

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK ZAHAVA FOR CHAZKEINU AS IT HAS GREATLY ENHANCES MY DAY-TO-DAY LIFE AND FOR MY CHAZKEINU SISTERS/FRIENDS FOR YOUR TOTAL ACCEPTANCE AND FRIENDSHIP.

I HOPE YOU ENJOY AND ARE INSPIRED BY THIS EDITION OF THE RISE AS MUCH AS I AM.

SINCERELY,

SARALAH P.

FROM THE DESK OF RABBI EISENMAN

IN HONOR OF ESTHER JAFFE

AT 3:20 PM ON FRIDAY, MARCH 3, ESTHER JAFFE, EPHRAIM JAFFE'S WIFE OF FORTY YEARS, PASSED AWAY IN HER SLEEP.

ESTHER JAFFE PASSED AWAY ON EREV SHABBOS PARSHAS ZACHOR; SHE WAS 65 YEARS OLD. I STOOD IN FRONT OF HER HOUSE AS THE MINUTES KEPT TICKING AWAY. AS I WAITED WITH THE CHEVRA KADISHA, MY THOUGHTS WERE FOCUSED ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HER PASSING JUST MINUTES BEFORE THE ONSET OF THE SHABBOS WHEN WE RECALL THE GENOCIDAL INTENTIONS OF AMALEK. ESTHER JAFFE WAS ALSO A VICTIM OF AMALEK'S MURDEROUS DEEDS. ESTHER'S POLISH-BORN PARENTS HAD BOTH MIRACULOUSLY SURVIVED THE HOLOCAUST. HER FATHER WAS IMPRISONED IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP. HER MOTHER WAS HIDDEN BY A POLE. HOWEVER, THIS MAN DID NOT DO THIS OUT OF COMPASSION. RATHER, HE HAD THE WARPED DELUSION OF WANTING TO BE THE SOLE-POST-WAR-POSSESSOR OF THE LAST LIVING JEWS ON POLISH SOIL. AS CAN BE IMAGINED, THE FAMILY WAS TREATED AS CAPTIVES. THE COUPLE MET AFTER THE WAR AND WERE BLESSED WITH THEIR ONLY CHILD, ESTHER. THEIR OWN STUNTED JEWISH EDUCATION PRECLUDED THEM FROM CREATING A TRUE OBSERVANT HOME. YET, ESTHER, IN HER ADULT YEARS, CAME TO APPRECIATE AND CELEBRATE A COMMITTED JEWISH LIFE. WHEN SHE MET HER SOULMATE, EPHRAIM, THEY BEGAN THEIR MARRIED LIFE, IMMERSING IN FULL-TIME TORAH IN YERUSHALAYIM. THEY EVENTUALLY SETTLED IN PASSAIC AND RAISED THREE CHILDREN; TWO SONS AND A DAUGHTER. ESTHER WOULD BECOME A LICENSED NUTRITIONIST AND A LOVING AND DEVOTED MOTHER AND WIFE. HOWEVER, THE HORRORS OF THE HOLOCAUST WERE NEVER FAR FROM HER MIND. WHEN SUBBING IN A PRESCHOOL, SHE NOTICED CHILDREN NEARING THE FENCE SURROUNDING THE PERIMETER OF THE PLAY AREA. HER CONCERN WAS APPARENT, AND SHE QUICKLY BOLTED TOWARD THE CHILDREN. WHEN A CO-TEACHER MENTIONED THEY WERE SAFE, ESTHER REMARKED, "MY PARENTS TAUGHT ME YOU NEVER LET A JEW GET TOO CLOSE TO FENCES. YOU NEVER KNOW IF THAT FENCE IS ELECTRIFIED."ESTHER BECAME RECLUSIVE AS THE YEARS WENT ON, AND HER CHILDREN MADE THEIR OWN LIVES IN DIFFERENT LOCALS AROUND THE COUNTRY AND ISRAEL. JUST AS HER NAMESAKE ESTHER HAMALKA BECAME SEQUESTERED INSIDE THE PALACE WALLS OF SHUSHAN, ESTHER JAFFE REMAINED SHELTERED IN THE FOUR WALLS OF HER HOME. PERHAPS THE NIGHTMARISH HORRORS AND FEAR HER PARENTS HAD SUFFERED CONTINUED TO HAUNT ESTHER. ALTHOUGH SHE PASSED ON FRIDAY, THE LEVAYA- AS ONLY HASHEM CAN PLAN- WAS DELAYED UNTIL PURIM DAY. ON A COLD AND WINDY PURIM DAY IN 2023, ESTHER JAFFE WAS FINALLY LIBERATED FROM HER SELF-IMPOSED ISOLATION. SHE WAS BROUGHT TO HER FINAL RESTING PLACE JUST HOURS AFTER WE READ ABOUT THE HEROISM OF HER NAMESAKE, ESTHER HAMALKA. ALMOST ONE HUNDRED MEN AND WOMEN GATHERED TO GIVE THE FINAL KAVOD TO ESTHER AS SHE WAS FREED FROM CONFINEMENT AND ENTERED THE LIBERATING BLISS OF THE NEXT WORLD. THE FAMILY SPREAD APART WAS NOW UNITED IN THEIR MOURNING. LONG ALMOST FORGOTTEN FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS ARRIVED AT THE SHIVA HOME. FORMER CLASSMATES FROM TWO DECADES AGO WAITED FOR SOMETIMES HOURS TO SPEND TIME WITH THE THREE CHILDREN AND EPHRAIM. RABBONIM, NEIGHBORS, FRIENDS, AND FAMILY FROM FAR AND NEAR GATHERED TO COMFORT THE JAFFES. ESTHER, THE WOMAN WHO FOR YEARS STRUGGLED WITH LONELINESS, WAS NOW THE CATALYST FOR UNITY AND THE CAUSE FOR COMMUNAL HARMONY. AS HER YOUNGEST SON EMMANUEL COMMENTED, "WE FEEL WE HAVE RECEIVED ONE GREAT COMMUNITY HUG." THE MENUCHA, WHICH PROVED SO ELUSIVE IN LIFE, WAS FINALLY GRANTED TO ESTHER AS SHE MADE HER FINAL JOURNEY TO A PLACE FREE OF FEAR.

RON YITZCHOK EISENMAN

RAV, CONGREGATION AHAVAS ISRAEL, PASSAIC, NJ

FROM THE DESK OF RABBI AVROHOM STEIER

I WILL NEVER IMPROVE

THE BATTLE AGAINST MENTAL ILLNESS CAN BE A LONG ROAD. IT IS A ROAD FULL OF POTHOLES AND DITCHES, AND, AT TIMES, YOU MAY FIND YOURSELF GOING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION. FOR EVERY STEP TAKEN FORWARDS, IT FEELS LIKE TWO STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN BACKWARDS, AND IT IS ONLY NORMAL FOR SOMEONE INVOLVED IN THIS BATTLE TO BEGIN TO DESPAIR OF EVER GETTING BETTER AND BEING ABLE TO LIVE A HEALTHIER, HAPPIER LIFE. AS IN ALL OTHER AREAS OF LIFE, ACCOMPLISHMENTS GIVE US THE STRENGTH TO CONTINUE, WHILE FAILURES ROB US OF OUR WILL AND DETERMINATION TO SUCCEED. WHEN FAILURE REARS ITS UGLY HEAD ON A STEADY BASIS, AS IT INEVITABLY WILL WHEN TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH SUCH A MONUMENTAL TASK AS DEFEATING MENTAL ILLNESS, IT CAN LEAVE A PERSON DEVASTATED WITH LITTLE DESIRE TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT.

THE PROBLEMS INHERENT TO THESE FEELINGS OF DEVASTATION ARE OBVIOUS. BESIDES FOR HEAPING ADDITIONAL EMOTIONAL PAIN UPON SOMEONE WHO IS ALREADY EXPERIENCING THE LION'S SHARE, THE FEELINGS OF DESPAIR CAN BRING A PERSON TO LOSE THE ENERGY NEEDED TO FIGHT PROPERLY, POSSIBLY RESULTING IN A COMPLETE SURRENDER AND DEFEAT TO THE ENEMY WITHIN. THEREFORE, PERHAPS WE CAN HELP TO REDUCE THIS ADDITIONAL PAIN WITH A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT OUTLOOK.

THERE IS A LETTER FROM R' YITZCHAK HUTNER ZT"L (PACHAD YITZCHAK, LETTERS, LETTER 128) THAT SHOULD BE BASIC READING FOR EVERY JEW. THIS LETTER WAS WRITTEN AS A RESPONSE TO A YOUNG MAN WHO HAD BEGUN TO DESPAIR OF EVER ACCOMPLISHING IN LIFE AND ACHIEVING GREATNESS, AND THE WORDS OF R' HUTNER ARE A BALM FOR BURNING EYES. FOR OUR PURPOSES, I WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS ON ONE PARAGRAPH WHICH WAS WRITTEN IN MIDDLE OF THE LETTER. THE WISEST OF ALL MEN SAID, "SEVEN TIMES WILL A RIGHTEOUS PERSON FALL, AND HE WILL GET UP." THE FOOLS THINK THAT THE INTENT [OF THIS STATEMENT] WAS TO BRING OUT TO WHAT DEGREE ONE CAN ALWAYS ARISE: EVEN THOUGH SEVEN TIMES A RIGHTEOUS PERSON WILL FALL, NEVERTHELESS HE CAN ARISE. HOWEVER, THE WISE KNOW FULLY WELL THAT THE INTENT IS THAT THE ESSENCE OF THE RISING UP OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN IS THROUGH HIS "SEVEN FALLINGS."

R' HUTNER, WITH THIS STATEMENT, HAS TAUGHT US A POWERFUL LESSON FOR LIFE. THE CONSTANT SETBACKS AND FAILINGS THAT WE EXPERIENCE ARE NOT SIGNS OF WEAKNESS AND DISABILITY; RATHER, THEY ARE A NECESSARY COMPONENT IN THE GROWING PROCESS. A COMPONENT WHOSE ABSENCE IS A SIGN OF STAGNATION RATHER THAN PERFECTION. SETBACKS TEACH US HOW TO BETTER APPROACH THE SITUATION THE NEXT TIME IT ARISES, GIVE US MORE ENERGY TO CORRECT THE FLAW THAT BROUGHT ABOUT THE FAILING, AND REMIND US THAT WE ARE NOT YET FINISHED CLIMBING, THEREBY AVOIDING COMPLACENCY. THESE ARE BUT A FEW OF THE NECESSARY POSITIVE RESULTS OF SETBACKS, AND I'M SURE THAT MANY MORE EXIST.

THE WORDS OF R' HUTNER APPLY AS MUCH TO MENTAL ILLNESS AS TO ANY OTHER AREA OF CHARACTER IMPROVEMENT. WHILE FAILINGS IN DEALING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS ARE EXTREMELY FRUSTRATING AND PAINFUL, ONE SHOULD TRY, IF POSSIBLE, TO FOCUS ON THE FACT THAT THEY ARE A NECESSARY PART OF THE HEALING AND RECOVERY PROCESS AND THAT, WITH TIME, THEY WILL HELP BRING THE PERSON CLOSER TO HIS ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE OF LEADING A HEALTHIER, HAPPIER LIFE. THE BATTLE MAY HAVE BEEN LOST, BUT THE WAR HAS JUST BEGUN.

AVROHOM STEIER IS A ROSH CHABURA IN BAIS MEDRESH GOVAH IN LAKEWOOD, NJ AND THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK BATTLE OF THE MIND; A BOOK OFFERING TORAH BASED WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND INSPIRATION FOR THOSE BATTLING MENTAL ILLNESS.

OUR AMAZING PROGRAMS!!!

THESE PROGRAMS ARE FOR CHAZKEINU MEMBERS ONLY. TO BECOME A MEMBER TEACH OUT TO US INFO@CHAZKEINU.ORG OR 314-634-7627

Online forum

Chazkeinu has an exclusive, anonymous online community. "Chazkeinu Connections" where lively written discussions regarding challenges, support, and inspiration related to mental health take place. The forum is facilitated by a Rabbinic Advisor along with peer moderators.
To join visit:
https://chazkeinuforum.proboards.com/

Davening group

Chazkeinu members connect in a spiritual way by davening for each other. Members submit their Hebrew name or that of a loved one. A bi-weekly email is sent out with a list of names. and members have one another in mind in their prayers.
info@Chazkeinu.org

Partner program

This project offers an opportunity to form a personal connection on a one-on-one basis with someone who understands and relates to the individual struggle. Participants connect via phone, email and text. For more information email partnerprogram@chazkeinu.org

Empowered hotline

A team of licensed clinicians are available bi-weekly by phone to the entire Jewish community during specified hours for non-emergency questions. They speak one on one to callers, providing education and guidance.
For more information email empowered@Chazkeinu.org

Phone meetings

Women all across the globe reach for the phone and connect to 'their lifeline'.

Care packages

Whether it's inspirational reading material, cleaning help or a self-care gift card, we want our members who are suffering to know we care.
Do you or someone you know needs a package? Email us at info@chazkeinu.org

Hospital visits

In the event that one of our members needs to be hospitalized, we will set up a visit from a fellow member. Hospitalization can be an isolating experience and we want to be there, providing peer support. If you or someone you know needs a visitor email :info@Chazkeinu.org

Daily chizuk emails

Chazkeinu regularly sends out email blasts containing information about Chazkeinu's constantly expanding programs. We include original songs and poems from our members, educational articles,resources, interactive columns, book recommendations, videos, uplifting quotes, and more
Contact us at: emailsubmissions@chazkeinu.org.

Zoom meetings

We host bi-weekly zoom meetings. "Our Zoom Chill Room" includes presentations from mental health professionals. personal stories, music, art, dance, drama, interactive games, and more.

Individual cities

Cleveland@Chazkeinu.org
Baltimore@Chazkeinu.org
Florida@Chazkeinu.org
To start a program in your city ,
Reach out to zahava@Chazkeinu.org

OUR AMAZING PROGRAMS!!!

WhatsApp chat
A chat where our members "Give and Get Chizuk" through sharing with their peers.
To join WhatsApp 314-346-7414

Texting chat
Our members share inspiration and chizuk with each other. We
To join text 314 -364-7414

Shabbaton
The Shabbaton provides an opportunity for participants to leave their pain and loneliness behind for a weekend. Inspiration and insight from professionals and peers combine with stimulating activities in a fun, relaxing atmosphere. Women from all walks of life, ages, and religious backgrounds come together with a shared bond. Differences fall by the wayside as each woman feels validated and understood.
For more information email info@Chazkeinu.org

Winter Renewal Retreat
An annual two day winter retreat. A real 'getaway' and chance to enjoy meaningful workshops, self care activities, delicious food, and more. A rejuvenating experience in an atmosphere of warmth, connection, and acceptance.
For more information email info@Chazkeinu.org

Chazkeinu
חזקנו

OTHER RESOURCES

COMPLIED BY OUR VERY OWN:
BAILA P.

