

WINTER 5780

RISE

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Shabbaton Edition

A Project of Chazkeinu





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“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!

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| Letters |

To My Dear Chazkeinu Sisters,

Welcome to a new and long awaited Chanukah/Shabbaton edition of RISE!

When I think about attending our 4th annual Shabbaton I am filled with emotion and appreciation to Hashem for giving me the honor of being part of the Chazkeinu family. I learn from each of you and feel more hope and strength each day knowing that you all are such a big part of my life. The bond we share, the empathy, and unconditional love we spread is palpable.

Let's continue to be there 4 each other and remember that Chazkeinu is here 4 you! Please reach out if we can help you in any way.

You are all priceless and the world is lucky to have you.

There's so much I wish to share with all of you that I decided to express my inner feelings to you through song.

With all my love, admiration, and appreciation,

Zahava

My World Turned Around

While travelling on life's journey
"Four"tunate that it came to be
Grateful for all who crossed my path
Each of you have made an impact
I'm alone - no more!

It's you and I connected as one
I can be myself, laugh, have fun
Differences aside, my world looks bright
From all four corners we now unite
Like never beFour!

*It's one step at a time
Each rung that I do climb
I can - just 4 today
A mantra I will say
Not let pain stand in my way*

*With Sisters by my side
I'll now enjoy the ride
So take your hand in mine
Together we will shine
Our road map so divine*

We'll look past our 4 sides.
Remove all that divides
What helps me pull through
Is that now I can do for you
My giving hand- reaches far!

Enjoy - we'll take care of the rest
A Shabbos that will bring out your best
Shabbaton 2019 a time to truly treasure
Memories we'll always remember
Be proud - of who you are!

A Message from Rabbi Yisroel Grossberg, Rabbinical Advisor of Chazkeinu

It is my pleasure to once again greet the Chazkeinu membership through this very special newsletter. This is a very exciting time to be a part of this special organization, as it is constantly growing and striving to do more for its members. As this newsletter coincides with the annual Shabbaton, one just has to look at the venue and program to realize that Chazkeinu is evolving and playing a major role in helping bringing the struggles and challenges of facing emotional illness to the entire Jewish community. Thanks to the efforts of Chazkeinu the goal of ending the stigma associated with emotional struggles is becoming more of a reality each day.

It is my hope that the achdus that is seen at every Chazkeinu event and runs through all that Chazkeinu does continues to give us the strength and drive to grow and expand. May we all find the comfort and chizuk from sharing our challenges together and through that reach our goal of shared growth in all we do.

Mailbox



Chazkeinu, and namely Zahava List who is at the very helm of Chazkeinu everyday, has left a powerful impact in my life. Zahava infuses Chazkeinu with her vibrancy and passion for fighting mental illness' stigmas. When I got out of the hospital this past year, getting the warm gift package from Chazkeinu infused me with such hope and gratefulness. Going to events has left with me such a powerful connection and sense of belonging. Chazkeinu has brought so many Jewish women relief from isolation, and it continues to provide a powerful feeling of positivity and a place to rest one's head from the hecticness and stress of living in a dysfunctional world, bringing one to a place of sisterhood and love emanating from every fiber of this incredible organization that I am so proud to be a part of.

A proud sister, Chana



I just wanted to share the impact Chazkeinu has had on my life. The opportunity to connect with other women from similar backgrounds who also struggled was a big part of my healing. This enabled me to normalize and accept my experiences. I can't thank Chazkeinu enough!

All the best, Shani



To my dear Chazkeinu Sisters, What would I do without you? I'm so happy that I found Chazkeinu! It has truly been a lifeline and a life saver for me.

I wish you all the strength and the courage to be brave and truly take care of yourselves in every way possible, spiritually and physically. This is not always an easy task, and so worth the effort. We have to put ourselves first so that we can give to others and fulfill our purpose in life.

I want to thank you all for being there for me and being so supportive and kind.

I want to wish all of you and your families a warm, uplifting Chanukah filled with much love and light. I really hope we see Mashiach soon, and I know that Chazkeinu is definitely bringing that reality closer every day.

Love Always, Chaya Leah



Dear Chazkeinu Sisters, Chazkeinu is an absolutely and truly amazing organization that seeks to help and support women with mental health issues. However, it is much more than that. The feelings of achdus, laughter, and friendship that I felt last year at my first Chazkeinu Shabbaton in Passaic, NJ were something I never, ever experienced before in my entire life. Over 100 Jewish women, of all walks of life, came together for a Shabbos of connection and support. Irrespective of religiosity, we all connected on the basis of being Jewish and having some sort of mental health issue. Whatever our diagnosis was, was purely irrelevant. What we needed was the validation, support, and friendship of other like-minded woman just like us seeking to meet and connect with other woman over Shabbos. What was the result? I had the most fantastic time of my life, and the entire Shabbaton completely exceeded all of my expectations. The food, singing, discussions, and group activities were so fun and engaging. But more than that, for the first time in my life, I was made to feel accepted and normal despite my lifelong challenges that Hashem blessed me with. While I previously could not relate to my challenges as blessings, I quickly discovered that I was wrong. My blessings or challenges are my tikkun in life and reflect a quote on a picture that my husband bought for me at a craft show a few years ago:

"The things that make me different are the things that make me, ME!"

The enthusiasm and excitement that I gained from one year ago have kept me going for the last year. I have told dozens of people all about the amazing things Chazkeinu brings to the Jewish world of mental health. As well, I now have a whole support network of Chazkeinu sisters that I can call on for support. They know that they can count on me, and together we are a Chazkeinu family!

Have an amazing, amazing Shabbos everyone, and I can't wait to see you all at Camp Nageela very, very soon!

Good Shabbos Ladies!

Bayla

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

Nothing Will Become of Me

By Avrohom Steier

When in the throes of mental illness, it can be very difficult, often impossible, to see past the illness. The darkness of severe depression allows no light to enter, the paralysis of anxiety can greatly impair one's ability to function, and the pain of trauma can be so vivid that it feels as if the trauma is reliving itself time and again. Under such difficult circumstances, it is hard to see past the illness to a brighter, more joyful time; therefore, the person starts to believe that such a time is not a possibility for them. She will live in a constant state of pain forever, never accomplishing what she wants to in life and never achieving the goals she had previously hoped to reach. She thinks that nothing will ever become of her and that she will leave this world as an afterthought to history.

While the pain such a person is experiencing is very real and very intense and, therefore, these thoughts of despair are normal and to be expected, it is important to understand that these thoughts are largely untrue. There have been many world leaders, artists, authors, and entertainers who suffered from mental illness at some point in their lives, yet they accomplished a great deal and are well remembered for their contributions to society. In addition to these more famous and well known personalities, there are literally hundreds of millions of people the world over that suffer from mental illness and manage to live productive, fulfilling lives.

Until here, we have discussed one's ability to function as a person while battling mental illness, but

what of the Orthodox Jew. Can a person survive, and perhaps even thrive, as an Orthodox Jew who must deal with this difficult challenge? Or perhaps there is no place in Judaism for such people, and they have no hope of ever reaching the lofty spiritual levels that they yearn for.

The Gemara tells us (Pesachim 113b) that there are three types of people whose psychological makeup makes their lives very difficult. The first is someone that feels a need to show mercy and to do kindness to others constantly without stop. Even though showing mercy and doing kindness to others is considered an admirable trait, one who is constantly preoccupied with it will have no rest and will never feel fulfilled by the kindness that they have already accomplished. Modern psychology also has a concept of pathological giving where a person feels the need to constantly give, even when doing so is to their own detriment.

The second person listed is someone who constantly gets angry. It goes without saying that someone who regularly flies off the handle and loses their temper on a consistent basis will be so caught up in their perceived injustices and personal grievances that they will be unable to enjoy any aspect of life. In modern psychology too, extreme and consistent anger is associated with various forms of mental illness, especially several forms of personality disorders.

The third group of people listed is those that are extremely finicky. Everything in their lives must be done

“She thinks that nothing will ever become of her and that she will leave this world as an afterthought to history.”

| Features |



“To love without knowing how to love wounds the person we love.”-Thick Nhat Han

It's that warm feeling that permeates the insides, engulfs the senses, and leaves you feeling secure, safe, and comforted in a world that can often feel unpredictable and lonely. It's a feeling of unity between you and the other, which helps one feel whole in a world where separateness plagues the human existence. You want this feeling, and yet somehow it remains impervious and difficult to attain.

How could the one thing you want so much be so hard to pursue?

