

**Research & Innovation**

**Submission for NJHSA**

**JFS Houston 2019**

I. General Information

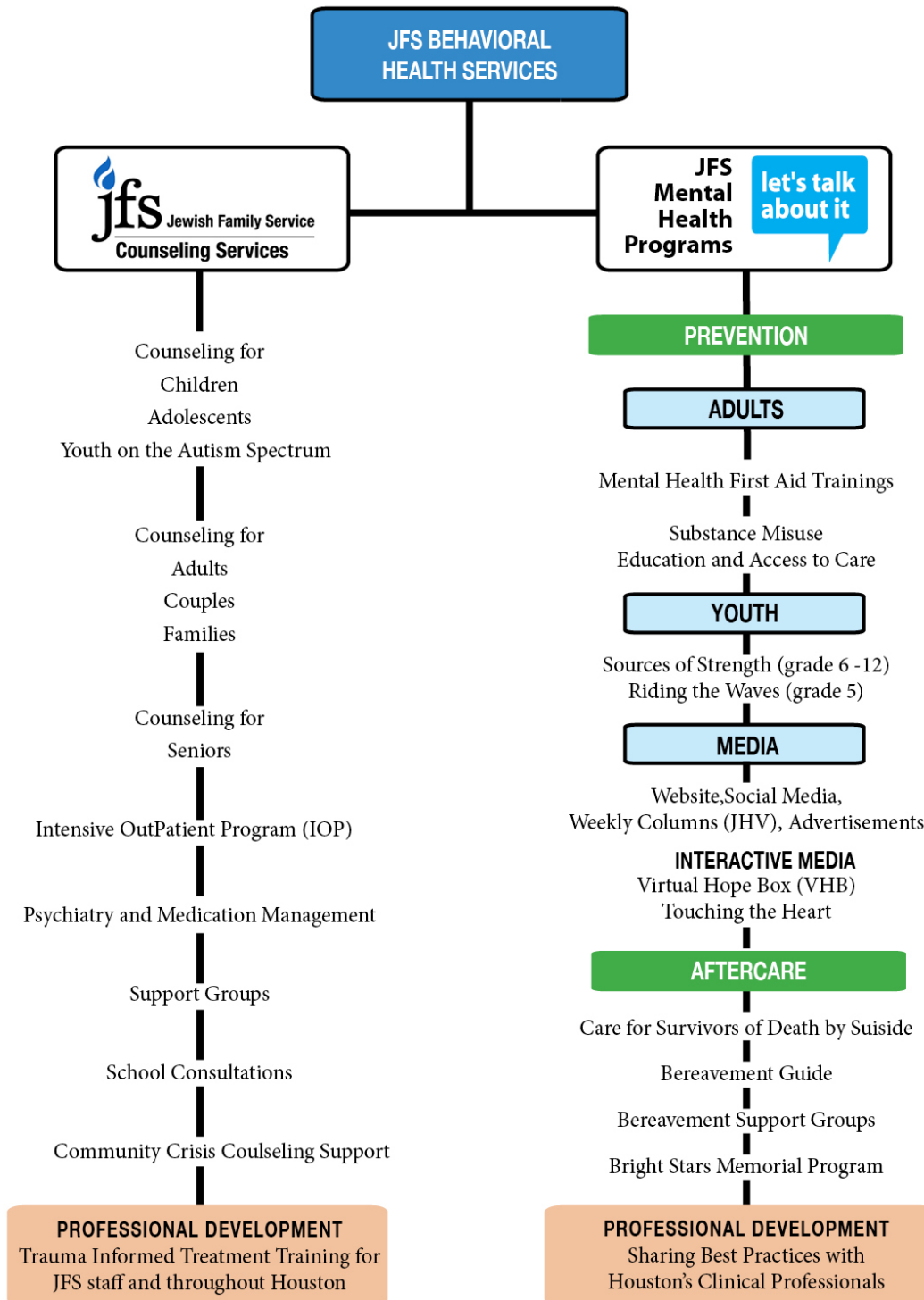
- a. Mental Health Programs: A New Division of Behavioral Healthcare at JFS Houston
- b. Jewish Family Service Houston
- c. Research & Innovation
- d. [www.mentalhealthletstalk.org](http://www.mentalhealthletstalk.org)  
(see additional attachments)

II. Summary

The main goals of JFS Houston's new Mental Health Program initiative are:

- to increase awareness and decrease stigma
- to provide support to those suffering and those effected by mental illness
- to develop a conversation in the community about mental illness
- to decrease suicide in the Houston Jewish community
- to promote and train the community in Mental Health First Aid

The Flow Chart below shows the Mental Health Program (right column) of our Behavioral Health Services that this submission addresses



a. This submission shares information about the comprehensive mental health program JFS Houston has implemented in the past two years to combat deaths by suicide and substance misuse in the Jewish community of Houston and to provide aftercare for those who remain after a related death.

b. In 2017 JFS Houston noticed a sharp increase in young adults who died by suicide. Reacting initially by providing supportive groups for their friends who were shaken by these continuing deaths, the pain exhibited by the many family members and friends impacted caused JFS professional leadership to look at more comprehensive reactions. The first step the agency took was to convene a coalition of agencies in the community and mental health partners who would provide a structure for looking at the problem and begin providing community outreach and programs to provide education about the signs and possible interventions related to suicide.

c. Successes and Lessons Learned

After 20 months working actively on the development of the program (during which Hurricane Harvey hit and was a disruptive force in the community), JFS has led the community in establishing a number of initiatives designed to strategically saturate the community, providing evidenced based programs to infuse the entire community with tools and awareness to change the trajectory of the trend.

It was clear right away that JFS needed to address substance issues in the community as well, due to a concurrent rise in deaths by substance use. In addition, it was understood that JFS needed to address the challenge at all ages and life stages of individuals in our community including training for those who have professional interaction with the youth of the community as well as synagogue clergy and staff and school administrators and staff.

Community Rabbis were brought together with experts on substance misuse in the Jewish community; a collaboration with the education department of the Jewish Federation was one vehicle for providing mental health training for teachers and those who work with community youth. The JFS mental health director also developed a customized *Suicide Protocol Training* for clergy, school staff, administrators and business leaders in our community.

By identifying and cultivation the right partnerships, JFS was able to quickly move forward on several fronts.

As the Chair of the Network for Behavioral Healthcare Providers, Houston's network of CEOs leading Behavioral Healthcare hospitals and programs throughout the city, JFS's CEO Linda Burger was in a prime position to access information about the lead researchers in the arena of suicide. JFS Director of Mental Health Programs Laurie Silver modeled program development based on the work of suicidologist Thomas Joiner, Ph.D. Based on his research, the agency was able to design the strategies and programs to introduce to the community.

### III. Components

#### a. Jewish community component.

JFS Houston made the decision to focus the initiative on the Jewish community of Houston. This has allowed the agency to target spreading the initiative through already established deep relationships in the community. For instance, a key component of the plan is to provide upstream prevention services including mental health training, akin to CPR training but for the brain, to the vast majority of adults in Houston's Jewish community. Our partner is the National Council on Behavioral Health who has trained millions of Americans in the 8 hour training sessions. JFS has held trainings at our agency and other sites we've recruited including synagogues and schools. In January, 2019, JFS recruited 15 men and women representing the full spectrum of the community to become trained as MHFA trainers in a three day session. Each official JFS trainer will now take the training back to their organizations and provide three trainings a year, helping us reach our goals faster.

Suicide prevention and aftercare have been a major focus of the new Behavioral Healthcare Initiatives. Prevention efforts are multifold including multiple upstream prevention programs. Aftercare services have included the design and production of a Jewish focused bereavement guide for those who lost a loved one to suicide. The guide has been placed in all local funeral homes, synagogues, schools. In addition, those who have lost a loved one receive the guide and therapists in the area have the guide on hand if needed.

In addition, JFS holds a weekly support group for those who have lost a loved one to death by suicide, mental health fatality and overdose. In addition, a self-care curriculum has been written and customized for our community and is being offered to synagogues, college and university students, school teachers, business leaders, and Federation staff in our area.

In addition, the agency designed a first ever memorial service named Bright Stars held in for family members of those who died by suicide which created a meaningful experience for those who opted to participate. Following a suicide, the loved one's life story becomes focused on the method of death versus who the person was before they were ill. The service was timed with Hanukkah to honor those lost when they were Bright Stars.

The local Jewish newspaper has partnered with JFS to run a weekly column entitled Be Well to address relevant mental health issues. The Herald Voice has also written a series of articles and editorials that have been revealing, challenging the community to come together for this initiative.

JFS tested programs with middle and high school students and chose "Sources of Strength" which is a peer leadership program, proven to show that those who experience the program are four times more likely to seek help from a trusted adult when they experience extreme stress or anxiety or when a friend is having a crisis. JFS negotiated a single contract with the national program for the entire youth population—schools, religious schools, youth groups,

after school clubs, summer camps --- of the Jewish community in Houston, rather than by school.

JFS designed and launched "Touching the Heart", a text-based program that initially was designed to provide Jewish college students from Houston with biweekly resilience focused messaging and an open door for assistance should it be needed. The program has now been expanded to reach young professionals in our community.

The stigma experienced by those who remain after a death is sometimes acute, as is, of course, the pain and guilt. JFS Houston has become the source of outreach to the family immediately after any suicide and overdose incidents and for the long term.

#### b. Human services component

JFS added this program to its traditional offerings of counseling within the context of the expertise of our clinicians, all who operate as trauma informed evidence-based professionals.

This program, while focused on the local Jewish community, is of interest to social service agencies and other organizations that deal with these issues nationwide. Suicides and accidental death by drugs has risen on the national level dramatically in recent years. JFS Houston is being contacted by entities around the country to share materials and strategies. For instance, an organization that helps African American students who are attending Ivy League Schools has reached out in their efforts to help these students be resilient with the unique challenges they face. We approach our work, while targeted to the local Jewish community, as an open source project.

JFS continues to learn techniques and strategies for approaching the issue of suicide. Dr. Madelyn Gould was a consultant of JFS CEO Linda Burger regularly regarding best practices. Dr. Gould, PhD, MPH, is a Professor of Epidemiology in Psychiatry at Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons, and a Research Scientist at the New York State Psychiatric Institute (NYSPI). She directs a research unit in the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and NYSPI and focuses on her long-standing and well-funded research youth suicide prevention interventions. Her work has influenced the development of state- and national-level suicide prevention programs. JFS is also learning from her work on suicide risks related to bullying, contagion and modeling. JFS is committed to using such high-level consultants for the continued development of strategies for not only suicide prevention for also related to the impact on peers when a fellow student dies by suicide.

One component of the program is the plan to share cutting edge professional approaches to local clinical providers throughout the city. As in our traditional counseling program, providing

professional development is a part of our mission, as well as is training students in graduate programs in the field.

Most of all, this is a mental health program, one that sets the stage for people to seek and access help and treatment before, during and after a mental health or drug use crisis.

#### c. Outreach/Community Building Component

In its beginning stages, JFS brought together over 40 collaborating entities in the Jewish community to host community wide events and programs. Then

JFS convened a professional comprehensive Council of Advisors from over 20 organizations, schools, and departments to “bless” our comprehensive prevention, treatment and aftercare initiatives. This collaborative effort, while led by and powered by JFS, has brought the community together with a single mission, to save lives.

#### LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS

#### IV. Outcomes

- a. In this effort, JFS has:
  - trained 69 adults who work with youth on Mental first aid
  - trained an additional 70 adults in mental health training (8 hours each)
  - convened 17 Rabbis for a full day workshop on substance abuse in the community
  - held five community programs related to these subjects
  - trained 15 community members to be trainers of Mental Health First Aid (24 hours of training)
  - trained 56 students and adults in Sources of Strength
  - signed up 59 college students for Touching the heart
  - Trained, in partnership with the Israel Trauma Coalition, Houston’s Police and Fire department personnel on disaster response from a trauma perspective
  - Gave eight customized talks to public and private schools, national organizations, colleges, conferences and Grand Round presentations on topics of mental illness and wellness
  - Worked with over 15 families who have needed aftercare or experienced death by suicide or overdose.

#### b. Evaluation Method

At this stage in the program, JFS is providing programs which are evidenced based, particularly the Mental Health First Aid Training and Sources of Strength. The agency is focusing on building

outputs of those who participate in the programs and as we put specific outcome measurements into place.

#### V. Sustainability

a. JFS is implementing aspects of the program as funding becomes available. The agency is seeking a five year major grant for the program and continues to build endowment/legacy funds for the long term.

b. \$420,000 per year. Private foundations are providing the bulk of the funding.

b. JFS Houston is committed to continuing this program as an essential part of the Behavioral Health Services of the agency.

#### Contact:

Rachel W. Davis, JFS CDO  
4131 S. Braeswood Blvd.  
Houston, Tx 77025  
713 667 9336  
rdavis@jfshouston.org





# MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

JFS  
MENTAL HEALTH  
PROGRAMS **let's talk  
about it**

## Mental Health First Aid Instructor Training

Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. **Jewish Family Service is hosting a Train the Trainer instructor training on January 8, 9, & 10, 2019**. As a new instructor, known as "First Aiders", you will have the ability to saturate the Jewish community with 8-hour mental health first aid trainings. First Aiders must commit to co-leading at least three 8-hour trainings a year for the first year following their instructor training. Jewish Family Service is looking for individuals who are passionate and interested in mental health initiatives and are willing to take the steps necessary to become trainers.

On average, there are

# 123

SUICIDES A DAY.