Samchainu.
Supports widows
https://samchainu.org/

Amudim
Resources and referrals
https://amudim.org/

A Time
Helping childless couples
https://www.atime.org/

Refaenu
Outreach and peer support for mental health
https://refaenu.org/

Relief
Referral agency
https://www.reliefhelp.org/

Shalom Task Force
Confidental crisis lines for domestic abuse
https://shalomtaskforce.org/

OK Clarity
Website of resources
https://okclarity.com//

Ray of hope
Supports sexual abuse survivors
https://rayofhopeus.org/

Sister to Sister
Peer support for divorced women
https://sistertosisternetwork.org/

La'abriut
Peer support
https://www.labriutwomen.org/

Regesh
Helping teens with home and school struggles
https://regeshnetwork.com/

Atzmi
Eating disorder prevention
hhttps://www.atzmi.org/

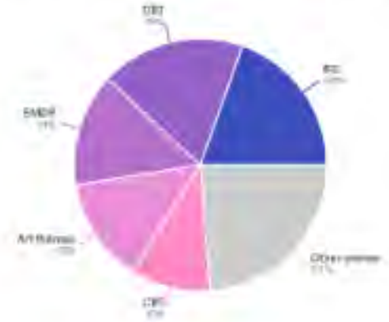
MASK
Helplines, support groups, referrals
https://maskparents.org/

CATCH
Live support in 5 towns
https://catchiscommunity.org/

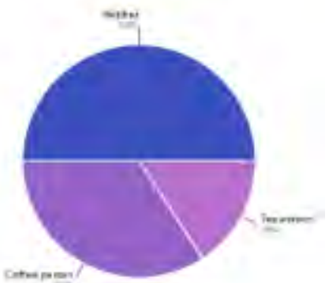
Kindred Forum
Support groups for eating disorders
https://www.thekindredforum.com/

OUR CHAZKE INU FAMILY

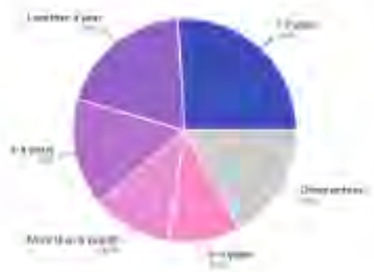
What is your favorite therapy modality?



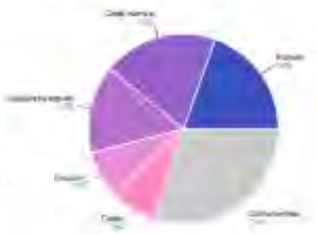
Are you a



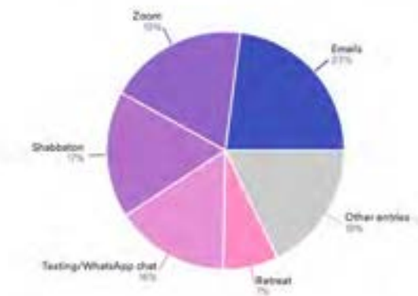
How long have you been a Chazkienu member for?



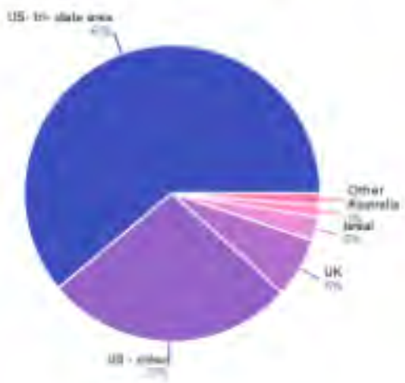
What is your favorite board game?



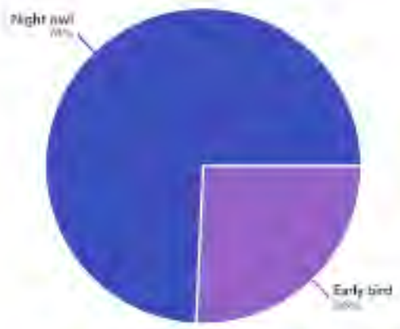
Favorite Chazkienu activity



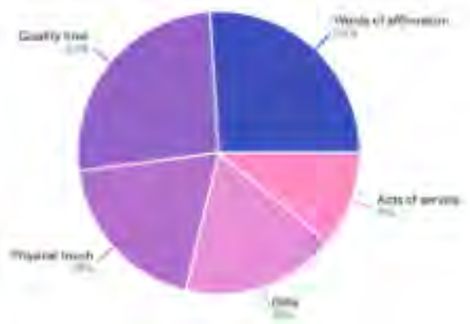
Where are you from?



Are you a



What is your primary love language?



Chizuk playlist

PEDUSCHA

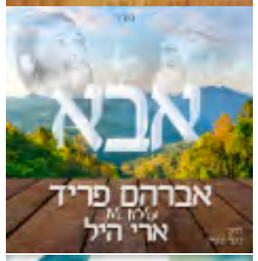
BY: BARUCH LEVINE

A YID

BY: BENNY FRIEDMAN

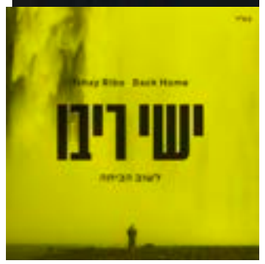
SHIR2

BY: SHLOMO YEHUDA RECHNITZ



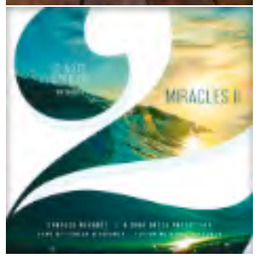
ABBA

BY: AVROHOM FRIED



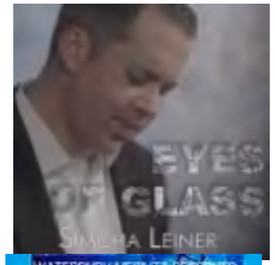
LASHUV HABAYTA

BY: ISHAY RIBO



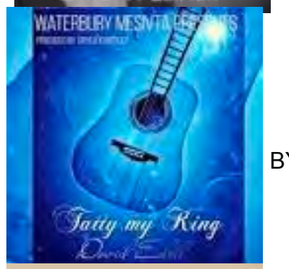
MIRACLES II

BY: CHAYALA NEUHAUS



EYES OF GLASS

BY: SIMCHA LEINER



TATTY MY KING

BY: WATERBURY MESIVTA

CARRY ON

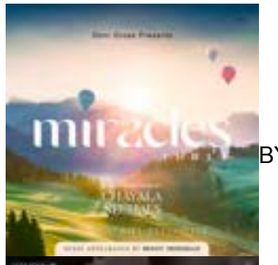
BY: ELI LEVIN

BURNING BRIGHT

BY: BRACHA JAFFE & SHAINDY PLOTZKER

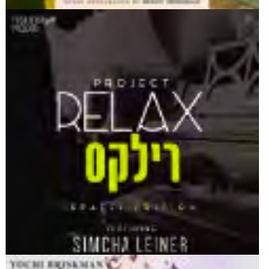
GIVE US STRENGTH

BY: DOBBY BAUM



MIRACLES

BY: CHAYALA NEUHAUS



PROJECT RELAX

BY: SIMCHA LEINER

PROJECT RELAX

BY: SIMCHA LEINER & BARUCH LEVINE

ALEH KATAN

BY: SHALOM GOLDSTIEN

BEN SHEL MELECH

BY: MEIDAD TASA

WHATS YOUR LOVE LANGUAGE???

You are having a busy day and you are feeling a bit drained. Which scenario sounds the most like you?

A - I'd like to put on my headphones and listen to an inspiring podcast
B - A soothing bubble bath and facial sounds AMAZING!
C - It'd be fun to go on a solo weekend get away.
D - I'd probably treat myself to a scented candle at Target.
E - Honestly, a good tidy up and decluttering session will do the trick.

When do you feel the most valued by the people around you?

A - I like the idea of receiving a gift they chose for me just in mind.
B - I like it when someone I love goes out of their way to help me.
C - It's nice to hear the words "I love you!"
D - When they surprise me with a day together. Its great spending time.
E - Nothing is better than a hug from somone I love.

Which one of these options sounds like an activity you'd add to your self care routine?

A - Mediation and mindfulness!
B - Positive affirmations and mantras
C - Working on a DIY project
D - Bullet journaling!
E - Going to the gym/taking a fitness class.

What is your most valuable momento?

A - Tickets to a concert/show I saw.
B - A handmade gift someone made me.
C - Seashells from a beautiful summer trip.
D - A scrapbook filled with happy memories.
E - A framed puzzle my bestie helped me finish.

How would you most likely show someone you care?

A - Plan a fun outing - movies, dinner ect!
B - Make them a gift basket
C - send a sweet text.
D - Run an errand for them.
E - Comfort and hold them when they are sad..

What is something you'd like to do for yourself more often?

A - Compliment myself.
B - Treat myself.
C - Spend more time with myself.
D - Cook healthy meals for myself.
E - Be gentler with myself.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

A - Never feel guilty about investing in yourself.
B - It's important to set boundaries in your everyday life.
C - Speak to yourself as though you're talking to a loved one.
D - Listen to your inner voice.
E - Staying in tune with your body is a crucial part of your self care.

ANSWER KEY:

1. You're having a busy week and feel a bit drained at the moment. What sounds most refreshing to you?

A -Words of Affirmation **B -** Physical Touch **C -** Quality Time **D -** Receiving Gifts **E -** Acts of Service

2. When do you feel the most valued by the people around you?

A - Receiving Gifts **B -** Acts of Service **C -** Words of Affirmation **D -** Quality Time **E -** Physical Touch

3. Which one of these options sounds like something you'd add to your sel

A - Quality Time **B -** Words of Affirmation **C -** Receiving Gifts **D -** Acts of Service **D -**

4. What is your most valuable memento (or most similar to these ch

A - Words of Affirmation **B -** Receiving Gifts **C -** Physical Touch **D -** Quality Time **E -**

5) How would you most likely show someone you care?

A - Quality Time **B -** Receiving Gifts **C -** Words of Affirmation **D -** Acts of Service **E -**

6. What is something you'd like to do for yourself more often?

A - Words of Affirmation **B -** Receiving Gifts **C -** Quality Time **D -** Physical Touch **E -** Acts of Service

7. What advice would you give to your younger self?

A - Receiving Gifts **B -** Acts of Service **C -** Words of Affirmation **D -** Quality Time **E -** Physical TouchThank

SNACK

Super-Simple Cornflakes Treats

Ingredients

Oil

Honey

Cocoa

brown sugar

cornflakes

Directions

1.Combine equal parts oil, honey, cocoa, brown sugar in a pot (amounts depend on how many you want to serve). Heat while stirring until it starts to bubble.

2.Pour in enough cornflakes to get evenly coated with the mixture. Start with a little and keep adding so you are not left with a half-coated mixture of cornflakes.

3.Divide into cupcake holders. Allow to cool and harden.

TIME

Chocolate Peanut Butter Bites

Ingredients

(Optional- crushed peanuts to garnish)

1 cup Medjool dates

1/2 cup natural peanut butter

1/2 cup high-quality chocolate chips

Directions

1. In a food processor fitted with the "S" blade, blend the dates and peanut butter until smooth. Roll into balls.

2. Melt the chocolate chips and pour the melted chocolate on top of the balls to cover. Garnish with some crushed peanuts. Refrigerate before freezing and keep frozen.

Validation Corner

inspiration

You don't need anyone or anything to approve of your worth.
When you understand this you'll be free.

Peace comes from within.
Do not seek it without.

I'm not perfect. I make mistakes.
And I will make more mistakes. And that's OK.

Every step of our life we need to accept ourselves all over again

Life is hard enough,
stop beating yourself up.

You are imperfect, permanently
and inevitably flawed.
And you are beautiful.

The minute you settle for less than you deserve, you get even less than you settled for.

Being Positive in a Negative Situation isn't Naive,
It's Called Leadership

We Rise By Lifting Others

The Best View Comes
After the Hardest Climb

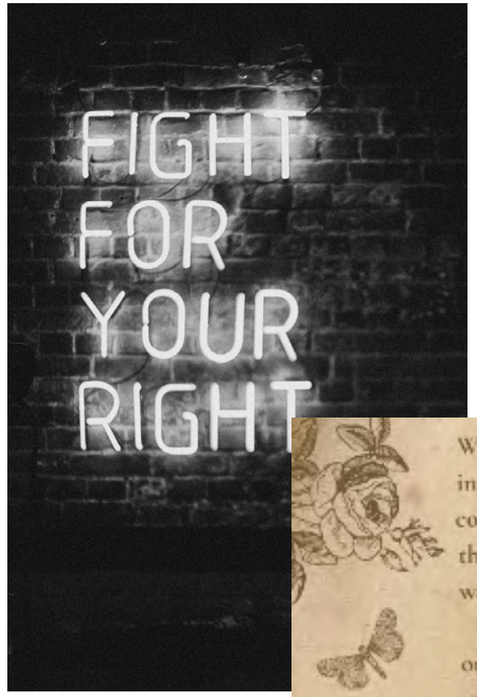
Nobody can make you to feel inferior
without your consent.