Humans, all humans – you, I, your friends, your family – are all created with an inner ability and desire for love. It's a desire we treacherously pursue with caution and fear fueled by the depth of yearning that plagues the insides. However, despite this intense desire, people fumble along, arduously, hesitantly, and painfully, often not getting there. Why is that? Why when it comes to a career, money, hobbies, fulfillment, and the like, a person sets a goal in mind and with effort and work can often attain it? On the other hand, creating and sustaining fulfilling loving friendships and relationships seems to be elusive.

I believe that the issue lies in the focus of how one works on attaining this inner experience and the security it brings. People are subliminally taught to exert their efforts and execute anything possible in an attempt to have others instill this feeling of love into them, to feel

loved by the other. Rather a more productive and attainable goal would be in becoming a loving individual, to embody an internal feeling of acceptance and love towards the other. Love is something we embody in ourselves and not something others instill in us. Love is an inner experience of joy and commitment, and yet learning how to experience this inner sensation, learning how to be a loving individual, learning how to engulf oneself by a sensation of love is not taught, modeled, or encouraged.

Eric Fromm, a notable psychoanalyst and philosopher put it eloquently: *“Most people see the problem of love primarily as that of being loved, rather than that of loving, of one's capacity to love. Hence the problem to them is how to be loved, how to be lovable.”*

With the perspective that one has to find ways to be loved, to be lovable by another, one must find ways to deserve that love, to do things that are attractive and liked by the other. People try to look pretty, earn money, be a good wife, be a successful mother, get good grades, be friendly, do good deeds, etc., all with the attempt of trying to deserve and receive that love. Rather, to truly love is to embody a feeling of love inside of oneself that exudes outward to the world; love is an attitude and a way to see and exist in the world. When a person loves another person, an object of love, that's likely an attachment, an attachment society has labeled as “love.” That's a small, limiting, and inhibiting way to understand love or to have that feeling of warmth on the inside.

Learning to love means living with all the happiness, joy, loss, sadness, and richness that accompany this human capacity. Without the capacity to love, we are only empty shadows of whom we can be. We are placed outside life and cannot participate in the process of living; without the capacity to love, we live without color, variation, and vitality.

To truly love, to become a loving individual, to embrace the world with warmth, care, and concern, to fill your insides with love, takes practice and commitment; however, the feeling that ensues is worth the effort.

One of the beauties and unique aspects of the human phenomenon is the vast differences that exist between us, despite how similar we are. If you contemplate the physicality of being human, you will see an art unto itself. Imagine painting billions of copies of the same picture, having each look simultaneously the same and yet so different. It's incomprehensible and utterly mind-blowing at the same time.

We are all created with difference. We differ in our thoughts, opinions, feelings, experiences, knowledge, appearances, likes, dislikes, etc. To be a loving individual is to accept and admire all these differences while proudly holding onto your own uniqueness. To see the world from another person's perspective, to see what they see, to understand who they are, to understand what they feel, is the first step in the capacity to love. When you can truly see the other for whom they are, accept them for their life experiences and how those have molded whom they have become or whom they are becoming; when you can truly see others with positivity and esteem, you open up your heart for love.

The process involved is the journey of empathy – the “being with” someone else and understanding what it is to be like them, not reacting to or acting upon, but putting yourself in their shoes. It involves listening with your heart. Empathy is the means by which our humanity is born. This is a very simple truth, but it is also complex.

One of the primary lessons taught in many Jewish grade schools is that giving creates love and that the

Hebrew term “ahahava” is derived from “hav,” which means to give. I hear too many people perplexed that they give and give and give, but end up with feelings of resentment and emptiness, not love.

I think it is imperative to understand what giving means. People often understand giving as giving of physical material items in the world: giving food, clothing, rides, time, etc. But when it comes to love, giving is not primarily of physicality, but of one's internal self. Giving is your ability to understand, empathize, and to give of your inner experiences. Giving is about wanting to really know the other – going out of yourself to be and know the other – that creates a feeling of love. I will refer to Brene Brown's well-known words on empathy. Brene says, “In order to connect with another, you have to connect with something in yourself that knows that feeling,” because “I know what it's like down here” and I can be with you in that experience. That's called giving. You are opening up parts of yourself, parts that are vulnerable, honest, and real, and are giving from those parts to another.



When you can give of your internal emotional world and be with another, see them for who they truly are, and love them – despite the things that drive you crazy about them – you have just begun feeling what true love is. Love is an attitude within oneself, love is an orientation, and love is a way to see and exist in the world. If you can become a loving person, you can become a whole person, and you can begin loving others, humanity, society, and open your heart to be touched by love.

To finish the quote from above: “To love without knowing how to love wounds the person we love. To know how to love someone, we have to understand them. To understand, we need to listen.”

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.

| Meet a Member |



Meet a Member

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

I'm a 19 year old single girl. My official journey with mental illness began when I was only 10 years old! I had many ups and downs including some major relapses along the way. I have been given many diagnoses over the years. To date, I mostly struggle with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (including panic disorder), Bipolar, and OCD.

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

For me, medication has been a major part in helping me deal with my mental illnesses. Therapy has also helped me tremendously. I've been in therapy since I was ten. Up until a year and a half ago, I was seeing a regular talk therapist. After a major relapse last summer, I started seeing a DBT therapist, and I am in DBT group therapy. I actually just completed my first full round of DBT group, which I'm very proud of! (I have just started my second round of DBT group.) DBT has done a tremendous amount for me! I also have been blessed with the most amazing big sister/mentor who takes me out on a weekly basis! I strongly believe in having a great support system, which I Baruch Hashem have created for myself!

What is one of the difficult parts of your challenge?

The most difficult part of my challenge is that it's invisible. People can't tell I'm struggling. I look like any other typical girl my age, but, really my brain is acting up. I wish people would know I'm struggling and therefore be able to care about me more. I also have a fear of relapsing Chas V'shalom, which is always on my mind. This adds to my anxiety and causes me so much unnecessary stress.

How did you hear about Chazkeinu?

I found out about Chazkeinu in a very unique way. In High School I became very close with my school nurse (I literally lived in her office). One day in 12th grade, she mentioned to me that her sister in law's twin has an organization called Chazkeinu. She asked me if I wanted join. Being the super curious person that I am, I immediately said yes, and I found myself calling the phone conference that night. The rest they say is history!

What have you gained from being part of Chazkeinu?

Chazkeinu has been an integral part of my recovery journey! I learned to be open about my illness and to be more accepting of myself for who I am. My closest friends are from Chazkeinu. Chazkeinu has literally (yes, I mean literally) saved my life and I am forever grateful! A huge shout-out to all the "Behind the Scenes" people who work endlessly on behalf of Chazkeinu!

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

Having so many diagnoses can make me feel crippled, but I try to view my illnesses as something that I have and not who I am. It's hard to always remember that you are amazing (and many times your brain will keep telling you otherwise). So my suggestion is to try and stick around positive people who can tell you positive affirmations and remind you how special you are! Always remember you truly are a hero in the eyes of Hashem and there is nothing greater than that!

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Meet a Member

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

I'm a young married woman in my 20s, and this past year, after a long journey, I was blessed with three little miracles, triplets! My journey started when I was 18 years old. At that time, my younger sister had a manic episode and being that I had never known anyone with mental illness, I was shaken. I started reading up and researching mental illness, and I realized that I had been going through a lot of emotional neglect. I also struggled a lot in my relationship with my mother. This made me really sad, and I began crying myself to sleep every night. I was a kallah at that time which was supposed to be a very happy time of my life, but in fact it was just the opposite. Only after I got married and was referred to a doctor and therapist was I diagnosed with depression.

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

I started taking medication right after I was diagnosed, but it took a while until it kicked in. Then I started therapy which was a lifesaver for me! My therapist used Psychodynamic Therapy and some Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) when necessary. Inner child work helped me identify where my neediness was coming from, and after grieving for what I didn't get as a child growing up, I was able to forgive and find (can I change to make) peace with everyone. The relationship with my mother really improved. In fact, I was the only one of all my sisters that spent a lot of time with her during her last days. I was able to see her positive side and realize that she did the best that she could, and although I didn't see it at the time, she really did love me.

CBT was also extremely helpful with my anxiety. Additionally, I also started going to Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) group, and I found that it was really helpful in communicating with others, especially those who don't understand emotions.

In therapy, I also learned a lot about myself. I discovered talents that I never knew I had, or that I had never utilized. I also started taking music lessons which really helped me connect to myself.

What is one of the difficult parts of your challenge?

Feeling alone was one of the most difficult parts of my challenge. I found that most people that I told about my challenges just did not get it. When I confided to a very close friend of mine and told her that I had depression,

she told me that I needed to say more Tehillim, read more spiritual books, and pray more. I was so hurt! Of course, she didn't mean to hurt me. In her eyes, as someone with no awareness about mental and emotional challenges, that was all I needed do and that would cure all my problems.