*American Foundation for Suicide Prevention*

From 1999 to 2016,

# 630,000

people died from  
DRUG OVERDOSE.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Nearly **1 in 5** U.S.  
adults lives with a  
MENTAL ILLNESS.

*National Institute of Mental Health via the  
National Survey on Drug Use and Health  
and the Substance Abuse and Mental  
Health Services Administration*

### WHO SHOULD TAKE IT

- Employers
- Police officers
- Hospital staff
- First responders
- Faith leaders
- Community members
- Caring individuals

### WHAT IT COVERS

- Common signs and symptoms of mental illness.
- Common signs and symptoms of substance use.
- How to interact with a person in crisis.
- How to connect the person with help.
- **NEW:** How to administer naloxone in the event of an opioid overdose.

### The course will teach you how to apply the ALGEE action plan:

- **Assess** for risk of suicide or harm
- **Listen** nonjudgmentally
- **Give** reassurance and information
- **Encourage** appropriate professional help
- **Encourage** self-help and other support strategies

TO REGISTER FOR THE INSTRUCTOR TRAINING COURSE OR FOR MORE INFORMATION, please email Gittel Francis at [gfrancis@jfshouston.org](mailto:gfrancis@jfshouston.org) by December 14, 2018.

Instructors are on the frontlines of the program and are the key link to Mental Health First Aid trainings

## More than 1 million trained!



## Mental Wellness: Signs, Symptoms, & Strategies

---

### Remember that the majority of the population is engaged in positive social norms

According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, depending on where you are in the country, 1/7 report seriously considering suicide and 1/13 report making an attempt; however, the death data shows that 1/10,000 youth actually dies by suicide. This means that the vast majority who consider suicide, recover. Recovery and resiliency are the true norm.

Depression is not the same as feeling blue or sad...all of us have that experience at times when tough things happen. We may experience a short-term depressed mood that we recover from without treatment. But major depressive disorder is diagnosed by criteria specified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSMV).

### Symptoms for you to look and listen for:

- Depressed mood almost all day for a period of two weeks
- Anhedonia (diminished loss of interest or pleasure in almost all activities)
- Significant weight or appetite disturbance; gain or loss
- Sleep disturbance
- Psychomotor agitation or retardation (a speeding or slowing of muscle movement)
- Loss of energy or fatigue
- Feelings of worthlessness (low self-esteem)
- Diminished ability to think, concentrate and make decisions
- Recurrent thoughts of death, dying or suicide
- Longstanding interpersonal rejection ideation (i.e. others would be better off without me); specific suicide plan
- Be at least two weeks long
- Cause significant distress or severely impact social, occupational or other important life areas

### Contextual factors that may contribute to triggering a depressive episode or suicidal ideation:

- A break up of a relationship or living in conflict
- Long-term poverty
- Having an accident that results in disability

- Bullying or victimization
- Being a victim of crime
- Developing a long term illness
- Death of a partner, family member or friend
- Stress of another mental disorder such as an eating disorder or anxiety disorder or schizophrenia
- Intoxication or withdrawal from alcohol or other drugs

### **Warning Signs of Suicide:**

- Threats to hurt or kill oneself
- Looking for ways to kill oneself by seeking access to pills, weapons or other means
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Expressing hopelessness and guilt and worthlessness
- Feeling rage or anger, seeking revenge
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking or caring
- Feeling trapped like there is no way out
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from family, friends or society
- Experiencing anxiety or agitation, being unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Undergoing dramatic changes in mood
- Feeling no reason for living, no sense of purpose in life
- Feeling isolation and a lack of belonging
- Engaging in self-harming behaviors

### **Statistics:**

Mental health disorders are common in the United States, with one in five adults having a diagnosable incident during a one-year period. In addition, national statistics demonstrate a 19.6% incident of mental disorders each year in those 18 and older. This percentage equates to 45.6 million people each year.

Mental disorders often start in adolescence or early adulthood...50% by age 14 and 75% by age 24...this statistic in particular highlights the importance of your role in helping to identify and support yourself and those around you in getting the help needed.

**Now let's talk about how to help a person/friend who may be suicidal:**

- 1 **Be yourself.** The right words are unimportant. If you are concerned, your voice and manner will show it.
- 2 **Listen.** Let the person unload despair, express anger. If given an opportunity to do this, he or she will feel better by the end of the call. No matter how negative the call seems, the fact that you are talking is a positive sign, a cry for help.
- 3 **Be sympathetic, non-judgmental, patient, calm, accepting.** The person has done the right thing by getting in touch with another person.
- 4 If the person is saying 'I am so depressed, I can't go on', ask **The Question: Are you having thoughts of suicide?** You are not putting ideas in someone's head; you are assessing what kind of support the person needs. You are showing the person that you are concerned, that you take him or her seriously, and that it is OK for the person to share their pain with you.
- 5 If the answer to the above question is *YES*, **you can begin asking a series of further questions:** Have you thought about how you would do it (PLAN); Do you have the means to you're your life? (MEANS); Have you thought about when you would do it (TIME SET). 95% of all suicidal people will answer no at some point in this series or indicate that the time is set for some date in the future. This will be a relief for both of you.
- 6 **Simply talking** for a length of time will give suicidal people relief from loneliness and pent up feelings, awareness that another person cares, and a feeling of being understood. They also get tired -- their body chemistry changes. These things take the edge off their agitated state and help them get through a bad episode.
- 7 Avoid arguments, problem solving, advice giving, quick referrals, belittling and making the person feel that they have to justify the suicidal feelings. It is not how bad the problem is, but how badly it's hurting the person who has reached out.
- 8 Do not go it alone. Get help and you should debrief afterwards.

**The most important resource is the help of a trained mental health professional.**

You can always reach out to your school counselor, or any trusted adult to help identify resources. Remember that JFS is always here for you.

There are factors that can be protective against mental health issues. What are your strengths?

**Protective Factors:**

- Family Support
- Positive Friends
- Mentors
- Healthy activities
- Generosity
- Spirituality
- Medical Access
- Mental Health

HOPE HELP AND STRENGTH



**Things you can do:**

- Spend time writing in your journal who represents your support system: friends and family and other trusted adults
- Write the healthy activities that leave you feeling restored and relaxed and see if you can make the list longer
- Make time for connection with your friends and trusted adults every week
- Consider writing the things you are grateful for over your winter break and see how you feel!
- Keep a conversation going with your friends about how they are feeling.
- Tell someone who is trusted if you believe you would benefit from counseling
- Be sure you have had your annual physical and consider an annual “counseling physical”.



let's talk  
about it

To Houston's Jewish College Students!  
**TOUCHING THE HEART**

Generously underwritten by



**We know you are heading to college and we want to be your partner in settling into your new life.**

We want to connect with you every once in a while by text and send you messages just to say hello. We also want to help you keep your wellness as the highest priority so we will send tips for stress reduction and resilience. We all need more resilience and connections!

JFS is asking you to join our Touching the Heart program by giving us your first name and phone number to add to our database. We will send occasional text messages with tips and just to say hello and see how you are doing.

To participate, fill out the form and return to **Laurie Silver, Jewish Family Service, 4131 S. Braeswood, Houston, Texas 77025**, or online at [www.mentalhealthletstalk.org/touching-the-heart/](http://www.mentalhealthletstalk.org/touching-the-heart/)

With this in mind, would you share your first name and text/phone number.

Your First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Number \_\_\_\_\_

Your College or University \_\_\_\_\_

Touching the Heart text messages will come from the following number: **832-990-7880**

For questions, please contact: [laurie@lauriemorgansilver.com](mailto:laurie@lauriemorgansilver.com) - 713-542-5544  
[www.mentalhealthletstalk.org](http://www.mentalhealthletstalk.org)

Sponsored by




JFS is a beneficiary of




## Report for dates 11/17/18-1/3/2019

### Updated flyer for Young Professionals



let's talk about it

To Houston's Young Professionals!  
**TOUCHING THE HEART**

Generously underwritten by  
 **ERIC M. SUHL**  
FOUNDATION

**We know you are navigating the working world and we want to be your partner in settling into your professional life.**

We want to connect with you every once in a while by text and send you messages just to say hello. We also want to help you keep your wellness as the highest priority so we will send tips for stress reduction and resilience. We all need more resilience and connections!

JFS is asking you to join our Touching the Heart program by giving us your first name and phone number to add to our database. We will send occasional text messages with tips and just to say hello and see how you are doing.

To participate, fill out the form and return to **Laurie Silver, Jewish Family Service, 4131 S. Braeswood, Houston, Texas 77025**, or online at [www.mentalhealthletstalk.org/touching-the-heart/](http://www.mentalhealthletstalk.org/touching-the-heart/)



With this in mind, would you share your first name and text/phone number.



Your First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Number \_\_\_\_\_

Touching the Heart text messages will come from the following number: **832-990-7880**

For questions, please contact: [laurie@lauriemorgansilver.com](mailto:laurie@lauriemorgansilver.com) - 713-542-5544  
[www.mentalhealthletstalk.org](http://www.mentalhealthletstalk.org)

Sponsored by  **ERIC M. SUHL**  
FOUNDATION  **JFS Mental Health Services**  
Jewish Family Service

JFS is a beneficiary of  **Jewish Federation**  
OF GREATER HOUSTON  **United Way**  
OF GREATER HOUSTON

### Organizations contacted

YAD/Federation (Sara Sandhaus)

Rabbi Sammi Soussan (head of JSU)

Jewston (through Hillel- Emily Moses)

Lauren Blachman

- Emery
- TargetTeen alumni

24 Mental Health First Aid participants

Kinkaid counselors

Anti Defamation League's Associate Board

58 individuals through LinkedIn

U of H therapy department (4 professors)

3 U of H Jewish Studies Professors

Rabbi Zev Johnson (Austin Chabad)

Rebecca Prager of Shalom Austin

Sarah Yonas- Regional Director of BBYO

### [Upcoming organizations to contact](#)

16 Mental Health First Aid Trainers

UT Austin Mental Health department

Galia Weber (Federation)

Houston Bar Association

Houston Women's Bar Association

Harris Health System

Baylor Therapists

Harris County Medical Society

Texas Public Health Association

Peers of Katelyn (about 30 individuals)

20 of the top 60 colleges with Jewish enrollments according to Hillel (ex Brandeis, American Jewish U)

U of H alumni association

UT alumni association

Baylor alumni association

List of Linda Burger's young professionals (about 120)

### [New people on the database](#)

11 new college students

### [Retention Rate](#)

Only 1 opt out in this time period meaning a 91% retention rate for this period

**Total Students currently enrolled: 41**

### [Feedback examples](#)

Text:

Finals time! Now's the best time for self care: a massage, a workout, time with a friend, a walk. You got this, no matter the grades! Laurie Silver, JFS Houston

Response:

Did some Yoga this morning it was a great way to start the day!

Text:

[Name], off during winter break can bring its own stressors. Returning home, awaiting grades, and figuring out how to slow down can all be challenging. Consider creating daily morning and evening rituals to make your transition home more relaxing, energizing, and restorative. Laurie Silver, JFS Houston.

Response:

What sort of rituals do you recommend? I am interested to learn more. Thank you so much! ☺

Reply:

Hi [Name]. Finding the rituals that matter and have meaning to you are the ones you will do with regularity. Journaling, reading affirmations, yoga, other exercise, breathing relaxation, walking are all good. Choose quiet and easy options that leave you feeling calm and restorative. Let me know how it goes! Laurie Silver, JFS

## Young Professionals

1 YP enrolled 1/4/2019

Total YP= 1



**Sometimes, first aid isn't a bandage, or CPR, or the Heimlich, or calling 911.**

**Sometimes, first aid is  
YOU!**

**A person you know could be experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis. You can help them.**

You are more likely to encounter someone — friend, family member, neighbor, or member of the community — in an emotional or mental crisis than someone having a heart attack. Mental Health First Aid teaches a 5-step action plan to offer initial help to people showing signs of a mental illness or in a crisis, and connect them with the appropriate professional, peer, social, or self help care. Anyone can take the 8-hour Mental Health First Aid course, but it is ideally designed for adults — teachers, coaches, leaders of faith communities, social workers, and other caring citizens.

**Sometimes, the best first aid is you. Take the course, save a life, strengthen your community.**



## UPCOMING TRAININGS

**Session for Adults**

**March 24, 2019 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM**

**March 28, 2019 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM**

**Session for Adults who Engage Youth**

**June 13, 2019 - 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM**

To register, contact Gittel Francis at  
[gfrancis@jfshouston.org](mailto:gfrancis@jfshouston.org)

A light breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Trainings are provided free of charge through a generous grant from Jewish Family Service and will be facilitated by certified Mental Health First Aid facilitators from Mental Health America of Greater Houston.

**For more information about the JFS Mental Health First Aid program, please email [gfrancis@jfshouston.org](mailto:gfrancis@jfshouston.org) or call 713-986-7812**  
[www.mentalhealthletstalk.org](http://www.mentalhealthletstalk.org)

Sponsored by



BBYO regionals (12/27/18):

BBYO all girls grades 9-12 were at the SoS part of BBYO Regionals at the Double Tree

6 peer leaders who are here

8 chapters 5 for Houston 1 from San Antonio 2 from Austin

And 6 chapters of boys doing other display

230 total kids

One youth already came forward to get help and "never would have otherwise" if not for Sources of Strength



By  
**Laurie Morgan Silver**  
LCSW  
Jewish Family Service

## Emotional Balance

As summer winds down, we welcome you to our new Jewish Family Service weekly column in the Jewish Herald-Voice. We are calling our column, "Be Well," because that is exactly the goal for our readers.

