

SUMMER 5778

RISE

REACHING OUT WITH INSPIRATION SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT

A Project of Chazkeinu





A **REVOLUTIONARY PROJECT** UNITING JEWISH WOMEN WORLDWIDE

A **PEER-LED ORGANIZATION** STRENGTHENING AND EMPOWERING
JEWISH WOMEN WITH MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES

SERVICING WOMEN LIVING WITH:

- ADHD •
- ADDICTION •
- ANXIETY •
- BIPOLAR •
- CYCLOTHYMIA •
- DEPERSONALIZATION/
DISSOCIATIVE DISORDERS •
- DEPRESSION •
- EATING DISORDERS •
- INSOMNIA •
- OCD •
- PANIC DISORDER •
- PARANOIA •
- PERSONALITY DISORDERS •
- PHOBIAS •
- PPD •
- PTSD •
- PSYCHOSIS •
- SCHIZOPHRENIA •
- SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDE •
- SOCIAL ANXIETY •
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- ... AND MORE

ALSO SERVING WOMEN WITH
UNDIAGNOSED EMOTIONAL STRUGGLES

OUR PROGRAMS

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- > QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
- > PARTNER PROGRAM
- > INSPIRATIONAL EMAILS
- > ONLINE FORUM
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HOTLINE
- > CARE PACKAGES
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“AFTER THE FIRST MEETING I JOINED, I WAS ON A HIGH! IT WAS ONE OF THE MOST INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCES OF MY LIFE. I FELT SO CONNECTED AND VALIDATED.”

“I WOULD DESCRIBE CHAZKEINU AS A HEARTBEAT, IT IS ESSENTIAL AND PART OF WHAT KEEPS ME ALIVE.”

“I HEARD SOPHISTICATED NORMAL WOMEN SHARE THEIR STRUGGLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS.. I DON'T THINK OF MYSELF AS DAMAGED GOODS ANYMORE. I THINK OF MYSELF AS A REGULAR PERSON WITH A TOUGH CHALLENGE.”

“I HAVE BECOME MORE CONFIDENT, STRONGER, HAPPIER, BECAUSE OF CHAZKEINU.”

“CHAZKEINU HAS BECOME MY GO-TO PLACE TO CONNECT AND FEEL LIKE A REAL HUMAN BEING.”

IF YOU ARE A WOMAN LIVING WITH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES OR COPING WITH A FAMILY MEMBER STRUGGLING, WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US! PLEASE CALL, EMAIL OR CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE!

314.346.7414 • CHAZKEINU@GMAIL.COM • WWW.CHAZKEINU.ORG

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| Letters |

*To the Family of my Dreams,
My Dear Chazkeinu Sisters,*

It is with great pride and excitement that I welcome you to the RISE summer edition. I would like to thank Tzippy, our editor, and all of the wonderful writers who gave us all the gift of their inspiring words. I can't tell you how much I gain from reading each article, interview, poem, story, feedback, and more. We all have so much to give and accomplish in this world.

As summer comes and sunshine permeates the air, the warmth is all encompassing. I am reminded of the warm feelings that Chazkeinu shines within me. I am no longer alone in the darkness of challenges given to me. My Chazkeinu sisters shed light for me on the coldest of nights.

The warmth and shine that we all spread to one another in Chazkeinu is indescribable. Joining Chazkeinu takes courage, like jumping into the deep water of a cold pool. A leap that many of us feel is so refreshing. When joining Chazkeinu, we are joining a revolution to remove so much of the darkness and stigma in the world, and, most importantly, the stigma we carry inside of ourselves.

*May we find the sparkle inside of us and truly shine!
Sending all my love and warmest wishes,
Zahava, Chazkeinu co-founder*

Dear Chazkeinu Sisters,

As the summer season continues, I can't help but to marvel in awe at how Chazkeinu has grown in just over two short years. With over 500 email subscribers, members from different continents and a continuously growing membership, Chazkeinu's goal of helping others feel less alone is really very far reaching. More and more women are joining, as they too don't want to keep their illness hidden. In reality, there is no reason why they should.

Mental health challenges are just as real as any other illness. Together, by participating in Chazkeinu's programs, activities and events, we are working to slowly rid the world of the stigma that exists. Women have told us that their lives have been changed since joining Chazkeinu. Chazkeinu is a place where you don't need to hide your diagnosis or keep it a secret. Chazkeinu is a place where there are others that can relate to you and get exactly how you feel.

Chazkeinu is now at a juncture that in order to continue all of its important programs, we need to turn to our members for support. If you feel that you have been positively affected by our organization, kindly take the time to show your support. Donations can be made on our website at www.chazkeinu.org/donate or mailed to Chazkeinu 2832 W. Touhy Chicago, IL 60645. If you wish to make a credit card donation over the phone, feel free to call me at 773-841-5065. You and your fellow Chazkeinu sisters will benefit greatly from your assistance which will be much appreciated.

*Wishing you a great rest of your summer,
Tamar Mishkin, Chazkeinu co-founder*

| Letters |

Dear Chazkeinu Sisters,

Wow, I can't believe I'm up to the point where I am writing this letter. You see it has been a very busy summer, and I didn't have as much time as I usually do to work on the newsletter. Consequently, this newsletter which was supposed to come out right after Tisha B'av was delayed. Additionally, less than a week ago I lost my flash drive with all my files from the RISE newsletter. B"H all of the articles were still accessible on my email; however, the only partially formatted copy of the newsletter was gone. So after sufficiently freaking out and using my acceptance skills, I set out to Staples to resave all my lost files from my email. B"H resaving everything didn't take too long and after a couple hours on my home computer I managed to reformat all that I had lost. This whole incident reminded me of some important lessons. Firstly, ALWAYS back up EVERYTHING you have saved on a flash drive. More importantly, however, it reminded me of the impact that small things and small actions have on our lives. My flash drive was small, and my small act of not backing up this one important file caused me so much hassle. As we approach the end of the summer and the beginning of the Yomim Noraim, let us remember the impact that each small Mitzvah and act of kindness has on the world.

I hope that you enjoy the newest edition of RISE.

Wishing all Chazkeinu Sisters a wonderful rest of the summer,

Tzippy, RISE Editor

*"Let your smile
change the
world, but
don't let the
world change."*

Credits: Chanie

*P- Persist
U- Until
S- Something
H- Happens*

Credits: Chanie

*"You never
realize how
strong you are,
until strong is
your only
choice."*

Credits: Chanie

To read more inspiration shared by fellow Chazkeinu members, turn to page 21.

Mailbox



Rise asked Chazkeinu members to share which speaker and what he or she shared that resonated with them. Bellow are the responses we received, as well as some other feedback that arrived in our mailbox.



In response to Tzippy's question about what resonated with me, it was when Rabbi Grossberg spoke about The Nine Days/Tisha B'av. Every year since I can't recall, a heavy, thick veil of sadness clouds over me during this time period. (This is coupled with intense heat and humidity which usually lifts around Shabbat Nachamu or sometimes the day after the Taanis). This year after hearing R' Grossberg's shiur, I was able to actually process it immediately (because Hashem let), and I felt it lift during the 9 days!!! The "heat wave" broke, there's been breezes, and the blessings of rain. All this freeing me up to work on a connection and longing rather than dread and depression. Thank you Hashem and thank you Rabbi Grossberg and Chazkeinu.

All the best, Fraidy



Chazkeinu does not cease to amaze me again and again!! It's an organization that keeps on renewing its programs and whose goal is really coming to fruition!! So many of us can attest to the fact that Chazkeinu has literally changed our lives!!! May this outstanding organization continue to expand and decrease the self-stigma and outer stigma in our communities. Thank you, thank you, and thank you!!!

Minky

We would love to hear from you. Please email Chazkeinunewsletter@gmail.com with your questions, comments, and feedback.



When Elisheva shared that "Feeling depressed just isn't an option for me," it opened a door to a reality I haven't much considered; that when necessary, it is absolutely within our power to choose how we will feel. Although I may be predisposed to depression, that doesn't mean I don't have the power to say no to those feelings. **I may have depression, but depression doesn't have me.**

Chany



A speaker that resonated with me was the one and only Chazkeinu sister, Shaina. Firstly, the sensitivity and support she showed to her husband was enormous. This is absolutely tremendous. No matter how hard it became for her, she was there for him, and she believed in his potential and became frustrated for him that he couldn't reach his potential. That is AMAZING! That shows loyalty. I also liked her line that "We don't know what the future is. We don't know what tomorrow will bring. We only have today and to try our best today." That reminds me of the quote, "Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, and today is a gift. That's why we call it the present."

Best wishes and my good luck wishes to Shaina and all my Chazkeinu sisters.

Baila

Hoping and Waiting

By Avrohom Steier



Just a short while ago, we experienced the saddest day of the year for the Jewish people, the day of Tisha B'av. The day on which we sit on the floor and remind ourselves of the glory of the days of yore when the Bais HaMikdash still stood, the days of darkness and desolation when the Bais HaMikdash was taken from us, and the days of consolation and renewal when Mashiach will light up the world with the Glory of Hashem.