Every Day May Not Be Good, But There is Good in Every Day

Life is 10% What Happens to You, and 90% How You React to It

YOU
GOT
THIS

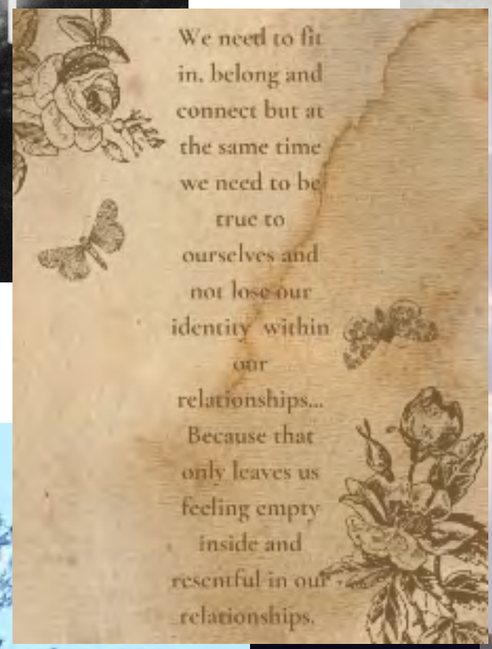
I AM
WISE
BECAUSE
I LEARN
FROM
MY
MISTAKES


FIGHT
FOR
YOUR
RIGHT

TAKE YOUR
PLACE!
NO ONE ELSE CAN MAKE
YOUR MISTAKES FOR YOU

Stay
Positive
WORKHARD
Make it Happen

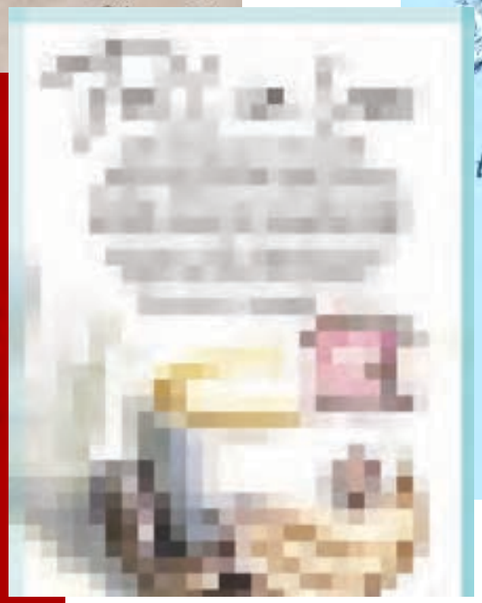
AS AN ADULT
WE GET TO
MAKE CHOICES
AS AN ADULT WE ALSO
GOTTA LIVE WITH THE
CHOICES WE'VE MADE

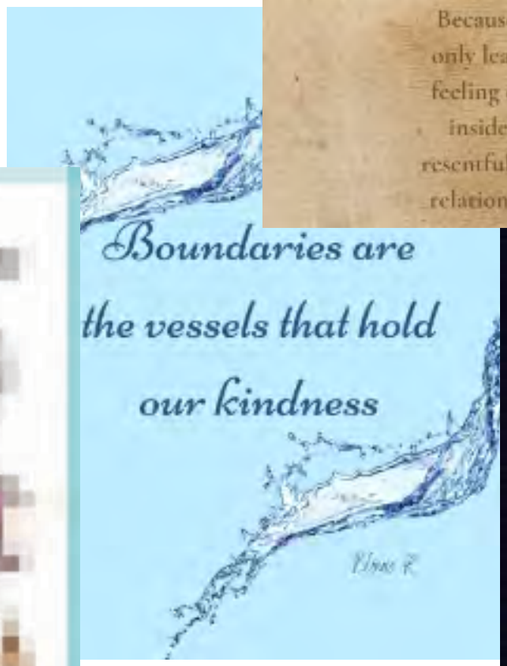

We need to fit
in, belong and
connect but at
the same time
we need to be
true to
ourselves and
not lose our
identity within
our
relationships...
Because that
only leaves us
feeling empty
inside and
resentful in our
relationships.

NO MATTER
HOW HARD
YOU TRY TO
DESCRIBE IT,
NO ONE WILL
GET IT
UNLESS
THEY'VE BEEN
THERE
Blinne R.

As humans we have
2 basic needs;
Authenticity
&
Attachment
Being able to navigate
those needs greatly impacts
the way we feel within
ourselves and within our
relationships.

DO
A LITTLE
PROGRESS
EVERYDAY




Boundaries are
the vessels that hold
our kindness
Blinne R.

Be kind to
YOURSELF

I just watched my dog chase his tail for 10 minutes and thought, "Wow, dogs are easily entertained." Then I realized I just watched my dog chase his tail for 10 minutes...

I've been alive 20 years and still haven't found the right thing to say when someone knocks on the door of the public bathroom you're in.

Me and my friends have planned about 100 trips... guess where we've been... absolutely no where

My new business cards just arrived.

"Today I saved $241.58 by not going into Target for deodorant"

SPOTLIGHT ON..... THERAPIST CLIENT BOUNDARIES WITH TEMIMA KOVEL

CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP LOOKS LIKE BETWEEN A CLIENT AND THERAPIST?

A HEALTHY THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP IS AN EMOTIONAL BOND OF TRUST, CARING, AND RESPECT IN WHICH THE CLIENT AND THERAPIST AGREE ON THE GOALS OF THERAPY AND WORK COLLABORATIVELY TOWARDS THEM.

IN A POSITIVE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP, THE CLIENT FEELS THE THERAPIST'S UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD. UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD MEANS THAT AS A CLIENT, YOU CAN SENSE THAT YOUR THERAPIST SEES THE INHERENT GOODNESS WITHIN YOU. HE OR SHE GIVES YOU UNDIVIDED

ATTENTION IN SESSION, LISTENS WELL WHEN YOU SPEAK, BELIEVES IN YOU, IS SUPPORTIVE, UNDERSTANDING, ENCOURAGING, AND NON-JUDGMENTAL. AN IDEAL THERAPIST-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP IS UNIQUE IN THAT IT IS SIMULTANEOUSLY COMPLETELY PROFESSIONAL AND VERY INTIMATE. THE BALANCE OF THESE TWO ASPECTS IN THE RELATIONSHIP IS ESSENTIAL.

COUNTLESS RESEARCH STUDIES COMPLETED OVER DECADES HAVE SOUGHT TO IDENTIFY THE FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SUCCESSFUL THERAPY TREATMENT. THE FACTOR THAT FAR OUTWEIGHED THE OTHERS IS NONE OTHER THAN THE QUALITY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THERAPIST AND THE PATIENT!

WHAT ARE SOME RED FLAGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO LOOK OUT FOR?

IN ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION, LET ME FIRST BRING OUT A FEW POINTS:

A) AS CLIENT UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, YOU CAN RELAX, KNOWING YOU'RE IN THE HANDS OF A PROFESSIONAL. YOU DON'T NEED TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR RED FLAGS.

B) AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE AWARE OF WHAT ARE CONSIDERED RED FLAGS IN A THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP SO THAT YOU AREN'T BLIND TO BLATANT ISSUES.

C) REGARDLESS OF WHETHER SOMETHING IS OFFICIALLY CONSIDERED A RED FLAG OR NOT, IF SOMETHING FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE- TRUST YOUR GUT. IF SOMETHING IS HITTING YOUR RADAR AS FEELING OFF, DON'T IGNORE IT.

NOW THAT YOU HAVE THAT FOUNDATION, CONSIDER IT A RED FLAG IF YOUR THERAPIST:

- ☐ ACTS OR SPEAKS IN A WAY THAT SEEMS TO BE SHAMING YOU, BLAMING YOU, JUDGING YOU.
- ☐ OFTEN TELLS YOU WHAT TO DO, MAKES DECISIONS FOR YOU, GIVES YOU UNWANTED ADVICE.
- ☐ ENGAGES IN EXCESSIVE SELF-DISCLOSURE (MAKING HER PERSONAL LIFE/PERSONAL ISSUES A FOCUS. NOTE: IT'S OKAY FOR A THERAPIST TO USE A PERSONAL EXAMPLE SOMETIMES, BUT THE MAIN FOCUS OF THE SESSION SHOULD REMAIN THE CLIENT).
- ☐ REGULARLY CHECKS THEIR PHONE DURING SESSION (UNLESS THERE'S AN EMERGENCY/ANOTHER UNUSUAL, UNDERSTANDABLE CIRCUMSTANCE).
- ☐ ENGAGES IN NON-CONSENSUAL TOUCH.
- ☐ BREAKS CONFIDENTIALITY.
- ☐ IS AN INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR.
- ☐ IS CONSTANTLY ENCOURAGING YOU TO BLAME OTHERS.
- ☐ SEEMS OVERWHELMED AND/OR TRIGGERED BY YOUR FEELINGS OR ISSUES.
- ☐ REGULARLY CANCELS, MISSES, OR IS LATE FOR SESSIONS.

FIND THE COURAGE TO BRING IT UP WITH YOUR THERAPIST AND SEE HOW SHE RESPONDS TO YOUR CONCERN- DID THE RESPONSE SHE GAVE MAKE YOU FEEL MORE OR LESS COMFORTABLE CONTINUING WITH HER? IF YOU DON'T FEEL COMFORTABLE, IT'S YOUR PREROGATIVE TO FIND A THERAPIST THAT FEELS TRUSTWORTHY.

ONE LAST IMPORTANT POINT- IN YOU KNOW A THERAPIST IS ACTING IN A WAY THAT IS EXTREMELY UNPROFESSIONAL AND/OR HARMFUL, YOU CAN REPORT IT TO THEIR LICENSING BOARD IN ORDER TO PROTECT OTHER POTENTIAL CLIENTS. EVERY LICENSED THERAPIST IS REGISTERED WITH A LICENSING BOARD THAT MAINTAINS THEIR LICENSURE. THESE LICENSING BODIES REVIEW ALL CONCERNS THAT ARE FILED AND IF THEY ARE FOUND TO BE VALID, THE ISSUE IS ADDRESSED WITH THE THERAPIST (AND IF NEED BE, THE THERAPIST CAN LOSE HIS/HER LICENSE).

IS IT OKAY IF YOUR THERAPIST HUGS YOU/RUBS YOUR SHOULDER/BACK ALL THE TIME?

THIS IS A DIFFICULT QUESTION TO ANSWER AS PHYSICAL TOUCH IS A VERY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE IN THERAPY. I WILL SHARE A COUPLE OF POINTS THAT PROVIDE IMPORTANT CONTEXT AND THEN, (HOPEFULLY, LIKE A GOOD THERAPIST), TRUST THAT YOU WILL TO COME TO A DECISION ABOUT THE ACCEPTABILITY OF YOUR PARTICULAR SITUATION.

NONE OF THE ETHICAL BOARDS THAT REGULATE THE MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS PROHIBIT TOUCH OR VIEW IT AS INHERENTLY UNETHICAL. TOUCH IN A THERAPEUTIC SETTING HAS POTENTIAL TO BE HIGHLY INAPPROPRIATE OR THERAPEUTICALLY BENEFICIAL - IT ALL DEPENDS ON THE CONTEXT. HOWEVER, IT IS NEVER OKAY FOR A THERAPIST TO TOUCH A CLIENT IN A WAY THAT IS ROMANTIC OR AGGRESSIVE.

AN EXAMPLE OF APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL TOUCH WOULD BE A FEMALE THERAPIST DOING GRIEF COUNSELING WITH A LONELY, WIDOWED MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN AND GIVING A HUG FROM TIME TO TIME. THIS GESTURE CAN ENHANCE THE CLIENT'S FELT EXPERIENCE OF EMOTIONAL CONNECTION AND SUPPORT. THE SAME THERAPIST MAY FIND THAT, FOR HER ADOLESCENT CLIENT WHO STRUGGLES TO MAINTAIN HEALTHY BOUNDARIES, BRINGING PHYSICAL CONTACT INTO THE RELATIONSHIP WOULD LIKELY BE CONFUSING FOR THE CLIENT AND COULD CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS FOSTERING AN UNHEALTHY DEPENDENCY ON THE THERAPIST'S AFFECTION.

THE MAJORITY OF THERAPISTS KEEP PHYSICAL CONTACT TO A MINIMUM IN ORDER TO AVOID THE ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH IT, WITH MANY THERAPISTS PREFERRING TO PLAY IT SAFE BY KEEPING TO NO PHYSICAL CONTACT.

COMING BACK TO YOUR SPECIFIC QUESTION, A WARM GESTURE SUCH AS PATTING YOUR SHOULDER AS YOUR THERAPIST WALKS YOU TO THE DOOR IS VERY DIFFERENT THAN REGULAR FULL-ON BACK RUBS. IT'S HARD TO ASCERTAIN FROM THE WORDING OF YOUR QUESTIONS WHAT, OBJECTIVELY, IS HAPPENING. BUT, REGARDLESS OF AN OUTSIDER'S JUDGEMENT, IT MATTERS IF YOU'RE FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE. SPEAK TO YOUR THERAPIST ABOUT HOW YOU ARE FEELING AND SEE IF YOU CAN RESOLVE IT TOGETHER. IF THE CONVERSATION DOESN'T GO WELL, THAT'S AN IMPORTANT SIGN BUT OTHERWISE, IT'S LIKELY TO HELP IN BUILDING AN EVEN MORE TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU!

I LIKE TO SAY TO PEOPLE- OUT OF EVERY TEN TEACHERS YOU'VE HAD, YOU PROBABLY HAD SOME WHOSE PERSONALITY AND LESSONS YOU REALLY DIDN'T CONNECT WITH, A COUPLE WHO YOU FELT NEUTRAL ABOUT, AT LEAST ONE WHO YOU FELT SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN IN FRONT OF A CLASSROOM, AND A FEW WHOSE CLASSES YOU REALLY LOOKED FORWARD TO. IT'S LIKE THAT WITH THERAPISTS, TOO. YOU MIGHT HAVE LOVED ONE TEACHER BECAUSE SHE WAS SO WARM AND FUN BUT REALIZE THAT, WHILE HER CLASS WAS A PARTY, YOU WEREN'T REALLY LEARNING MUCH. ANOTHER WAS TOO STRICT FOR YOUR LIKING. ANOTHER WAS SMART, FAIR, INSPIRING, AND A GOOD KIND OF HARD... SHE YOU REALLY LIKED...

TEMIMA KOVEL, LPCC ATR IS A COUNSELOR AND ART THERAPIST WHO CURRENTLY PRACTICES IN YERUSHALAYIM. SEEING MOSTLY AMERICAN SEMINARY GIRLS IN YERUSHALYIM.

SPOTLIGHT ON.....
ART THERAPY

Art Therapy is a form of therapy that uses art and creative processes in conjunction with psychological theory, and human experience.

Art Therapy, facilitated by a professional art therapist, effectively supports personal and relational treatment goals as well as community concerns. Art Therapy is used to improve cognitive and sensory-motor functions, foster self-esteem and self-awareness, cultivate emotional resilience, promote insight, enhance social skills, reduce and resolve conflicts and distress, and advance societal and ecological change.

Art therapists are master-level clinicians who are guided by ethical standards and scope of practice. Honoring individuals' values and beliefs, art therapists work with people who are challenged with medical and mental health problems, as well as individuals seeking emotional, creative, and spiritual growth.

Through integrative methods, art therapy engages the mind, body, and spirit in ways that are distinct from verbal articulation alone. Visual and symbolic expression gives voice to experience, and empowers all.

SARAH

MIRIAM

MEET A MEMBER

DEVORAH

MIRIAM

Can you please share a little bit about yourself and your struggles?

I am a young adult and Baruch Hashem, I have a good job in the field that I have my degree in. I have dealt with anxiety and OCD from a young age. I've struggled with other things as well. My OCD had a variety of themes, and some symptoms of my OCD were hard for even professionals to really understand that it was OCD. At many times, during my childhood and adolescence, I had a lot of externalizing behaviors at home. I had strong emotions including anxiety, irritability, and feelings from OCD, and I didn't have great frustration tolerance and struggled with emotion regulation. The externalizing behaviors contributed to challenges in my relationships with my parents and siblings. The relationship struggles with my parents affected me very deeply and I'm working on healing. When I was a teenager, the pain from having relationship struggles with my parents actually helped me develop a close relationship with Hashem because I believed and felt comforted that Hashem knew my deepest feelings and had unconditional compassion and understanding for me.

What is one of the most difficult parts of your challenge?

Currently, I would say that being easily dysregulated is one of the more difficult things. It's hard because it doesn't feel good and because it's sometimes harder to act effectively or according to my values when I am dysregulated. I have to work on accepting that I have this challenge and (dialectics!) that I am trying to improve in this area. That's really the Torah approach to view it: Hashem may give us challenges and middos to work on - that we didn't cause and may wish we Didn't have - and since it doesn't feel good, we can get upset that it's in our lives and upset that we have to struggle to work on it. But if we can realize that it's obviously good if Hashem gave us the challenge, then we can move towards both acceptance of the challenge that we are asked to work on, and doing our best to overcome it/make the right choices within the challenge.