Each week we ask you to join us in exploring a topic about mental health and well-being, so that our Jewish community is informed of the most current and important research, trends, healing modalities and prevention approaches. We will address topics that are most important to you in caring for your own mental health and well-being, and also the health of your close family, friends and loved ones.

As background, since 1913, Jewish Family Service has continually served people of all ages and walks of life. Our

goal continues to be to provide light, hope and help to individuals struggling with life's challenges. JFS's professional, highly credentialed staff provides mental health treatment, support and counseling for individuals and families, including specialized programs for individuals living with persistent and pervasive mental illness. JFS also offers employment services, Jewish chaplaincy services at area hospitals, community outreach and financial assistance programs.

Through the years, as our community's needs have changed and grown, so have our programs and the focus of our programs and staff. Most recently, JFS is focusing significant resources on addressing the mental health and well-being of our community.

**According to the World Health Organization, mental health is** "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a meaningful contribution to his or her community."

*Mental health reflects a state of emotional balance. Everyone experiences*

*emotional imbalances from a variety of factors, including work stress, the chaos of family life, conflict with friends, to name a few. In fact, obtaining mental health is no easy task. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, only about 17 percent of U.S. adults are at the optimal state of mental health. However, this does not mean it is not possible! Mental health can be obtained through education, support and connection.*

We at JFS have launched a broad range of mental health programs called "**JFS Mental Health Programs: Let's Talk About It.**" This column will do just that. We will invite you to join us in a conversation about many aspects of mental health and building mental wellness and resilience. We will offer you many ideas for supporting well-being for you, personally, your children and for your extended family. We will talk about taking care of your relationships and effectively managing stress at work. We will talk about the stressors facing teens, young adults, aging adults and their caregivers. We will talk about being in a relationship; the stressors and strategies to strengthen those relationships. We will ask you to partner with us to learn how to talk about the hardest topics, as well: topics including suicide

prevention, substance, grief and bereavement support. We will introduce you to the many new services that we want you, your friends and your family to access. We invite you to be part of the conversation by sending us suggestions for topics of interest to you for us to explore.

### Our goals are:

- to increase awareness, decrease stigma and shame and support effective coping strategies
- to provide support to those suffering and those impacted by mental illness
- to develop a conversation about mental health, mental illness and mental wellness
- to decrease suicide in the Houston Jewish community
- to build a culture of wellness and well-being through education and dialogue.

We want you to join Jewish Family Service, and take steps to explore and understand your mental health and increase your quality of life. So, join us and BE WELL!

If there is a topic you would like us to address, please email us at [Info@mentalhealthletstalk.org](mailto:Info@mentalhealthletstalk.org). □

First Column 8/16/2018

Be Well

Laurie Morgan Silver, LCSW, Jewish Family Service

As the summer winds down, we want to welcome you to our new Jewish Family Service weekly column in the Herald Voice. We are calling our column “Be Well” because that is exactly the goal for our readers. Each week, we will address a topic about your mental health and wellbeing so that our Jewish community is well informed on the most current and important research, trends, healing modalities and prevention approaches. We will address topics that are most important to you in caring for your own mental health and wellbeing and also the health of your close family, friends and loved ones.

As background, Jewish Family Service has served people of all ages and all walks of life since 1913. Our goal has been to provide **light, hope and help** to individuals struggling with life challenges. For years, JFS's professional, highly credentialed staff has provided mental health and support counseling for individuals and families including a specialized program for individuals who live with persistent and pervasive mental illness. JFS has also offered disability services, senior adult services and case management, employment services, Jewish chaplaincy services at area hospitals, community outreach and financial assistance programs.

Through the years, as our community's needs have grown, so have our programs and staff. Most recently, JFS has focused significant resources on addressing the mental health and wellbeing of our community.

According to the World Health Organization, mental health is

“a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”.

Mental health reflects a state of emotional balance. Everyone experiences emotional imbalances from a variety of factors including work stress, the chaos of family life, conflict with friends to name a few. In fact, obtaining mental health is no easy task. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, only about 17% of U.S. adults are at the optimal state of

mental health. However, this does not mean it is not possible! Mental health can be obtained through education, support and connection.

We have launched a broad range of mental health programs and we call our work “JFS Mental Health Programs, Let’s Talk About it.” This column will do just that. We will talk about many aspects of mental health. We will talk about recognizing symptoms of mental illness and we will talk about building mental wellness. We will offer many ideas for supporting your personal wellbeing as and the wellness of your children and extended family. We will talk about taking care of your relationships and handling stress at work. We will talk about the stressors facing children, teens, young adults and aging adults. We will talk about being in a couple; the stressors and the paths to strengthening relationships. We will talk about the hardest topics as well including suicide prevention, substance use and abuse and grief and bereavement support. We will introduce you to the many new service initiatives that we want you, your friends and family to access. We will be open to exploring topics you may be interested in as well so we encourage you to send topics to us that we can explore with you.

## Our Goals Are

- to increase awareness and decrease stigma
- to provide support to those suffering and those effected by mental illness
- to develop a conversation in the community about mental health, mental illness and mental wellness
- to decrease suicide in the Houston Jewish community
- to build a culture of wellness and wellbeing through education

We want you to join Jewish Family Service and take steps to explore and understand your mental health and increase your quality of life by taking steps toward greater mental wellness and wellbeing in all the aspects of your life. So join us and BE WELL!

If there is a topic you would like for us to address, please email us at xxx



By

**Laurie Morgan Silver**  
LCSW  
Jewish Family Service

## Touching the Heart

Human beings thrive on connection. When this need is met, we feel we are cared about and that we belong. Connection softens feelings of isolation and loneliness. Human connection is as important each day as are the basics of food and water. In times of crisis or transition, the need for connection increases. Certainly, we all seek connection from those we know, whether family, friends or co-workers. Current research, however, has turned up a remarkable finding about human connection, concluding that even contact from an anonymous person has enormous value for the well-being of the recipient.

This conclusion was first discovered during World War II when anonymous volunteers sent postcards with messages of caring and hope to soldiers fighting around the globe. Research showed that the support provided by these anonymous

postcards comforted soldiers in their isolation and loneliness.

Most recently, the Defense Department hired a leading American suicidologist, Thomas Joiner, to test this theory. With rates of completed suicide at very high levels in the military, the concept of sending anonymous text messages to those at risk was put into place to discover if hopelessness and the desire to take one's life might be positively impacted. This text program, along with the military's "Virtual Hope Box," has been shown to reduce rates of depression. Research on these efforts continues with the goal of reducing death by suicide among active military and retired veterans.

With this tested program as our model, Jewish Family Service is launching a pilot program that we have named *Touching the Heart*. Our initial goal is to connect with students who are heading to college. We know that young adults leaving home and heading to college face a transition period as they settle into a dorm, make new friends and begin classes. This transition can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation for many.

Our volunteers will be sending text messages, just to say hello and provide

a message of caring. We will also send tips on settling into college life, provide ideas for increasing wellness and managing stress and always include words of support for those new to experiencing life away from home. We will also be offering phone or Skype counseling to any student who would like to schedule an appointment with us.

Once we establish the viability of our texting initiative, we will expand our audience to those young adults returning to Houston for work; those working in the Houston community; and to older, more isolated adults in our community.

We are including a link so you can sign up for our program or forward to anyone you know who might be a candidate for connecting with us through text messaging. All we need is a first name and cell phone number and then we include you or someone you may know in *Touching the Heart*. Text recipients will know the message is coming from Jewish Family Service, and recipients may respond to us if they want more support or simply want to continue to receive our text messages.

We all are aware that the rates of suicide in our country, state, city, county and Jewish community have been on a steady increase and now are at all time high levels. We cannot ignore the need for connection and support. Jewish Family Service has

been working diligently to implement a comprehensive suicide prevention and aftercare program in our region. We offer *Touching the Heart* as a new front line initiative, based on the latest suicide prevention research. Help us to connect with those who need our support. Share this link with anyone you know who may be in need of a friendly message of caring and kindness. Help us support our community. *Touching the Heart* is for all of us.

*Laurie Silver has been in private practice in Houston for almost 25 years. She has worked with Jewish Family Service on developing mental health programming, including comprehensive suicide prevention and aftercare efforts.*



<http://mentalhealthletstalk.org/touching-the-heart/>

If there is a topic you would like for us to address, please email us at

Info@mentalhealthletstalk.org



JHV

8/30/18



By  
**Laurie Morgan Silver**  
LCSW  
Jewish Family Service

## Back to School Parenting

Mindful parenting is a great tool to consider for the new school year! As parents, we find that the opportunities for impulsive reactions are almost limitless. So, taking time to breathe and parent with intention is a gift we can give to our children. Here are some thoughts for you to consider as the school year begins:

**Catch your child being good.** Make an effort to provide positive feedback when your child behaves appropriately. We focus our attention so often on negative behaviors and provide little to no feedback when our

children behave well. Positive feedback is far more fun, too!

**Choose your battles.** While choosing your battles is mindful parenting at its finest, it also helps with reducing conflict with teenagers. If the behavior "violation" is relatively minor, you can offer direct, calm feedback, without necessarily imposing a consequence.

**Reduce debating.** A spirited debate, regarding negotiable issues, often can be healthy and productive. But, we often find ourselves debating with our children about non-negotiable issues. One mindful approach is to avoid debates when the issue at hand is not up for negotiation.

**Stop nagging.** Children are smart. If we teach them that we are willing to repeat our requests 10 times, why would they respond after the first or second request? We accidentally train our children to ignore our initial requests! The solution is to minimize our repetition of requests and be clear that their compliance is expected in a timely fashion. Mindful parenting!

**When to just listen:** As parents, we want to help our children with their problems. So, when a child runs into the house crying about a fight with a friend, we try to understand what happened and offer suggested remedies. The more we try to suggest, the more upset a child (at any age) can become! Kids don't really want someone to solve, advise, remind or teach. What they really need is a parent to simply listen mindfully. Solutions, advice, reminders and lessons can come later. When we really listen, we also can better understand a child's feelings, thoughts and motives, which will help us become mindful advisors as a child ages.

JFS is here to support you and your children this school year. Reach out to us to join your parenting team!

*Laurie Silver has been in private practice in Houston for almost 25 years. She has worked with Jewish Family Service on developing mental health programming including comprehensive suicide prevention and aftercare efforts.* □

## JHV/JFS SEPTEMBER 6

### HOPE

You can feel it in your body. Lightness in your arms and legs. Clarity in your thoughts. Brightness in your outlook. You can see it in the body language of others. You feel the energy to do the things you want and need to do. You can look forward with anticipation and motivation.

Hope brings ideas. Hope brings goals. Hope brings a belief in dreams and new outcomes. The hope of others, as evidenced in research, joins with our own hope to create quantum connection, wellbeing, optimism and synergy.

The counterpoint, hopelessness, can feel like a light bulb that has turned off. Turning inward, isolation, and a loss of connection. The past year brought Hurricane Harvey to our community with months of fear and loss and isolation.

Both feelings, though utterly different as experienced in our minds, bodies and spirits have enormous power. Moments of hope during the past year brought light. Shock and fear and loss brought struggle. As we approach this season of the Jewish year, we can reflect upon times of feeling enormous hope during the past year. We can also remember as a community the shock and loss that faced so many.

Jewish Family Service has worked diligently to address the abundant needs throughout our community since Hurricane Harvey. We along with other Jewish organizations have focused on offering physical, emotional and spiritual support to those who lost their homes, their belongings, and their sense of security. The year almost past made it so difficult for so many to hold onto a sense grounding and faith.

We offer this guided meditation as a path to healing for the upcoming year 5779.

Please settle yourself onto a comfortable chair where you can reflect and later perhaps write some thoughts. Have paper and a pen. Sit comfortably so that your breathing can be deep and your back straight. Place your hands gently upon your thighs face down. Close your eyes and enjoy a deep breath into your nose and out through your nose or mouth. Take some time to scan your body for tension and allow your body to relax and settle in while returning your focus to your breathing.

- Now in your mind, see the year winding back to just before Rosh Hashanah 5778. Notice what memories from the past year begin to emerge. Notice if specific times or feelings or conversations from the past year come to mind.
- Continue to relax and follow your breath as you journey through the flow of months that brings this year to a near end. Take all the time you need to remember all of the months of the past year.
- When you feel a sense of readiness, open your eyes and if you feel like it, take up your pencil or pen. On your paper journal some thoughts about the following questions:
  - What was happening in my life during the past year when I felt hope?
  - Did I feel hopelessness during the past year?
  - What was happening when I felt that hopelessness?
  - What did I learn from the hope I experienced?
  - What did I learn if I felt hopelessness?



- What do I want to carry forward into the coming year to heighten my experience of hope and reduce my feelings of fear and loss?

Sometimes believing in the possible and trusting in the chance of good outcomes is a struggle. The past year has shown us how hopeful life can feel individually and as an entire community. Amidst that shock and despair, we also experienced abundant goodness as so many joined together to address challenge after challenge. We at Jewish Family Service are here to continue to support you in the year ahead with comprehensive mental health services to increase your wellbeing and hopefulness.

We invite you to reach out to us for support, connection and community in the days and months ahead.

*Laurie Silver has been in private practice in Houston for almost 25 years. She works with Jewish Family Service on a wide range of mental health programming initiatives including comprehensive suicide prevention and aftercare efforts. To suggest questions for this column or for any questions, please write [lsilver@jfs.org](mailto:lsilver@jfs.org).*

Be Well September 13, 2018

## The Season of Forgiveness

Whether it's a parent who let you down, a spouse who betrayed you, an employer who was dismissive of you, a child who criticized you, a friend who ignored you, or your own behavior in a challenging situation, we all face questions about whether or how to forgive. With Yom Kippur upon us, we are asked to deeply consider questions of harm and forgiveness.