It is this final point that I would like to further discuss. We all know that we are supposed to yearn for Mashiach and pine for his arrival, and we also know that one who questions the belief in the coming of Mashiach is considered to be lacking one of the basic tenets of Judaism. While we know all this from early in our youth, we often do not know why we should be hoping for Mashiach. Words like "utopia," "paradise," and "redemption" have a glamorous ring to them but don't explain what it is that we are waiting for.

While this lack of information is a hindrance to many people in their ability to yearn for Mashiach, for many others the problem runs much deeper. These people question their readiness for Mashiach's arrival and develop a fear that they are unworthy and unready for Mashiach to come. They may be familiar with the Gemara that seems to say that there will be no more merits in the time of Mashiach because spiritual matters will become

easy and commonplace. They therefore start to dread the thought of Mashiach's arrival, and their dread drowns out any yearning they may have otherwise had. This may be especially true for those that suffer from various mental illnesses who believe themselves to be inferior to others and to be so far removed from perfection that there is no way that the coming of Mashiach could be beneficial to them.

To address these issues, we need to develop a better understanding of the purpose of the period of Mashiach. The Maharal (Netzach Yisrael, 46, as explained by Rabbi Mattisyahu Solomon) explains that the period of Mashiach is actually one of great merit for the Jewish people. It is a time when people who struggle now to achieve and to grow and who are greatly hindered by difficult life challenges will find their challenges and difficulties removed; thereby, allowing them the freedom and peace of mind to accomplish all that they wish to accomplish with ease.

The Maharal explains that the one thing that cannot be changed is one's direction in life. If someone was a truly wicked person before the arrival of Mashiach, they will not be given the option of repentance when he arrives. However, for those who struggle and fight to accomplish and grow today (albeit at a very slow pace and with numerous setbacks), the coming of Mashiach will herald in a new era; one in which they will be able to

"The coming of Mashiach is not something to fear or dread, nor is it something to feel inadequately prepared for; rather, it is truly something to yearn for."

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| Features |

The Silent Killer

By Yocheved Rabinowitz, LCSW

“I don't have any right to complain” is a line I often hear from clients sitting in front of me. They go further to explain, “I received nourishing food. I was sent to good schools. I was clothed. I went on family vacations. I had the “perfect” family.”

Everything was done right....and yet...yet....you feel empty on the inside. Your insides are turning and fighting as you try to make sense of the inner turmoil you experience. Everything was done right and nothing happened so what is going on? What is wrong with you?

There is a force that hides in obscurity and has effects way beyond your childhood years. It dwells in what was not done, what was not said, and what is not remembered. There are no physical signs or overt wounds, rather in its wake there is pain without an identifying source and an adult left wondering what is wrong with him or her.

This silent killer is known as childhood emotional neglect. When it comes into my office I often hear things like, “I was a difficult child” or “I have no excuse for _____ because I had such a great childhood.”

Childhood emotional neglect is when parents weren't there for children in the ways they **emotionally** needed. They weren't there to rub their back, to hold them, or comfort them. It's those moments that nobody asked “Are you okay?” “What's wrong?” “Are you sad?” Since these moments are nothing, because *nothing* happened, and brains are not designed to see things that

didn't happen, emotional neglect is usually not recognized by a child until symptoms arise in adulthood.

Childhood emotional neglect causes a child to believe that his or her thoughts, feelings, and/or desires don't matter. As adults these individuals can struggle to trust how they feel, they can avoid letting people in, they can become people pleasers, they can struggle in relationships, they are often concerned about what others think of them, and/or struggle to know how they feel until the feelings are overwhelming. People often feel

that they are either “too much” or “aren't important.” They can feel empty on the inside, have low self-esteem, feel like something is missing, and/or have perfectionistic tendencies.

Adults who've experienced childhood emotional neglect struggle to know who they are. It's important to note that emotional neglect is different from emotional abuse in that emotional abuse are events that did happen while emotional neglect are events that didn't

happen.

Recovering from Emotional Neglect:

One of the first steps to recovering from emotional neglect is acknowledging that it happened. This can be challenging because it's invisible and leaves you wondering if you are making things up. People often resist admitting that something was missing because they don't want to put their caregivers in a negative light. However, once you can acknowledge that it happened, or rather didn't happen, there are ways to help you recapture your emotional world.

“Childhood emotional neglect causes a child to believe that his or her thoughts, feelings, and/or desires don't matter.”

Tips to help you reclaim your emotional life:

1. Track your feelings each day. This can be hard at first since often people who have experienced emotional neglect don't even have words for their feelings since their feelings have been ignored for so long. Having a feelings list or feeling wheel and keeping a feeling log can help you start paying attention to the various feeling states that were not acknowledged.
2. After jotting down the feeling, try describing the feeling word you selected without using that exact word you used. See if you can elaborate and describe what this feeling feels like within you.
3. Begin noticing your needs. People who aren't aware of their feeling states often aren't aware of their needs and furthermore, don't feel they deserve getting their needs met.
4. Once you acknowledge and know your needs, it's time to take action. Start asking for your needs and accept help and support from others. Knowing how to accept the support from others is a skill one sometimes has to attain. (If you believe that you don't deserve to have your needs met, acknowledge that belief and see it as a belief, not a fact.)
5. Be gentle and compassionate with yourself and begin engaging in self-care. Try treating yourself with the care you would give a child who isn't able to care for itself. It might be helpful to create a list of things that make you feel nurtured and cared for.
6. Set healthy boundaries - at work, at home, with friends, with family etc. Know that it's okay to say no and that you are just as important as the people around you.
7. Keep reminding yourself that you did nothing wrong to have experienced emotional neglect and try healing from the shame that might be residing inside of yourself.

As you embrace the journey of knowing yourself, your thoughts, your feelings, and your needs, share them with others. Start giving yourself what you never got so that you can become the best version of yourself and finally live your life like you matter.

Yocheved Rabinowitz, LCSW is a graduate of Fordham University School of Social Services with a master's degree in clinical social work. She has years of experience in the diagnosis and treatment of a wide variety of clinical issues including anxiety-related disorders, depression, relationship concerns, problems related to low self-esteem, problematic family dynamics, transitional issues, and eating disorders. Her private practice is located in Brooklyn, New York.

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grow by leaps and bounds and reach heights that are unattainable in our current existence. It follows that the coming of Mashiach is not something to fear or dread, nor is it something to feel inadequately prepared for; rather, it is truly something to yearn for.

Allow me to illustrate this concept. This past winter, I had the great honor and pleasure of attending Chazkeinu's Shabbaton and offering words of inspiration for those who attended. When I opened the floor for questions, what struck me more than anything else was the burning desire of many of the women present to develop a relationship with Hashem and draw close to Him. At the same time, many of these women were unable to accomplish their goal due to the interference created by their mental illness, whether from depression, neglectful or abusive parenting, trauma, or any other psycho-emotional cause. The frustration with their inability to accomplish their dream was palpable.

However, with the arrival of Mashiach, all of that will change. Suddenly, the thick wall of steel surrounding their hearts will melt away and be replaced with a flimsy curtain that will easily be opened to create an intense bond between them and their Creator. They will then be able to bask in the glory of their relationship with their Father in Heaven that they had yearned to develop but were unable to until that point.

The arrival of Mashiach is truly something to hope and wait for. All of the struggle of today's existence will translate into a glorious opportunity to reach unimaginable levels with relative ease and to prepare for the ultimate pleasure of The World to Come.

Avrohom Steier is a talmid of 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.

| Meet a Member |



Meet a Member

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

I am a 38 years old single woman. I live with my parents who are not getting any younger. I was born with physical disabilities. I have had mental health challenges most of my life. My mental illness diagnoses are: Bipolar 1 with mixed features, anxiety disorder/OCD, and insomnia. I was diagnosed with learning disabilities at the young age of 5.5.

I transferred to a special-education/therapeutic high school program at 16 ½ years old. At 18 ½ years old, I was diagnosed with Bipolar disorder during my first psychiatric inpatient hospitalization. I was put on a mood stabilizer, which was changed countless times. Over the years, I have had meds added on to treat psychosis, anxiety, and insomnia.

I stopped going to social events over a year ago. It was becoming overly stressful for me between my food sensitivities and my emotions, including binge eating. Being an older single woman with mental illness makes going to social events, especially weddings particularly challenging. I am also dealing with multiple medical conditions. My mind can start racing at weddings, so I made a decision that for my benefit, it is better that I do not attend.

I love researching disability issues, which combines my love for people who have disabilities with keeping busy. I have started to do writing on disability related issues, but haven't been successful. I love singing. For me music equals Tefillah. Music helps me even if I'm only listening and not singing. I love Psychology, especially Torah-based, such as books by Rabbi Abraham J Twerski, M.D. and Rabbi Zelig Pliskin.