How did you hear about Chazkeinu?

At one point, I told my therapist that therapy is one part of the healing, but I also want to be able to talk about my struggles openly with people who really understand and won't judge me because of them. She said that she would look into it. At that time, I didn't think about such a huge support group as Chazkeinu. All I had in mind was that maybe my therapist could connect me with another patient with similar challenges.

The next session, my therapist told me that she thought she might have something for me. She told me about this support group that has phone meetings and sometimes in-person meetings as well. That was all she knew about it. I told her right away that I was interested, and she helped me sign up in her office.

I will never forget where I was at the first meeting. I was on a bus on my way home from the city at that time. I don't even remember who the speaker was, but one thing I remember so clearly was the warm and welcoming atmosphere.

From that Monday night on, I started looking forward to every Monday evening for the weekly phone meetings. I gained tremendously from all the speakers and even more from the personal stories. From then on, I didn't feel alone anymore. I felt part of a community of people who are going through similar challenges and understand me. People who would just get it!

What are some of the Chazkeinu programs that you have benefited from?

Shortly after I joined Chazkeinu, I requested to be matched with a partner. It took a while, but in the end, I got a wonderful partner. My partner is another young woman with similar struggles, albeit from a completely different background, and we became very close.

One day I called up Zahava and told her that I really wanted to connect to women from my community as well. She helped me connect to another Chazkeinu sister through the contact list, and I was shocked that it was a person that I knew from before. We were so happy that we found each other, and we decided to have an in-person meeting!

Slowly, from different Chazkeinu events, I met more people and picked up a lot of friends. My Chazkeinu friends are truly like my sisters, and I share a very close bond with them.

I also benefited a lot from sharing my story. It was another way of healing, and the feedback that I got validated me so much.

Last but not least, although I have only attended the Shabbaton once, it was an experience that was out of this world. To all the people who are here this year at the Shabbaton, I really want to meet you! I'm probably not going to be there, but shout out to everyone that does come!

What do you love most about Chazkeinu?

The thing that I love most about Chazkeinu is that it is a peer lead organization. Everyone can get involved and contribute something.

In the last two and a half years, I have had the opportunity to help organize events and help out for the Shabbaton. I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed it. By giving to others, I got back much more in return. I discovered hidden talents that I wasn't aware of, and I got so much satisfaction. *(Continued on the bottom of page 14)*

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ESTIE

My name is Estie, and I am a wife and mother of four precious children. At the age of fourteen and a half, I began displaying symptoms of depression and anxiety. On the advice of my pediatrician, I agreed to see a psychiatrist. After visiting several psychiatrists, my devoted parents finally settled on one, and at the age of fifteen, I obediently started taking medication. The medication started working fairly quickly, and I returned to school where I studiously continued my studies. Socially, things were definitely harder as I felt that I had become quieter. Yet, I always had and still have good friends.

After graduating high school in 2003, I went to seminary and worked as a teacher's assistant. I really enjoyed that stress-free job. When I was about nineteen years old my psychiatrist put me on a "safer" medication as I was about to enter shidduchim. At the age of twenty one, I was lucky to meet my soul mate, and I'm grateful for every day of our twelve years together.

My first hospitalization occurred three to four weeks after the birth of our first child. It was then that I was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder, and I switched to a new psychiatrist who I really liked. However, after another hospitalization ten months later, I switched doctors once again, and I'm still under the care of that same doctor today. The new psychiatrist put me on a host of vitamins and supplements in addition to my medication. After the birth of my second child, I didn't experience depression and functioned very well. I also had a lady help me with my two and half year old so I wouldn't get overwhelmed. I then became a stay at home mom and didn't go back to teach the following September.

After my third child birth, I experienced severe Post-Partum Depression (PPD) and was not well enough to go away to the mother and baby convalescent home to rest. We hired a nurse to care for our baby at home while I was able to recoup by eating nourishing meals prepared by my mother and an organization. My kind husband took care of our baby at night so I could get adequate sleep. It was at this time that my psychiatrist recommended Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) for me. TMS has been life transforming for me. Traveling to the city three to four days a week for two months was a huge commitment, but the results far outweighed any of the hardships involved in traveling. For those who are not familiar with TMS, I will just say that I was able to text on my phone, say tehillim, or take a nap during my 30 minute treatments! I still go once a year for a quick maintenance dose of TMS.

Two and half years later, I was blessed with another life transformer called Chazkeinu! Last summer, Zahava suggested I call Hamaspik, (an agency that provides a host of different services) to see if I could work with an individual. At the interview, I learned about free online classes to become a certified peer specialist. With unending support from my husband, I studied and completed the required thirteen chapters and tests. On Jan 1, 2019, I received my Master Certificate. Today I'm back at work, now as a certified peer specialist, and I thrive on working with my peers.

Seven months ago, we were blessed with the gift of our little princess Pessy; our first girl after three boys. B"H it was my best pregnancy and easiest delivery, and I functioned well afterwards as well.

One of my greatest struggles today is getting enough sleep. Running a home and going to simchas often interferes with the sleep I so desperately need. I often feel jealous of the rest of the world that does not need to worry about this. We currently receive a weekly dinner and have cleaning help once a week which eases my burden and enables me to get more sleep. Another factor that has recently become harder for me is coming to terms with the next generation, my nieces and nephews, buying their own homes, while I've spent "houses" on my psychiatrist and other related medical expenses. I just have to stay focused on thanking Hashem for all I do have. Learning from the Book "Living Emunah" helps me tremendously with that. I owe tremendous gratitude to a Chazkeinu sister for being someone who lives Emunah and for introducing me to the world of Living Emunah.

(Continued from Page 12)

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

There is a light at the end of the tunnel. Even though it seems that the pain will never end, it will! There were times when I thought I would never be able to be a mother, but here I am, a mother to three beautiful children! There were times that I thought that I would never have a good relationship with my mother, but when I look back, I have so many good memories of her. I miss her so much. In fact, during my whole pregnancy and even after my babies were born, I felt like she was watching over me and helping that things should go smoothly. The journey is never easy, but with hard work you will get there.

STOP
the searing guilt after
having cheesecake.

Dieting is painful. It takes energy and self-control. It sucks the fun out of parties. There is another way.

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How to live a balanced life emotionally and physically - and with ease.
And even how to cook healthy yet delicious food - and you'll take in all the compliments.

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BRING THE JOY BACK IN EATING



The IFS, Internal Family Systems model, was developed by Richard Schwartz. He believed that just as we embody different roles within our external lives, we have internal parts that have very specific roles within our psyche as well. He also found that all of us can access Self - the loving, embracing, and accepting part of ourselves. He came to this realization while working with clients that were struggling with eating disorders and listening to them describe their internal conflicts and voices. It is currently a popular form of psychotherapy; a seemingly simple yet powerful treatment.

In IFS, our parts can be divided into three basic groups - managers, exiles, and firefighters. I'll try to describe their functions based on my understanding. Our managers and firefighters are both there to keep the exiled parts of ourselves hidden and safe. Managers can be compared to a brick wall whose job is to prevent the enemy from entering. Our managers will do whatever they can so that we're not in touch with the pain of our exiles. What happens if that wall begins to break and outside forces threaten it? Any method, including force, will be used to stop the takeover. So too, the firefighters can potentially be triggered when an exiled part is shown.

The managers tend to be protective and very controlling in their goal of keeping your exiles beneath the surface, beneath your awareness, and beneath your consciousness. The exiles carry our most vulnerable and wounded experiences and emotions, such as shame and worthlessness. They are burdened with life events that were overwhelming, perhaps so overwhelming and traumatic that they even froze in time. When the pain of these parts begin to be felt, they may trigger a different set of parts - our firefighters. They will do whatever it takes to get you away from the intense thoughts and feelings of your exiles. Firefighters tend to be reactive, more extreme, and more impulsive.

Many of us struggle with a lack of clarity as to who we truly are. At times, the depth and intensity of our personality can surprise or even scare us. Often, there is an internal war that causes us pain and confusion. Our parts can manifest themselves in various ways and control our thoughts, behaviors, and beliefs. Let me show you a sample of what an IFS session may look like.

Client: I'd like to work on improving my eye contact. I find myself looking away involuntarily when speaking to adults.

Therapist: Do I have permission to speak to the part of you that makes you turn away from people?

Client: Yes, it feels like a protector. I'm getting the image of a tall and strict looking teacher. Her fingers are on her lips and she's saying, "Quiet, I expect quiet."

Therapist: Let's welcome her, and ask her what else she would like to share about herself.

Client: She's saying, "You talk too much, and I have to make sure to keep you quiet".

Therapist: (Speaking directly to part) Is that your job?