How did you Hear about Chazkeinu?

It was over 5 years ago. I think I may have read about it in one of the Jewish magazines.

How have you worked and continue to work on overcoming your challenges?

I started going to therapy during elementary school and started medication a few years later. I saw *many* therapists and tried *many* medications (and different dosages and combinations) throughout the years. It took a lot of time to find medications and therapists that were sufficiently helpful for what I needed. Seeing so many professionals and dealing with my mental health for so long made me knowledgeable about a variety of therapy modalities and about mental health struggles and treatments. After many years of struggle, I finally found treatment that was helpful -- Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) therapy for OCD. I attended a PHP (partial hospitalization program) for OCD and worked hard on using Exposure and Response Prevention therapy (ERP) to overcome severe OCD symptoms. I also finally found helpful medications and dosages for the struggles I had.

I was, Baruch Hashem, in a good enough place emotionally to go to Israel for seminary. I really enjoyed my year there. During my year in seminary, there were times that I struggled with some mental health issues including anxiety, depressed feelings, OCD, low self-esteem, and disordered eating (it was not the first time that I struggled with disordered eating). I also struggled with my relationship with my parents quite a bit. I had a therapist in Israel and also had some sessions with my therapist from back home. Baruch Hashem, I also found trusted people that were supportive and helped me feel less alone. Even with the times of struggle, I really did enjoy my year in Israel, and I found it really beneficial to have the year away from home. When I came home after seminary, I felt the positive effects of having spent the year away from home, particularly because that long time away from home helped shift the relationship dynamics at home that I was stuck in for years prior to going away to Israel for the year. Even though things shifted positively after I came home from seminary, the relationship with my parents has still gotten really rocky at times, but Baruch Hashem, bli ayin hara, it has been working out well these last few months and I daven that it continues this way.

These days, I do sometimes struggle with certain themes of OCD - mostly things related to my moral/religious beliefs - sometimes referred to as scrupulosity (I probably still struggle with these themes because I must not have fully work through them in therapy), but I do know the skills that I can use if I get an OCD thought or urge to do a compulsion, though it can be really hard to make the right choices in the face of strong OCD thoughts and urges to do compulsions. It's not always easy to deal with OCD thoughts and urges, but Baruch Hashem, it's manageable.

Can you please share a little bit about the spiritual part of your journey and how you cope/deal with your struggles as it relates to Shabbos and Yamim Tovim?

As I mentioned earlier, I grew closer to Hashem during very dark times as a teenager. I don't always feel that strong connection like I did during such trying times, but I really value connecting to Hashem and doing His *ratzon* (Will), so I try to keep the right perspective on life and try to be in a place of wanting to grow in *yiddishkeit* and in connecting to Hashem, so that I will make choices that align with those values.

Since I am not so open about my deep emotions and internal experiences with my family and I don't really have people in walking distance that I'm particularly vulnerable with - if I'm struggling with difficult internal experiences - I like to know that I am able to reach out to people whom I am open with. Without my phone on Shabbos and Yamim Tovim, it can feel isolating. Baruch Hashem, it's not all the time that I get those difficult moments, so it's partly that I'm anxious that I'll feel a lot of distress and then I won't have someone to turn to.

So firstly, I recognize that a part of it is anxiety, and also even if I have those very difficult moments, I know I've gotten through them on past Shabbasos or Yamim Tovim in a healthy way (as well as during the week- without reaching out to anyone), so I will manage IY"H. It's a good practice for me to be there for myself and trust myself that I can use the skills that I have to be there for myself and help myself feel better. It's good to know how to turn to others for support, and many times that is helpful for me, but for me personally, I sometimes feel that my younger self wants certain people's support in a desperate way - when really, I am not actually in a desperate situation - and I have it in me to help myself. At those times it might be a good opportunity for my adult self to practice managing various emotions independently. I have been able to do it, so I know that I can do it again. It might not be easy at all, but riding out the waves of emotions and choosing to use healthy skills, is something to be proud of myself for.

So, Shabbos and Yomim Tovim are opportunities for me to grow in my ability to help myself and having my adult self give my younger self the nurturing, love, empathy, and attunement that it is yearning for. I hope to use those opportunities to do that for my younger self because it's so healing to do so. Also having no one around that I want to be open with makes Shabbos and Yomim Tovim great opportunities to learn to turn to Hashem--including in those times of distress. On Shabbos and Yomim Tovim it's important for me to keep myself occupied and present, so that I feel grounded and okay and don't get too overwhelmed by painful emotions or by distressing thoughts. Specific things I might do to stay occupied include reading a book or a Sefer, playing a game with people, talking with a friend, mindfully relaxing, helping someone, etc.

My hope is that by writing this interview, I will be able to give Chizuk and help others. Any feedback is appreciated. I can be contacted at interviewfeedbackiswelcome@gmail.com.

Can you share some of your go-to skills/techniques that you use to overcome and deal with your struggles?

My desire to live my life according to Torah values and wanting to feel good emotionally helps me work on myself to be the best version of myself. My self-awareness has really helped me understand myself and it helps me with making effective choices to deal with my internal experiences. I hope to continue to increase my self-awareness because it's so important to grow. Some skills that have been helpful for me:

1- To ground myself and regulate myself, using somatic work, like mindfully noticing the sensations in my body (not thinking about the sensations rather feeling it physically) and gently & non-judgmentally shifting my awareness to areas of tension or to place(s) in my body where I am feeling certain emotions. If the distress is from a younger part, it's important to be aware of that and to stay present in the current adult body and not in the body of the distressed younger self. This has really calmed me down when I had felt dysregulated/in emotional pain/anxious and originally felt I couldn't possibly figure out how to regulate myself.

2- Grounding myself by shifting into the mindset of identifying with and operating from my adult self, and that I'm okay and can deal with my life and that I may have inner child parts, but they aren't who I am. I am an adult, and I can deal with all the tasks of my day and relate to others as my adult self. This is instead of getting all consumed by feelings from my inner child parts. Furthermore, once I get into the mindset that I am my adult self, my adult self can actually be there for my younger self/inner child parts. And as my adult self, I can compassionately acknowledge any feelings from my younger self, and if I need to be busy with an adult responsibility, I can even tell my younger self something like *"I see you, I know you are there, and I will more fully work through these feelings later"* and remind myself - if needed - that I'm an adult. I remember that I used this strategy one day before work and it freed me from operating from a place of feeling all consumed by painful and insecure feelings from my younger self and was able to feel more competent, confident, and emotionally grounded going into work.

3- Recognizing the concept of emotional boundaries so that I can stay more emotionally regulated and relate to myself in a more grounded way.

4- Similarly, working on recognizing that what others say about me doesn't necessarily mean that it's the truth; trusting my own self-image and not doubting it when others say something critical, judgmental or triggering.

5- Owning my reactions - that I am responsible for working on myself to have effective actions and reactions, and no matter what the other person might be doing (or not doing), if I want to make good choices and react in an effective way, I can't think about who is right or wrong; I need to regulate myself and act in accordance with my values and in ways that will be effective.

6- Learning to relate to myself and my actions with self-compassion and validating my emotions without judging myself for them.

What message or words of Chizuk can you share with others that are going through a similar challenge?

Not to give up on trying to find the right treatment(s). I really know what it's like to go through *many* years looking for the right help for my struggles. But don't give up because you are worth it!

Another thing is - if you can, to try to have compassion towards yourself and your internal experiences instead of letting your inner critic run the show.

Also, no matter if you have people to turn to or not, don't forget that Hashem is always with each one of us and we can always turn to Him. People feel a connection to Hashem in many different ways. Different things help me at different times. Sometimes it's tapping into a feeling of connection during formal Tefillah (prayer) including Tehillim, talking to Hashem in my own words, thinking of His presence, learning a Sefer, silently calling out to Him, having *Kavanah* when saying Brachos etc. It's so important to internalize that we are each so valuable to Hashem and Hashem loves us unconditionally.

For those that struggle to feel the unconditional love that Hashem has for us, I Bentch (bless) all of you - and myself - that we should be able to feel Hashem's unconditional love for us. Also, you're not alone if you have a hard time feeling a connection. Many times, it's hard for me too; I'm working on it. As with all emotions and internal experiences, try not to judge yourself if you try to feel connected but don't feel it. Practicing self-compassion helps us more than criticizing ourselves does (I originally didn't believe that when I learned it in therapy, but it's true!). Whether or not we feel a connection at a given time, we should just know that we are never truly alone because Hashem is with us at all times, and we can always turn to Him.

What have you gained from being part of Chazkeinu?

I appreciate the emails and that there are so many a week! I also like the online forum. I have benefited from and enjoyed Zoom meetings and phone meetings through the years.

SARAH

Can you please share a little bit about yourself and your struggles?

I am a 24-year-old single frum girl, living in a very close-knit out of town community. I grew up in a very sheltered chassidish home and was a very emotionally intense child. My parents are second-generation Holocaust survivors, and they did not have the capacity to give me what I need, physically or emotionally. My eating disorder, depression and anxiety are all products of an extremely difficult childhood. I became aware of my mental health struggles about five years ago. Until then I had never heard of the word depression or mental health in general. However, it was only quite a bit of time later that I was able to accept my difficulties enough to take medication and seek the right help. At around the same time, I decided that I did not want to get married and start a family to produce another generation of traumatized children, until I was in a healthy enough place to be confident that I would not continue the pattern of dysfunction. Instead, I went to university and started earning my degree in educational psychology. This was something practically unheard of in my family, and even in my community, it was a very 'out of the box' thing to do. I struggle with my eating disorder and chronic difficult thoughts almost every day.

What is the most difficult part of your struggle?

Keeping a brave face and pretending that I am okay often feels like the worst part of my mental illness. On days when I am physically and emotionally in horrific pain, I need to keep going and smiling and acting like my life is perfect and it rips my heart in two. This is especially difficult as my family are not yet open to understanding or supporting me in my challenges. They have shown me that they do not yet have the capacity to understand mental illness yet, but not being able to ever lose my cool or fall apart in front of my parents or siblings really breaks me.

How did you hear about Chazkeinu?

I heard about the concept of Chazkeinu from a friend about 4 years ago. At the time, I did not think that the support she was talking about was relevant to me. It was always in the back of my mind, but when during my first hospitalization, I reached out to Chazkeinu. The hope, love and connection from my Chazkeinu sisters changed my life.

How have you and continue to work on overcoming your challenges?

Building a support network and gaining a strong understanding of my difficulties have been key for me to stay on my recovery journey. I have also tried a lot of alternative treatments like homoeopathy, reflexology, acupuncture and energy healing, to name a few! Traditional therapy and trauma therapy have been great c atalysts for changeAs well, although if I'm being honest, it is often a big struggle to accept help and keep showing up for sessions and facing my demons. I have also gained a lot of healing from being in a 12-step group and working the steps as they are relevant to my problems. I also started two small organizations that support teens who are struggling with mental health in my community. Seeingthe impact that our events have on them has been really healing. This is the exact support I needed when I was that age and being able to give something to those in a similar situation for me and maybe change their narrative and future has given a lot of meaning to my struggles.

Can you please share a little bit about the spiritual part of your journey and how you cope/deal with your struggles as it relates to Shabbos and Yamim Tovim?

My observance of Shabbos and Yom Tov, and Yiddishkeit in general have really borne the brunt of my illness, unfortunately. I have come a long way in seeing things in a less black-and-white way, for example, if I broke Shabbos to get help, this is the path Hashem wants me on and does not mean I am a 'broken Jew'. This is especially true when I am not able to fast, and I feel so 'wrong' about it. Since being diagnosed, I have had to reframe the way I understand Yiddishkeit and the role of mitzvos in our relationship with Hashem. Having a connection with G-D has really been my anchor in hard times, but I work hard on this relationship and try to connect with other people who are struggling so we can give each other chizuk.

Can you share some of your go to skills that you use to overcome and deal with your struggles?

I try to use some DBT skills I have been learning but they take a huge amount of practice and discipline. I have worked very hard on creating a space for myself that is free from pressures and toxicity. Whenever I am going through a 'flare-up', my priority is taking excellent care of myself. This has sometimes meant that I miss work deadlines or don't keep my family/social commitments, but I have learnt that when the dust settles, I am the one who has to continue living with myself and if I don't take care of myself when I get sick, it will ultimately take me longer to recover and get back to myself. Whenever I feel particularly emotionally charged, I do the following: HALT-check whether I am hungry, angry, lonely or tired. I then do whatever I can do address any of these problems. My go-to release is writing letters, I write letters to myself and to people whom I feel upset at (although I don't send them!). I also try to check in with my inner child and ask her what's wrong. I write out the response in my left hand and usually her responses are very insightful and help me understand the root of my discomfort. Sometimes I just need to journal or draw the pain away. Other time when I am in a dysregulated mess, I do basic breath work and shower.

As someone who has been on both sides - being a client and a professional- How would you say they are different and perhaps also the same? What stands out for you?

Although I don't specifically work with patients who are struggling with their mental health, I am in the field and do a lot of emotional regulation work with the children and teens I work with. When I started this work, I began rejecting therapy. If I could teach it, I felt, surely, I did not need someone else to teach it to me! However, I learnt that just like a pilot can train other pilots in aviation theory, they still need someone to actually show them how to fly. This was a transformational realization. Just because I understand even people in the helping professions, struggle and that does mean I am a less capable professional. In fact, it means that I really 'get it' and can support people in a very deep way because I have been there. I especially relate to the children I work with that have attachment difficulties. I see my own inner child show up in them and instinctively know just what they need.

What have you gained from being part of Chazkeinu?

I could honestly say that being a part of this supportive community has kept me alive. I have gotten to know some very special sisters who have held my hand and sustained my hope even during my darkest hours. The emails are like a warm hug in my inbox on the days when everything is cold, and I feel so alone. They inject me with validation that the struggle is real and the encouragement to keep going. Especially around Yom Tov, which are often my most difficult times, the resources and ideas sent over are a lifeline. The Zoom classes and phone calls are filled with brilliant psychoeducation and we are privileged to have some real healers come and spend time with us on these meetings. I have gained a tremendous amount of knowledge and self-awareness from these! I would also say that being part of Chazkeinu has given me a space to give back in a meaningful way to those who also need encouragement and hope. I love writing and contributing in any way that I can as it makes me feel like a part of something bigger. But I would say the biggest part of Chazkeinu is that I feel like I have been given a new family, a warm, supportive, caring bunch of amazing sisters who are always there. This is the so important for me because I don't yet have a family who understand mental illness or who can support me in any way. However, when I feel the pain and grief of being so alone in the struggle, I think of my sisters who care like real sisters should and it melts a little bit of the pain.

What words of chizuk can you give to someone going through a similar situation?