I had various jobs, almost all volunteer positions, since I turned 12 years old. I helped out in the school office in 8th grade when I was getting my psych meds adjusted and couldn't be in class all day. Many the jobs were within the disability community. I also volunteered at a local hospital. My favorite type of work is disability advocacy work, even behind the scenes. My job duties ranged from answering phones and clerical work to assisting with organizing and speaking at an event for people who have disabilities. For about one year. I was on a statewide advisory board for people who have disabilities. I had a specific job that I worked from home, but I it got too complicated so I resigned in November of 2015.

Can you share with us how you have worked and continue to work on overcoming your difficulties?

I have been in therapy for many years. Staying in touch with people in my community has been especially helpful regardless of whether they understand everything I am going through or not. I'm hoping to continue working on myself using various types of creative activities. Fueling my creative side has helped in the past and hopefully will continue to aid in my wellbeing. In addition, I plan on getting exercise more often.

I have been in and out of various types of therapy programs from inpatient, PHP and various outpatient programs. I have experience with self-help groups. I am starting to participate in OA again. I really need OA in my routine. I did live on the East Coast for several months about 14 years ago. I wasn't getting the help I needed so I returned to my parents' home in Los Angeles. I've been here ever since. Coming home ended up being what is best for me due to constantly battling a medical and/or mental health issue.

What is the most difficult part of your challenge?

One of the most difficult parts of my challenges is that I have to deal with multiple medical and mental health conditions. At this point my emotional struggles are mainly hypomania and severe anxiety/OCD, binge eating, and chronic pain. Even with my binge eating and other food/weight issues, I don't have an official ED diagnosis.

Dealing with my mental illness, in addition to my own physical and learning disabilities, while simultaneously living with my elderly parents who have their own issues is not easy. I wish I had more support from people going through mental health challenges whom also deal with elderly parents with their own challenges.

How did you hear about Chazkeinu and how have you benefited from their programs?

I joined Chazkeinu after reading Zahava List's story in Mishpacha Magazine Lifeline's column. I related to part of her experience, as I was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder 20 years ago. I became connected with several Chazkeinu outside of the Online Forum. A few months after joining Chazkeinu, I contacted Chanie from London via email. Although our contact wasn't continuous, she has been there for me in ways that no one else in my life has been. Thank you for your support, especially for calling me close to Shabbos in London. An 8 hour time difference should be an impossible feat on a Friday. There is nothing more important than having people who actually understand what you're going through even if their situations are not the same. Sharing a struggle can be inspiring and a great way to connect and knowing the fact that you are not alone no matter how much it may feel like it at times. I wish something like this had been around a number of years ago when there when I and other women I know were struggling. All of my desire of helping people with disabilities particularly mental health challenges came from my desire to help others and help myself. I love the phone conferences especially when Rabbi Grossberg speaks.

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Meet a Member

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

Hi my name is Geulah. I'm 22 years old. Since I was young, particularly since I was 14, I've felt like life wasn't worth living. I battled depression every day. I had a hard time at school (behavior-wise). When I was 17, I ended up in the hospital and was officially diagnosed. Since then, I've been on an up and down journey battling depression, anxiety, BPD, and CPTSD, to name the major ones. Every day is a challenge.

Can you share with us how you have worked and continue to work on overcoming your difficulties?

Therapy has been a lifesaver for me. At first I resisted it. It was only when I went on my own, with my money, that it accomplished something. My therapist pushed me and I made major mind-shifts. I also had amazing mentors over the years who have been there for me, showering me with love and understanding.

What is the most difficult part of your challenge?

The unpredictability. It's hard for me to commit to things because I don't know how I'll be feeling. Having to take off work is really hard, and feeling like I'm just crazy the whole day.

How did you hear about Chazkeinu and how have you benefited from their programs?

From Google and I was hooked!! It was always my dream to break the stigma and have support! Thank you Zahava! And I am honored and privileged to have started the Online Forum which helps me on a daily basis. Just knowing that I'm not alone is so helpful. Chazkeinu is the best!!

Which of Chazkeinu's programs have you gained the most from?

The online forum and nope, I'm not biased at all!

What have you gained from your relationships with other Chazkeinu members?

Understanding and not being alone! People in Chazkeinu get me! People are open, honest, and real! I love my Chazkeinu family!!

What message and words of inspiration would you give to those with similar challenges?

You've done it until now and you can do it now. When I'm struggling I try to talk to myself and say you can do it even if it's hard. And just push, push, push! Being that my name is Geulah, I relate to the concept of redemption a lot. I try to challenge myself to put the Alef (Hashem, light) into my situation, thereby turning the darkness into light.

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What message and words of inspiration would you give to those with similar challenges?

"If I am I because I am I, and you are you because you are you, then I am and you are. But if I am I because you are you, and you are you because I am I, then I am not and you are not."
(R' Menachem Mendel of Kotzk)

The above quote makes me realize that needs one of us is an individual and we are not who we are because of somebody else.

My advice to someone struggling with mental health issues or any health issue is to keep a schedule doing things that you like to do in addition to what you need to do. This can be daily or weekly. (I am talking to myself here.) Find things that you like to do. I would include one or more creative activities, as well as exercise on a daily basis - whether it's working in the kitchen, doing an art project, singing along with music that you like, writing anything creative etc. Keeping in touch with others is very important. It helps keep me out of my head. Contact a fellow Chazkeinu sister and you never know who benefited from it more. In the language of Wellness Recovery Action Plan, otherwise known as WRAP, these are called Wellness Tools, from which you create the rest of your WRAP, starting with the Daily Plan, which is some ways, is a schedule.

I love singing. For me singing equals Tefillah I'm also a major worrier. It is sometimes worse than other times. I was taught the pasuk, which became the famous song Daaga Minayin. This song really got me through tough times and still does. I hope I can continue to be inspired by the two songs by Yaakov Shwekey regarding Reb Sholom Mordechai Rubashkin, as they really helped me. I have been dangerously ill many times. Music helps me even if I'm only listening and not singing.

To be interviewed for this column please contact Chazkeinunewsletter@gmail.com



Meet a Member

Note to Reader: DBT (Dialectical Behavior Therapy) is an evidence-based treatment developed by Marsha Linehan to treat BPD (Borderline Personality Disorder). DBT was designed to be taught in a group setting by a DBT-trained licensed therapist. It is set up in 4 modules: Mindfulness, Interpersonal Effectiveness, Emotion Regulation, and Distress Tolerance. DBT has seen success in hospitals, outpatient centers, clinics, and private practices and is used to treat other mental health issues as well.

What was your experience with DBT?

Tzippy: I gained so much from DBT, and it has had and continues to have a huge impact on my life. Originally, I went through the mindfulness skills, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness skills in individual therapy. At that point, I was too embarrassed to attend a DBT group, and I also really appreciated the fact that my therapist could gear the skills to my particular issues. When I was ready, my therapist began a DBT group, and I completed two rounds and then went on to attend a graduate group for a little while. All the modules of DBT have been exceedingly helpful, and the emotion regulation skills in particular have probably made the biggest impact on my life. When I began therapy, I had a very difficult time managing my emotions and not lashing out when I was angry. The emotion regulation skills provided me with concrete tools to regulate my emotions.

Elisheva: DBT is great! DBT has given me a foundation on which to work through any of my BPD symptoms, whether small or large. It is something that I can carry around with me and use wherever I am and however I am feeling.

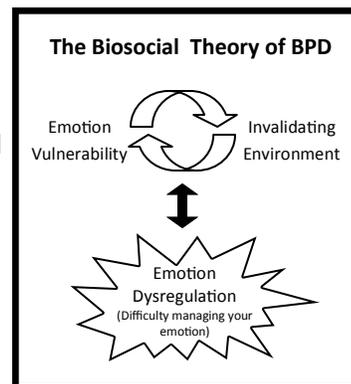
Did you find that it's necessary to stay in individual therapy long term?

Tzippy: I have been in therapy long term and have found it to be extremely necessary, effective, and life changing. Therapy has enabled me to learn skills to manage my BPD and transcend it. It has also helped me recover and heal from traumatic periods of life. I actually look forward to therapy (that doesn't mean the sessions or the aftereffects are easy). I really appreciate being able to have that regular time each week to meet with my therapist and focus on me.

Elisheva: From my experience, I feel individual therapy is really important. Long term is relative. Does it mean two years? Does it mean seven? Forever? I have been in therapy for almost 8 years now and don't see myself stopping any time soon. Often, BPD comes along with other symptoms, so for me, I am now in therapy more for trauma work than BPD work. Once one has mastered DBT skills, I believe it is important to maintain it which doesn't have to mean being in therapy for so long. Just brushing up every so often or when the symptoms reappear might be sufficient. But from my experience and hearing many others as well, most people with BPD who have done DBT treatment are now in long term therapy for other issues, such as trauma or other diagnoses.

How did trauma impact your BPD?