Client: You bet. For twelve years I've been making sure that she doesn't tell people the truth about what's going on.

Therapist: Thanks for working so hard to protect Miriam. What are you afraid will happen if you take a break?

Client: No way! The risk is too great. I must make sure that she doesn't say the wrong things to the wrong people.

Therapist: Thanks for being so loyal. What made you take on this role?

Notice that we were coming a bit closer to an exile so a firefighter jumps right in.

Client: My head is banging. I'm in so much pain.

Therapist: A part just got scared. This part is welcome too.

Client: Can we stop with this whole part business?!

Therapist: Miriam, can you ask your part to give you more space so that you can be more present with this part.

Client: My head is hurting a bit less.

What I find most refreshing about IFS is the way attention is given to parts without any focus on pathology. In this inviting atmosphere, it feels safe to let your guard down. It is hard to describe that deep level of trust when you know that no matter how extreme or seemingly bizarre your thoughts and ideas are, they will be respected for what they truly are - a part.

I've heard people using expressions such as, "I lost myself during my illness" or "I'm no longer myself." Using IFS concepts, I wonder if other parts simply took over. So, perhaps you lost yourself; the self you've always known. Can you allow your real Self to be curious and get to know your parts.? Illness has that way of breaking barriers and allowing unexposed and painful parts of our internal family to be revealed. Instead of using all of your energy to get back to who you were, why not embrace the emerging parts of yourself.

I wish that I can give you the encouragement and support that you'll need to trust this process. Every time you help a part of yourself heal you will feel more internal peace. Maybe who you were and how you presented yourself to the world was being controlled by a manager. Now that things have changed, please believe me that you will arrive and eventually come home to yourself. Despite the turmoil, confusion, despair, and grief, you will prevail!

Hashem, our loving and caring Father, is with us on our journey. Even when we reject Him, His boundless love for us will never cease. Tapping into Self is tapping into that spiritual power of love and forgiveness. With enough self/energy on board we can be curious about our parts and grateful for their contributions.

We all contain reservoirs of deep compassion, wisdom, and strength within ourselves. It is our Neshoma, a piece of G-dliness, that is unharmed and unaffected by the bruises of our lives. The more connection we can develop to our souls, the easier it may be to truly be there for our parts. All of them. And although I've only scratched the surface of IFS, I hope I've given you a flavor and appreciation of its value. Wishing you all courage and siyatta dishmaya in the discovery of your most beautiful essence, your Self.

I am a selective mutism specialist. Over the last ten years I have helped fifteen children.

I am available to come to your child's school in Brooklyn.

I can be reached

at Morgenstern826@gmail.com



Ask the Therapist

By Dr. Rebecca Holczer, PsyD and

Dr. David H. Rosmarin PHD, ABPP

I've been having trouble coming to terms with the fact that my therapist sees and helps other people besides for me. I know it wouldn't be realistic to have a professional all for myself, but still it's very painful for me, to the point where I sometimes want to give up therapy all because of this. (Since I have strong black and white feelings when it comes to this.) What would you suggest? Are these thoughts normal?

Thank you for writing!

To start: Thank you for being brave. This is a hard question and the “very painful” feelings you describe certainly sound difficult to say the least. As therapists, we would invite you to consider that as painful as these thoughts and emotions may be, they are valid. While we don't know you or your history at all, there are good reasons for you to have these emotions. One thing you might want to do for yourself is think about those reasons. Do you have a hard time allowing new people into your life? Do you question whether people want to work with you in general? Does this theme appear in other relationships you may have in your life?

So let's say that we've addressed at least some of the source of these emotions. The next question you appear to be asking is, what to do about it?

We love this question because it gets at the heart of one of the most important pieces of the therapy process—the therapeutic alliance. One well-known study in the psychotherapy research found that about 12% of person's predicted outcome in therapy can be attributed to the relationship he or she has with the therapist. Further, many clinicians agree that the relationship a person has with his or her therapist can serve as a model for healthy connections.

With this in mind, we would strongly recommend that you address this directly with your therapist. We understand that this might be uncomfortable. However, you can plan in advance how you'd like to express yourself. For example, you may decide to share this column with your therapist rather than having to start from scratch. Or, maybe you'll decide to write out something for your therapist to read on his or her own. Whichever method you choose, just remember that the goal is to be able to foster a meaningful conversation about these issues. Your

therapist may choose to address these issues in different ways depending on his or her personal style, the stated goals for therapy, or additional factors not listed here—but at the end of the day, hopefully you will feel validated.

Finally, just remember that we cannot necessarily control what the therapist is doing for the other hours in a given workweek, whether that means seeing other patients or other obligations. But for the (presumably) 45-60 minutes per week that you have your scheduled session, that time is yours. Rather than (understandably) getting caught up in thinking about the time that the therapist may be busy with other things, remember that he or she shares your goal of getting better and achieving your therapeutic goals, and that can happen even when he or she sees a number of people. This is an exercise in what Marsha Linehan, founder of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), calls “dialectical thinking”—that is, the possibility for two apparently different ways of thinking to coexist. Your therapist can be 100% aligned with your goals *and* 100% aligned with those of the other people he or she sees, and having one does not have to detract from the other.

*Wishing you the very best in your therapy journey,
Rebecca Holczer, PsyD and David Rosmarin, PhD, ABPP*

Rebecca Holczer, PsyD is a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Anxiety's Monsey office. She has received extensive training in the application of various exposure therapies, as well as Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) to adolescents and adults experiencing anxiety, depression, chronic pain, and other disorders. Her clinical style is collaborative and highly individualized to the needs of each patient. 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

(Continued from Page 6)

exactly a certain way with no flexibility or change allowed. In modern psychology, this would be included in various forms of anxiety disorders including OCD and perfectionism, as well as certain personality disorders such as OCPD. The rigidity and inflexibility of these people make daily routines extremely anxiety provoking and leave them preoccupied and stressed.

After listing off these groups of people who live very difficult lives, the Gemara concludes with an astounding statement from Rav Yosef who was one of the leaders of his generation and whose teachings are recorded numerous times in the Gemara. Rav Yosef says that he personally experienced all three of these psychological deficiencies. The obvious question is what are we to learn from this statement of Rav Yosef? The Chida in his commentary to this Gemara explains that Rav Yosef is giving us all some much needed encouragement. Mental illness is not a death sentence. Rav Yosef had all of these issues (in addition to being blind), yet he rose above his issues and became the great leader and scholar who

so greatly impacted his generation and all of the future generations of the Jewish people. Rav Yosef is teaching us that no matter the challenges and difficulties that one faces he can overcome those challenges and be a productive member of society in general and Judaism in particular.

When we are faced with daunting challenges that seem to stretch on forever, it is understandable to begin to question our ability to accomplish our goals or to wonder if anything positive will become of us. It is precisely in those moments, however, that we must remember the lesson of Rav Yosef. Every person, no matter the size or magnitude of the challenges they face, has the ability to be spiritually productive, to make something of themselves, and often to accomplish great things that will impact the world for generations 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.

| Chazkeinu Sisters Share |



Chazkeinu

By Chani

When I heard about Chazkeinu for the first time, I was tentatively hopeful. I never heard of a frum support group for women with mental health issues. Since joining about a year ago, my whole life changed for the better. I can connect with other women who really understand what I am going through. I can really be myself, open and honest about my struggles. I get so much Chizuk from the Chazkeinu emails and motivational quotes. I have gone through serious trauma in my past. I have learnt to accept it and not blame anyone for past mistakes. I would like to use it as a learning experience to help others who may have gone through something similar. Thank you Chazkeinu for being there for me always!

Transformative Silence

By Saralah

Running, running
To the dentist and doctor,
To the grocer and tailor,
To the pharmacy and then finally home.

Contrast the above to...

Silence
Quiet
Solitude
A break from all the noise.

Being,
Sitting (alone),
On your couch,
In those rare moments of quiet.
A transformative silence that seeps into your every pore and quiets your mind and body.
Silence that is so quiet yet so loud,
It is your inner compass guiding your intuitive wisdom.
So listen to a moment of silence - see what it has to offer.

Turning Goals and Dreams into a

R E A L I T Y

By Shaina

Each person has a different way of coping during those tough times. Not every way works for each person, but what can be wrong with having a mantra? Studies have highlighted the powerful effects of personal pep-talks, even from the shortest ones. They increase a person's ability to reach their potential, and it's been shown to reduce anxiety and increase self-confidence in the way they feel and perform in day-to-day life.