Forgiving ourselves and forgiving others can cause emotional and spiritual struggle. We may relive painful memories that still bring anger and resentment toward a person who hurt us. We may still experience the intensity of our emotions because we cannot move beyond the pain caused by a loved one or colleague. We may feel regret when we remember words we have spoken or actions we have taken.

Regardless, we are generally aware of the enormous discomfort we feel when we remember the hurt others inflicted on us or the hurt we inflicted on others. Of great significance to our health, scientific research clearly shows that harboring pain, resentment and anger correlates to physical and emotional ailments. [https://www.salon.com/2015/08/24/the\\_science\\_of\\_forgiveness\\_when\\_you\\_dont\\_forgive\\_you\\_release\\_all\\_the\\_chemicals\\_of\\_the\\_stress\\_response/](https://www.salon.com/2015/08/24/the_science_of_forgiveness_when_you_dont_forgive_you_release_all_the_chemicals_of_the_stress_response/)

If we can start by understanding **what forgiveness does and does not mean**, we may take a step toward learning how to forgive. For starters, **forgiveness does not mean:**

- you are pardoning or excusing another person's behavior
- you won't have more feelings about a situation

- you need to forget the situation ever happened
- you now need to include the other person in your life
- you need to actually tell another person you forgive them

Forgiveness simply means you come to accept the reality of something that happened and choose to live in a state of resolution with it. Forgiveness requires an internal willingness to come to terms with a deep range of feelings toward yourself or another. And forgiveness is ultimately something you do for yourself more than for another person. This process is often very gradual.

Our religious tradition is rich in teachings about pain and forgiveness. Yet we may struggle to move beyond intense emotions toward a place of acceptance. Learning to forgive does not come with a formula but certain steps can be helpful.

#### Remember what happened

We can remember an incident that caused us to react with intense emotions, whether we created the situation or someone else inflicted pain on us. We can simply acknowledge what happened and how we felt about it and how hard we find it to let go of our painful emotions.

#### Explore what we learned

We can explore whether the incident led us to learn something about ourselves. Did we gain any self-awareness about our needs? Did we discover a greater ability to set boundaries with others? Did we grow from the pain?

#### Understand the other person

We can try to understand what caused another person to behave the way they did toward us or why we acted as we did toward another person. We are human and most often view

situations through our own perspective. How can we understand another person's needs and why they tried to meet their need in a hurtful way? We can put ourselves in the shoes of the person who harmed us so we can move toward understanding them and then resolving our own feelings of hurt and anger.

### To forgive or not?

We can then decide if we want to forgive another person face to face or if we just want to say out loud, "I forgive you." And we can use this same formula when we need to forgive ourselves. Sometimes forgiving ourselves is the hardest process of all.

Forgiveness can allow us to turn the page on the most complex and traumatic experiences of our lives; events that happened to us and caused us unbearable pain. Events when we caused pain for others. We may long remember what happened, but we may think of the events less and less and feel relief and healing. We may feel stronger because we have forgiven ourselves or another person. We may see a happier path forward.

(Same signature paragraph)

BE WELL September 20, 2018

## LOVE & CONNECTION

One religious interpretation for the holiday of *Sukkot* suggests that we come out of our familiar “homes” and build a new structure where its most important detail, the roof, is constructed with properties of love and positive connection.

On a purely social level, dining with friends and loved ones in the Sukkah offers precious time for slowing our routine and experiencing the joy of quiet social interaction.

On the psychological level, research teaches us that social connection improves physical health and mental and emotional well-being.

We all think we know how to take good care of ourselves: eat veggies, work out and try to get enough sleep. But how many of us know that social connection is just as critical?

A major medical study showed that lack of social connection is a greater detriment to health than obesity, smoking and high blood pressure.

On the other hand, strong social connection:

- leads to a 50% increased chance of longevity
- strengthens our immune system (research by Steve Cole shows that genes impacted by loneliness also code for immune function and inflammation)
- helps us recover from disease faster
- may even lengthen your life

People who feel more connected to others have **lower levels of anxiety and depression**. Moreover, studies show they also have **higher self-esteem, greater empathy** for others, are **more trusting and cooperative** and, as a consequence, others are more open to trusting and cooperating with them. In other words, social connectedness generates a positive feedback loop of social, emotional and physical well-being.

Unfortunately, the opposite is also true for those who lack social connectedness. Low levels of social connection are associated with declines in physical and psychological health as well as a higher likelihood for antisocial behavior that leads to further isolation.

### **Feel lonely?**

Research unfortunately shows that **loneliness is on the rise**. Despite its clear importance for health and survival, research shows that social connectedness is waning at an alarming rate in the US. A revealing sociological study showed that the number of close others (i.e., people with whom one feels comfortable sharing a personal problem) Americans claimed to have in 1985 was only three. In 2004 it dropped to zero, with over 25% of Americans saying that they have no one to confide in. This survey suggests that one in four people that we meet may have no one they call a close friend!

This decline in social connectedness may explain reported increases in loneliness, isolation, and alienation and may be why research is finding that loneliness represents one of the leading reasons people seek psychological counseling.

People low in social connection are **more vulnerable to anxiety, depression, antisocial behavior**, and even suicidal behaviors which tend to further increase their isolation. Most

poignantly, a landmark survey showed that lack of social connectedness predicts vulnerability to disease and death beyond traditional risk factors such as smoking, blood pressure, and physical activity! Eat your greens and exercise, yes, but don't forget to connect.

### **Feel like you may be low on social connection?**

The good news is that social connection has more to do with your *subjective* feeling of connection than your number of friends. You could have 1,000 friends and still feel low in connection (thus the expression *loneliness in a crowd*) but you could also have no close friends or relatives but still feel very connected from within.

Jewish Family Service is offering many opportunities for social connection and support through counseling, support groups, volunteer opportunities and texting initiatives. Reach out to us to increase your social connection. We are here for you.

Adapted from Social relationships and health

*Science* 29 Jul 1988:  
Vol. 241, Issue 4865, pp. 540-545  
DOI: [10.1126/science.3399889](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.3399889)

Same signature close...

Be Well September 27, 2018

## Sources of Strength

Jewish Family Service is very proud to announce the upcoming launch of an exceptional program called Sources of Strength. This national program is one of the first suicide prevention programs associated with reducing suicide within school populations and young adult social networks.

**The mission of Sources of Strength** is to provide the highest quality evidence-based prevention program for suicide, violence, bullying and substance abuse for 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders in our community. We will do this by training, supporting, and empowering both **peer leaders and caring adults** to impact their world through the power of connection, hope, help and strength.

**Sources of Strength** is based in the belief that the strengths are more powerful than one, and our united goal is to activate and mobilize these strengths in ways that positively change the lives of young adults within their school and social communities.

Most important, research concludes that **young adults who participate in Sources of Strength are four times more likely to report themselves or someone else in trouble than those not involved in the program.**

How does Sources of Strength work? JFS has been actively recruiting an outstanding group of young adults and adults to train in this program and **we want you to join our Sources of Strength team.**



After the training, our PEER LEADERS and TRUSTED ADULTS will saturate our community's day and religious schools as well as their social environments with messages of hope and support. **These campaigns will highlight the strengths that young adults feel are most important to build in order to navigate the many stressors they face.**

We are actively recruiting adults who connect well with young adults and young adults who want their voices heard on critical topics of today. We are asking our adult and young leaders to **spend a highly interactive and fulfilling training on SUNDAY OCTOBER 14.** Dan Adams, Director of Training for Sources of Strength, will be in Houston to train adults from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM and peer leaders with adults from 1-5PM. Once our adult and young leaders are trained, they will return to their schools and social networks to fill those settings with creative message campaigns on topics of their choice, all geared to building resilience and community.

What are we asking you to do? We want you to participate in Sources as an adult or peer leader by contacting JFS Sources of Strength Co-coordinator Katelyn Bleiweiss at [kbleiweiss@jfshouston.org](mailto:kbleiweiss@jfshouston.org) 713-986-7858. To register for training, please use these links [www.tinyurl.com/peers-sos](http://www.tinyurl.com/peers-sos) (for youth) [www.tinyurl.com/adults-sos](http://www.tinyurl.com/adults-sos) (for adults

Sources of Strength is a proven tool for supporting young adults by building a bridge of connection between them and trusted adults so that when a need arises for support, the connection is already in place. Join us in building a community of strength!

**BE WELL OCTOBER 4, 2018**

## **YOUR BASIC NATURE**

I find it hard to believe my Dad has been gone for eight years. He was a remarkably gentle, loving, funny and wise man. I find myself using his hilarious and wise expressions multiple times a day. One I particularly love that I thought of today is "your basic nature." It may sound simple but the words are remarkable. Regardless of our "behavior" as kids or adults for that matter, Dad would gently talk about our "basic nature." I can hear his voice.

In hindsight, when Dad talked about my "basic nature," he was generously separating my behavior from my "personhood." It was his way of conveying unconditional love and telling me that no matter how I acted, I was always fundamentally good and loveable. I still remember the words he used to describe my "basic nature," and when I am not being self-deprecating or having a difficult moment, I remember his loving description of me and I might even agree with him at times.

Quietly hidden within each of us is a knowing of our most authentic "basic nature." We may choose words that describe who we are at our very core, at our very most real. If we quietly reflect, we may also rediscover images of ourselves from the course of our lives that best capture our essence. Of late, I have had the pleasure of being in the company of a number of toddlers. What I have had the joy of observing is their effortless interactions, their natural ways of talking and playing. They are totally themselves, not yet influenced or changed by the pressures or reality of socialization.

For some, the ease of toddlerhood carries through childhood and even into adulthood. For others life is affected by trauma,

hurt, rejection, and pain. As we age, we all create defense mechanisms to protect our vulnerable inner core or manage the pain that life has brought to us. If we allow ourselves to be emotionally vulnerable; either alone or with another person, we have the chance to get back in touch with that pure person at our core... that "basic nature."

When I see adults in the company of toddlers, I notice spontaneity, a joy, and an effortlessness that comes with knowing that children take us as we are. No judgment, no gossip, no interpretation. Embracing and showing our basic nature is natural when we interact with those who live in that way. I hope you will take time to remember the very best of your "basic nature." We are on the verge of ending a full reading of the Torah and beginning anew. Time to step forward again as you are at your core, filled with all of the goodness of your "basic nature."

Same signature close

BE WELL October 11, 2018

## Mental Health CPR

Jewish Family Service is honored to bring Mental Health First Aid trainings to our Jewish community. This nationally recognized and evidenced based program has trained over a million people throughout the United States with results that show greater access to care and reduced rates of suicide.

Just as CPR helps a person assist someone having a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid teaches us how to recognize and assist someone who is having a mental health or substance-use related crisis. JFS is training as many people as possible in this remarkable program so that we can support as many people as possible in our community in order to understand and respond to mental health warning signs and addiction concerns.

As a backdrop, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention confirms on average 123 suicides a day in the United States. We have established through extensive research that the Houston Jewish Community has experienced about 8-10 completed suicides per year.

The Centers for Disease Control report that 630,000 people died from drug overdose from 1999-2016. In our Houston Jewish community, we are experiencing about 4-6 deaths from drug abuse each year.

Clearly, we will benefit from having a community of “First Aiders,” trained to apply the ALGEE action plan:

**Assess** for risk of suicide or harm

**Listen** nonjudgmentally

**Give** reassurance and information

**Encourage** appropriate professional help  
**Encourage** self-help and other support strategies

**Nearly one in five adults in the United States live with mental illness.** We know we can increase access to care and support for those who are suffering in our community by having a trained adult who can direct those in need to sound resources and care. Our Mental Health First Aid instructors are on the frontlines of the program in our Jewish Community. Please sign up for one of the trainings listed here by contacting Gittel Francis at [gfrancis@jfshouston.org](mailto:gfrancis@jfshouston.org)

Mental Health Training for those working with Youth  
10/28/18      8:30AM-5:00PM Beth Yeshurun

11/12/18 and 11/15/18 5-9PM Jewish Federation

Mental Health Training for Adults

11/28/18      8:30-5:30 Jewish Family Service  
1/14/18      8:30-5:00 Beth Yeshurun

Mental Health Train the Trainers

Three Day Training to Then Train Others in Our  
Community  
January 8-10, 2019 Jewish Family Service

If you are an employer, police officer, hospital employee, first responder, parent, faith leader, community member and a caring individual, we need you to be trained so our community sees more care and fewer tragic outcomes for those we love who may be suffering with mental illness and drug abuse. Please sign up today and change a life

includeLogo and same signature close

BE Well October 18, 2018

## Twenty Seconds of Courage

Recently I watched an older but charming film “We Bought A Zoo.” The movie tells the story of a recent widower who reclaims his life and that of his children when he leaves his job, his home and his old life and buys a run down zoo. The plot line follows the unexpected path that leads to the rebuilding of the zoo and the story of each member of the family. A particularly touching scene involves the father, Matt Damon, telling his terribly unhappy teenage son the concept of “20 seconds of courage.” He explains to his son the idea that anyone can go after someone or something that seems unattainable by just **grabbing 20 seconds of life and taking a risk to make a dream happen!** What a concept! Twenty seconds seems an almost ridiculously short period of time to show some courage in the interest of a great outcome, right?