Tzippy: Trauma and invalidating environments actually contribute to the development of BPD. There is a DBT theory called the Biosocial Theory which describes how BPD is caused by a combination of both biological (emotional vulnerability) and environmental factors. Many people with BPD grew up in environments where their emotions were invalidated, and they were never taught how to deal with their emotions. It is important to note that the combination of emotional vulnerability and emotional invalidation is what leads to BPD.



Elisheva: Research shows that BPD and trauma have a direct correlation in so many different ways. An excerpt I found states, "Childhood sexual abuse is not the only form of maltreatment that has been linked with BPD. Physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect are all associated with the development of the disorder. In some studies, the rates of maltreatment were as high as 90 percent in BPD patients." In my personal situation, there is no denying that my childhood traumas, being family related and not, play a huge role in my BPD. I definitely and truly believe that they are very much connected.

Can one heal fully from BPD?

Tzippy: B"H, at this point I no longer meet criteria for BPD; however, this doesn't mean I am symptom free. It simply means that my symptoms are no longer severe enough to warrant a diagnosis. I still have difficulties with fear of abandonment, and I will probably always be more of an emotionally sensitive person. This means I experience emotions (both positive and negative) more strongly than the average person, and as my therapist reminds me, this is not always a bad thing.

Additionally, according to research there is a lot of evidence that people who are hospitalized with BPD no longer meet criteria for this disorder after six years. For anyone who enjoys reading studies, there is a study done in 2003 by Dr. Mary Zanarini that discusses this in more details.

Elisheva: Research shows that most people with BPD don't show major symptoms anymore by around 40 years old. Every situation is different. In my situation, I don't believe I will ever heal. Manage and maintain? Yes, absolutely. But healing? Having no more symptoms? Being regular with no emotional issues? I highly doubt it, and I am just being honest. I am not trying to scare anyone.

Do certain environments/people bring it out more?

Elisheva: In my case it's people from my childhood, such as schoolmates or family members, but other than that, it is people in my life who remind me of traumatic situations in my life or of traumatic people.

How much would you say medication helps?

Tzippy: To be honest, I have no idea how much medication has played a part in helping me overcome my difficulties. I began taking medication when I was diagnosed with OCD and other anxiety disorders, and this was a number of years before I was diagnosed with BPD. For the past year, I've been in the process of being weaned off my medication to see if it is truly making any difference. Since I have not felt any different since beginning this process, my assumption is that it probably was helpful at some point, but that it's not doing much anymore.

Elisheva: For those who have heard my story, the reason I was hospitalized is because I went off of my meds and got depressed and suicidal. I believe that medication plays a massive role in helping me be grounded and functional. I don't want anyone to confuse that with medication being the ONLY source of healing. A lot of therapy, self-talk, and DBT work also has to be done, and a person should not feel that if she has a pill to pop into her mouth she doesn't need to do all the other hard work. For me it's 50/50.

What tips can you give for someone who is dealing with a family member with BPD?

Tzippy: Go out and buy the book *Stop Walking on Eggshells*. It helps give you a better understanding of the inner world of someone with BPD, and it provides tips and advice on how to interact with them as well. I personally bought this book for my husband, and we've both read through it (him more than me). It's a great resource.

Elisheva: There are many books out there to read, and there are many sources of support such as support groups, articles, and professionals. It's not easy to have a family member with BPD; it can be confusing and overwhelming, but there is a lot of support out there. For me to come and say, "Accept them and treat them like a regular person because this isn't who they really are," could feel invalidating to people who really need validation. So reaching out for support is very important.

What do you find most triggering?

Tzippy: There are definitely some situations that are more triggering than others, and when I have advance warning that they might arise, I usually spend some of my therapy session discussing and preparing. In this way, I am better prepared to deal more effectively and skillfully with these situations. Imagery has also been extremely helpful in preparing for difficult situations. I will usually imagine the difficult situation and imagine using skills to deal with it effectively.

Elisheva: It's really not so easy to answer that, because it depends on what kind of mental/emotional place I am in and so many other things. I can get so triggered from one family member one day, because I was feeling anxious about something at work so it was occupying so much brain space, but then the next day be able to spend a whole afternoon with them. I think when I get triggered from traumatic memories, it makes it very hard for me to focus and be grounded, which will throw my whole day off and whoever I see or interact with that day... so I don't really think it's a specific situation...

What was your experience with non-Jewish therapists in rehab?

Elisheva: It was hard for me because up until then I was only seeing a Jewish therapist, and it's hard when they don't understand or are not familiar with the religious practices. It wasn't easy, but I learned to separate religion from recovery and focus on the two of them separately.

What do you find was the most helpful from DBT, and does it work for other mental illnesses as well?

Tzippy: As I have said earlier, the Emotion Regulation module has been very helpful for me in my journey of overcoming BPD. Acceptance, validation, and dialectics are also huge parts of DBT, and I am constantly working on accepting myself and all that I've been through. In terms of whether or not DBT is helpful in treating other mental illnesses, research has shown that it is. I have personally seen how mindfulness etc. has been helpful in treating my anxiety and OCD.



EFT stands for Emotional Freedom Technique and consists of a set of tapping motions that can be done to help maintain your emotional health. It is a form of psychological acupressure that helps to improve mood, get rid of pain, curb food cravings and implement positive goals. This is a self-help technique that helps to reduce tension and promote deeper mind-body connection. This technique utilizes the same energy meridians (circuits) that were used in acupuncture from thousands of years ago just without the needles and pain. It was developed in 1995 by Gary Craig. The tapping is combined with verbal positive affirmations that help to improve the mood of the person doing it. This works because “The cause of all negative emotions is a disruption in the body's energy system.” Negative emotions come about because you are tuned in to certain thoughts or circumstances, which in turn, cause your energy system to disrupt.

To begin, it is important to identify the issue that you are looking to target with EFT. Focusing on one issue at a time is the most effective. Then you create a reminder phrase by giving it a title which helps you stay focused during the process. Before you start tapping, rate the intensity of the issue on a scale of one to ten with one be the least significant and ten being the most.

The tapping is done with the fingertips of the index and middle fingers. The tapping can be done on either side of the body. It is advised that one should remove their glasses, watch and bracelets prior to beginning the process. The meridian points can be tapped

in any order as long as all are touched. These are the following points: top of the head, eyebrow, side of the eye, under the eye, under the nose, chin, collar bone, under the arm and wrists. Each location should be tapped 5-7 times. While tapping, the set up positive affirmation goes like this, “Even though I have this _____, (food craving, pain, depression, anger, headache etc.) I deeply and completely accept myself.” It is important to say this affirmation with feeling even if you don't truly believe it.

For EFT to be most effective, it is important to think about the item that you are tapping about, so that the negative energy can be rechanneled. Sometimes one round of tapping is enough to decrease your anxiety about the issue but if not, a reminder phrase can be used, and another round can be done. Re-rate the intensity of the issue after to each tapping session. Since this technique is relatively discreet, it can even be done in public. The set-up phrase can be said to yourself. It is recommended that EFT be practiced multiple times a day. EFT has been shown to lower cortisol (stress hormone) levels, help treat PTSD and even improve athletic performance.

It is important to note that even though the findings regarding the positive effects of EFT are promising, this should not be considered “standard treatment” and should not take the place of therapy. EFT should be seen as adjunct therapy used in tandem with things like getting enough exercise and eating in a healthy fashion.

I personally have learned and used this technique with amazing results. I have been shocked at how fast the transformation takes place and whatever I am tapping about calms down in my mind. Tapping helps clear the mind, focus attention on the present moment (like meditation) and improves one's attitude to give a person a better chance of overcoming the challenges they may face. There are many videos online that demonstrate how to go through the EFT process. One of the best things about EFT is that it can be done anywhere, at any time, quickly and without the use of any equipment, medications or supplements.

Material for this article was taken from the following websites:

<https://eft.mercola.com/> and <https://draxe.com/emotional-freedom-technique-eft-tapping-therapy/>

If there is a specific form of treatment or therapy that you would like to see featured in this column please email Chazkeinnewsletter@gmail.com.

(Continued from Page 16)

Elisheva: I feel like DBT is a lifestyle. It's like taking a parenting class. It isn't good just for one child, but it's something that can be used for all of the children, each in a slightly different way. DBT is a lifestyle that anyone can gain from. Yes, it was designed for BPD patients, but I have a friend who doesn't even have a mental health struggle but has a hard time coping with regular life tasks and she will ask me for ideas of different DBT skills that I use to cope with stress, or relationships with others...I feel like everyone can gain from it on their own level.

How do you work on intense emotions?

Tzippy: I turn to DBT skills of course. When I first began with my therapist over six years ago and I would feel intense emotion, I would usually go to my room and complete emotional regulation sheet 4a (for those familiar with DBT). Doing this worksheet helped me in a number of ways:

- To recognize the prompting event for my emotion.
- To figure out if there are any vulnerability factors that prompted the emotion.
- Helped me recognize any beliefs and assumptions that I had about the situation.
- It also helped me get in touch with how my body was feeling and put me in touch with my action urges and their possible repercussions. Did I want to scream, yell and get upset?