The night before I wrote this, I was upset, like really upset. I hadn't felt that way for more than six months. I went back to meditating and trying to tell myself it would all be okay, things that normally work when I felt this way in the past. There's this video I watch that is called, "This is Not the End." It's one of my favorite online pep-talks of all times. One of the points made in the video stood out to me, and has really impacted me. It says that "It's important we learn why we get down and then how we can change it because believe it or not, we create our own negative feelings, and we can also ensure that we turn our lives around and be a positive change for others. The reason anyone gets depressed always comes down to the consistent thoughts we think and the consistent beliefs we hold."

Then I thought, what would be better than creating my own pep-talk? There's nothing more personalized than doing it personally, and when a person says these positive affirmations, even though it might be hard to believe at first, this dream of her ideal self can penetrate into her mind to the point where she comes to believe it, and most of all, act on it.

Now, without thinking about this before, I want to share my experience of writing a simple, yet powerful pep-talk personalized to me and my dream, and I hope I can inspire you all to do the same.

I am strong,
I am capable,
Nothing gets in my way.
I am beautiful,
I am passionate,
I'm happy with being me.
I am determined,
I am confident,
I walk with my head held high.
I am alive,
I have a purpose,
Today is a brand new day.

This is what I wrote. These aren't close to what I think about myself, but it's what I want to feel and how I want to act each day. It only takes a minute to sit down and just let your mind flow. Write down your dreams, aspirations and things that you will strive to believe about yourself and who you want to become. Now, I dare you to go take a minute and write a unique pep-talk that is personalized just for you, and say it! Say it and hopefully with the help of G-d, those dreams, aspirations and goals will penetrate into you and can become your reality.



*A Truly
Heavenly
Blend*

By Chanie (From (Sometimes) London)

I always marvel at the sight of many different things that merge, to create one beautiful masterpiece. I love when a bowl of fruit has a range of different colors, and how their stark contrast adds so much to the decor. I truly connect to a painting that has those striking colors that are all brought together. I feel that the more contrast, the more beautiful...

I remember being at an event that was supposed to be really upper class. The advertisement boasted a gourmet meal, fit for a king. It was supposed to be a unique culinary experience, like never before.

When we arrived, the one thing that stood out was that all the foods featured had a similar color. No matter how wonderful and appetizing they were, the vibrancy was sorely missing from it. I remember thinking what a pity it was, and how with just a little more diversity, the level could have been upped so easily.

Last year, at the Chazkeinu Shabbaton, that picture came to mind – but in a very different way. It was Sunday, and I was busy manning the ‘makeup counter.’ I really had a blast transforming your faces... When I had a minute and I looked up, I noticed a group of women dancing. It was the most beautiful sight I had seen for a long time. The diversity was so complete – the stark difference couldn’t have been more highlighted. That was what made it so breath-taking. No matter how unique we all were, no matter how different the lives we live might be, no matter where we came from, we all joined hands – creating what was a truly heavenly circle...

Our Chazkeinu family truly embodies the spirit of this. All the details of our lives, our ages and stages all get left behind and really don’t play any role in creating our special bond. Instead, we connect on a deeper level. We are truly an international, multi-faceted and unique blend of people who their difference has no significance. We connect with our soul...

I really get uplifted when on the phone conferences, a young girl can be heard lending support to someone three times her age. We hear women who lead such different lifestyles congratulate each other, get each other and validate each other. We leave behind the stigma and judgement of the world – where we are somehow only supposed to understand those similar to us – where anyone slightly different is ‘not your cup of tea...’ but here we drink tea together...

How about we all challenge ourselves this year? For those of you who are here at the Shabbaton, or meet at any live events, and even those who don’t, but who are in touch with many Chazkeinu sisters– let’s try to find that common bond with the person who we thought we had the least in common. I definitely want to challenge myself to do that after all, we are part of the heavenly blend called Chazkeinu!

Thank you, each and every one of you for teaching me so much. The lessons I have learned from all of you, are precious and unique, and I realize that it is our collective strength that helps us grow and pushes us forward. I love you all so much!



Memories of my Tante Leah, A”H

By Baila



The last email that Tanta Leah sent me or anyone else was on Friday, Erev Shabbos before she passed away the next day, shortly after Shabbos. This is what she wrote: You are so strong. I am proud of you. Keep up the bravery. Hashem is taking care of His children. Channel your worry into Tefillah. I can't talk. My voice is too weak and I'm on strong painkillers. Sending you love through the email.

Sometimes, I'm angry and sometimes I'm sad that she's not here anymore, but I've learned to appreciate my new found independence. I am able to appreciate that now I can soar in ways I could never have done had she been alive. Here is an email exchange Tante Leah and I shared:

Dear Tante Leah,

Words can build, words can break, it can melt a hardened heart, and it can bring a broken heart on to its feet. Words can bring someone life. You Tante Leah, have shown me and so many others how to use the gift of speech. You are constantly giving me kind remarks and lifting my spirits just when it feels crushed. When you came into my life, I was a lost lamb, needing the language of the heart, which is love. I was poor and broken, not a soul was able to reach me. I was unreachable, but when you came into my life a miracle occurred. You came in and turned my heart which was made of stone and you thawed and melted it. I ripened to a loveable child of yours, like a baby bird trying to fly. Tante Leah, thank you, thank you for everything.

With all my love, me

Her response was:

Dear Baila,

You are a beautiful bird who turned into a wonderful wife and mother. I am so grateful and honored to know you. You are a special person. You taught me so much and I am so grateful to our Father in heaven for sending you my way. May Hashem bless you with physical, emotional, and spiritual health. You are a very special present to me.

I am so proud of you,

The proudest Tante ever

When I came home from the funeral, there was a nice frame hanging on my door with a beautiful song in it. The song was describing a king's beautiful garden, with lovely flowers, but there was one rose who stood out. Everyone, including the king and all his subjects, admired this one special rose and one day the king plucked this rose and took it for himself. Oh how everyone's hearts were broken and how they missed it so, but they took comfort from its fragrance. The song ends with the words, "Hashem noson V'Hashem lokach, yhei shem Hashem mevorach." This means Hashem gives and Hashem takes. May His name be blessed. (By the way this frame was sent by a Chazkeinu sister.)

I take comfort in knowing that I can copy some things Tante Leah stood for and that is chesed. Tante Leah ran a cleaning lady agency, where she would setup cleaning ladies in her neighborhood. This was a huge chesed as people really rely on their cleaning ladies to help clean and organize their homes. I know for a fact that people with or without emotional packages need cleaning help. For some people it's life, and so I also set up a cleaning lady agency for my neighborhood. I'm onto my fifth cleaning lady, and I know what a chesed it's doing for people as the amount of brochos I get is remarkable. I take comfort in the fact that it's in the merit for Tante Leah and I'm sure it's making her proud.

Tante Leah was a real brocha to me. I loved her so much and in return she loved me so much and I take pride in the fact that I had a special place in the heart of a righteous woman such as her. Tante Leah helped me and my family in so many ways. She became my safety net. She was my shining ray of light in my upturned way of life called mental illness. Tante Leah was my ocean, peacefully calming my waves. She knew how to calm me in only the way she knew how.

I owe Hashem a big thank you for showering me this gift of Tante Leah, even for just a few short years. If there is one thing Tante Leah taught me, it was to love every Jew no matter who they are or where they come from. She loved everybody big or small, emotionally well or not She loved them because they are Hashem's children and so they were her relative and she cared. May her memory be blessed.

—Dont—
GIVE
—up!—

I want to run
Run away from the pain
Run from my emotions
Run from my brain

I want to hide
Hide from myself
Hide from my inside
Hide from my decisions

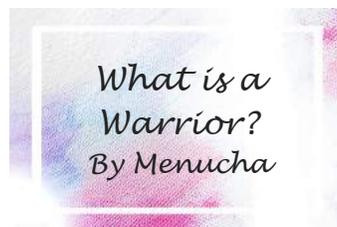
I wish I would change
Change the past
Change my personality
Change my task

BUT I CAN NOT!
Hashem gave me what I need
The good the hard and easy
Along with all the tools

And when it seems too hard
Like Hashem there is no more
Just you remember
He doesn't close the door

He is always there
Holding us tight
He knows what you are going through
And He will help you with your fight

So just hold on
His arm is outstretched
He's waiting for you to reach to Him
And you'll have ultimate success



When I look around, I see what people see.

The man who spends all day davening.
The women whose skirt is below her knees.
The tzaddeikes who collect money for tzeddaka.
The Rabbi whose speech inspires millions.

Those are warriors in the eyes of men.
They've done good. They've accomplished. They've won.

What do they see when they see me?
Who do they think I am?

Do they see the piles of unfinished laundry littering my floor?
The overflowing garbage, the old food, the dirty high chair?

What do they see?

If they looked inside, I know what they'd see.