**So how do you want to use your 20 seconds?** Going for a dream with 20 seconds of courage as the only requirement means the possibilities are endless. You could call a person you have dreamed of dialing. You could write a letter or email you have wanted to write. You could start a conversation with someone you have been thinking about for a long time. You could take a tiny step forward toward any one of your ideas or dreams.

**So what makes the 20 second idea both scary and exciting?** Well, scary because we humans don't like feeling embarrassed and we don't like to think we have failed. We will avoid doing things...even for 20 seconds... to avoid making mistakes or having things turn out in a way we can't predict. Exciting because we can certainly handle a little bit of embarrassment or discomfort to take a chance toward fulfilling a dream.

**So what stops us?** Most of all, our minds get very busy chattering all of the possible things that could or might happen or could or might not happen. We can talk ourselves out of things just because we conspire in our minds to stop ourselves. We also like to know how exactly how things are going to turn out before we even start trying. We find it very hard to remember that our “20 seconds of courage” is more about just going for it than any particular outcome.

If we can keep from tripping ourselves up with our fear of embarrassment or failure, imagine how many potential 20-second increments of courage we have ahead of us!

Imagine what your future might hold if you just keep risking 20 seconds of courage over and over again.

If you haven't seen the film, I'm not going to tell you how the miserable adolescent claims his courageous 20 seconds. But I am going to strongly encourage you to focus your energy upon discovering your first 20-second goal and then taking a risk...followed by another. If you decide to give this 20 seconds of courage idea a try, send me a note to .....(the email address) and share your story.

Same signature close

Be Well October 25, 2018

## 13 Reasons Why Not

Jewish Family Service hosted an amazing group of adult and middle and high school leaders recently to launch our resilience based mental wellness program called Sources of Strength. During the course of a spectacular day, our trainer shared that one of the school message campaigns launched by students in another city was called 13 Reasons Why Not.

Clearly in opposition to the highly controversial and sensationalized show that focuses on reasons to take one's life, Sources of Strength students focus on their strengths, hopes and capacity to face life's adversities and live.

I thought I might offer a few thoughts on 13 Reasons Why Not.

1. Life is worth living. Our tradition teaches "choose life," and with good reason. None of us get by in life without facing stress or adversity. But when we face those challenges and survive, we may discover we are stronger for it and filled with a desire treasure the gifts life offers.
2. Life is an adventure. We can't predict what is coming around the corner but each day offers so many tiny moments of discovery and adventure. Keep your eyes out for the tiny gifts of living.
3. Life is filled with connection. We often find it hard to connect and might want to isolate but it through connection that we discover the comfort of family, partners, friends, mentors, teachers and animals.
4. Life is a teacher. We learn in school. We learn from each other. We learn from what happens to us



everyday. Learning, even when it is uncomfortable enriches us, gives us wisdom, humor and hope

5. Life can be so much fun. Music, movies, travel, hobbies, sports, art, theater, dance, books, cooking, eating, water, mountains, forests, cars, bicycles, even weather to name a few are simply spectacular things to live for.
6. Life offers answers. You may not like the answers when you face adversity but answers can be found. Solutions in even the toughest moments can be discovered even if they are temporary. Options are always available. Life brings hope.
7. Life is full of surprises. Yes, some of them are not the happy kinds of surprise but we learn to weather those with the support of people who care about us. Then there are the exciting surprises that we just can't predict.
8. Life allows us to give to others. We learn a lot about ourselves when we have the chance to give to people we care about. Sometimes we are the ones receiving, sometimes the other way around. Giving can feel amazing.
9. Life is creative. We can live our lives in endless ways and discover endless places. We can choose to take healthy risks in order to create a life that aligns with the person we are or want to become.
10. Life is funny. On a daily basis, life can bring us many chances to laugh. Often things that happen in life are not funny but given the chance to find humor, life can be filled with irony and hilarity.
11. Life offers love. Loving family or friends or life partners or teachers or employers or colleagues or mentors or animals can just feel remarkable. Both receiving and giving.

12. Life is predictably unpredictable. We may think we know what is going to happen and sometimes we are right but most often we don't have a clue. That may lead to stress and adversity. Unpredictability can also lead to magic.
13. Life is a blessing. We are just pretty lucky to get to try this journey of being alive even when it brings worry and challenge. We get to discover the miracle of gratitude.

Send your thoughts of the more than 13 Reasons Why To Live!

Same signature...

11/8/2018

How Do We Grieve The Pittsburgh Tragedy?

*“Pain is the price we pay for being alive. Dead cells—our hair, our fingernails—can’t feel pain; they cannot feel anything. When we understand that, our question will change from, “Why do we have to feel pain?” to “What do we do with our pain so that it becomes meaningful and not just pointless empty suffering?”*

*Harold S. Kushner, When Bad Things Happen to Good People*

Each of us faces struggle, tragedy, loss, and grief in our lives that may feel so overwhelming our minds and bodies do not know how to understand what has happened or how to console ourselves and the ones we love.

I heard a sermon given by Rabbi Samuel Karff many years ago when I was a young adult facing one of life’s uninvited struggles for the first time. Rabbi Karff’s words return to me as the Jewish community worldwide mourns the tragedy at The Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh.

Rabbi Karff shared his belief that G-d cries with us when tragedy touches our lives, that G-d mourns our inconsolable losses and our feelings of powerlessness. He shared that we must hold onto our faith that teaches us that is a mystery that lies beyond what we as humans can ever know or understand.

We do know we can use the power we have to support those around us. We know that adults, children and teens want to feel safe and loved especially after a tragedy such as the violence at The Tree of Life Synagogue. Though life brings no guarantees of safety, we yearn to feel a blanket of emotional connection and

community support. With that in mind, we do understand the psychological effects of community violence.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network research concludes that “chronic community violence can be enough to rob children of their sense of safety, putting them into “survival mode,” making them ready to gear up for fight or flight. Exposure to community violence can affect children’s outlook on the future and their sense of control. Here are ways that youth have described the impact of community violence in their lives:”

- “I don’t know who to trust anymore.
- I’m on edge all the time, like something’s going to happen to me, and I can’t be caught off guard.
- I’ll do anything to stay safe. That’s why I carry a gun or knife, like my friends do.
- I don’t expect to graduate from school. I’ll probably die young anyway.
- I worry most about my little brother and sister getting shot.
- My friends say I’m different since the shooting.
- Sometimes thoughts pop up in my head, and I’m right back to the night my world changed.
- I’m more tempted to get drunk or high to numb it all.
- I feel angry even when nobody is messing with me.
- I get jumpy or nervous at the smallest things or little sounds.
- I just can’t stop thinking about all the violence, how it’s never going to end.

We have much to do to console our children and ourselves. Here are a few guidelines on talking to your children about death. <https://www.nctsn.org>

- Be truthful with your child
- Give short, simple, honest, and age-appropriate answers to their questions
- Listen carefully to their feelings without judgment (there are no “wrong” feelings)  
Be ready to discuss the same things or answer the same questions over again

- Do not be afraid to say that you don't know the answer to a question
- Ask what he or she wants to know and give answers that fit those questions
- Let your child know that he or she can come to talk to you at anytime

Jewish Family Service is here for you as you and your friends and loved ones grieve this enormous tragedy. Our grieving will take time, individually and as a community.

*"One man alone can't defeat the forces of evil, but many good people coming together can."*

*Harold S. Kushner, Living a Life That Matters: Resolving the Conflict Between Conscience and Success*

same signature...

## Both Of Each

By LAURIE MORGAN SILVER | JFS•

Thu, Nov 15, 2018

When my daughter was young and I would offer her toast or waffles, she would reply “both of each,” an endearing response from a 4-year-old that generally resulted in the outcome she wanted, with jelly and syrup.

As she grew up, I learned that she also was teaching me the hardest emotional lesson of adult life, at least in my book. The concept is called paradox.

Yes, both of each – feeling two things at the same time that seem to contradict each other and even ought to cancel each other out, but in fact, co-exist. Isn't this the meaning of paradox? How can we humans feel devastated and relieved at the same time? Afraid and happy? Guilt-stricken and content?

These subtleties of emotion were lost on me until my late 30s, but I am awed that adolescents and younger adults are far wiser, more emotionally grounded and able to grasp this concept earlier in life.

With “both of each” as an operative concept, we can process the deepest losses in life and somehow go forward. For example, after the tragedy in Pittsburgh at the Tree of Life Synagogue, we felt and may still feel, deep despair, while also feeling hope. We then can breathe and take a tiny step forward.

When a marriage ends in divorce, the partners can feel deep-prolonged sadness and simultaneously experience relief. When someone loses a job, he or she can feel enormous fear and also experience an optimistic

longing for a different future. When adolescents feel confusion and anxiety about relationships and sexuality, they also can feel joy when experiencing a meaningful connection.

I was programmed to believe in a black-and-white approach to emotion – either this or that. One feels happy or sad. Afraid or hopeful? Lonely or connected? This either/or emotional option can leave us feeling pretty trapped, with inflexible choices and outcomes.

But, “both of each” is the gentlest path to self-forgiveness and growth. We can feel both regretful of past experiences and encouraged that we can understand, grow and change. We can immerse ourselves in the bounty of grey and the comfort of paradox, versus holding ourselves captive in a black-and-white experience of life.

May I offer a few options for your consideration?

- When faced with a seemingly overwhelming emotional moment, allow yourself to relax, breathe and find the flexibility that comes with discovering the depth and paradox of your emotions. What emotions are you feeling that may be in opposition to each other?
- Once you discover the range of emotions you are feeling, attempt to embrace this complexity and see what it feels like to tolerate the contradiction; i.e., sit and breathe.
- Then let yourself try to accept that, when you feel conflicting emotions at the same time, you can then balance your response to any emotional moment or crisis in your life.

So, don't forget: Try both of each – toast and waffles!

*Laurie Silver has been in private practice in Houston for almost 25 years.*

*She has worked with Jewish Family Service on developing mental health programming, including comprehensive suicide prevention and aftercare efforts. If there is a topic you would like discussed in this column, email [info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org](mailto:info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org).*



## **Everyone Needs Support**

By LAURIE MORGAN SILVER | JFS•

Thu, Nov 22, 2018

In our culture, the power and importance of the individual over the group has increasingly become the norm. In the world of mental health and well-being, however, the power of community has far more impact on positive outcomes and healing measurements.

In ancient Israel, women in the Bible sought support in the reproductive process not only from child bearers, but also from medical or even medico-magical specialists. Midwives cared for all the women in labor. In some instances (most notably, the delivering of Rachel's son Benjamin and of Ichor, the son of Phinehas's wife), the midwife had to draw on considerable skill, as both the mothers died giving birth.

Written in 1997 by novelist Anita Diamant, "The Rent Tent" offers a fictionalized account of the complex life of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah. Of particular comfort in imagining life for women at that time was a description of the "Red Tent," a concept rooted in a feminist retelling of this ancient biblical story. The Rent Tent was a menstrual hut where women congregated during their cycle to support and nurture each other, eat together and even braid each other's hair. A place for community and connection.

In the modern world, we congregate within couple groups, with friends, in religious settings, at sporting events, in book clubs and other entertainment venues, and with our families. But, we are slow to reach out for support when we may be struggling, confused or isolated.

### **Support groups**

Jewish Family Service is currently offering 10 different support groups for any and everyone in our community. Facilitated by our JFS clinical director, Ada Cheung, and licensed psychotherapists, Nancy Tipton and Steven Parks, we want you to know you have a safe place to seek support. I facilitate two of the groups.

All JFS groups – free of charge and held at JFS, unless otherwise indicated – are listed below, along with the contact person.

**Managing Long-Lasting Impact of Flood**

Mondays, 7-8 p.m.

Nancy Tipton, [ntipton@jfshouston.org](mailto:ntipton@jfshouston.org)

Men's Support Group (age 55 and up)

Mondays, 1-2 p.m.

Dr. Ada Cheung, [acheung@jfsjhouston.org](mailto:acheung@jfsjhouston.org)

**Psychotherapy Group for Adolescent Males**

(males, age 14-18, experiencing conflict with parents, poor school performance and social challenges)

Mondays, 7-8 p.m.

Steven Parks, [sparks@jfshouston.org](mailto:sparks@jfshouston.org)

**Psychotherapy Group for Adolescent**

Females

(females, age 14-18, experiencing conflict with parents, poor school performance and social challenges)

Mondays, 6-7 p.m.

Emily Van Laan, [evanlaan@jfshouston.org](mailto:evanlaan@jfshouston.org)

**Resilience and Support for Anyone**

Impacted by Substance Use

Mondays, 6-7 p.m.

Nancy Tipton, [ntipton@jfshouston.org](mailto:ntipton@jfshouston.org)

**Support Group for Widows and Widowers**

Tuesdays, 7-8 p.m.

Laurie Morgan Silver, LCSW, [lsilver@jfshouston.org](mailto:lsilver@jfshouston.org), 713- 542-5544

Location: 3214 Mercer St. (between Buffalo Speedway and Edloe, off West Alabama)

**Support Group for Caregiver Stress and Needs**

Wednesdays, noon-1 p.m.

Nancy Tipton, [ntipton@jfshouston.org](mailto:ntipton@jfshouston.org)

**Al-Anon Group**

(for adults whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking)  
Wednesdays, 6:45-7:45 p.m.  
Shirley, 832-883-1405

### **Support in Your Grieving**

(for anyone who has lost a loved one to a tragic death, overdose or death by suicide)

Wednesdays, 7 p.m.  
Laurie Morgan Silver, [laurie@lauriemorgan.com](mailto:laurie@lauriemorgan.com)  
silver.com, 713-542-5544

### **Project Shalom**

(support/guided activities for adults living with persistent depression, anxiety or related mental health diagnosis)

Thursdays, 12:30-2 p.m., lunch is \$2  
Location: Celebration Company at JFS  
Mallory Botwin, [mbotwin@jfshouston.org](mailto:mbotwin@jfshouston.org), 713-986-7852  
Please reach out for support. We are here for you!