I also used Distress Tolerance and Tip skills, when necessary, although for me emotion regulation skills were usually a go-to. I want to mention here that this doesn't mean I was always successful in regulating my emotions; many times I did give into my natural urge and acted ineffectively. When that happened, I usually felt a lot of guilt and very punitive towards myself. Usually at some point afterwards, I would fill out a behavior chain analysis to figure out how to do better in the future.

At this point, I don't have to fill out emotion regulation sheets whenever I experience intense emotions since regulation has become more natural. I still have to work through my emotions; however, it is much easier and quicker. I also call or email my therapist whenever a difficult or not so difficult situation arises so that I can receive coaching. Schema Therapy has also helped me work on dealing with some of my intense emotions by linking them to old core beliefs. At times I do a schema worksheet to help me transcend my schema.

Elisheva: DBT skills. I went to individual and group therapy and practiced over and over and over until it was in my bones. I still struggle with it on a daily basis, but B"H I am aware that I can stop myself and pull out some DBT skills. Sometimes I fail, but that does not mean I am a failure, I just need to work harder.



Ask the Therapist

By Dr. Gabriel Hoffnung PHD and

Dr. David H. Rosmarin PHD, ABPP

Dear Center for Anxiety,

I'm finding it hard to watch family members struggle with the emotional issues that I myself have dealt with. Baruch Hashem, I have graduated from CBT treatment two years ago, with skills that have transformed my life. But now, I am watching the same issues happening with my younger sister and it is painful for me. I don't think she will listen if I suggest therapy because my anxiety was worse than hers is, and she thinks her situation is not so bad that she needs to spend money and time on professional help. I wish I could open her eyes to see that she is missing out. What should I do?

Sincerely,

Sister who wants to help

Dear Sister,

Thank you for bringing up this very important and very common question. First of all, it's important to recall what it was like for you to enter therapy. Did you go right away when you were experiencing mild anxiety, or did it need to get worse before you decided to take care of it? There are many reasons why people don't come to our office before their symptoms are moderate or even severe. For most people, it's inherently uncomfortable to acknowledge that they need to work on their mental health. Also, as you mentioned in your note, many people don't like to spend money or time on therapy – perhaps because they don't feel that they are important or worthwhile enough to warrant it. Of course therapy can be life changing! We routinely get overwhelmingly positive feedback from our patients about our services. But choosing to pursue professional help is a big step for most people, and can also be a big statement. Everyone needs to be ready before they come in. Unfortunately, your younger sister is just not there yet. As such it is essential to remain sensitive and empathic to these concerns about commencing therapy, even though you believe in your heart that it would do her a lot of good.

As the saying goes, “you can bring a camel to water, but you cannot make it drink” and therefore we cannot always convince our friends and family to seek professional help. However, we can prepare the camel to desire drinking...

Most people consider mental health struggles in one of two ways (neither of which is accurate). Some view it as a doomed fate that cannot be avoided. They may see their issues as a brain disease, or as an ingrained pattern that cannot be changed. Either way they conclude that they are just “messed up” and ultimately there is no point in therapy. Others take the opposite perspective and accept 100% full responsibility for their symptoms. They believe that their concerns are all in their heads and fully within their control, and that they should just “snap out of it” and feel better. In certain (rare) circumstances, these positions are correct. But much more often, neither perspective captures the reality of why people suffer from mental distress. Almost always, people are not “messed up” to the extent that they cannot benefit in therapy, and similarly it is rare that significant symptoms are fully within our control to stop – if it was all in one’s head one would surely snap out of it.

If your sister is amenable and open, perhaps have a general conversation with her about why people suffer from mental distress, along the above lines. Try to get her talking about mental health as a topic unrelated to her personal struggles, and identify what she thinks about this subject. Then try to highlight that both of the above extreme positions are not correct, and the middle path dictates that there are some aspects of our emotions and behavior that may presently be out of our control but could become better managed with outside assistance. Above all, try to stress that mental health concerns are not a doomed fate that cannot be helped, and also not a weakness that should be ignored. With empathy and support, patience and lots of love, perhaps she will come around?

All our best,

Gabriel Hoffnung & David H. Rosmarin

Gabriel Hoffnung, PhD is a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Anxiety's Monsey office. He combines a strong background in neuropsychology with a staunchly behavioral approach to provide treatment to adults, adolescents and children in both English and Yiddish. David H. Rosmarin, PhD, ABPP, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, part-time, and Director of the Center for Anxiety, which has offices in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Monsey, and Boston. They can be contacted at 646.837.5557 or info@centerforanxiety.org

To submit a question for this column please email Chazkeinnewsletter@gmail.com

| Chazkeinu Sisters Share |



"He who refrains from passing judgment rid's himself of enmity, robbery, and vain oaths"

- Pirkei Avos Perek Daled Mishna Zayin

When I saw this quote, I immediately thought of Chazkeinu. Chazkeinu is an organization where judgment does not exist and we can all feel free to be what or who we want to be. For that I am grateful. Keep up the great work and I hope that Hashem continues to give you all the syata d'shmaya that you need to keep Chazkeinu going so that we all have a place to come to where we can be judgment free.

Love,
Jodi

The Roller Coaster

By C. H. Landman

The roller coaster analogy may be cliché, but it's so achingly true for me right now.

Each morning, the ride starts out slowly, easing into action with a prolonged groan. As I come to my senses, my mind churns, the cogs in my brain randomly choosing the day's track; will it be up or down, smooth or rickety?

Inevitably, as all roller coasters do, the day's track includes a bit of everything.

The exhilarating moments, when I'm actually *happy*, collide with moments of numbness and fear; the loop-de-loops of pain and sadness let out into the surprising calm of strong, sturdy tracks.

And through it all, I am left gasping, wondering, never knowing and always fearing what will come next.

I never did like roller coasters.

And yet there is one thing reassuring about my day, about those rides; there is an end.

I will have a chance to breathe.

The ride may be long, perhaps unbearably so, but it is never endless.

And that is something to be grateful for.

Even if tomorrow brings a whole new ride.



Life is like a jigsaw puzzle,
So many pieces come with it.
We gather them every day,
To see how they will fit.

Some people start with edges,
Some start with corners too.
Others go for the middle,
It's always up to you.

Hold each piece, embrace them,
To see where it will go.
Sometimes they fit so easily,
Then times you never know.

You turn each piece slowly,
And try it every which way.
It doesn't seem to belong,
Are you sure that piece should stay?

You carefully look at the picture,

And it all becomes clear.
The piece simply fits right in.
It's spot was always there

A sense of satisfaction,
Wells up deep inside.
The joy of finding its proper place,
The answer no longer does hide.

We go through life and gather pieces,
Every situation is something new.
Some become good memories,
Others leave us sad and blue.

We look at our puzzle pieces,
And some just do not fit.
Why do I need this one?
What can I do with it?

Our Father, our Creator,
Does have a master plan.

We don't always see it,
And rarely do we understand.
But Hashem's picture is perfect,
There are no mistakes.
Each piece fits in neatly,
No matter how many tries it takes.

When completing a puzzle,
We use the picture as our guide.
Without it, the task could not be done,
No matter how hard we tried.

Our lives come with a picture,
Yet it is hidden from us all.
Our job is to trust in Hashem,
As this is our tafkids call.

We daven each and every day,
That Mashiach we will greet.
The last piece will find its place,
And our puzzle will finally be complete.

My Blessings By Saralah

I was complaining to one of my good friend about my angst, pains and frustrations about what went wrong this week. My once pleasant mood was replaced with a sour countenance that verbalized the sadness my heart held. My friend silently listened as I bitterly described the events of my week. She nodded compassionately and gestured that she understood. When I finished, I felt cleansed; a dark cloud was slowly lifting away.

She gave me a hug, and enveloped me in her warm soothing embrace which felt really good! She continued being the good friend that she is and gently asked me a few questions:

Are you healthy? Do you have a roof over your head? Do you have food to put on the table? Do you have running water and chairs to rest on? Windows to look out of? Do you have friends? Do you have a family? Are you blessed to have talents and character traits? Do you have clothing on your back? Are all your senses intact and working? Do you see Hashem's gorgeous world and take note of the blossoming flowers?

My friend finished and I sat their spellbound and shocked. I sat their quietly, absorbing the truth behind each question. The truth I so sorely missed. The truth that should have been in the front of my mind and not on the back-burner. Each question spoke volumes. Volumes that are louder than all the people clapping in a baseball game. I remained seated for a few more moments allowing the truth to penetrate.

Still seated, I told myself that when things get rough and threaten to steal my smile and pleasant mood, I will remember those simple yet brilliant questions that allowed me to see the truth that gets tainted. It gave me an additional perspective. It taught me that I am blessed no matter what kind of rough patches or curve balls life sends my way. And having that mindset is a true blessing and tool for life!