They'd see a person who is fighting.
Fighting to breath, to smile, to live.
A person who is still alive, against all odds.
A person who refuses to give in.
Who gets up every day, stands up tall, looks the world in the eye
and says, "you'll never break me down. I'm still standing."

They'd see a warrior.

Because I AM a warrior.

THE WIZARD OF OZ!

♪ Somewhere, over the rainbow
Way, up high
There's a land that I heard of—
Once in a lullaby

Somewhere, over the rainbow
Skies are blue
And, the dreams that you dare to dream
Really, do come true!

Someday, I'll pray upon a wall
And wake-up where doubts are far behind me
And troubles most like ice-cube pops
Way above the mountain tops,
That's where you'll find me...

Somewhere, over the rainbow
Bluebirds fly
Birds fly over the rainbow
Why, oh why, can't I?
If ~~HAPPY~~ little 'kinder' (children) play,
WHY OH WHY, CAN'T I??

This movie was made long ago-1933-interesting-because at that time Europe was being destroyed / basically falling... apart, while America was, obviously blossoming.

The song, attached to this movie, was written by Isadore Hochberg, and the music was by Harold Arsen.

Curious to know-were these 2 Jewish men?

Yes, I played around with the wording of the song to be more fitting to my psychological hopes and wishes...

Also, "over the rainbow", connects me to the 'Parshah of Noach' where we were promised that the world would never be destroyed. So, what was happening in Europe with the Germans' wish to annihilate us, we were being reassured with the hint of, "over the rainbow"!

Continuing my thoughts and feelings-

Is the land that I heard of-referring to the land of Israel?

Is the dream that I dare to dream-referring to the hope-one day all of us, will live in the HOLY LAND?

In Israel, yep, the skies are blue

"someday, I'll pray upon a wall-is my own changing of the original words of the song- perhaps, hoping to pray at the Kotel Wall, and wake-up where doubts are far behind me.

There a Jewish phrase

"Ayin Simchah K'hatoros Hasfaykos"

Meaning: there is no joy/happiness like the resolution-figuring out what to do; if/when in doubt!!

Where do we find these mountain tops, if not, all over Israel?! (tehillim Chapter #¹²¹~~122~~)

And finally, if happy little children play-

Crying out to G-D, "Oh why, Can't I??!"

Yes, with G-D's help, all of Chazkeinus' family,

3 Will do whatever we need to do i.e. pray,

In the greatest of true HAPPINESS!!!

Debbie (personal adjustments to a beautiful song)

For the younger ones, in Chazkeinu who are not familiar with this neutral movie of long ago-it is about the wishes to have a brain, a heart, and courage-that's the idea/short version of the simple movie; and, realizing that these traits are really inside of all of us-whatever it takes "to access" (to find)

To bring these essential character traits to help us achieve our individual purpose; help us on our unique journey!

By Debbie

The 40 Year Miracle

By Tova Leah

As I have reached my 40th birthday, I realize that I have lived a life full of miracles. I have a lot of friends to celebrate my birthday with.

I refer to my multiple diagnoses as “alphabet soup,” basically too many unpronounceable words or abbreviations. I think this happens more with conditions that effect mental health.

Even though I have been dealing with physical disabilities and medical conditions from birth, so much good has happened in my life. I still have many of the same friends for over 20 or 30 years, despite the fact that I am different - but not always visibly different. Add the fact that I have had learning challenges, as well as mental health challenges since I was about 6 years old. My mental health diagnoses changed as I got older. I have been an inpatient in various hospitals for both medical and mental health issues. It’s too many to count. This doesn’t include all the ER visits for not such big issues, and constant outpatient appointments with doctors or therapists, or for medical tests. After all I have been through, it’s a miracle that I am alive and walking around.

It’s reassuring to have people of various ages with a multitude of challenges in my life. This is both in and out of Chazkeinu. It gives me to courage to push myself harder. In certain situations, I am old enough to be the mother, but we talk as equals. This includes a local married friend who I recently discovered is also a Chazkeinu member. She has been there for me over the last few months of struggling to get professionals and non-professionals to understand me. At least she understands me.

Should I get down on myself if I didn’t finish high school, and finding a job has been next to impossible - even just simple volunteer work? I finally said something to a number of people about trying volunteering I used to do, which really doesn’t exist anymore because of the world of technology. It would be a stepping stone back into the world that has forgotten I am capable of actually doing something in the community. Which leads me to...

Does it matter that I am still single and want to start a business or organization to provide people with resources for disabilities and disability-related issues? I have wanted to do this for years, and now the time has come. Thank G-d that I have a friend who lives on the next block who has working with me for several years. I also have other people I go to for advice about my ideas for the business/organization.

Stay tuned for details of my special pilot project for Chazkeinu sisters coming in January!



By Breindy

Sometimes life throws us challenges
The test is to face it, accept it, and
Reveal our newfound strengths and grow
Everyone has their own test
No one has it perfect
Giving
To others
Helps us and strengthens us!



By Breindy

G-d gave us obstacles to overcome
Really what He wants from us is
Our trust in Him
We need to recognize the master plan in order
To grow.
Hashem will pull us through!



Freedom to Reconnect

By Perry

I hate relationships. They scare me and feel unsafe to me. I run in the opposite direction. Why, you ask? I think sharing a part of my past will explain.

I was born with a very sensitive personality - a deep need for love and connection. From the tender age of two, I was able to understand and feel emotion with a deep awareness of how I felt. I craved connection, and for me it was all or nothing. I constantly tested those around me to make sure they really do care and love me, and they aren't faking it. The thing is, I have wonderful parents but didn't know how to express real love. They loved me as much as they knew how, but for me that was far from enough. They didn't know how to love themselves and in turn couldn't love me on an emotional level, so any kind of emotional nurturing was absent.

I felt threatened. My world didn't feel safe.

I would reach out for love - search every nook and cranny and see if maybe, just maybe I could get the connection I needed. I would cry for it. Tantrum for it. Try to be witty and cute so I could gain some of it. But nothing seemed to work. At that point, I came to the realization that I had no choice but to close up my heart and bury my feelings if I wished to survive. So I retreated into myself. I took my emotions and buried them somewhere far, far away in a place where even I couldn't get to. I locked up and threw the key away. It felt good and safe.

From then on, I was on my own and I liked it. I felt in control.

It's been a while, and here I am wanting to make life a better place for myself. In order to do that I need to start trusting again. I need to want people again. I need to want connection and relationships so I can heal and feel free.

Now, what do you do when you are in therapy and the goal is to create a relationship? When you need to practice healthy connection and transfer it to your personal life and other relationships? When you fear creating a relationship with your therapist because when you start liking her and connecting with her you will want more of her. She won't be able to give me what I need because a therapist must keep her boundaries. Just thinking of finally building a relationship with someone, needing them and then not be able to get those needs filled is a painful thought. So why would I go ahead and allow a relationship to form between me and my therapist? Why set me up to get hurt? I need to want her, and I need to need her. So I can learn to need people in my life. So I can connect with other people in a healthy manner. But the fear of getting hurt is so great. I don't want to go through that process....

This has been my struggle from the very first day I met my therapist, and I knew I liked her. I never allowed myself to feel that, though. It is almost 2 years later, and I have something powerful to share with you.

I went to the Chazkeinu Shabbaton and loved it. I met really amazing people. I connected with a lot of them. As I got home and pondered that, it suddenly hit me. It's okay... I can love my therapist. I may start needing more of her than I can get. But it's okay, I have others in my life that can fill the roles my therapist cannot fill. If my feelings for her are overwhelming and I wish I can go out with her to just schmooze, I can find a friend to do that with me. If I suddenly have strong feelings and I wish she would hug me, I can have my husband or someone else do that for me. It can make me feel warm and cared for. If I wish I can go out and have fun with her as I like her company, I can find someone else to go out and have fun with!!

This revelation is so freeing for me. I don't need to guard myself, protect myself from creating a nurturing loving relationship with her. I know I can have that, and I will still not get hurt.

Isn't that awesome????

I can even take it a step further. I can apply it to any relationship in my life. There will always be people in my life I will wish to have more from than they care to give me. I don't need to feel hurt and drop them. I can take what they have to offer and have someone else fill the rest. It's just as amazing when you can be just you. Know what you want and deserve, and just make it come true for you. If I can't get it from one person I can find someone else. If I cannot find someone else, I can learn to give it to myself. It doesn't mean I'm not good or worthy enough to get it from others. It means that I know what I need, and I am resourceful enough to find a way to fill my missing pieces. I just need to be flexible and creative about how I get it.

We need to want to make things better for ourselves. Let go of the stuff we cannot get in the form we cannot get it.