I think that ascribing meaning to suffering is key to gaining and keeping recovery. Keep looking back and see how far where you have come. Try and see what has helped you through the most difficult times and use those tools to keep climbing. Don't look back and stay shackled to the past, rather, use the past to write an incredible background for your story of triumphs.

Don't isolate yourself; it may feel easier to keep the pain to yourself and hide away, but sharing the pain can mean that someone else who has been there realizes it was worth recovering to help someone else swim to the other end!

DEVORAH

Can you please share a little bit about yourself and your struggles?

I'm Devorah, I'm 23 years old, newly married, and am currently in school pursuing a degree in nursing. I have struggled with anxiety and an eating disorder for the last several years. I've always been an over thinker and a people pleaser. I care deeply for others; this ultimately is what leads me to experience a lot of social anxiety.

How have you and continue to work on overcoming your challenges?

I go to therapy and see a dietician weekly. I also have a doctor and psychiatrist that I see monthly. Having a proper support system has been a big piece in my recovery. I would not be able to be where I am without that proper support system. I also put my recovery as a top priority, and also try to work toward using healthier coping as opposed to maladaptive ones.

What is the most difficult part of your struggle?

I think one difficult part of my challenge is how intertwined it is into daily life numerous meals a day, every event or party food is an included part. It sometimes feels. as if I can't escape from it; it kind of forces you to have to conquer it often.

How did you Hear about Chazkeinu?

I was on Instagram and a blogger Bari Mitzmann was talking about Chazkeinu

Can you share some of your go to skills that you use to overcome and deal with your struggles?

I find for me one big one is being mindful and breaking up things into smaller chunks I can handle. I take it one day at a time, sometimes even one minute at a time. I also use distraction techniques like listening to music, taking a walk, or talking to a friend.

What have You gained most From being part Chazkeinu?

I gained support and understanding from others that truly understand the struggle It's often hard to feel truly heard and understood, but with my Chazkeinu Sisters,they are able to really be there for you, and help you through your hard times.

Can you please share a little bit about the spiritual part of your journey and how you cope/deal with your struggles as it relates to Shabbos and Yamim Tovim?

I truly always felt like Hashem gave me this challenge. He will also be the One to help me through. I don't usually feel the ability to daven from a siddur, but I am constantly talking to Hashem--sometimes there are no words but just tears. It helps me to know the same One that can save me and help me through is always listening. When I got married, I found my relationship with Shabbos changed a little. My favorite time is Friday night candle lighting. I light and daven for anyone I know in need and then I sit on my couch in my quiet apartment, and I truly feel an inner peace. Shabbos and Yom Tov have always been tough for me, but I find what helps is incorporating things that bring me peace or joy such as taking a walk, taking a nap, reading a book and spending time with someone.

What words of chizuk can you give to someone going through a similar situation?

I think it's important to remind yourself this too shall pass. No matter how hard or dark things are, remember there is a way out and you will get there, but for the moment it's also okay to acknowledge how hard things are. Cry it out, take a minute, but then get up and push yourself in whatever small way you can.

THANK YOU TO OUR SISTERS WHO SHARED

MY SKILLS TOOLBOX

By: Hila

I started exchanging a gratitude list with a friend and it really is uplifting. We list five things we are grateful for that day. I love writing my own quotes so I write one each day for the gratitude exchange.

Here are some:

"Gratitude is like planting roses without thorns."

"Gratitude might not get you home but it will definitely take you to nice places."

"Gratitude will not necessarily grant you what you lack but it will grant you what you own."

RACHEL G SHARES

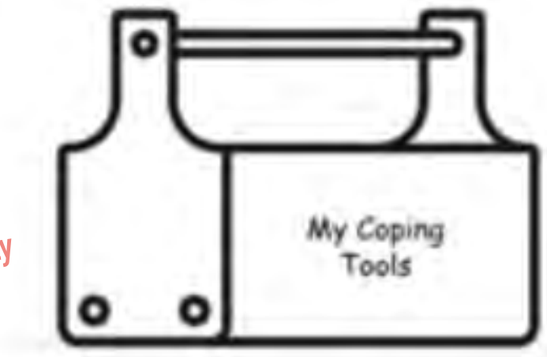
ONE THING IVE BEEN DOING A LOT LATELY, THANKS TO MY THERAPIST, IS MAKING MY FOCUS ON COPING IN THE MOMENT RATHER THAN WITH EVERYTHING I'M DEALING WITH. FOR INSTANCE, IF I'M HAVING A REALLY HARD DAY BUT I KNOW THAT THE NEXT DAY I'M GETTING TOGETHER WITH A GOOD FRIEND WHO I HAVENT SEEN IN A WHILE, I'LL FRAME IT AS "HOW CAN I GET THROUGH UNAL TOMORROW WHEN I'LL BE ABLE TO RECHARGE?" INSTEAD OF "HOW ON EARTH CAN I MANAGE MY LIFE??" IVE FOUND THIS TO BE REALLY HELPFUL AND HOPE ITS ABLE TO HELP SOME OF YOU TOO. :)

Perry M. Shares:

I like to save the quotes t hat I like from the emails. Hoping to print them and hang them on the wall so I get to see them every day :)

FRAIDY W. SHARES
HERE ARE MY COPING SKILLS:

- Writing
- Listening to music
- Calling a friend or mentor
- Reading a book
- Treating myself to a mani/pedi
- Making myself a nice drinking it quietly
- Buying myself a lunch or treat



Zahava Shares

Writing poetry is one of the biggest coping skills that have helped me in the hardest times. Sometimes I don't know what is bothering me or what I'm feeling. When I finally get it onto paper, and in a way that flows in a rhythm of the words, it gives me a sense of relief and validation. Words have power, and the power of reading our own writing is beyond therapeutic. I also really benefit so much from reading poems of other Chazkeinu Sisters.

Rivka K. Said:

If you find positive affirmations hard, try saying one with a qualifying preface, e.g. "Maybe I really am good enough. " Obviously, the ultimate goal is beyond that, but this can help to ease into the mindset if we're not used to it. Just discovered and tried this and found it really helpful!

Sharing our wins

By Hila
I started practicing self-compassion. I include in it self-validation, self-love, pep talk and just giving myself a check in how my day went etc. and comment on how my day went like I would do to a friend. I believe in the positivity of doing it consistently, which also makes it easier as it would be much harder doing it only when you're up to it. You deserve it always. Take a moment; you can talk or think of the words, and you can do it while hugging yourself. Sending love to everyone.

Rivka K.
The other day when I was thinking self-deprecating things/ negative self-talk, I said, "Said who?" It's not like that's a one-stop fix or even fixes anything, but I was able to not just take for granted that what I was "yelling at myself" were true!

Saralah P.
I'm trying to be more mindful of my phone use and I stop myself and ask if this (checking an app or for notifications) is something I really need or want to do. Does it align with my goals and will I feel good about myself after. For example, just about a minute ago, I got a message on my phone (while typing), and I SO badly wanted to check to see what it was, but I didn't!

Aviva
For a long ,me, I was angry at Hashem and didn't daven or say Brachos. Now, after two years, I started davening and saying brachos again!!! This is so special to me, and I want to dedicate this as a zechus for all the Chazkeinu Sisters out there. You are all so special!

Chani M.
Today I woke up very early even though I was tired as a side effect from my medication. I made it to therapy on 9me for the first 9me in a really long 9me! I am so proud of myself!

Breindy W.
I wore the Chazkeinu sweatshirt outside, yet, I didn't wear one yet in my new neighborhood. Someone said they liked it. I wore it to the local bakery without covering the logo.
I'm really proud.

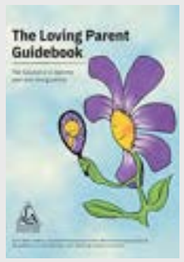
Bassy
I bought myself a reclining deck chair and I knew my children would want to sit on it. I preempted the whole thing by telling them that I bought the chair for myself and that if I wasn't on it that they could use it but otherwise, that it is mine. In the past I would have felt very selfish to do that. This would have led to them asking and then demanding (like children know how) to sit in it while I'm on it and I would have go Ben up.

Rivky L.
From when I got separated, I wasn't able to prepare Nagel Vasser; it was like a trigger for me. I was thinking that I can't push myself and that I'm going through enough, but I always wanted to do it. And b"H, I started again on Tuesday. It felt so good.

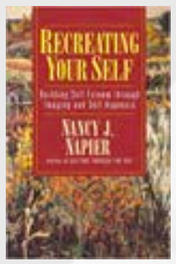
Sima
I was angry at someone, and instead of making a scene, I called him and calmly told him how I felt instead of lashing out!
Me: 1
BPD: 0

Chaya Sara M.
I closed out an EMDR memory that I was working on for months!
I never thought I would do it but I did!!

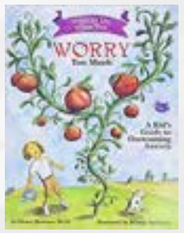
Chaya
I went to a session and replied 'sometimes' when she asked difficult questions. I worked with my therapist in EMDR therapy. I let my therapist do EMDR on me and shared what I felt afterwards. I let myself feel my feelings and I let myself break down and cry. I reached out afterwards when I was not okay. This may seem like normal things, and I know you guys do this at every session, but even answering a yes or no question by me is a whole struggle. So even though I'm drained and I'm not okay, it's still a victorious day for me ;)



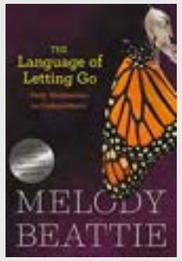
This book provides guidance on creating the conditions to reclaim your inner child and reparent yourself with gentleness, humor, love, and respect. You can apply everything you learn in this guidebook to parenting, interacting with children, and interacting with adults. When you become a friend to yourself, you're naturally a friend to others. The book is structured to help you access the love inside you and grow the awareness and skills you need to become your own loving parent.



For people who were emotionally and physically wounded as children, the journey from childhood to adulthood is a constant struggle with shame, self-criticism, and fear. This book shows these adult children of dysfunctional families how to use self-hypnosis to resolve the effects of abuse, to build a healing relationship with the child within and an inspiring one with the future self, and to give back "hand-me-downs" that are causing pain. The author's stories and hypnotic strategies emphasize self-acceptance, healing old wounds, and getting on with life. Explicit exercises and self-hypnotic scripts, clearly explained and set within a framework that enables readers to make sense of their experiences, give people the tools they need to create a resilient, healthy self.



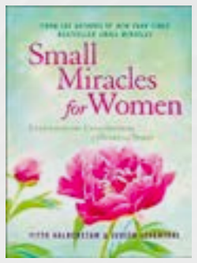
Did you know that worries are like tomatoes? No, you can't eat them, but you can make them grow, simply by paying attention to them. If your worries have grown so big that they bother you almost every day, this book is for you.



Inspiring even for those that don't struggle with codpedency but any heightened emotions…

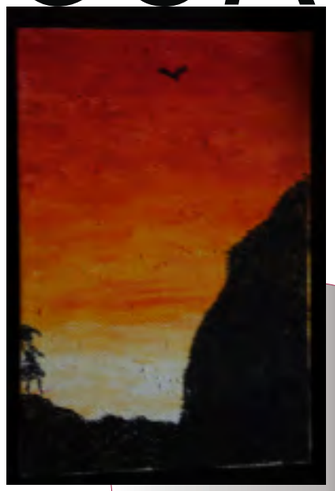
'Think Again reveals that we don't have to believe everything we think or internalize everything we feel. It's an invitation to let go of views that are no longer serving us well and prize mental flexibility over foolish consistency. If knowledge is power, knowing what we don't know is

In The Pursuit of Perfect, Tal Ben-Shahar offers an optimal way of thinking about failure and success--and the very way we live. He provides exercises for self reflection, meditations, and "Time-Ins" to help you rediscover what you really want out of life.



have been reading books in the Small Miracles series, written by Yitta Halberstam and Judith Leventhal. These are books of short stories, and there are several of them, including Small Miracles, Small Miracles II, Small Miracles for Families, Small Miracles for Women, Small Miracles for the Jewish Heart, Small Miracles from Beyond, Small Miracles of the Holacoust, and Small Miracles of Love and Friendship. The books are light, inspirational, easy reading, and are especially good if you don't have the concentration and focus to follow a longer story plot. Highly recommended! They were recommended to me by my rav, even though they are not all about Jewish people.

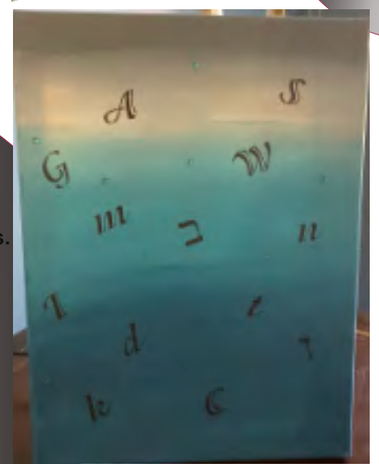
OUR CHAZKEINU ART TALENT!



Submitted by:
Chava T.

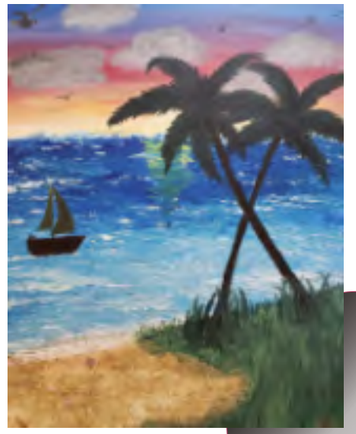
Submitted by:
Rachel G

Submitted by:
Rochel B.



Submitted by:
Sarah H

I got a stencil for letters in a local store,
Then looked for a matching font with Yiddish letters.
I didn't find, so got was available.
I then stencilled the first letter of every word of
(my personal treasured version of)
the serenity prayer, using each letter just once
Here goes:
עסיז ,רעפעשאב
Grant me the serenity to accept the things I can not change
Courage to change the things I can
And wisdom to know the difference

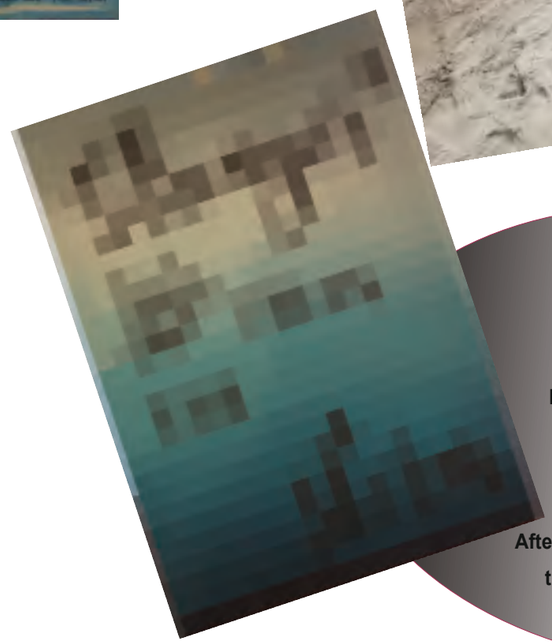


Submitted by:
Blimi R.