*Laurie Silver has been in private practice in Houston for almost 25 years. She has worked with Jewish Family Service on developing mental health programming, including comprehensive suicide prevention and aftercare efforts. If there is a topic you would like discussed in this column, email [info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org](mailto:info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org).*

11/29/2018

## Butterflies Are Free

Recently while visiting a natural history museum, I got to walk in a rain forest setting to view a spectacular community of live butterflies. I was stunned to learn that while caterpillars take up to two years to grow and develop before opening, most adult moths and butterflies live only a matter of days or weeks, and some don't even have feeding mouth parts. Let me repeat... ***Caterpillars can take up to two years to become butterflies and then they most often live only two weeks.***

I never imagined the life span of most of butterflies is only two weeks and that their sole purpose is breeding. Somehow I always thought that butterflies; a species I particularly love, have long, multi-faceted lives, floating and fluttering around sharing their beauty for years.

Learning about the minute lifespan of a butterfly filled me first with sadness and then with a laugh. How like humans I thought? It takes us more time to learn and grow and change than to live life with maturity and freedom. Butterflies seem to be a metaphor for how short and fragile life truly is for us humans as well.

I remember a movie made in 1972, starring Goldie Hawn in one of her first roles. The movie is called *Butterflies Are Free*. Goldie (Jill in the role) meets her neighbor who turns out to be a young blind man who is living on his own trying to develop independence in spite of his disability. He also plays guitar and writes and sings music.

Goldie's character has never met a blind man before, so she asks him all sorts of questions about how he (neighbor Don) manages everyday chores. She tells Don that her favorite quote is: *"I only ask to be free. The butterflies are free. Mankind will surely not deny to Harold Skimpole what it concedes to the butterflies."* (From *Dickens' "Bleak House"*). Don goes on to write a beautiful song with the lyrics "Butterflies are Free."

When I look at butterflies, I also think of freedom. Because of their beauty and flight, butterflies seem untethered from time and responsibility. But in fact, like humans, butterflies are bound by the fragility of their lifespan and life mission.

Butterflies turn out to be great teachers of mindfulness. Though their lifespan is shockingly short, they fly freely and effortlessly through their days on earth. Even though, g-d willing, our life spans are longer than butterflies, we know that our time is also fleeting and fragile. Butterflies seem to be teaching us to move slowly through our journey and find purpose along the way.

Signature...

# Impeccable Speech

By LAURIE MORGAN SILVER | JFS•

Thu, Dec 06, 2018

We all are unpleasant at some time. We're not always good allies to the people in our relationships. In fact, we sometimes can be kinder to strangers. How do we acknowledge that?

We all are human and we all lose track of being attentive to our own behavior. In our closest relationships, we lose track of how we speak, how we act, how we react and how we respond. So, our starting point is simply to acknowledge that we are human and thus, we give ourselves permission to drop our guard too often in our closest relationships.

Why do we drop our guard? We think we get to truly "be ourselves" in our closest relationships, which gives us permission to drop the effort, the discernment, the caution many times. We don't edit ourselves. We don't stop ourselves. We don't measure ourselves. We carry baggage and we don't clear it up. We think letting our guard down completely is just being "ourselves" and saying what needs to be said.

But, the consequence of no filters or limited filters, of effort or little effort leads to far greater consequences in our closest relationships. So, what does it mean to be an ally in our closest relationships?

Being an ally is being:

- Patient
- Supportive
- Nonjudgmental
- Validating
- Non-argumentative
- Non-provoking
- Kind

I am a proponent of what I call "impeccable speech," which simply means requiring ourselves to be mindful of not only what we say but how we say it. Substance and style. Impeccable speech also is about what we don't say and what we choose not to react to. Impeccable speech is about being a cheerleader/ally to our partners, parents, children, co-workers with our verbal language and our body language.

We don't practice this because we are tired, because we are impatient, because we are worn, because we just plain don't feel like trying. We don't practice because the price of repetitive or ineffective conflict or emotional neglect is just not recognized sufficiently.

So, start by lightening up on yourself most of all, and then on those who you are around the most. Breathe a lot, count to 20, measure your speech, make it as impeccable as you can. And, if and when you falter, which we all do, just be sure to take accountability and say you are sorry. Stay connected!

*Laurie Silver has been in private practice in Houston for almost 25 years. She has worked with Jewish Family Service on developing mental health programming, including comprehensive suicide prevention and aftercare efforts. If there is a topic you would like discussed in this column, email [info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org](mailto:info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org).*

# Teach Your Children Well

By LAURIE MORGAN SILVER | JFS•  
Thu, Dec 13, 2018

*I would love some advice on how to make sure – and keep – a relationship in a position of priority when you have kids at such a young age that they demand so much of you. I also find that, because children this young want lots of physical touch, I get a lot of my needs met for physical touch and, because I am not wanting, I can forget that my husband has those kinds of needs for day-to-day touching, as well.*

New mothers and fathers have the blissful experience of feeling the unconditionality of love between a parent and child. The purity and wholeness of that is intoxicating, uncomplicated and fulfilling. How to connect and reconnect as an adult couple when children fill the picture is more complex and unfamiliar.

For starters, the basic needs of food, activity and sleep for young children require the time and attention of adults in a kind of relentless timely way. By default, the adult “couple,” gets the back seat on a daily basis, simply because of this necessity.

The adult priorities of work and sleep then somehow dominate the balance of time, leaving the adult “couple” to come in last on the list much of the time.

Ironically, children learn about physical and emotional love, not only because of the way they are loved by their parents, but even more significantly because of the way they see their parents love each other. We all walk out of our families of origin with unconscious messages about love and connection and marriage. From watching the marriage of parents or other partnered couples, children learn how to love other people from siblings, to friends, to future partners.

When children observe gentle, humorous, laid-back, loving couples and marriages, they grow up and leave their childhood with the message that marriage (or couples in connection) means loving, physical, gentle, fun, funny, caring, consistent, stable and dependable love. If parents give the gift of not only loving each other in these ways, but also parenting in these ways, children learn well how to give and receive love.

Without seeing the physical and emotional love that adult partners share at



the top of the family hierarchy, however, children ultimately learn that they can “dominate” their parent’s time and attention and eventually even co-parent with their parents.

Without sustaining and deepening love and connection to one’s self (if a single parent) or one’s equally exhausted partner and fellow parent, the endurance and resilience of the couple, and ultimately the family, is compromised. Perhaps, readers may consider these ideas:

- Children want to see that their parents love each other physically and emotionally and take time for each other, even when they complain about it and even before they are truly conscious of it.
- Couples and partners need a very strong connection to each other, in order to parent their children with balanced outlook and strength.
- Couples and partners need to deepen their love and connection to each other so that children can grow up and have their own lives.
- Children of coupled and/or married parents want to know their place, even if they behave otherwise.
- Children of divorce do not want to become surrogate partners, even if it seems otherwise.

In a nutshell, elevate the couple as a priority for your time and tenderness. Spend time alone as a couple, with regularity, and do not leave out the physical component of your relationship. Get help with your children, so you can be alone as a couple and allow your children to adjust to that as a regular part of the family’s life.

Although the balance is subtle, sustain your individual well-being, then that of the couple, then that of your child/children. In unbalanced configurations, the lessons of love and connection are far more complex and challenging for children.

*Laurie Silver has been in private practice in Houston for almost 25 years. She has worked with Jewish Family Service on developing mental health programming, including comprehensive suicide prevention and aftercare efforts. If there is a topic you would like discussed in this column, email [info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org](mailto:info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org).*

# To Understand And To Be Understood

By LAURIE MORGAN SILVER | JFS•

Thu, Dec 20, 2018

Humans yearn to be understood. We want and need to feel that people we care about deeply get us and get where we are coming from. Get what we think and how we feel. Get our sensitivities and our dreams.

After years of working with wonderful couples, I see again and again that it doesn't matter if a partner agrees, but it does matter if a partner listens and hears and validates. Couples can comfortably agree to disagree on many topics, if each person is capable of calmly listening to their partner's point of view and their feelings. Once each person's point of view and feelings are understood and validated, it hardly matters if the couple agrees

When we hear and feel that another person whom we care about is able to hear us and understand and even validate what we feel, then we register a sense of being valued for who we are and what we think and feel. We matter. We count. We are taken into consideration. When we don't feel understood or validated in our thoughts and feelings, we might escalate our behavior as we struggle to connect. Or, we might pull away to deliver hurt in a more indirect way. I see both approaches with clients all the time, and both are ineffective.

Endless films show the scene in the therapist's office, where a couple practices the reflective listening approach. The technique has achieved caricature status, but I have, in fact, watched countless couples de-escalate conflict and reduce tension by taking the time to lovingly listen and understand without defensiveness and without a right or wrong mentality.

Relationships are grey – points of view are not black and white in couples or close friendships or parent-child relationships. What matters most is honoring that we all think and feel things in different ways. We literally see the world through different pairs of eyes. All of our feelings and thoughts are valid. And, the ability to get what another person thinks and feels far outweighs any awards for right or wrong. Blame is a good concept to jettison out of relationships.

As time slows over the winter break, there is more space for couples, friends and families to take time to just listen and actually hear. Hold back judgment and dial up awareness and understanding. The same techniques are used in corporate mediation and international negotiation. Worth a try!

*Laurie Silver has been in private practice in Houston for almost 25 years. She has worked with Jewish Family Service on developing mental health programming, including comprehensive suicide prevention and aftercare efforts. If there is a topic you would like discussed in this column, email [info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org](mailto:info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org).*

## How We Operate In The World

By LAURIE MORGAN SILVER | JFS•

Thu, Dec 27, 2018

When you walk through an airport, do you look up? Do you notice who is around you? Do you see who is walking toward you or who is behind you? Are you engaged in tasks in addition to walking? Like using your cell phone on a call? Or texting. Or checking your text messages?

When you are in a grocery store, do you notice who is around you? Do you notice the carts around you? The people waiting to grind their coffee? The person waiting beside you or behind you at the salad bar or at the checkout?

When you are driving your car, do you let other people enter into your lane in front of you? Do you let another driver from an adjacent lot enter your lane ahead of you? Do you look in your rear view mirror to see if you are holding someone up in the passing lane?

When you are at a pharmacy waiting to pick up a prescription, do you notice who is ahead of you and behind you in line? Do you ever step ahead to ask the cashier a question or do you wait for your turn? Do you remain aware of those behind you when you are in the midst of your turn?

A remarkable article in The New York Times, titled “Teaching Social Skills to Improve Grades and Lives,” reported on a study showing that students who are taught emotional skills not only are more successful in school grades when they have this knowledge, but also have better jobs, greater life stability and more long-term relationships with peers later in their lives.

Through the skills program, children learn how to recognize, communicate and manage their emotions, read others’ emotions, solve problems and change patterns of negative thinking.

School suspension rooms have been replaced with “planning centers,” where students work through problems or practice how to better handle conflicts. Schools have staff teams to lead social and emotional learning efforts and work with families. ... “We have years of data,” said Eric Gordon, chief executive of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. “Our current ninth-graders have a 30 percent higher rating in their social and emotional skills than the 10th- to 12th-grade students,” who missed the programs. “Our senior leadership team spends time looking at this data, just like they do with the

reading and math and graduation data. That's what makes it a priority."

Let's return to the questions in the first two paragraphs. How do you operate in the world? Do you notice or not? I am almost uncomfortable admitting that I am wired-up to be hyperaware of those around me. I defer. I let drivers into the lane before me. I move aside in the airport. I let people go ahead of me at the pharmacy.

This does NOT mean I am patient. In fact, I struggle with patience. But, I have set a "mindfulness goal" for myself to see those around me, to move aside, to pay attention, to "uni-task."

We now have startling evidence that these life-skills behaviors have a significant and measured impact on the outcome of students' lives. The jobs they get, the relationships they make and sustain, the socio-economic realities of their lives. Do we have a choice, then, other than to look up and be fundamentally courteous and aware in the world in which we live?

"Social and emotional learning have always been a critical foundation of education," observed Ed Graff, the superintendent of the Anchorage School District. "People are now at a point where they're beginning to see the true value and benefits of it. It's not something that's a trend. It's the fabric of what we do in education.

Our next step is to take it beyond education out into our communities and throughout the state. That's really where the need is."

I want you to engage in a weeklong experiment. Wherever your walk, drive or go, please make it a point to notice the world and the people around you. Step aside, stay off your phone, pay attention, engage and interact with the strangers around you who make up our world. Emotional learning may change your life. Emotional learning may change our world! Let me know what you discover.

*Laurie Silver has been in private practice in Houston for almost 25 years. She has worked with Jewish Family Service on developing mental health programming, including comprehensive suicide prevention and aftercare efforts. If there is a topic you would like discussed in this column, email [info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org](mailto:info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org).*

# Come At Fear Gently

By LAURIE MORGAN SILVER | JFS•  
Thu, Jan 03, 2019

When we feel afraid, we often respond by showing might. If something is scary enough to us, we are not inclined to approach it meekly. Franklin Roosevelt, in his first-term inauguration speech on March 4, 1933, spoke the famous words: “We have nothing to fear but fear itself.”

We can interpret his statement as meaning that we should face our fears boldly, rather than cower before them. We should not be afraid of our fears. We should master our fears.