(I just wanted to add in that the above story is made up)

A Change, A New Start
Song by Zahava

What can I do
I cannot see
Don't know which way to go
The path I knew
Was given to me
No longer looks the same
The road curves up ahead
Two paths to choose instead
It's time to decide
But I just want to hide
Scared of what I'll find
Can this be true

Never thought it would be
I feel all alone
I don't know where I belong
Saw nothing in me
Had I fell or grown
Can't escape the pain inside
To accept my life's new stage
Amidst the longing and rage
Can it be real
That I will heal
Clarity and comfort I'll feel
Will inner peace come

Life always seemed
It was in my hand
Though control I did not have
Away what I'd dreamed
Could not understand
How my life had changed so fast
Even though it's hard to bare
I have a purpose that is rare
From backstage I see clear
The Director's plan is dear
His love removes my fear
I can play my part

It's not the end but a new beginning
A fresh new start
We can embark
On our new journey each day
A pure soul comes down, wishing to say
You can
You will
I know
It's true
Hashem sees from start to end
He sees
He loves
He knows
What's true
How we can each ascend
A day
will come
the world
will know
The truth is in Hashem's hands
Trusting and guiding us all the way

It's not the end but a new beginning
A fresh new start
We can embark
On our new journey each day
A pure soul comes down,
wishing to say
You can
You will
I know
It's true
Hashem sees from start to end
He sees
He loves
He knows
What's true
How we can each ascend
A day
will come
the world
will know
The truth is in Hashem's hands
Trusting and Guiding us all the way

It's not the end but a new beginning
A fresh new start
I can embark
I have a new journey each day
My pure soul comes down,
wishing to say
I can
I will
I know
It's true
Hashem sees from start to end
I see
He loves
He knows
What's true
My true self will ascend
A day
will come
I know
I'm sure
The truth is in Hashem's hands
Trusting and Guiding me all the way

*“The best way out is
always through.”*

- Robert Frost

Credits: Batsheva

Am I Still a Believer

By Tilli

It's a heavy cloud I can't explain
Making me listless and groggy
I feel like I'm about to go insane
My vision's completely foggy

I dig deep for the good
But instead I only grieve
And although I know I should
I simply can't believe

I'm angry at the One Above
For making me so sick
There's no way I can feel his love
I want it all to end quick

I feel He's out to get me
Hurting me time and time again
Does He even care and see?
Or did He forget about my pain?

It takes just a blink of an eye
And the fog is lifted
So easy to spot the clear blue sky
I feel grateful and gifted

I thank Hashem and thank once more
For all the good He's done
Grateful from within my core
For each new day that has begun

I cannot help but ponder
If I'm a believer at all
If I would have true faith I wonder
Would I have this nasty fall?

But the Emunah I've acquired
Didn't disappear in my pain
My Bitachon has not expired
My effort was not in vain

Hashem decreed it all before it began
It's just another Emunah lesson
Everything that happens is part of his plan
Including such hopeless depression

I believe that my disbelieving mess
It was all meant to be
It doesn't take away from my success
It creates a stronger me...

*"Coping leads
to progress"*

Credits: Jodi

*"Compare
yourself to
who you
were
yesterday,
not to who
somebody
else is
today."*

Credits: Bassy

The Hidden Spark

By Tilli

It's waterproof
Fireproof
Windproof
Bulletproof
It doesn't matter that the waves are overwhelming
That the winds are blowing strongly
That all arrows are pointing at it
That it's the culprit of many nasty enemies
It's there
And it continues to survive
And thrive
No matter what the circumstances
It's my inner core
The real me
The sincere and hopeful part which wants to do what's right
Which looks forward to a bright future ahead
Even though the surrounding factors

All predict otherwise
It's the inner spark
That's mine to keep
Though in times of war
It might be covered
And hidden from my own two eyes
The inner spark
That will live through the war
Even if I don't fight
The little spark
That will soon emerge from its hiding place
Overtake the battlefield
And proclaim with pride
I preserved
I endured
I lived on
And I won



Thunderstorms. The weather forecast for many summer days calls for thunderstorms. While some people may feel excited, others tremble with anxiety and fear. After all, thunderstorms can be fierce, destructive and loud. Yet amidst the chaos there is a certain beauty that can be found.

These were some of the thoughts which crossed my mind during my most recent art therapy session. As someone who has struggled with an eating disorder for many years, the primary focus of our sessions is on body image. Body image involves our perception, imagination, emotions and physical sensations of and about our bodies. These ideas of body image are learned through our relationships, experiences and personal history. The task with which I was faced was to create a piece of art that metaphorically explores what it feels like to be in my body.

After thinking about it for a while I began to throw around some ideas with my therapist, but none seemed to fit exactly what I was trying to express. And then through the window I saw the sky starting to darken, the clouds moving fast and the faint rumble of thunder somewhere in the distance. At that moment I knew that Hashem was sending me a message, it is a thunderstorm that really describes how I feel.

My eating disorder destroyed my body, but even more so destroyed me as a person. I became someone I never wanted to be. I hated myself and pushed myself to achieve while never stopping to appreciate all I had already accomplished. I neglected my most basic needs until I was literally a shadow of myself and yet at the very basis of this destruction, I found courage and strength I never knew I had.

In the aftermath of a destructive storm there is a great amount of debris to clean up. Trees may fall down, and houses may be torn apart. Yet after the storm we are given a chance to rebuild something new and completely different than what was there before.

The thunder roars, the lighting crackles in the sky and the rain comes down with incredible force. Yet these thunderstorms generally move quickly in and then out. So too with our lives, life happens quickly and so do its storms. While we may feel we are caught in a storm forever the sky always returns to its normal state and brings with it a sense of calmness. So too we can be assured that our storm will also move out quickly and the sun will shine once again. Furthermore, when it rains, the earth is nourished. So, don't be afraid of getting wet, all living things need water to survive. In fact, there is a famous quote "Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass, it's about learning to dance in the rain". While the storm is raging remember that this challenge is helping us grow which is the only way real transformation happens.

Each one of our unique perspectives about storms are much like our outlook on life. For some life is just wonderful and amazing while others find it difficult to get out of bed each morning. Storms show us that life can be both beautiful and ugly. So, while we are caught in our own personal storms we can find comfort that Hashem would never send us something we couldn't handle. He uses storms to cleanse and refine us as we move toward growth. I have been through many of my own storms and have been weathering my own lately. I know how painful they can be. The suffering and darkness feels like it never ends. so, if you are in a storm, please know that you are not alone. Hashem is with you and your Chazkeinu sisters are with you too. Look for the lessons of the storm and remember "Once the storm is over, you won't remember how you made it through, how you survived. You won't even be sure whether the storm is over. But one thing that is certain, when you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what the storm is about." – (Haruki Murakam)



One of my favorite things to do is lie on the grass and watch the birds flying high in the sky. And my favorite place to do this is just outside Crow Forest, named for.... the crows! They are nosy, they are plenty, and when they fly overhead in a messy circle, they are beautiful (I'm attracted to messy ;-). So I'm doing my mindfulness practice; taking in the sights, smells and sounds of summer. They squawk and glide round and round, their silhouettes stark against the darkening blue sky.

As I am watching the crows circling the yard, I notice one bird is missing a whole chunk of wing. The peace is gone and suddenly I'm angry at whoever considers crow-wings to be breakfast. The other crows are gliding around with a couple of flaps here and there to keep up the momentum, but Mr. One-and-a-half Winged Crow has to beat his wings almost constantly just to stay afloat. And when you're lying on the grass staring straight up at a darkening sky, all you see is the black shape of birds, gliding. A deep, grey-blue sky shows through the gaping hole of the missing half. I'm watching, awed, and I tell myself, "He is missing half a wing. Everyone else has two. They are all gliding and he has to beat his wings over and over again. He never gets to take it easy.*But that does not stop him from flying!*"



Being Our Own Cheerleaders By Saralah



A few weeks ago, on a Shabbos afternoon, my sister-in-law put my niece on her stomach to do tummy time (an exercise to get her to lift her head). As I watched my niece on the floor, a thought came to mind: She has to learn how to lift her head, crawl, walk and talk – all from scratch. I was simply 'wowed' by that! Now, I don't really know when babies learn to do all that, but I do know that it's a gradual process with lots of encouragement and praise. We encourage them along the way in reaching all their milestones. We clap and smile, filled with excitement, encouragement, and positivity. If they fall, we pick them up, soothe them and help them carry on. And fall they do, until they master those milestones.

But what happens when we grow older and reach adulthood? Is our team still clapping and cheering us on? Do they pick us up after we fall and assure us that we will be okay? Maybe, maybe not.

Regardless of our situation, it's so important to dust ourselves off and cheerlead ourselves. It can be with a gentle whisper that soothingly says, "I fell and that's okay. It will be okay. Let's try again."

I know how hard this can be. It feels sort of fake and not quite right. And that's okay too because but it's the key to our healing and success. Could you guess what I'm going to say now? Yes, the well-known quote: Practice makes perfect.