For those of you who are like me and fear the therapist-client relationship with its restrictions - or any relationship for that matter - whether it's a parent, spouse or a friend. Let go of it. It's so freeing to stop guarding and protecting yourself all the time. Just know that you can choose to get your needs met. We just need to let go of the form in which we think we should get them met. Be open to receiving love and connection, and you will be surprised how many people are willing to give that to you if only you will allow them to.

For those that are in pain because they wish they can get more connection from their therapist: Just let go and be open to receiving that from others. It will give you a life of joy and connection. And you, too, will feel free. You will learn there are so many others out there who can fill the role your therapist can't. Because after all, she IS your

He's Holding my Hand

By Rivka

I know I'm still a young girl, but something's on my mind.
And though I try to express it, the words are hard to find.
Life isn't always easy-by far it's very tough.
But deep inside I realize I'm growing from this stuff.
Pushing through the hardest challenges, trying to stay in control
As a bas Melech (Jewish princess) I do know serving Hashem (G-d) is my goal.
And every day that I am struggling; the pain threatens to engulf-
Yet I stay strong above it all with my Tatte's Help

People around me seem to have such lives-
That perfection for which I strive.
But now I know it is not real-
I can't see how they truly feel.

I let the waves crash over me-
It's about time I finally see.
The journey of life has a ton of bumps,
But also my many triumphs.

So as I close and end my song,
When darkness seems endlessly long,
There's a light at the tunnel's end-
I understand...He's holding my hand!

Other Days

By ReadWrite

Today is a bright day. I do not take that for granted, as the sunshine penetrates my heart and my soul fills with gratitude. Inside my mind, the sky shines, the birds sing, my heart swells and floats up into the heavens.

Then there are the other days. Other days the dark closes in on me. Suffocating, squelching out all the good in my life. Outside the sun shines, but inside it is cold and dim. All the world's radiance cannot penetrate my closed psyche.

I struggle to remind myself of all the good in my life, but it is disconnected, removed from my world. Pleasant things are for other people's lives. Mine has no space for anything positive. I yearn for the warmth but reject it all the same. I want, oh how I want, to taste the sweetness of life again. But the world has closed its doors on me, locking me in a cold, dark prison of mind.

Somewhere, there is the awareness that the good days will come, because they always do. But that knowledge is a stale factoid floating in the back of my mind. My world remains ever dark, and I do not believe the good days can ever come. On those days the world is impenetrably dark, and nothing can pierce the doom.

Yet today the sun shines inside, though the sleet falls against dark skies outside the window. Today life is for loving; today the world is good and bright. I know that the days of darkness will return, like they always do, and the light will vanish from my life again. I know, and I understand, yet the dread cannot touch the part of my heart that is lit up. Today I will rejoice in the brightness; today I will enjoy the light. For what do I have but to make use of today and enjoy?

Wise Man's Leap



There they place me,
I stand at the edge,
Of an ocean roaring with might.
They say it's life,
And I must jump in,
But I tremble, overcome with fright.
I see the waves,
Violent and stormy,
The depths, murky and black.
I see the current,
The force of its pull,
How I beg them to let me go back.
They paint glorious pictures,
Of diamond and riches,
All waiting on the opposite side.
All I must do,
To merit that treasure,
Leap in and swim against the tide.
Desperation mounts,
I say if I must,
Now enter this tumultuous sea,

Perhaps if I can,
Just keep my eyes closed,
Its dangers I don't wish to see.
The choice is mine,
They say in response,
With my sight I can do as I wish.
But lacking my vision,
I shall not behold,
The most dazzling array of fish.
Exotic plants, and multi-hued creatures
Their breathtaking beauty awaits me.
A world of its own,
Exits down below.
In this turbulent, dangerous sea.
Indecision overwhelms,
Yet I squash my fear.
And grabbing the tools I've been given.
I do as I must,
Open my eyes,
Take a deep breath, and dive in.



I'm looking around,
I feel displaced.
By everyone everything's sound,
By me it's all a maze.

I can't get through this,
Don't you see?
Your life is bliss,
And everything is wrong by me.

To make things worse,
I am told,
I should have taken a different course.
It's all my fault.

Nobody gets it,
They think it's a choice.

Should I quit,
Or can you answer my voice?

One day I mentioned,
A few words I said.
Somebody listened,
And understood what I meant.

She has a Chazkeinu heart,
She says it's okay.
And makes me feel part,
Together we are on our way.

We share,
Because we know,
We are both here,
To find direction to go.

Side by side,
We encourage.
There's nothing to hide.
A bond is established.

We propel each other.
We converse and take it all in
In unison, we move forward.
That's how we win.

You see,
We get through,
When you are here for me
And I am here for you!

I'm Fed Up By Leah

I'm fed up
Fed up of feeling shame
And constantly taking the blame
I'm fed up of needing to hide
Of being full of pain inside
I'm fed up of pushing away
Every nice person who comes my way
I'm fed up of being annoyed
And feeling a huge void
Of being desperate for validation
And constant admiration
I'm fed up with putting up a show
Of not wanting people to know
Who I really am
I want to pull off the mask
That's helping me hide
I want to find out who I am inside
But the thought fills me with dread
Perhaps I should give up instead
Will I ever find the courage
To face all that's been hiding



My BPD Fighter Friend

By Molly

Dear Bracha,

Battles raging
Constant struggles facing
Thoughts in the mind keep on racing
Fighting each day
Thru the storms and sky so gray
Will the sun ever shine its ray

Human nature is to want run away
Whenever pain and torture come our way
It's too much to bear, too hard to stay
Doesn't matter what others try to say

Giving up sounds so much easier for sure
When the fire in our brains can take no more
Oh the pain, it's all too much
Seems the only choice is to give up the what

But you my dear and close friend Bracha,
You are lemala min hateva
You fall, you climb, you pull through
I feel so privileged that I got to know you

You teach me how to fight each day
Each time a challenge comes my way
So thank you for all you give me

Lights

By Tirtzah

Lights

I often wonder about the pinpricks of light in an otherwise black reality. I wonder about their significance. Their power. I ponder the futility of these infinitesimal beacons of light disappearing into the enormity of the night.

Lights

I sometimes consider powerful search beams shining through the light of day. I consider their significance. Their power. I contemplate the senselessness of illuminating the daylight.

It's deep in the night when the undeniable truth hits me. The power of a little light is magnified when surrounded by blackness. The darkness doesn't diminish its effect. It only makes it that much more valuable.

And in the bleakest of times, when light is barely within the grasp of my imagination, this thought comforts me.

Although struggling with a dark world, I reflect on the lights even as they fade. And I think not of futility, but of the future. A beautiful, shining future.

And then I know the light of happiness will be mine too, one day.

Magical Moments of Friday Night

By Saralah



Friday night arrives,
Sundown is here,
Dressed in our best,
We're wearing our beautiful new dress,
We take a moment and gaze at the unlit candles,
It's awaiting our touch.
Slowly, we take out a single match and strike it,
It emits a blazing, strong fire,
A deep orange and red,
We light each candle, say the blessing and cover our eyes,
We beseech our Loving Father,
We cry out to Him, talk to Him and thank Him,
Together, the two of us, relish in this beautiful moment.
Quiet falls on us as we usher in Shabbos,
A silent, serene atmosphere envelopes the room.
It is a beautiful and precious time,
Us and Hashem, one of a kind,
Slowly, we uncover our face and sit down,
Everything is in sync,
The air is clear,
The food is prepared,
The room is clean,
This peaceful space is ours to keep.

Battle of the Mind

By Breindy



I have a battle that feels strong
I don't want to choose wrong
To choose healthy or unhealthy
A big part of life's journey

At any given moment I can choose to stay stuck
It makes me feel like I have a lot of luck
It's the broken pieces of my life's struggle
That sometimes at me they do snuggle

Then there is the healthiness that keeps us on our toes
It helps us make friends not foes
It gets us very far
Keeps us up to par

It treats us with respect
Tells us what to expect
We see many points of views
Our choices we do review

Which will we choose
The healthy ways we have yet to lose
It may feel tempting

Chanukah

By Saralah and Elisheva



Chanukah is almost here, excitement is rising,
So much fun to do, menorah we will be lighting,
Night by night,
We light candles shining oh so bright,
Spin the dreidel sound and sound,
Latkes make a frying sound,
Oh! Donuts, donuts what a treat,
Yum, yum and fun to eat!
Sing Maoz Tzur, a beautiful song,
Latkes will be ready and hot before long!

Standing around the table, watching the candles glow,
What a special time, a time to grow,
Chanukah, my favorite Yom Tov by far,
We light the menorah after we see three stars,
We spend time with family and friends,
Commemorating Neis Chanukah, it is truly a gem,
Al Hanisim choir, oh what a sight,
In front of the candles burning so bright,
Chanukah, Chanukah, you're almost here!
I'll dance a little and give a little cheer!