## Henry David Thoreau?

If Roosevelt had often expressed those words, it is difficult to understand why his closest colleagues, and even his wife, Eleanor, did not know that he had thought it up. When FDR’s associate and sometimes speechwriter, Samuel Rosenman, asked Eleanor about the expression, she ventured that her husband may have found something very much like it in a volume of Henry David Thoreau’s writings.

Thoreau had written the sentence as part of a literary commentary, “Nothing is so much to be feared as fear,” in his journal entry for Sept. 7, 1851, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, later, quoted his young friend approvingly, and the phrase was included in later collections of Thoreau’s writings.

During the Roosevelt Depression years, the phrase, “the only thing to fear is fear,” had some currency among businessmen promoting efforts to stabilize the economy. A business conference, reported by The New York Times, had a subheading, “Fears Most Fear Itself,” followed by the quote, “In a condition of this kind, the thing to be feared most is fear, itself. Confidence, tempered with prudence, is necessary to the operation of even the most perfect business mechanism. The retarding effect of a sense of insecurity is promptly communicated from worker to consumer, from consumer to producer, and the whole machine stalls, and the anticipated evil becomes real.”

Many in the Depression-era business community were convinced that the country was suffering from a kind of psychic sickness, caused, not by systemic problems in industry or banking, but by the nation’s irrational lapse into fear, which had caused an economic paralysis. By this metaphor, our

nation was an invalid, afflicted with a paralysis of action due to fear.

### **New Thought**

Are humans invalids when we feel afraid? Given that fear can leave us acting very meek, we certainly can feel ill and reduced to emotional paralysis and inaction when we are afraid. But, fear also can be deafening and overpowering and overwhelming and ferocious. Humans can transform the underlying sense of powerless and helplessness beneath their fear into a form of aggression and domination.

So, what if we approach fear from “the middle path,” neither paralysis nor tyranny? What if we come at fear gently, with compassion and humanity? What if we allow ourselves to simply feel the most primal emotion of fear without acting or reacting to it? Just noticing how it is so closely aligned with loss or the possibility of loss. And then, waiting to see what happens next.

*Laurie Silver has been in private practice in Houston for almost 25 years. She has worked with Jewish Family Service on developing mental health programming, including comprehensive suicide prevention and aftercare efforts. If there is a topic you would like discussed in this column, email [info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org](mailto:info@MentalHealthLetsTalk.org).*

## YOU CANT GET THERE FROM HERE IF YOU DONT KNOW WHERE YOU ARE

I was driving through a particularly magical fog and snow filled night. Driving was extra slow as visibility was limited to about two feet in front of me. On the radio was a song I had never heard before with the lyrics "You can't get there from here if you don't know where you are..." I got to my destination and immediately wrote down the title lyric since it struck me as the perfect language to bring in a new year. The secular New Year launching pad is now in front of us asking us to think about here and there...where we are now and where we want to go.

We likely begin the new year of 2019 with that fresh feeling that ushers in the beginning of a transition, making our past seem more distant. Yet in spite of that "all is new" feeling, each of us comes into this year with a number of givens.

We generally have some sort of home or another, a job or another, a routine or another, a little community or another. We likely have commitments of some sort or another.

Feelings of one kind or another. **Look around and get very clear about where you are now. Be honest with yourself about your "givens" and what is working and what is not. What you would want to change and what you want to hold onto in 2019? What are the existing givens that are working and what would you really like to change?**

Now what is required to get you "there"? And where is there? **The journey to "there" may be incremental as humans make change slowly...but we do move toward "there" more successfully if we have a vision unfettered by fear or limitations. The "PURE THERE."**



Now for your first homework assignment of 2019. Gather a pen or pencil and paper or if you prefer a paintbrush and paper. Sit in a quiet cozy place. Close your eyes and bring your focus to your breath just as you have learned in meditation. Visualize your "THERE" including the sounds, smells, tastes, textures and sights. Who is there? What is going on there? Who would you like to join you there? Imagine more than one there. Make it several. With THERE now imagined in multiple scenes, the year's work begins, giving you ample time to figure out the incremental steps to get you from HERE to THERE. Take the leap! Happy abundant joy to you in 2019! And perhaps choose someone to keep you accountable this year as you work to get from here to there!

1/17/2019

## EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON

I do not remember the first time I actually heard this expression or how I learned it. I do remember the first time I believed this statement to be true in my life. That was in the year 1988. I am very aware of people frequently using this expression in conversation today.

When I think of the times I have heard this expression and the times I have thought of this expression in my own life, I recognize that the words were a source of comfort. Sometimes I thought of the words after great pain. At such times, these words offered solace and comfort and a look ahead to transformation, change and hope.

Sometimes, when life is in the flow and filled with abundance and fulfillment, these words confirm that grace and joy and bliss do in fact exist.


But in truth, we haven't a clue. **Do things happen for a reason?** The words offer a spiritual underpinning that gives us a glimpse into a universe we cannot know and cannot see. **Do we want to believe?** Of course we do. When we are hurting as well as when we are in a patch of utter joy do we want to believe that things happen for a reason?

But what if we bring our vision back to each little moment? To the mindfulness of each breath, each thought, each act, each event... then we might observe that things actually do happen for a reason in each single moment.

When we relish our morning coffee, moment-to-moment and breath-to-breath, the aroma and the flavor that emerges happens because of the tiny steps we take to delight in the outcome.

When we have suffered a great loss, then we may relive each moment-to-moment breath of being alive that ultimately took us to the place of living the tragic moment...the one that later we hope happened for a reason.

None of us can know what happens for a reason and what just happens. Perhaps when we die, we will learn something we cannot now know. But if we commit ourselves to living in each and every breath...in each and every moment, then we can trust that everything happens for a reason because we slowly live the moment to moment gift of its unfolding.



# When a Loved One Dies...

Substance Use  
and Overdose

---

## **JFS Mental Health Services**

**Jewish Family Service**  
4131 S. Braeswood  
Houston, Texas 77025

**Phone:** (713) 667-9336  
**Fax:** (713) 667-3619  
**E-mail:** [info@jfshouston.org](mailto:info@jfshouston.org)

[www.jfshouston.org](http://www.jfshouston.org)

 **Jewish Federation  
OF GREATER HOUSTON**

 **United  
Way**  
United Way of Greater Houston

**JFS Mental Health Programs**  
[www.mentalhealthletstalk.org](http://www.mentalhealthletstalk.org)

## If you have experienced the death of a loved one from an overdose or substance use,

your reactions may be unlike anything you have ever experienced. Your feelings and reactions are in fact normal in what feels like an abnormal situation.

## Emotions after an overdose and substance use death include:

**Sadness** over not having had a chance to say good-bye or having many things left unsaid.

**Anger** at your loved one, yourself or others who played a part in their addiction.

**Guilt** as you may re-live over and over the “should haves, could haves” and “if onlys.” You may blame yourself or others.

You may feel a need to place **blame** on yourself, someone else or your deceased loved one.

**Fear and anxiety** are also prevalent grief reactions with a substance use death. There is the fear that other family members or friends currently using might also die. And, there is the fear of relapse for people in recovery.

**Relief** because you are no longer waiting for more terrible news or the next upsetting phone call.

**Frustration** that the system could not help or with the response from police or EMS. You may also feel frustrated if you lacked access to medical information for a loved one over age 18.

**Judged or ashamed** for loving someone with an addiction or for having an addiction yourself. **Shame** makes people hesitant to share. Consequently, you may not reach out but instead become **isolated and lonely**.

The **stigma** society imposes for substance use loss is overwhelming. You may fear judgment from others regarding you, your family and your deceased loved one. Unfortunately, people deeply misunderstand addiction.



## Grief reactions are often intricate and complex.

When you add that your loved one died from an overdose, accidental or not, it complicates matters. There are so many emotions that occur when someone dies, but when the death is from an overdose, the most painful ones rise to the surface.

If you have experienced these emotions or continue to experience them, please know that the intensity and duration changes over time.

## JFS Offers Support

JFS is here to support you and your family and friends from the moment you learn of the death of your loved one by substance use or overdose throughout your grieving process and beyond. We offer individual and family counseling as well as bereavement support groups and psychoeducation. We are here for you.

[www.mentalhealthletstalk.org](http://www.mentalhealthletstalk.org)

Contact Laurie Silver, LCSW at  
[lsilver@jfshouston.org](mailto:lsilver@jfshouston.org) or by calling  
**713-667-9336**

## Resource Links

[www.whatsyourgrief.com/the-grief-of-an-overdose-death/](http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/the-grief-of-an-overdose-death/)  
[www.whatsyourgrief.com/grief-of-an-overdose-death-part-2/](http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/grief-of-an-overdose-death-part-2/)  
[www.centerforloss.com/2017/01/helping-heal-someone-care-dies-drug-overdose/](http://www.centerforloss.com/2017/01/helping-heal-someone-care-dies-drug-overdose/)  
[www.myasd.com/blog/7-ways-grief-compounded-overdose-death](http://www.myasd.com/blog/7-ways-grief-compounded-overdose-death)



## Support for Those Who Have Experienced a Loss from Death by Suicide



**jfs** Mental Health Services

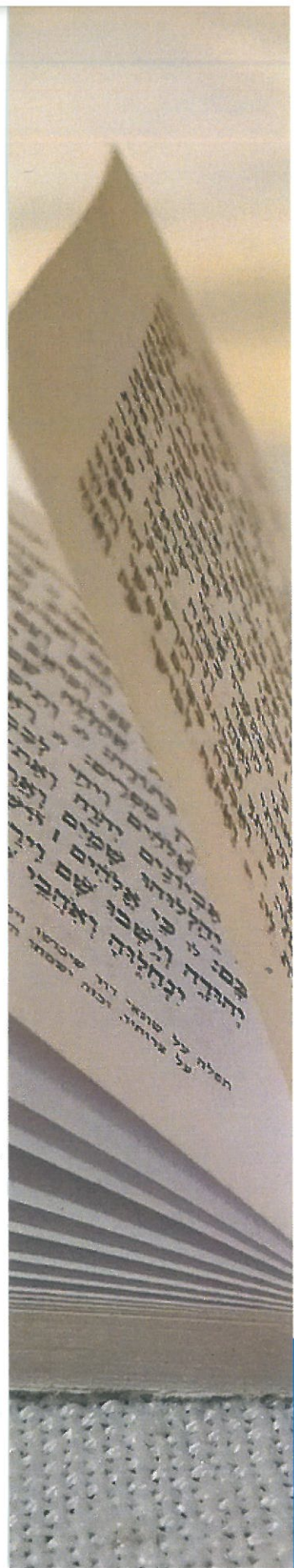
Jewish Family Service  
4131 S. Braeswood  
Houston, Texas 77025

**Phone:** (713) 667-9336  
**Fax:** (713) 667-3619  
**E-mail:** [info@jfshouston.org](mailto:info@jfshouston.org)

[www.jfshouston.org](http://www.jfshouston.org)



JFS Mental Health Programs  
[www.mentalhealthletstalk.org](http://www.mentalhealthletstalk.org)



## You are Not Alone

### Condolences, Comfort & Support After a Possible Death by Suicide

#### *Psalm 23*

A psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I lack nothing. God makes me lie down in green pastures; God leads me to water in places of repose; God renews my life; God guides me in right paths as befits God's name. Though I walk through a valley of deepest darkness, I fear no harm, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me. You spread a table for me in full view of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my drink is abundant. Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for many long years.

#### *Psalm 91*

One that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, God is my refuge and my fortress:  
my God; in God will I trust.

## Sections

Preface  
Page 2

What You May Be Feeling  
Page 4

What May Happen  
Page 13

How Death Affects  
Different Relationships  
Page 17

Facing the Future  
Page 24

Helping Someone Bereaved  
Page 27

The Jewish Mourning Cycle  
Page 31

Resources  
Page 35

## Preface

This Jewish bereavement guide has been designed to help you navigate perhaps the most painful time in your life. The content is based in part on the experiences of those who have suffered a similar tragedy and may have experienced some of what you are going through. We offer these words and guidance as a source of emotional and spiritual grounding during a time of excruciating pain and confusion in your life.

In these pages, you may find help understanding what you might be feeling. You may find direction by understanding what practical details need your involvement. You may find guidance knowing how and where to seek support in the days, weeks, months and years ahead. You may

find solace in grieving through our particular Jewish rituals. And you may also choose to offer this text to your family, friends or colleagues so they can begin to understand some of what you are going through and offer comfort and support.

This guide can only attempt to describe some of what you are going through. It is no substitute for talking things over with those people close to you or to a professional. We at Jewish Family Service of Houston have produced this guide through our *“Let’s Talk About It”* Initiative. JFS seeks to console, support and offer guidance to anyone bereaved by a suicide as well as those who are comforting the bereaved.