In the same vein, I remember a quote that hung on the wall of my high school classroom. It read: Try and fail, try and fail, but never fail to try. This rings so true and speaks volumes.

With that, here are a few positive and encouraging affirmations that can help us. You can start with:

- "I can make it through this."
- "Uncomfortable feelings are okay and will not last forever."
- "I know it's so hard, and I also know that I can do this!"

May Hashem help us find our inner strength to be our own cheerleaders, which will ultimately give us inner peace.

The Enemy

She makes my body tremble
Causes my mind to go wild
Creates a spirit which does resemble
That of a vulnerable helpless child

My biggest competition, my foe
The thought of her makes my stomach turn
If it were up to me I would throw
Her into a fiery furnace to burn

She's always before my eyes
Trying to prove me weak and wrong
Her scornful gaze I do despise
Yet she's so stubborn and so strong

To avoid her I'll climb a mountain
Fight through thick and thin
My eyes become a fountain
When in the end she does win

I know that you're real curious
Who's the enemy making me so ill
I bet you I'm dead serious
...it's a little white pill!

By Tilli

The Friend

She holds my hand through terrible pain
Stops my mind from going wild
She calms my anxious brain
Telling me I'm Hashem's child

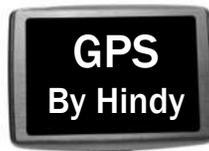
My dearest companion, my friend
Comforting me that I'm aching this test
She assures me that my pain has an end
That although not perfect, I'm doing my best

She's always before my eyes
Telling me life is not all black
Her importance I do recognize
For she makes up for me in places I lack

To have her company I'll climb a mountain
Fight no matter what
My eyes become a fountain
If to take her with me I forgot

I know that you're real curious

It's all a matter of attitude...



It's 1:00 am. It's silent in your car as you speed down the highway. It's a deep, dark night and shadows are casting their glow from the dim street lamps. It's spooky and frightening out there, yet you feel confident and assured that you will be home by 2:26 am. You're not terribly familiar with these roads. Actually, you're following your GPS blindly; certain that you will arrive home at the given time. You rely solely on the GPS, trusting it to give you the correct directions. Now, what if you're on the way back from the mountains, and your GPS fails you. Your screen turns black suddenly, and you have absolutely no idea how to get home. There isn't a car in sight to even help out. You pull over to the side of the road, and you begin to tremble. You feel so alone. Your phone has lost battery long ago, but you hadn't thought it was a problem since you knew for certain when you would arrive home. A deer flies out of the forest startling you, making you more aware of how terrifying this is. You lay your head down on the steering wheel, despair setting in. This is just too much for you. You would pay anything to buy a new GPS now. You break down, sobbing with whatever strength is left. You doze off leaning on the steering wheel, unable to proceed without the GPS which you were so completely dependent upon.

Is our trust in Hashem so complete that if we forgot for one second that He's the one leading us, we would be lost????! Are we calm, content, and reassured while relying on Him? Knowing that He will bring you to your destination in the direction that's best for you is something that is not worth giving up just like that!

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I Deserve to Love Myself



Dearest Molly,

There are a few things I want to share with you. Things you don't know or don't believe about yourself. Things you need to believe about yourself, because you deserve to know and believe them. Molly, take a look back at your life. Look at all the pain, suffering, abuse, fear, troubles, and sorrows. Look at what you've lived through and what you put up with. Now, look at yourself now, and what do you see? A brave, strong, and courageous woman who battled the worst battles and who's been through hell and back. A woman who has fallen many times and gotten back up time and time again, because she could do it! You've survived a hundred percent of your worst days! Look at this woman and tell me why she doesn't deserve to be loved by herself. Molly, you deserve to love yourself. You deserve to be kind and compassionate to yourself. You deserve good, and you deserve to be happy. Molly, there are voices in your head that try to convince you otherwise. They tell you that you're worthless, unimportant, unlovable, and stupid. Those voices were created by you and nobody else, and only you have the power to change them. Only you have the power to decide that, "You're lovable, you're worth it, you're OK, and you're good enough!" You deserve to believe it! You deserve to believe in yourself! You deserve to believe that you can do it! You've come to this point. You grew and blossomed in so many ways. I've been with you all along the journey, but you never notice and never believe anything I said or tried to tell you. You pushed me away when I tried knocking at the door, saying I didn't belong. Many times, I tried to convince you how wonderful, precious, and special you are, but time and time again I was taken over by the evil voices in your head. I won't give up. I will try again and again to tell you how great you are. You are a single mother; a single, fantastic, amazing, patient, and loving mother who is battling a severe mental illness. How many people do you know that have dealt with that? How many people do you know that, on top of all of that, have been neglected, abused, and brainwashed as a child, topped off by an abusive marriage? Molly, you can argue that you know people who have had similar struggles, but how many do you know that came out as strong and empowered as you? How many have never given up even through raging fires and fierce battles? Molly, I wish you can let go of those ugly voices! It pains me to see them consume you! It's okay to feel anger, resentment, and grief. It's okay to cry and cry more. It's all normal, but I want you to internalize what I am telling you here. There will always be obstacles and roadblocks. There will always be other people who will put you down and situations that will seem unbearable, but always remember, "All's in the eyes of the beholder." You are what you define yourself to be, not what the rest of the world defines you as. In my eyes you're a hero, and I hope you can trust me. It's scary to come out of the cave you protected yourself in for most of your life, and I'm not here to pull you out. Be gentle with yourself, it takes time. One step in front of the next. Slowly you can emerge and blossom, taking all your qualities and your belief in yourself to grow the most beautiful garden. The garden of the bigger and better life; a garden filled with the beautiful you, your talents, your strength, and your courage. You need to plant those seeds by letting go of that evil and torturous voice in your head, and embrace my love, my open arms, and my belief that you are so worth it. You are more worth it than you can imagine, and you can do it! I'm not asking for much, just one small step. Try to be open to letting go of the past, and embrace the loving arms so that I can hug you tight and say, "Molly, I love you. You are dear to me, and YOU ARE SO WORTH IT!!!"

Molly, I love you from the bottom of my heart, and I'm so proud of you for every step of your journey. I will never let you go and will never disappoint you! I will help you be kind and compassionate, and to find the real you. The you who I know and know you want to be. Molly, I'm here and I'm not running away. I'm ready for your embrace, when you're ready. Stay strong, be kind and loving to yourself, and I'm rooting for you!! Take care of yourself!!



*With Deepest Love,
The Real You!*





After hearing one of the speakers talk about challenges and hope on the Chazkeinu phone line, I felt compelled to write this. I want to make a disclaimer that these are my thoughts, feelings, and words of chizuk. They are based on my experiences, and my experiences only, and what helps me.

Hope. What is hope? Hope is about not giving up. Hope is about believing that I can get through this, and I can move on. Hope is about not feeling stuck. Feeling stuck is hard, very hard. Hope is not necessarily, "I made it, I passed a test, and I'm a success." No. No. No. Hope is not about getting to the finish line, and it doesn't mean you will get to the finish line. Hope means I believe. I believe in me and my ability to trudge forward step by step. Maybe even small, tiny baby steps; to reach a better and more fulfilling level and milestone.

Let's take Ahuvi for example. She struggles every day to take her medication. For her, medication is a signal of failure. She hates taking it and doesn't want to. She hopes for the day she will be able to stop or no longer need medication. Her wish to go off medicine may be nice but won't accomplish what she needs to do now, which is to actually take her medication. For her, a more helpful hope would be to find a way to help her take them. It can be in any way; maybe she can have a good friend (not just any friend, but a friend who understands) be on the phone with her or be there in person when she takes them. Hope may mean having a reward system; having someone take her out for ice cream or going out for ice cream by herself. Hope for Ahuvi means finding a way to accomplish her goal, her mission, her test, which is to take meds even though she

really doesn't want to and even though it is very hard for her. Hope for her is about doing what is needed in a way that works for her.

Here is another scenario. Let's take Judy for instance. Judy has a diagnosis that requires bi-weekly therapy sessions. Going to therapy and opening up wounds is very hard. Judy wishes she doesn't have to go through the therapy process since it feels too hard. It feels too slow, too shameful, etc... She finds herself hoping she won't have to go to therapy, but this hope won't change her situation, which is her illness and diagnosis. A more

effective hope is to find ways to make therapy a safe and welcoming experience. For example, she can let her therapist know about her comfort and discomfort up front. She might tell her therapist how she dislikes the diagnosis wishes she didn't have to be in therapy. In Judy's scenario, her hope is not about quitting therapy, but about getting through this mission, this test of dealing with the diagnosis and going to therapy.

Going to therapy can be very hard.

Believe me I know and I struggle with that too. However, the fact that we get up every day, take our medication, and go to therapy means we have hope. That means we believe we can and will get better. Hope means we believe in ourselves, even if we struggle with taking our meds and going to therapy. Struggling doesn't mean we don't have hope. We can struggle and still have hope. One doesn't take away from the other. We can struggle with a test, and still have hope that things can and will get better.