Submitted by:
Rachel G

Submitted by:
Blimi R.

Submitted by:
Blimi R.



Submitted by:
Sarah H

I created under the friendly guidance of a
program friend while on a retreat.
We painted and combined the colours
so that 1 bleeds into the next.
After it dried i used a thin paint marker to outline
the words and butterfly following stencils.

OUR CHAZKEINU SISTERS SHARE THEIR TALENT WITH US

Who Would Ever Think That...

By: Saralah

Who would ever think that public transportation can create a sense of safety?

Who would ever think that a B11 bus can give one so much power?

That the 15-minute bus ride is enough time to soothe some nerves?

Who would ever give thought to the cleanliness on the B11's (Brooklyn bus) bus?

Who would ever notice the calm blue color of the seats of the B11?

That its toasty-warm temperature calms my insides and makes me feel 'toasty-safe'?

Yes, I feel safe on the B11 bus because it's clean, warm and more or less predictable.

It's a cozy and toasty, warm environment that grounds and centers me.

Who Would Ever Think That...

While I ride the bus,

YES, I am a calmer and more serene ME?

He Sees Me

By: Tzivy

I'm looking all around,
And Hashem I'm trying to find.

I know that Your presence is everywhere,
Wherever I am, you'll always be there.

But Tatta if You are so close to me,
Do You notice, do You see?

My eyes that are full of tears,
My broken heart that constantly fears,

My mind that is hoping for a cure,
My soul that is searching for something more,

My depression that darkens my sight,
My inner battles that are a constant fight,

My cry that I call for You,
Tatta, do you see that too?

Yes, You see me, I know You do.
But please, Hashem, help me feel that too!

Broken to grow

By: Hila

The flower stem was weak,
It splintered under the weight of rain,
But look how two flowers emerged
Through each crack.

This is my blossom of hope,
Symbolism in disguise,
It allows me to fly
Through every locked door.

When the tears melt before showing it's proof
And the shadows in my heart hide between each cell,
The pain consumes my world
acks beneath the ground.

But I learn the beauty of a broken heart,
each fragment strikes out,
glory is known,
acks out of the soil.

s makes room for light,
on purple cross the sky,
yric fills my world,
got hope in one hand
rength at it's side.

Freedom from my Soul

By Chani M.

Depression
Slavery
No more happiness
Sleeping a lot
Not calling my friends
No escape
Freedom
YetziasMitzrayim
Lots of happiness
Optimism
We give thanks to Hashem
Looking forward to the next day
My salvation came in the blink of an eye
Hashem can do anything

Positive Word Power

By: Estie L.

Lying in bed in (physical) agonizing pain,

While trying to remain sane,

I thank my husband for doing his best,

To assist me so I can get some rest,

Notepad apps locked between now and then,

Hence the use of paper and pen,

Also brings me to the kitchen table,

And I am coping as best as I am able,

How will I hold Malky or nurse the precious child?

This pain's acute – yes, it's far from mild,

Getting dressed in the morn?

I don't even want to think,

Right now, I can't even wash my left hand in a sink!

This pain (as all) brings the Geula closer,

My heart with this thought feels a bit better,

And knowing there's a reason for it,

Is the only way possible to withstand it,

I know HKB"H can heal pain,

Whence this paper will be its only memory,

And I'll be able to pick up my glasses,

Which have fallen under my bed so gracefully!

Thank you for reading some of my heart,

Now I'll try to go back to sleep – I'll do my part!

Footnotes:
P.S. When I wrote this poem at about 3:10am & "thanked my helpful husband" I didn't feel much gratitude towards him; besides giving me Tylenol he wasn't of much help. Suddenly, when I went back into bed after completing my poem ;(NO I had not read it to him yet!), he brought me a warm compress, then ice packs & he even "picked up my glasses" from beneath my bed! This was a crystal-clear lesson for me, in positive Thinking & the wondrous powers of positive words/positive energy. & it's definitely thanks to Chazkeinu & all my positive Chazkeinu sisters that I was able to remain focused & positive - (my Chazkeinu pillow helped a lot as well) even amidst my agonizing pain.

Goodbye Inner Critic

By Meira

I find joy in colors and all of their glory
they are spilling out on the pages of my story
I sing, I laugh, I dance till I'm done
I've Opened my heart, I soak up the sun,
all's good till I hear,
that voice I've kept near,
it's the voice of evil, my enemy
one day from that voice I'll truly be free

Like fire and ice I'm mean and I'm nice
Cuz'it lives there, inside of my mind
A big bad bully the scary kind
Darkness and pain that's what I've known
since I gave the bully the reins long ago
His voice is loud with nothing nice to share
His comments are demeaning and hard to hear

He's like a cloud barely there
like moist wet air
Yet he's also a wall
stubborn and strong
completely enmeshed
he's been here too long
There's no space for me
when he's here I can't heal
If not for the mirror
I wouldn't know I am real
but I'll get him out
as soon as I let
As soon as I see

more of me than he

the time is now I feel the energy
It flows it swirls inside of my body
My heart feels heavy and ready to burst
His taunting and cruelty it stings and it hurts
My hands are too small to hold what He's gathered
All the broken pieces of dreams, shattered
He held them, the bully over the years
He's collected them for me, the pains and the fears

A bully from whom I've got nothing to gain
Blocks all my sunshine, I can't stop the rain
Now He's heavy and stifling, gathering dust
He sits on my chest full of grime full of rust
I am angry so angry tears on my face
From this critical beast I take back my place
Now the sound of my voice, is soft and sweet
Compassion and peace I can finally greet

I close my eyes, I pretend
I visualize this is his end
I shout and I scream, I drown out his mean
I stomp and I stomp
Till there's no sign of life
I feel only peace
this is the end of the strife
I take back my power
Forever it's mine
I welcome self-compassion
Until the end of time!
I am free

Silent Inner Pain

By: Saralah

Don't you see her pain?
Why do you think she's acting like this?
Do you think it's all in vain?

Don't you see that you're driving her away,
That each time you yell at her, you're causing her to go astray?

Can't you see beneath it?
Can't you recognize what's really going on?
It's not what you think—it's something way beyond!

Her childlike behavior is merely a mask,
It's a cover up for her true feelings…
Don't you care but to ask?

To go beyond what's surfacing and genuinely see,
That the inner frustration she's experiencing is
not quite easy,
One last question and thought for you to ponder, is
What do you want to accomplish?
For her to obey,
Or to run away?

And perhaps…
For her to go further astray…?

Mirror

By Hila

We don't do well with hide and seek,

You and me.

I remember you way back,

Further than your memory can exceed.

You always loved hiding from everyone,

And from me.

But I,

I find you each time.

In the end you stand there glowing,

You smile and beam to me,

You wave your little fingers,

You dance with words that pierce through my heart.

You let your reflection shine through you,

You breathe in your sighs,

You exhale hope,

In the form of tiny pink buds.

You blink those eyelashes in a magical way,

In a way only you can,

And you laugh,

You laugh again—never growing tired of that sound.

We don't do well with hide and seek—you and me,

I knew you will come back again now just to say hi.

Just to say – I love you more than you can imagine.

And I love you too.

Only I

By: Fraidy W.

Only I know your truth,
What's going on inside.
How you struggle each day,
What you feel forced to hide.

Only I know your strength,
How you reach out and reach in.
Forging real relationships,
And discovering new tools within.

Only I know your humility,
The times you swallow your pride.
How you listen to the advice of those who love you but don't know enough,
Fighting against the tide.

Only I know your courage,
How you're shaking inside.
When you push yourself to set boundaries,
While putting the power struggle aside.

Only I know your self-awareness,
Articulately sharing and explaining.
Knowing your limits, sticking to your guns,
While not being overbearing.

Only I know your greatness,
How you take the high road.
Showing kindness and concern (to someone who hurt you)
Even though you get no empathy in return.

Only I know your perseverance,
Never losing sight of your end goal.
How you don't compromise on superficial,
Or allow yourself to stay in a black hole.

Only I know your honesty,
Presenting both sides when asking questions.
How you dig inside to discover the truth,
Searching for true connections.

Only I know your responsibility,
Caring for your children even when you're down.
Showing up to work each and every day,
Instead of skipping town.

Only I know your depth,
Searching for meaning even in the pain.
Inspiring others while you do that,
So, it's not only you who gains.

Only I know your resilience,
How you never give up.
Despite being misunderstood,
And the aggravation and frustration build-up.

And only I know your reward,
For the pain you withstood.
With valor and heroism,
Making Me as proud as you could.

Conquer Mr. ED

By: Chaya

I am feeling miserable
my headache is terrible,
I've got this thing living in my head,
It's the wildest monster called Mr. ED.
All day and all night it calculates,
Making it difficult to concentrate,
It makes me feel guilty for eating even a crumb,
Which causes me to starve till I go numb.
I have a tug of war going on inside,
Can I let go of Ed, or keep it and hide?
My raw emotional pain is masked,
Losing weight is my foremost task,
My mind is constantly tormented,
Which leaves me utterly exhausted.
Wait one minute a little voice is saying
You can quit this game Mr. ED is playing,
In the past you have succeeded,
You kept fighting until ED was defeated.
In the beginning it's a real challenge,
The sooner you let go, the better you will manag
I know your emotions feels too much,
Since heavy topics you did touch.
There are other things to do,
When all this overwhelms you,
Are you willing to give it a try?
Although Mr. Ed can't understand why.

My Healing Journey

By: Devo P.

I've been fighting for so long,
However, now I am strong.

I will not give up,
Even when I feel like I could really use a good pick up.

I have come this far,
Starting to feel like a shining star.

I will always know that God took his time,
To make me perfect and achieve the climb.

I'm as proud as can be,
There's no other like me.

Everyone has a journey and at every stage,
I'm learning to love my body at every age.

I feel empowered and motivated,
When I think about my healing, I start feeling elated.

I let go of all negative thoughts and feelings,
And God is helping me through the healings.

I will focus on the positives wherever I go,
In any situation I hope to grow.

To God I hope to continue to pray,
With me forever I hope he stays.

Growing pain as challenges grow and pain snuggles its way through…

By: Ch.

When you are little
And from your sleep you awake in the middle
By a pain
Coming from deep next to your vein
You are told and then you know
This is "growing pain"
And it& will help you grow
It hurts, Yes it's true
But when you grow
No worry it'll leave you
But then, the years go by
And different challenges
Come around saying "Hi!"
And the pain comes with it along
Singing an ancient familiar sung
Although it appears now in a different context
And it changed its flavor and text
It hurts!
Different yet the same
It hurts, cause it comes from pain.
And then I understand
And then I know
THIS IS &"Growing Pain"
And THIS IS WHAT MAKES ME GROW

Life in Treatment

The fight to eat,
Is a major feat.
Sometimes restriction is a thing,
And happiness for some it brings.
Other times a binge you do,
And too much food for you isn't new.
Treatment is really rough,
But you know you are tough.
The first week feels like hell,
But you're hoping that all will go well.
You don't like yoga at all,
You think it just isn't your call.
You like writing instead,
It helps you to clear your head.
Treatment work is no fun,
But its worth it once you've won.
Everyone has a different goal,
But in the end, you're in a similar hole.
Getting out of the hole is really hard,
Although it's worth it to pick a new card.
Each chapter of life brings a new,
It's an important thing you have to do.
This new chapter in your book,
Will hopefully give you a second look.
Into the things you've always denied,
Knowing surely to everyone you lied.
If you talked when you were younger,
By now you would surely be stronger.
Each card in the deck is like a new day,
So, pick your card and get on your way.
Today is a new day for hope,
I know you have the power to cope.

MISUNDERSTOOD

My father says the meanest things,

He doesn't realize the hardship it brings.

Its not possible for me,

To do it alone it can not be.

Why does everything have to,

Feel so crazy and hard and new.

Its too much for me,

Why can't he just let me be?

I'm just trying to do what's best,

Its hard enough without the rest.

I wish he was able to see,

The struggles it is just to be me.

The anxiety with it is too intense,

And the limits I'm breaking is really immense.

Each day I come here,

Even if I'm overwhelmed with fear.

He doesn't realize I'm in pain,

But I don't tell him bc hell just take it in vain.

This has just been a peek,

Into what will happen every week.

Who Is Really In Charge:

By: Ch.

We walk in life
We think we're doing it alone
We're in charge
All is ours
And then it gets tough
And there's too much stuff
But I'm in charge
It's MY responsibility
Completely
Entirely
MINE
mine
mine
mine..
And then I remember
That it was never mine to begin with
That it was never mine to own
Cause I came here
To do a mission
And I'm supposed to take responsibility
On whatever I can do
But I don't own it
And neither do you
ה' He is in charge
It's his to take care of
To make sure it runs smooth
Leave it to him
Let him help you
To learn how to take responsibility
On what's really yours

The Power of Freshness—Newness

BY: Saralah

I got a new iPhone,

It's bigger,

weighs more and

is advanced.

The other one wasn't bad;

I just had the opportunity to trade it in with my old phone.

And I got this feeling of jubilation and excitement!

A new phone.

A bigger screen.

More stimulation.

In my mind, that equaled expansiveness and productivity—a certain freshness that represented me being 'important' and 'enough'.

That gave me the confidence and I labeled myself as 'important'.

I'm on a mission to…

Accomplish,

Create meaningful change,

And increase my productivity.

It's a delightful mission

It gives me purpose and creates rich experiences.

It's…

Stimulating

Fresh

And new.

Treading Water

By: Fraidy W.

I fall into the pool,

Unexpectedly,

Fully dressed,

Not ready for this.

I sink straight to the bottom,

Like a rock,

Down -

Down -

Down.

For you see,

I never learned how to swim.

I get to the bottom,

My feet touch the floor.

I am panicking.

I am frozen.

I am trapped.

As if by some natural instinct,

By the sheer will to live,

I start flailing my arms,

And kicking my legs.

I swallow some water.

I can hardly think.

I keep thrashing around.

By some miracle,

I reach the top,

Taking in a gulp of fresh air.

And then I fall back under.

For you see,

I never learned how to tread.

But now that I've had a taste of air,

Of freedom,

It is so much harder,

So much more devastating.

It reminds me of how much I miss.

Up and down.

Blowing bubbles.

Sometimes drinking water.

Sometimes breathing air.

This non-stop bobbing up & down is torturous,

It's literally a struggle for survival.

But alas,

Inner Peace

By: Blimie R.