I Know You're There

By Leah

I know you're there
When the sun shines bright
When the world around me is smiling
When I can look around and see
Your hand in everything
The truth is so clear My faith is real
I have no questions

Would You please come to me
When all around is dark
And too many clouds blur my vision
Would You remind me that
You are still here
Only a little closer
Hugging me tight
Giving me strength to stand up again
Hashem I know

You're here
Holding my hands
And when dangers threaten
You squeeze my hands tighter
Would You please come and remind
me
That it's You again

When I'm hurt
And feel alone
I know You're there
Guiding my
Every step
I want to feel closer to you
So I can wipe my tears away and
stand up once more
And for now I'm searching, and I

won't give up
I'm searching, I won't lose hope
Until I finally find You in my pain
And I'll be searching with all of my
strength
Every part of me will search
And I won't give up until I find You

So Hashem please grab my hand
It's reaching out to You
Waiting for the miracle to happen
Will You please once come to me
Whisper in my ears
That it will be ok
Remind me that I'm safe
So I can once again
Hold on tight

The
VOICE
By Leah

Among the knives
Deep in my heart
That are cutting
Me apart
I hear a voice
That whispers
At first
It's very quiet
And as I'm listening
It gets louder
And soon the voice
Is getting louder
And I'm looking forward
To hear it again
Its promise
Becomes stronger
With each passing day
It can no longer be ignored
I cherish
Every moment
It's healing
That voice
And soon
There are more voices joining
That is telling me the same

And suddenly
I realize
That everyone else is gone
And only I remained
With those voices
Begging for my attention
I start wondering
If I should give in
To these voices
Maybe it's the only way
My last resort
I want to lay back
And hear it one more time
Before I close my eyes
But then I look back
And see mountains of pain
The years of anguish
And loneliness
Of guilt
And shame
That I've endured
And I realize
That I can't leave them
Behind
They are too precious

To me
And even though
I feel defeated
And every part of me is crying
Yearning to allow
Those voices to speak
I'll keep fighting
For every breath
Because I find it hard
To believe
That I came this far
Just to stand
At the edge of the cliff
And surrender
There must be
Another reason
That I'm not aware of
And even though
It's concealed
And so perplex
One day I'll understand
And until then
I'm holding on

Moving FOURward with Chazkeinu

By Sarah



I recently went to a *shiur* in my neighborhood given by a prominent individual. He shared how we instantly categorize people upon getting and hearing information. For example, when looking into a *shidduch* for our children, instead of asking *can you please tell me a little bit about her/him*, we instinctively ask *what type is he/she*. Right away, before getting to know the person, we label and categorize them. At first, I heard his point; it really made sense. But then I realized that that's just the way we talk. It's not a matter of being callous and mean; it's our knee-jerk response. It's the way we're programmed to think.

However, if you contrast the above description to Chazkeinu, and what Chazkeinu embodies, you will find a glaring difference. At large, the Jewish Community is extremely giving, meeting its many needs and giving of themselves in very great ways. However, Chazkeinu contributes a vital need that no other organization does. In the most sensitive and empathetic way, Chazkeinu supports the needs of each member and is a living example of the *Pasuk* (verse) *K'ish Echad, B'Lav Echad - One Man, One Soul*. The warmth and support that each sister gives is truly palatable.

The amount of people that Chazkeinu has reached and continues to reach – from all 4 corners of the world - is simply unbelievable.

About a year ago, by Chazkeinu's 3rd Anniversary, a memoir was compiled and given out. In it, one of our Chazkeinu sisters mentioned that it's simply amazing to see just how much Chazkeinu is doing! Who would think that an organization which runs on peer support is still in existence? Not only in existence, but running and thriving! It's simply unreal at how many programs there are - all operating and supported by our Dear Chazkeinu Sisters!

Similarly, as we are approaching Chanukah, we commemorate the Miracle of the Pach Shemen. Who would have thought, that a Pach Shemen, a flask of oil, would be enough to burn for 8 days?! In today's day, we would all run to our local Judaica store, and buy a bottle of oil. Clearly, the tiny drop of oil was enough to burn and thrive – for – a total of 8 days!

It is simply mind-boggling to comprehend that in 2019, Chazkeinu is being supported by the "flask of oil" and not only running, but thriving, akin to "One Man, One Soul." *Baruch Hashem*, we are running and thriving, supported by each of our Dear Chazkeinu Sister's peer support. We are running and thriving on each of our sister's sincere compassion, empathy and non-judgmental care. How fortunate we are to be a part of Chazkeinu, moving "FOUR"WARD, with Hashem's help in a most positive and healing way!

The FOUR'th annual Shabbaton is finally here.
Looking FOURward to meet you at this grand affair.
From all FOUR corners of the world, we 'connect' as a unity.
What an honor to be part of this amazing and warm "Chazkeinu" Family!
May we gather inspiration and strength, like never beFOUR.
Thank you Chazkeinu FOUR enabling us all a rejuvenating Winter Get-together!

By Zissy



Shabbaton Theme Song

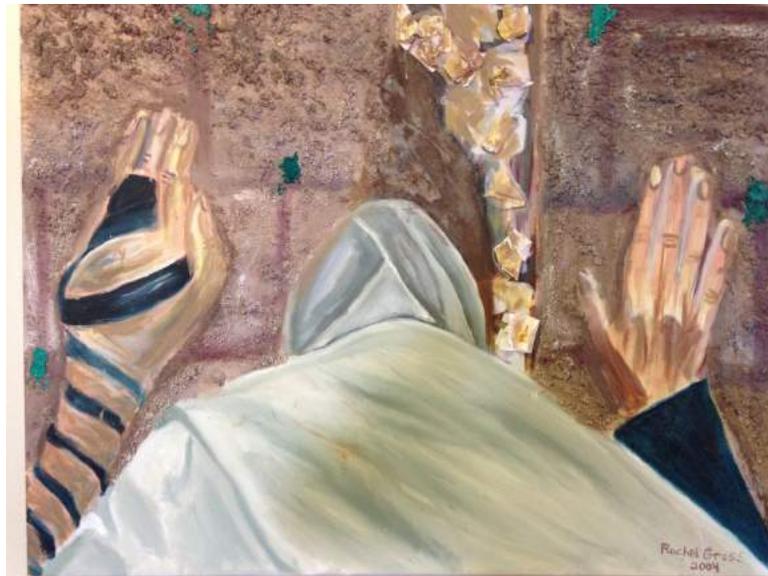
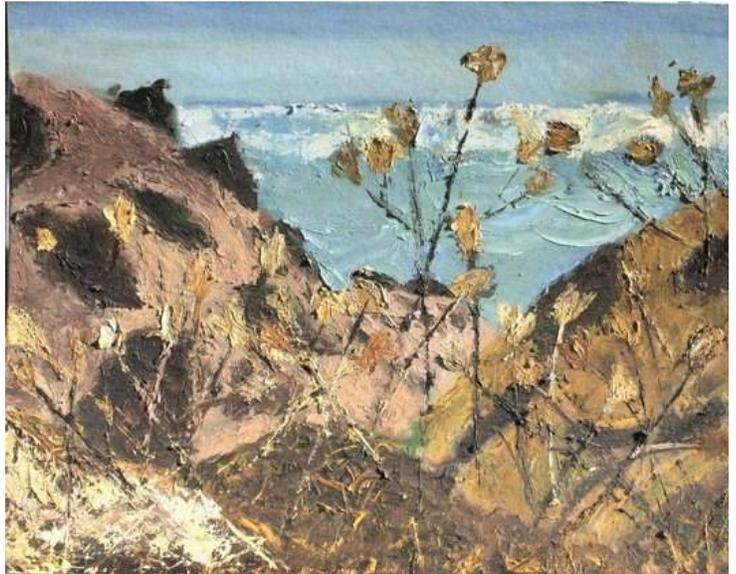
*its back again be4 our eyes
Chazkeinu's got another surprise
Shabbaton number 4 is finally here
Excitements rising everywhere*

*Time to rejoice, and have some fun
Time to connect 4ever as one
We'll 4m new friendships, all coming from
Arba kanfos Ha'aretz*

*It's time to celebrate
4get the worries, don't be late
How 4tunate are we
I'm here 4 you and you're here 4 me*

*4ever, hand in hand
Together, as one, we'll always stand
Chazkeinu you are mine
At Shabbaton 2-0-1-9*

ART CORNER



Artwork by Rachel



| Rising up |

“Every Jew has a specific mission that he came down to this world to fulfill. It is by means of the challenges he faces that he is able to fulfill his mission.”

*-Rav Sholom Noach Berezovsky
(Nesivos Shalom)*

A Project of



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