On the other hand, if there are still times we feel low and feeling like we are losing hope it shouldn't make

"Hope is about not giving up. Hope is about believing that I can get through this, and I can move on."

us despair because everyone, including those without mental challenges lives with ups and down. No one is exempt from suffering. Hope can be difficult in times of stress. When things seem to be falling apart it can be very, very hard to feel hope.

Hopelessness is the exact opposite of hope. Times of hopelessness are usually the times when things will begin to get better, because when we reach rock bottom the only other way is to go upwards. Hope shows us that we are fighters. We are warriors, and we believe in our ability. Hope is a sign of strength and courage. It's because when all else seems lost and life is so difficult and so challenging there is one thing that we can still hold on to that is never lost. One thing that will always remain no matter how challenging things get. Hope. Hope is never lost. It always remains, and we can always hope for a brighter future, a brighter tomorrow, and even a brighter

today. Hope is encouraging. It can lift us out of the despair of our misery and sorrow, and help lift us to become happier, more fulfilled, and accomplished people. People who are happy with everything allotted to them by Hashem. Hashem who created us and gave us our challenges, but He also gave us our talents and gifts. He believes in us and our ability to grow and He never gives up on us. He has the highest hope for each and every Jew. We are told that we should follow in Hashem's footsteps, so if Hashem believes in us and has the utmost hope for us, no matter how low we may have become, we should follow in His ways and never ever give up on ourselves or anyone else. Hope is a gift, a blessing, and the most powerful coping skill ever. Remember one thing friends: No matter how difficult things get **Hold On, Pain Ends.** Have the most hopeful summer ever. With all my Love, Baila

Ani Hashem Eloikecho
By: *Fraidy Spira*

To all out there
I'd like to air
Something deeply profound
Would like to share
Discovered something
I've found
Can raise you out of
Despair

You take an issue
Pressing you
And you say to Hashem:
"THANK YOU"
Amidst the tears
Amidst the pain
As tears down your cheeks
Leave their stain
You cry out
To the One who Hears
Tatte only You
Can wipe away my tears
Allay my fears
Set me free
As I agree
It all stems from You
You want we to go through
This challenge
This gain
Stuck in this refrain

Of seemingly
never ending
Stuckness
In a rut
Of motionless
Debris filled
Ravines
Over sized puddles
Attracting
And retaining
Sand, dust and dirt
Often other people's hurt
Strewn about
In this pool
Of rainwater.
With no drain
Of where to flow
She relies solely
On clear skies
N Sunshine
To dry
And release
Her debris.
She has found
A way
To allay
Her fears.
She cries out

Amidst her tears
"THANK YOU HASHEM
FOR SENDING THIS ALL TO ME..
Thank You
For making me see
That You sent me this Test
Cause You bring out the Best
In me
You love me So
And if You send me Sorrow
Even if I cry though
I Know
That You know
It is Best for Me.
And with this trust
I realize
That it was never really me
Was never my debris
Only Your Love for me
That has caused thee
To be.
And so I heal
As I feel
Bit by bit
Of motion occurring
Something deep within stirring
"..Ki ani Hashem Eloikecho
Ve'ani Hashem Roifecho.."

The Mountains Next to Me

By Blimy

I'm in the midst of climbing a mountain,
It looks so steep and tall
I often sweat, stumble, and fall
I feel like I would love to surrender
I wonder, I ponder
Do I have the strength to preserve?
Maybe climbing this mountain is way too difficult for me
to bear
I feel so isolated as alone I trudge
I'm afraid of being judged

But, I look at the mountain next to me that looks a lot
more steep
I see some courageous people who had the strength to
creep
They sweated, stumbled, and fell
Their struggles were surely hell
They did not surrender
They continued climbing in the very hot and cold weather
They encountered slopes
And often walked a tightrope
They avoided comparing with others
Mindfully, moved forward one step after another

Dear Chazkeinu sisters (heroeses),
Having a husband with mental illness is also hard to climb
Yes, I've slipped and fell many a time
Since his diagnoses are in a debilitating form
I could easily get swept away by the storm
But when I see how you climbed an even taller mountain
And I see how you emerged so beautiful and genuine
I gather the strength and hope
And find tools to continue to cope

Through every story you share
I gain so much insight and become more aware
I could relate to his struggles so much more
I could be a lot more empathetic than before
You empower me with energy anew
For, if you can do it, we can do it too
You give me strength to continue climbing and persevere
My feeling of isolation slowly disappears
There is a lot less shame
For he is not to blame
It's all from the one above
Who gives us all our challenges with sincere love
He accompanies us on our journey
And takes pride of each big and small victory!
He is the one who sends the right messengers to help us
throughout
To climb the mountain that was destined for us without a
doubt!

While I'm in the midst of climbing I look back to see
What did I leave behind thus far, on my journey?
I left behind denial and illusions
I left behind dreams and imagination
I left behind name and fame
I left behind guilt and shame
I left behind anger and resentment
I left behind control and judgment
I left behind values that I was raised with as being of
utmost importance
But, I'm still climbing to reach acceptance
For it was all meant to be
Custom tailored by Hashem for me!

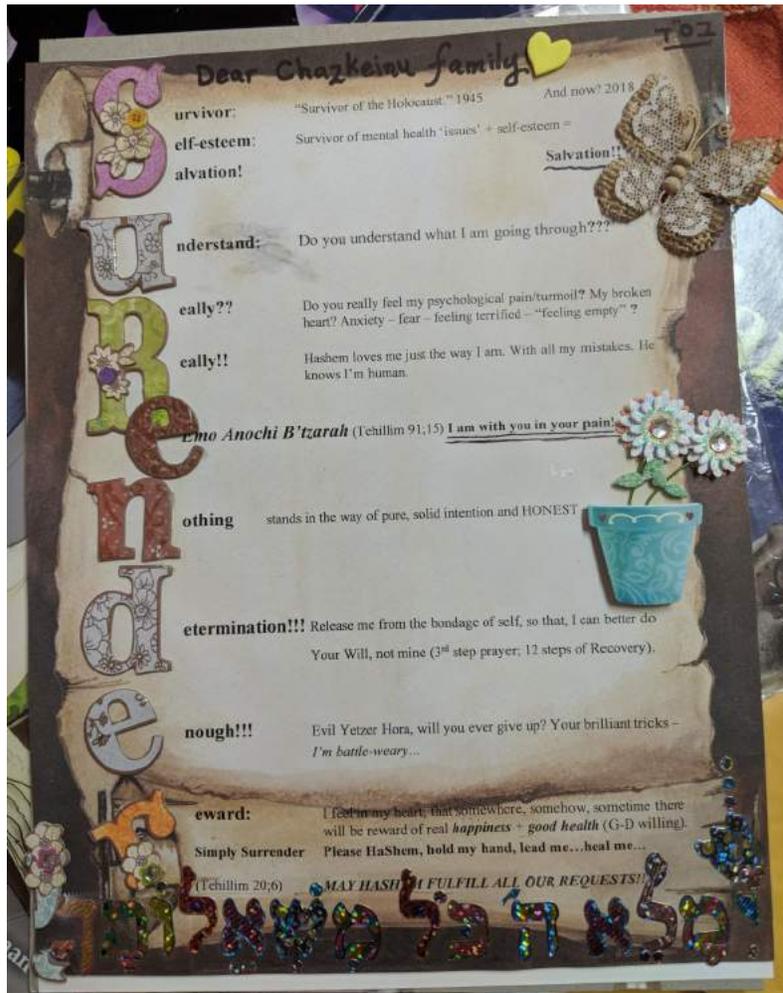
*"Don't tell me the sky's the
limit when there are
footprints on the moon."*

Credits: Batsheva

*"Life isn't about waiting for
the storm to pass. It's about
learning to dance in the rain."*

Credits: Tzippy

Have a favorite quote send it to us at Chazkeinunewsletter@gmail.com
and we will include it in the next edition of RISE.



Recipe:

David's Cold Fruit Soup

(Taken from Uncommonly Kosher)

- 2 pt. fresh strawberries, washed and trimmed (frozen, thawed strawberries can be used as well)
- 1 very ripe or overripe banana
- ½ c. Orange Juice
- ¼ c. Sugar
- Whipped Cream for garnish (optional)

Blend strawberries, banana, orange juice and sugar in food processor. Chill. Immediately before serving add a dollop of whipped cream. Serves 6.



Thank you Tamar for the recipe.

Have a favorite recipe send it to us at Chazkeinunewsletter@gmail.com and we will include it in the next edition of RISE.

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“WHEN I GET TO HEAVEN, I AM NOT AFRAID THAT THEY WILL ASK ME WHY I WASN'T LIKE MOSHE OR KING DOVID. I WILL SAY THAT I COULDN'T BE LIKE THEM. I AM AFRAID THEY WILL ASK ME, 'WHY WEREN'T YOU ZUSHA?' AND THEN WHAT WILL I SAY?”

“RABBI ZUSHA OF ANAPOLI

A Project of



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