Inner peace
Our deepest need
An elusive goal
How do I achieve it?
What does it even mean?
I think of the word peace
Peace between countries
Peace between friends
Peace between family members
Those are easy enough to understand
Albeit a bit more difficult to do
Peace is the absence of war
To coexist side by side
Why, then, do I need peace within myself?
Where is the war?
Who are the opponents?
And then it hits me
There's a whole world inside of me
So many voices
So many opinions
And, oh, do they fight!
I close my eyes
I imagine

A peaceful coexistence
The voices conversing
Understanding
Working things out
The absence of war
I want that
So badly
And so do my parts
They are sick and tired
Of fighting
Of screaming
Of needing to be right
So we all hold hands
Just for a moment
And decide
We want to live in harmony
We want to be there for each other
Not against each other
We want this war to end
It will be a journey
There's so much to sort through
But as I hold onto all of my parts
I make a commitment to myself that I will make peace of my pieces

I Feel at Peace

By: ZZ

I feel like my insides are so quiet,

It is hard for me I am not used to it,

I have so many essential parts inside of me,

And they are all content, how can that be,

Little Zeldy says she feels like someone cares,

Teenage Zeldy says finally somebody has for me open ears,

Somebody realizes that NOTHING was or is MY fault,

Somebody loves me the way I am and doesn't put on my wounds salt,

Finally, somebody sees the beauty inside,

I do not need anything to hide,

It makes me feel safe and secure,

It gives me hope and a reason to live for,

I cannot say that my pain all went away,

But I have somebody to hold it for me, and that is okay,

I have someone who is there for me all the time,

Someone who admits that I am fine,

Someone is ready to listen to everything I say,

Someone who tries to soothe me the right way,

Someone who knows me so well,

Someone who sees me through my shell,

Someone to who I cannot fake,

Someone who has only me at stake,

Someone ready to die for me,

Someone truly desperate that I should be happy,

Someone who I am Important too,

Someone who I never acknowledged or realized that her I knew,

I realized that I have a lot of strength,

I am the only one who knows myself at length,

I am the only one who could care for myself,

I am an amazing person. I have a self,

Realizing that people tried to ruin my life is so painful,

But realizing the call,

I HAVE THE STRENGTH TO OVERCOME IT ALL!!

I feel like it is a massive change for me,

I am not used to feeling so empty,

I am used to having intense pain all the time,

Struggling to live and never feeling okay or fine,

And now I am towards the end of this crazy journey,

Instead of feeling happy, I feel queasy,

I feel relieved,

Myself differently I perceive,

I see a beautiful path ahead of me,

With lovely flowers at the side, I see,

In a way, it is so nice to feel so positive,

But I feel like I do not know how with it to live,

In a way, life like this is so boring,

There is nothing intense I am not used to such a thing,

From when I remember myself, life was only there to survive,

And now I feel that in life you can thrive,

I feel there are so many reasons worth living,

There are so much to do out there that I could bring,

But I do not know myself yet how,

It feels good and bad now,

It feels incredible to be so happy and calm,

It feels rewarding the work I had done,

On the other side, I feel so bored,

It feels weird not to always be on board,

Now when I finally expressed myself,

I feel ready to indulge in this new life and wealth,

See the world in a different view,

Different from what I am used to,

Embrace the warm sun,

And see what life could bring how much happiness and fun,

I am still a tiny bit nervous about the change,

I always had a hard time rearrange,

Maybe now I will find it easier,

When I have somebody so special to help me through this with much care!!!

REBOUNDING

BY: FRAIDY W.

JUMPING UP AND DOWN,
SWEATING,
HEART THUMPING.
ON A TRAMPOLINE,
HARDLY STOPPING,
TRYING TO CATCH MY BREATH.
IN LIFE WE CAN GO DOWN,
SOMETIMES DEEP,
THINKING IT'S THE END.
BUT THEN TIME PASSES,
HEALING WOUNDS,
MENDING SOULS.
AND SO, WE GO BACK UP.
CAPTURE THE MOMENT.
TO LEARN, TO GROW.
FROM THE GOOD, THE BAD -
THE UPS, THE DOWNS.
FOR ISN'T THAT WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT?

I USED TO THINK THAT THE GYM WAS A PLACE TO GO,
IF YOU WANT TO LOSE WEIGHT,
OR GET STRONG.
BUT THEN I LEARNED THAT GOING TO THE GYM WAS ABOUT,
CLEARING MY HEAD,
RELEASING TENSION,
AND TAKING CARE OF MYSELF.
I USED TO THINK THAT DEPRESSED PEOPLE WERE PEOPLE WHO,
STAYED IN BED A WHOLE DAY,
CRYING,
UNABLE TO FUNCTION.
BUT THEN I LEARNED ABOUT THE MASKS MOST PEOPLE WEAR,
HOW YOU CAN GO TO WORK,
AND BE BREAKING ON THE INSIDE.
I USED TO THINK THAT ANXIOUS PEOPLE WERE PEOPLE WHO,
WRING THEIR HANDS ALL DAY,
WORRYING ABOUT NOTHING.
BUT THEN I LEARNED HOW ANXIETY CAN SIMMER BELOW THE SURFACE,
EATING AWAY INSIDE -
INSIDE THE MOST PUT TOGETHER PERSON.

I USED TO THINK THAT LIFE WAS LIKE A PATH,
SOMETHING YOU HAD TO TRAVEL ON,
TO GET TO A DESTINATION.
BUT THEN I LEARNED THAT LIFE WAS ABOUT,
THE JOURNEY ITSELF,
THE LESSONS WE LEARN,
AND NOT WASTING OPPORTUNITIES.
I USED TO THINK THAT IF I WORK HARD ENOUGH,
IF I TRIED HARD ENOUGH,
DAVENED ENOUGH,
THINGS WILL MOSTLY GO MY WAY.
BUT THEN I LEARNED THAT THE EFFORT ITSELF,
THE GROWTH MADE,
THE TEFILLOS DAVENED,
WAS THE GOAL ITSELF.
I USED TO THINK THAT STRONG PEOPLE WERE PEOPLE WHO,
CAN EITHER LIFT HEAVY THINGS,
OR NEVER BREAK WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG.
BUT THEN I LEARNED THAT STRONG PEOPLE ARE THE ONES WHO,
FALL APART,
OVERCOME INTERNAL BATTLES,
AND PUT THEMSELVES BACK TOGETHER.
I USED TO THINK THAT COURAGE MEANT,
GOING OUT ALONE IN THE DARK,
KILLING BUGS,
OR STANDING UP TO A BULLY.
BUT THEN I LEARNED THAT COURAGE MEANS,
FACING OUR OWN DARKNESS,
BEING WILLING TO LEARN NEW SKILLS,
AND NOT GIVING UP - EVEN WHEN ALL HOPE SEEMS LOST.
I USED TO THINK THAT FIGHTERS WERE,
PEOPLE WHO ARE OPPOSITIONAL,
DON'T GET ALONG WITH OTHERS,
AND ARE PEOPLE YOU DON'T WANT TO BE AROUND.
BUT THEN I LEARNED THAT FIGHTERS ARE,
THE TRUE HEROES,
THE ONES WHO ARE FIGHTING BATTLES YOU DON'T SEE,
AND ARE PEOPLE TO LEARN FROM.
AND MOST OF ALL I LEARNED THAT,
I HAVE STRENGTH.
I HAVE COURAGE.
I AM A FIGHTER.

CONNECTED CALL

BY CHANA BAILA

IT IS EREV SHABBOS CHAZON AND I REACH OUT TO MY REBBETZIN /MENTOR / FRIEND, REBBETZIN REISS. SHE IS WARM, GRACIOUS, AND PATIENT, AS ALWAYS. THOUGH SHE IS CLEARLY OVERWHELMED, DEALING WITH ORGANIZING A COMPLEX FAMILY CONFIGURATION SIMCHA, SHE MAKES HERSELF AVAILABLE TO ME. SHE IS VERY BUSY AND DEFINITELY DISTRACTED, YET, SHE STILL ENGAGES IN GENUINE CONVERSATION AND EXPRESSES INTEREST IN HOW I AM DOING AND HOW THINGS ARE GOING FOR ME. AS I AM SCHMOOZING WITH HER, I REALIZE THERE IS A QUESTION NIGGLING THE EDGE OF MY CONSCIOUSNESS. I HAVE BEEN GRAPPLING WITH SERIOUS TREATMENT RESISTANT DEPRESSION (THAT HASN'T RESPONDED TO VARIOUS MEDICATIONS OR ELECTRIC SHOCK TREATMENT) AND AM STRUGGLING WITH A HASHKAFIC DILEMMA. I CAN EITHER FAST AND SPEND THE DAY IN BED, DISTRACTING MYSELF WITH INANE NOVEL READING, OR I CAN EAT AND HAVE THE ENERGY TO BE PRESENT IN "MOURNING". I AM WONDERING WHICH IS PREFERABLE. REBBETZIN REISS PONDERS MY DILEMMA SERIOUSLY, THEN CONCLUDES THAT SHE ISN'T COMFORTABLE ANSWERING, AND WANTS TO CHECK WITH HER HUSBAND, A RESPECTED RAV AND POSEK.

I DON'T HEAR FURTHER FROM THE REBBETZIN AND ASSUME MY QUERY SLIPPED HER MIND, AMIDST ALL THE HECTICNESS OF HER REALITY. THUS, I AM QUITE SHOCKED WHEN MY PHONE RINGS AT 9:05 ON SUNDAY, TISHA B'AV MORNING. THE CALLER ID STATES THE NAME OF THE SHUL WHERE RABBI REISS IS THE RAV. I MISS THE CALL, YET HEAR A MESSAGE BEING LEFT. I LOCATE MY HANDSET, AND REBBETZIN REISS'S WARM, CARING VOICE FILLS MY LIVING ROOM. "CHANA BAILA," SHE SAYS, "ASKED MY HUSBAND YOUR QUESTION AND HE SAID AS FOLLOWS. "YOU SHOULD DO WHICHEVER ONE WILL BE BETTER FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH. WHATEVER YOU THINK WILL BE BETTER FOR YOU IS WHAT YOU SHOULD DO." I FINISHED LISTENING TO THE MESSAGE AND WAS OVERCOME WITH EMOTION. I WAS SO TOUCHED THAT REBBETZIN REISS, WITH ALL THE BIG THINGS SHE WAS BUSY WITH ON A KLAL LEVEL, REMEMBERED LITTLE ME AND MY RELATIVELY MINOR PROBLEMS. IT GAVE ME A LITTLE TASTE OF HOW HASHEM COULD POSSIBLY BE BUSY WITH THE WORLD, ON THE MACRO LEVEL, YET STILL BE LOOKING OUT FOR LITTLE ME. AND THAT WAS THE ULTIMATE FEELING OF KINDNESS AND CONNECTION.

The Trigger-free Pesach Greeting

By: Shiffy

(phone rings)

CHAYA: Hi, Shiffy! What's up?

SHIFFY: Hi Chaya – I wrote an erev Pesach message for my Chazkeinu sisters. Can I read it to

you and get your input?

CHAYA: Sure!

SHIFFY: To my dear Chazkeinu sisters,

As we celebrate that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim, I want to wish all of you to be able to

come out of your personal exiles and achieve true happiness.

Happy cleaning!

Happy cooking!

Chag kasher v'sameach (may you have a happy and kosher Pesach)

CHAYA: um…

SHIFFY: You don't like it?

CHAYA: um….that part about "true happiness" – I think it's triggering – I mean: some people

are depressed and feel that they will never achieve true happiness.

SHIFFY: Fine. So I'll end the sentence "…out of your personal exile."

CHAYA: …and you wrote "happy cleaning – happy cooking" …that might be triggering to

some people.

SHIFFY: How?

CHAYA: You know that some of us aren't capable of preparing for Pesach…

SHIFFY: Alright – I'll delete that.

CHAYA: You started by talking about that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim.

SHIFFY: Of course – that's the essence of Pesach!

CHAYA: But…

SHIFFY: What? It's triggering?

CHAYA: It might be! There are some Chazkeinu sisters who feel very far from Hashem right

now.

SHIFFY: Aah…I see!

Okay…so I'll write:

As we celebrate, I want to wish all of you to be able to come out of your personal exiles.

Chag kasher v'sameach (may you have a happy and kosher Pesach)

CHAYA: Why is that last part in Hebrew and English?

SHIFFY: The guidelines!!! "….we request that you translate all Hebrew phrases into English"

CHAYA: But it's repetitive…maybe just get rid of the Hebrew

SHIFFY: Fine.

CHAYA: You know – I think that the word "celebrate" might be triggering. There are many

people who find Pesach quite challenging.

SHIFFY: Hmmm…

CHAYA: …and you talk about "coming out of your personal exile" – that could be very

triggering for people who feel that they are in a tunnel, and they don't see the light at the end of

it.

SHIFFY: I'll take it out!

CHAYA: And…not everyone is looking to have a happy and kosher Pesach. Some people want

just to get through it in peace and in one piece!

SHIFFY: You're right!

I revised my message.

Here it is:

To my dear Chazkeinu Sisters,

May you have a trigger-free Pesach!

Love Shiffy

A PERSONAL YETZIYA

BY: CHAYA

YEARS AGO, I REMEMBER EREV PESACH WHEN I FELT MY WORLD COMPLETELY TURNED INSIDE OUT. I REMEMBER THE TRAUMA HAPPENING AROUND ME, REMEMBER THE SCREAMS AND CRASHES, AND YET I ALSO REMEMBER FOCUSING ON MAKING THE PESACHDIK ROLLS IN FRONT OF ME. PUTTING IN ONE EGG AFTER ANOTHER, STIRRING THE GOOPY CEMENT-COLORED MASS OVER AND OVER AGAIN, FORCING MYSELF INTO MY OWN SILENT WORLD. IT WAS A PEACEFUL MOMENT DURING ALL THE CHAOS. IT WAS A LEVEL OF MEDITATION I DIDN'T KNOW I COULD REACH… AND THEN THE CHAOS REACHED ME, AND I SNAPPED. FEAR FILLED MY LUNGS, I FELT I WAS DROWNING, FELT LIKE I WAS GOING TO DIE IF MY EYES STAYED OPEN ANOTHER SECOND. .. AND FINALLY, IT WAS OVER. AT LAST.

NIGHT FELL AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED. EVERYONE HEADED OFF TO SLEEP LIKE IT WAS ANY OTHER NIGHT. BUT THE TENSION WAS SO THICK… AND SO WAS THE REMAINING DAMAGE EVERYONE SIMPLY WALKED OVER AS IF IT WASN'T THERE. BUT IT WAS… BUT STILL I WENT TO BED LIKE EVERYONE ELSE… I WAITED TILL EVERYONE WAS ASLEEP, TILL I HEARD THE LOUDEST SNORES OF THE HOUSE, THEN I ACTED. I TIPTOED OVER THE CREAKY FLOOR, HID BEHIND THE BEDS, AND FELT MY HEART BEING HAMMERED INTO DUST WITH EVERY TICK OF THE CLOCK. BUT AT LAST, I MADE IT, MY HAND GRASPING THE ONLY THING THAT CAN SAVE ME AT THE MOMENT. I FELT THE SLEEKNESS AND THE BUTTONS FITTING SNUGLY IN MY HAND AND I RAN. I REFUSED TO BREATHE TILL I MADE IT, BUT I RAN, AND MY FINGERS FUMBLED OVER THE KEYS. I MADE IT… AND A NEW PAGE IN MY LIFE HAS TURNED FOREVER.

SINCE THEN, PESACH HAS BEEN A NIGHTMARE, A TIME OF TERROR FOR ME. IT BECAME A TIME TO RELIVE MY PAST, A TIME TO EXPERIENCE MY OWN YETZIYA, BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO REMEMBER. BUT AS THE WORLD JOINED WITH FAMILY AND SANG THROUGH THE SEDER, AND LAUGHED AT THE PUDGY FEET THAT DANCED AROUND THE TABLES, I FELT CAST ASIDE. PESACH HAS BEEN A REALITY CHECK THAT MY LIFE SUCKS, THAT I SUCK, THAT AT THE END OF THE DAY, NOBODY CARED. I WAS JUST ANOTHER GIRL, ANOTHER STRANGER. SOMETIMES I WAS THE BABYSITTER WHO SHOULD'VE FELT THE LUCKIEST PERSON TO ENJOY PESACH, TANNING AT ONE OF THE RICHEST PROGRAMS. SOMETIMES, I WAS THE BABYSITTER WHO SHOULD'VE BEEN HAPPY TO HAVE A ROOF OVER HER HEAD. SOMETIMES, I SHOULD'VE BEEN HAPPY TO HAVE FREE FOOD AND A PLACE TO STAY. BUT INSIDE ME, THERE WAS THE DREAD AND TERROR OF BEING UTTERLY ALONE, COMPLETELY ABANDONED. AND WORTHY TO NO ONE. PESACH WAS ONE OF THOSE TRAINS THAT I KEPT SCREAMING TO STOP, TO FIRST LET ME PASS… BUT EVEN THOUGH I WAS EXPECTING IT, THE IMPACT CONTINUED TO KEEP KNOCKING OUT MY BREATH, AGAIN AND AGAIN…

AND ONE YEAR, EVEN THE PROGRAMS WERE NO LONGER AN OPTION. I WAS NO LONGER A GIRL BEING HIT BY A TRAIN… I WAS THE TRAINWRECK BEFORE IT EVEN HAPPENED. ALONE, I TRAVELED TO TAHITI, HOPING TO HIDE UNDER PATCHES OF SUNBURN AND LUXURIOUS WHITE SHEETS, HOPING TO NEVER HAVE TO FACE MY YETZIYA ON AN ISLAND HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD WITH ONE OF THE LATEST TIME ZONES. BUT EVEN THE COCKY GAIT OF THE WILD TURKEYS OUTSIDE MY WINDOW DID NOTHING TO CHEER ME UP. BUT MY FRIEND'S PRESENT OF AN ENGLISH HAGGADAH SCREAMED AT ME TO JUST TRY. SHE DIDN'T MEAN TO BUY ME A HAGGADAH, AS SHE KNEW I WAS NOT INTERESTED. SHE MEANT TO BUY ME A WONDERFUL BOOK OF A COLLECTIONS OF STORIES OF PESACH THAT WOULD BE A LIGHT READ… BUT IT WAS HASHGACHA, FOR AS I OPENED IT, I JUST WANTED TO CRY TO HASHEM AND CREATE MY OWN SPECIAL VERSION OF A SEDER… ARMED WITH ONLY TAHITIAN FRUIT (I COULDN'T THINK OF EATING ANYTHING ELSE AS THERE WAS NO PESACHDIK FOOD AVAILABLE) I BEGAN MY SEDER. 4 CUPS OF WINE? INSTEAD, I DAVENED TO HASHEM PRAYING TO EXPERIENCE ANOTHER YETZIYA, THIS TIME FROM MY PAST, SO ONE DAY I CAN LIFT UP THE 4 KOSOS. KARPAS? NOT A PROBLEM… I TASTED MY TEARS. AND MATZAH… WELL, I JUST CRIED AND CRIED AND ENVISIONED MYSELF TAKING THE BITES. AND FOR MY MEAL, I ENJOYED SOME PAPAYA AND THE SWEETEST PINEAPPLE IN MY LIFE. DRAINED, I FELL ASLEEP BEFORE I COULD FINISH, BUT THE "SEDER" ENCOURAGED THE PAIN TO RIP THROUGH EVERY LAST PART OF ME THAT I KNEW THERE MAY BE NOTHING LEFT WHEN I WAKE UP.

IT'S FUNNY HOW A JOURNEY HAS ITS MOMENTS, HOW LIFE HAS ITS UPS AND DOWNS, AND HOW EVERY DAY IS ITS OWN PUZZLE. WE NEVER UNDERSTAND HOW TIME CAN MOVE ALONG AND HOW WE CAN HEAL. THIS YEAR, I KNEW THINGS WOULD BE BETTER. I SEE MYSELF HAVING PICKED UP THOSE PIECES, BEING ABLE TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND TELLING MY INNER CHILD THAT SHE IS WORTHY OF EVERY WONDERFUL MOMENT. PESACH CAME ALONG AND THOUGH I STRUGGLED TO HAVE A SEDER AND TO HAVE A CLEAN HOME, I KNOW I DID MY BEST AND I KNOW HASHEM IS PROUD. PESACH NO LONGER FEELS LIKE A TRAINWRECK WAITING TO HAPPEN. IT IS NOW A TIME WHERE I CAN RECONNECT WITH HASHEM ON MY OWN LEVEL, WHERE I CAN TALK TO HIM BECAUSE HE IS MY TRUE FAMILY. AND WHILE EVERYONE ELSE ENJOYS A BOISTEROUS YOMTOV SPEAKING OF YETZIYAS MITZRAYIM AND TEACHING ABOUT IT TO THEIR LOVED ONES, I FEEL EMBRACED BY HASHEM AND SPEND MY PESACH FEELING HIS LOVE AND PATIENCE WITH ME. I KNOW I HAVE MUCH TRAUMA (MY TEARS AS I WRITE THIS IS PROOF OF THAT), AND I KNOW I'M NOT PERFECT, BUT I ALSO KNOW HASHEM LOVES ME, AND HE'S HERE WITH ME AND HOLDING MY HAND. I KNOW HE ISN'T JUDGING; I KNOW HE ISN'T ANGRY, I KNOW HE'S SITTING NEXT TO ME AND IS WIPING AWAY MY TEARS AS THEY FALL. AND ALTHOUGH I DIDN'T HAVE A SEDER THIS YEAR FOR ELIYAHU HANAVI TO BE INVITED, I KNOW HE WAS ALREADY IN THE ROOM WITH ME THE WHOLE PESACH.

I'M NOT HERE TO TELL YOU, THOUGH, ABOUT HOW THESE MOMENTS STRENGTHEN YOUR BELIEF IN HASHEM,OR HOW THESE EXPERIENCES ARE STRONGER THAN ANY OF YOURS. BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT. THERE WERE MANY AREAS – SPIRITUALLY - THAT NEEDED TO BE WORKED ON AND IN NO WAY, SHAPE, AND FORM, WAS MY EXPERIENCE A "DELIGHT." BUT I KNOW WITH HEALING COMES LOVE--LOVE FROM WITHIN AND LOVE FROM OTHERS. AND AS I HEAL AND LEARN TO LOVE MYSELF MORE, I KNOW I CAN ACCEPT LOVE FROM OTHERS MORE, AND THE LONELIER I FEEL, THE MORE I CAN FEEL HASHEM'S LOVE TOO. I'M NOT PERFECT, NOBODY IS, BUT I KNOW I'M HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, AND I KNOW HE'LL BE RIGHT THERE EVERY STEP OF THE WAY. HE TOOK ME OUT, AND HE'LL CONTINUE TO GUIDE ME - EVEN IF IT ENDS UP TAKING 40 YEARS - TO FIND MY WAY BACK HOME.

THE WINK

BY: SHANI F.

ACCORDING TO SARA YOCHEVED RIGLER'S BOOK,THE FOOTPRINTS OF HASHEM, THIS IS THE DIVINE WINK. IT ISN'T JUST HASHEM'S CONTROL, IT IS HIS CARING.WINKING EXPRESSES THAT WE HAVE A PRIVATE BOND, YOU AND ME. THERE IS SOMETHING BETWEEN US THAT ONLY YOU AND I ARE PRIVY TO. WINKING CONVEYS AN INTIMACY.

THE FOLLOWING STORY WHICH WAS SHARED WITH ME BY A MEMBER, ILLUSTRATES THE DIVINE WINK.

SHE WAS GOING OUT OF TOWN TO A WEDDING WHERE HER FATHER WOULD BE ATTENDING. HER SON WAS IN A YESHIVA NEARBY AND WANTED TO JOIN AND SEE HIS GRANDFATHER. HE HAD NO IDEA HOW HE COULD GET TO THE WEDDING FROM HIS YESHIVA. HE SPOKE TO HIS FATHER WHO WAS IN ERETZ YISROEL PRESENTLY. HIS FATHER SAID IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO, SO IT WILL WORK OUT. A COUPLE OF HOURS BEFORE THE WEDDING, HE HEARD A TUMULT IN THE BEIS MEDRASH. A VAN LOAD OF BOYS WAS PREPARING TO LEAVE FOR A WEDDING. IT SEEMS THE CHOSSON IS AN ORPHAN. SOMEONE REACHED OUT TO THE YESHIVA, TO SEND A GROUP OF BACHURIM TO LIVEN UP THE WEDDING. HE HITCHED A RIDE WITH THEM TO THE WEDDING AND JOINED HIS MOTHER/GRANDFATHER.

HE WANTED TO DO A MITZVAH AND HASHEM SENT THE MEANS RIGHT INTO HIS BEIS MEDRASH.

WOULD YOU SAY THAT WAS A DIVINE WINK?

DEAREST HASHEM,

YOU GAVE ME CHALLENGES. OKAY. I TRY SO HARD DEALING WITH THEM, AND I MUST SAY, THAT I'M DOING A PRETTY GOOD JOB. FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS, YOU HAVEN'T STOP BOMBARDING ME WITH STRUGGLES. WHEN I THOUGHT I GOT IT UNDER CONTROL, ANOTHER ONE POPPED UP MOCKINGLY. I TRIED HARD, I REALLY DID. I HOPE THAT YOU'RE PROUD OF ME. I KNOW THAT THESE CHALLENGES ARE GOOD FOR ME, AND THAT THEY MAKE ME STRONGER. I KNOW THAT LOOKING BACK, I'LL BE HAPPY THAT I FOUGHT AND WON OVER THEM. I KNOW THAT THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I AM GAINING IS IMMEASURABLE. I KNOW THAT I'LL BE ABLE TO HELP AND UNDERSTAND NUMEROUS PEOPLE IN LIKE SITUATIONS. I KNOW THAT I AM FORTUNATE TO HAVE DONE SO MUCH INNER WORK, THAT I KNOW MYSELF SO WELL.

I KNOW. I KNOW. I KNOW.

BUT FOR HOW MUCH LONGER, HASHEM?

EACH DAY IS TORTUROUS AND FULL OF COMBAT.

EACH DAY IS JUST TOO MUCH TO HOLD.

I WON'T SAY THAT I CAN'T, BECAUSE I KNOW THAT I CAN.

BUT I'M INSANELY UNCOMFORTABLE, FOR MUCH TOO LONG.

I'VE GAINED SO MUCH, AND I'M TRULY HAPPY AND PROUD.

BUT I'M A HUMAN BEING, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE!

I'M STRIPPED OF MY SANITY, HAPPINESS AND ABILITY TO FUNCTION.

I'M STUCK FOR MUCH TOO LONG.

I LOVE YOU, HASHEM.

I TRUST YOUR WISHES COMPLETELY.

JUST AS A DAUGHTER WOULD DO, I'M EXPRESSING MY FRUSTRATION TO YOU.

I HOPE THAT YOU DON'T MIND.

LOVE, YOUR DAUGHTER

DEAR MRS. THERAPIST,

THERE IS THIS NEW FEELING INSIDE OF ME, AND THAT IS THE FEELING OF LOVE. PURE, UNTAINTED, WHOLESOME, COZY LOVE. AND YES, THAT LOVE IS DIRECTED AT YOU. JUST THINKING ABOUT IT MAKES ME CRINGE. I KNOW THAT THERE IS SOMETHING CALLED "THERAPIST LOVE" AND THAT MANY PEOPLE EXPERIENCE IT. BUT ME? SO WEIRD. IT'S LIKE I HAVE NO CONTROL OVER IT, IT JUST CAME. I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOU WELL. SO, HOW COME I LOVE YOU? I'M TOTALLY NOT THE KIND OF PERSON WHO FALLS IN LOVE WITH THINGS, ESPECIALLY NOT PEOPLE. THIS FEELING IS SO CONFUSING THAT IT MAKES ME FRUSTRATED AND IT MAKES ME CRY. LOVE? WHAT IS THAT, ANYHOW? HOW IS LOVE BORN? WHY DO I WISH THAT YOU CONTINUE WORKING WITH ME FOREVER? WHY IS IT THAT I DON'T FEEL THIS WAY WITH ANYONE ELSE AT ALL? WHY DO I HAVE SUCH A DEEP, INTENSE DESIRE TO SPILL OUT ALL MY TEARS, RIGHT HERE IN FRONT OF YOU? WHY DO I SO STRONGLY WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND MY FEELINGS, SO COMPLETELY? WHY IS THIS THE FIRST TIME THAT I WANT ANYONE TO LISTEN TO MY PROBLEMS AND STRUGGLES? WHY? WHY? WHY?AM I WORTHY OF LOVE? IS IT POSSIBLE FOR SOMEONE TO LOVE ME? CAN I ACCEPT THE FACT THAT OTHERS LOVE ME? ALL THIS IS CONFUSING ME SO MUCH. I HAVE ANOTHER WISH TO BE HELD CLOSE, SO, SO TIGHTLY AND NEVER LET GO. I WANT TO BE HUGGED. I WANT TO SO MUCH. YOU CANNOT HUG ME, I KNOW. ALTHOUGH I WISH THAT YOU WOULD. YOU CANNOT TAKE ME HOME WITH YOU, I KNOW. SO WHO WOULD? WHO WOULD SHOW ME SUCH UNCONDITIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND LOVE? WHO? WHO WILL HUG ME? I WAS ALWAYS SO STRONG, AND BUILT, AND UNTOUCHED. I SEE YOU FOR 45 MINUTES A WEEK. HOW MANY OTHER MINUTES ARE THERE IN MY LIFE? TOO MANY. IS THERE ANYONE WHO CAN HOLD ME FOREVER? IS THERE ANYONE WHO CAN WHISPER TO ME CONTINUOUSLY HOW AMAZING I AM, HOW MUCH I'M BATTLING TO GET THROUGH THE DAY? ANYONE? I DO NOT HAVE STRENGTH TO FIGHT ANYMORE, ALONE. IT'S A LONG, LONELY, CRUSHING PROCESS THAT IS CUT OFF OF EVERYTHING. I CAN'T ANYMORE. WHY DO I TELL YOU THIS? PERHAPS IT'S BECAUSE YOU ARE THE ONLY HUMAN BEING WHO WILL LISTEN, AND EMPHASIZE, AND REALLY CARE. AND UNDERSTAND, REALLY UNDERSTAND.

SINCERELY,

YOUR CLIENT

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