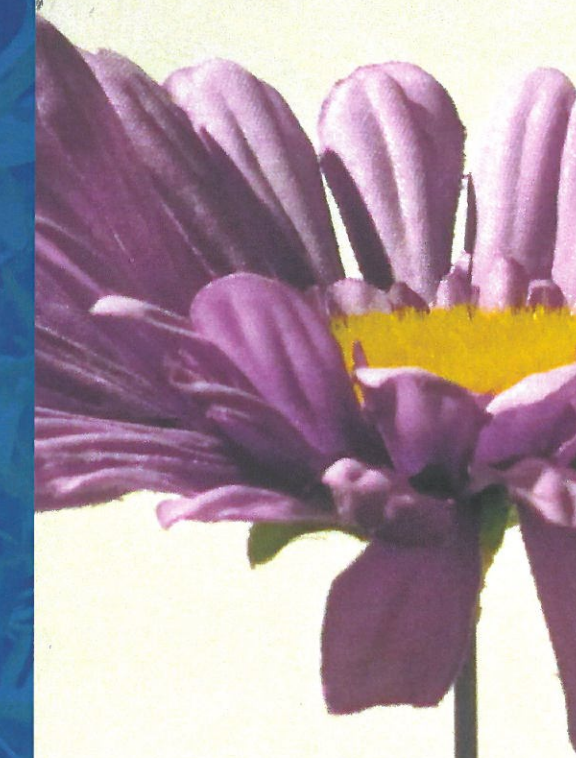
Photo Credit:  
Harry Samelson

## A note about language

Throughout these pages, we use the expressions ‘died by suicide’ and ‘taken their own life’. We understand mourners have their own preferred language but these words are now most common. We do not use the phrase ‘commit suicide’ because it implies people who die this way have committed a crime, which is certainly not the case.

Because there are differing relationships people have had with the person who died (‘loved one’, ‘relative or friend’, ‘someone close’, ‘someone important’) we will use the words ‘person who died’ throughout. This does not devalue the strength of any relationship.

Photo Credit:  
Gabrielle Howard



## What You May Be Feeling

**“In the confusion after the death, when I felt so alone, so devastated and so dazed, I wanted to understand what I was feeling, what was happening in my mind and heart and body and how in the world to grieve.”**

You may be reading this just after someone has died, or weeks, months or years afterwards. Being bereaved by suicide has been described as “grief with an unbearable volume.” Much of what you may be feeling now would be the same if the person close to you had died suddenly or after a long illness. Yet people who have been bereaved say a suicide seems to intensify the normal responses to loss. For example, you may feel a sharper guilt over your own actions, a more bitter blame towards someone else who you feel could have prevented the suicide, anger at the person who died or a deeper despair that someone close to you has died in this way.

## How people grieve

**Grief is as unique as you are, and as individual as a single leaf. Each person will be affected in his or her own way because everyone is different – even in the same family. Each has had their own relationship with the person who has died, their own experience of other losses and differing levels of support available.**

People also have their own ways of expressing feelings. Some find it helpful to share feelings and thoughts. Some find it very hard to cry or to put into words how they are feeling; it doesn't mean that they are not as distressed as someone who cannot stop crying.

In your grieving, you may find that other people tell you how you are or what you should be feeling, even suggesting how to grieve. Although well meaning, only you can find your own grieving path by listening to yourself and remembering there is no right way to be feeling or grieving.

**When someone dies suddenly and unexpectedly, you may experience an overwhelming tangle of feelings and thoughts that seem to occur simultaneously. Please know that everyone grieves and feels emotions in their own way. You may feel a range of emotions at the same time or you may be overwhelmed by a single emotion such as sadness. The range of emotions each mourner feels is also individual.**



These emotions are listed alphabetically as there is no order or priority to how anyone may feel. This list is not exhaustive as each person experiences loss in their own way.

6

Abandonment, Agitation, Anger, Anxiety, Betrayal, Confusion, Defensiveness, Despair, Desperation, Disbelief, Fear, Guilt, Hopelessness, Longing, Numbness, Feeling Overwhelmed, Powerlessness, Questioning, Rejection, Relief, Sadness, Shame, Shock, Stigmatized, Suicidal.

## Looking More Closely at Emotion

### Anger

People who have been bereaved often feel angry. You may be angry with the person for dying in this way or for leaving you. You may be angry for all the pain left behind or because you have to deal with so many practical details and you feel ill-prepared. You may be angry with yourself for missing signs or warnings. Or you may be angry with someone else who you feel let the person down, or with those who you believe should have taken better care of the person. If you have faith, you may be angry with your God. You may find yourself questioning your faith and feel angry and disillusioned that something this tragic could have happened under God's watch.

### Defensiveness

The uncertainty over how people will react can lead you to behave defensively to protect yourself in case someone says something upsetting or asks intrusive questions. Particularly with a death by suicide, you may find it hard to let this guard down and talk openly about how you are feeling. Some people say it can be easier to talk with people who have also been bereaved by suicide.

### Despair

People bereaved by suicide may question whether they can face living without the person who has died. For some, this may be a fleeting thought; for others, it can become a deep despair that leads to thoughts of suicide. Mourners can also feel they must somehow live the life of the person who died by suicide, leading to extended grieving and emotional turmoil.

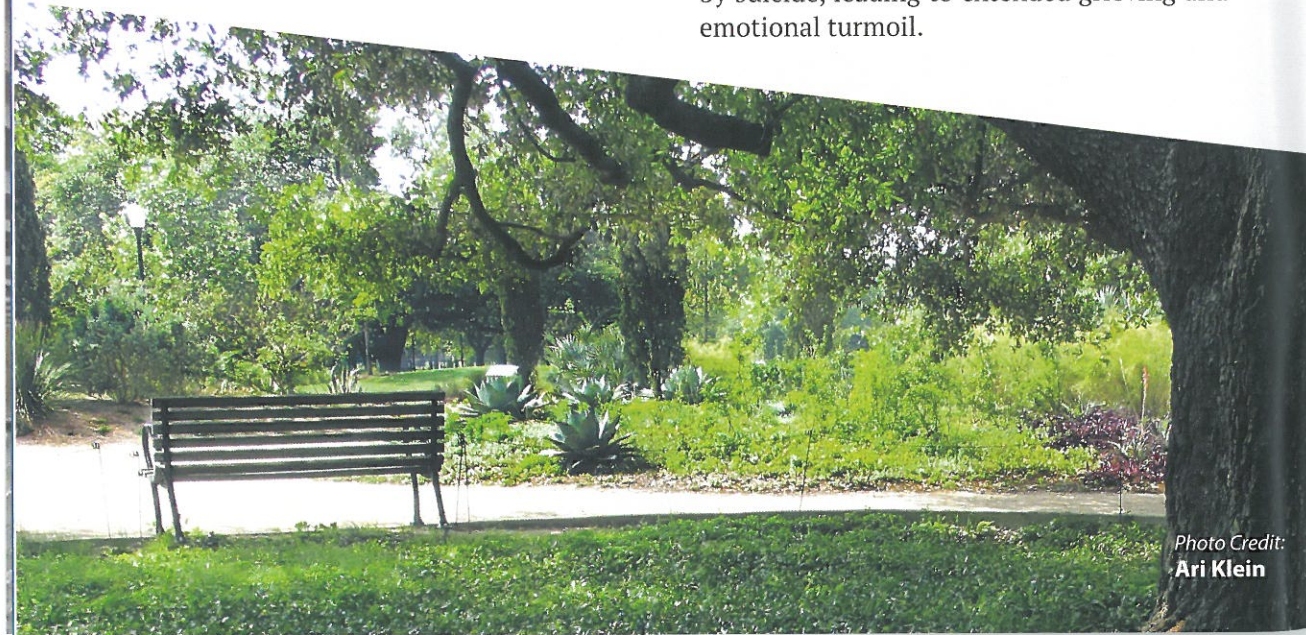


Photo Credit:  
Ari Klein



Photo Credit:  
Amy Davis

7

### Disbelief

Some people find it hard to accept the reality of the death. Internalizing the permanence that the person will no longer be part of their lives can take years. It is natural to struggle to believe what has happened, especially if the person may have died by suicide. This feeling can fade as the reality of their death sinks in, but you may still find yourself doubting what has happened for a very long time. You may experience the death as unreal or surreal, as if you are living in a time warp. Mourners often describe moving along at a different pace than others are moving.

### Fear

Grief can feel frightening; a shaky uncertainty because everything has changed. Sometimes people are afraid about what life will be like without the person who has died or the impact the death will have on others. It can be difficult or impossible to imagine a different future. Mourners can also feel fear about the way the person may have died, struggling to accept the death was by suicide.

### Guilt

Some people may feel painful guilt. You could be feeling guilty for something you did or did not do, or said or did not say. It may help to remember that only the person who died knows why they could no longer bear to live. Feeling overwhelming guilt may be one of the main reasons that bereavement through suicide is so painful. Guilt is not a feeling that can be diminished by someone reminding you of all the good things you did for the person who died. The guilt felt by the bereaved can sometimes feel like failure.

It is important to remember that mental illness can be fatal. Blaming yourself for a death by suicide is unjustified. Remember no one blames himself or herself when someone dies from cancer or heart disease. Brain illness is a disease too.

### Numbness

Some find it hard to feel anything due to the magnitude of shock. People who experience this numbness can feel guilty for not expressing grief through crying or talking, especially when others around them may find it easier. For some, it can take a long time for pain to break through and mourners can feel they are floating or disconnected or detached from any emotional response. This can make it hard to answer simple questions such as "how are you feeling?" Because the answer is sometimes "nothing." Often mourners find they prefer being alone because of the emotional states of being overwhelmed and numb.

### Longing

A particular sadness after someone has died can take the form of a desperate yearning for that person. It can be a physical sensation: wanting to see, touch, hold or smell them. It can feel like a heart-breaking longing for them to return, even for just a moment. These feelings are common not only early in the grieving process but over the course of many years especially at particular times of the year like birthdays, holidays or anniversaries. Other happy times like births, weddings, b'nai mitzvahs and graduations can leave mourners feeling alone and lonely, longing for their loved one to share in the joy.

## Looking at Other Physical and Mental Responses

8

The body and mind can show the impact of grief through many physical symptoms as if one is ill. These are normal physical reactions that can cause worry for the mourner:

- Low energy: needing more rest, tiring more quickly, feeling generally fatigued
- Hyperactivity: an intense state of arousal or panicky feelings, bursts of physical energy, difficulty sitting still, needing to move around
- Crisis response: elevated heart rate, high blood pressure, muscle tension, dizziness, weakness, headaches, not feeling well, tightness in the throat and chest, shortness of breath, dry mouth, feeling overwhelmed
- Susceptibility to illness: suppression of the body's immune system
- Aggravation of pre-existing chronic medical conditions or precipitation of new ones: ulcers, colitis, hiatal hernia, arthritis, asthma, migraines, back pain
- Sighing or yawning: shallow breathing, inhaling frequently, trying to catch your breath
- Feeling off balance, uncoordinated
- Nausea
- Erratic eating and sleeping patterns, insomnia, weight loss or gain
- Susceptibility to use of drugs, alcohol, nicotine, caffeine and food

- Heaviness: feeling as if you're made of lead
- Feeling "out of sync" with your body
- Distorted perceptions of time and distance

As mourners move beyond the initial weeks and months, caring for oneself becomes very important especially when one is suffering the physical symptoms of grieving. Though self-care cannot erase grief, it may offer periods of relief. Paying attention to nutrition, rest, relaxation, meditation, exercise and human contact are so important to healing.



Photo Credit:  
Halley Turner

## Other Suggestions For Coping With Physical Symptoms of Grieving

9

- Ask someone to stay with you to help you focus and prioritize what needs to get done.
- Feel permission to ask for help with specific tasks like reviewing medical bills or doing errands. Family and friends often feel helpless and confused and specific tasks and requests can help them to know they are meeting your needs.
- Inform your physician about what's happening in your life, so your blood pressure, weight changes and other health indicators can be monitored.
- Know you will make it through these episodes, even if it doesn't feel like it at the time.
- Recognize that your thinking processes, coordination and reaction time aren't your norm right now.
- Breathe. Frequently throughout the day, stop what you're doing, take a deep breath, hold it, then exhale very slowly and repeat this pattern for a number of minutes.
- Add fruit, vegetables and grains to your diet. Eat smaller, more frequent meals rather than three big ones. Eat foods you like that are easy to fix and digest, and include food that is special and comforting to you as well.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Find an exercise you can do (stretching, walking, swimming, dancing, swinging or swaying to music) and set aside time to do it regularly.
- Reach out to family and friends and seek touch. Cuddle children and pets; hold hands with your friends; get a massage.
- Attend to personal grooming (hair, skin, nails, wardrobe) that will support your sense of wellbeing.
- If you're having trouble sleeping, speak to your doctor for support.

Finally, be mindful if physical symptoms persist and deepen to a clinical level that may indicate depression or generalized anxiety. It is not abnormal that the shock and despair of grieving a death by suicide may lead to these outcomes. Allow yourself to always seek medical support and consultation without hesitation if you have concern about your physical or mental responses to grieving. Grief and bereavement support groups and individual counseling can also offer comfort during this time.

## Tasks of Mourning

10

Models of grieving are numerous. The theory of stages of grieving first introduced by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross has now transitioned to the “tasks of grieving,” written about by William Worden. We offer his model as a possible framework for understanding your grieving process.

Worden suggests there are four tasks of mourning. The idea behind the model is that grief is painful work that requires active participation on the part of the mourner and those who want to help him or her. He emphasizes these are in no particular order and that people may need to revisit certain tasks over time. Worden writes that grief is not linear, and that it is difficult to determine a timeline for completing the grief tasks. What are Worden’s suggested tasks?

- Task #1 To accept the reality of the loss
- Task #2 To work through the pain of grief
- Task #3 To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing
- Task #4 To find an enduring connection with the deceased while embarking on a new life

The first task can be both simple and complex. There are basic ways one can accept the reality of a loss: going through the rituals of a funeral or memorial, beginning to speak about (and think about) the person in past tense, etc. On a more complex level, there is accepting the reality of the significance of the loss. For example, one may speak of someone in the past tense and accept their death, but may downplay the significance of their relationship with that person, denying the impact the loss will have. On a basic level they may have accepted the reality of the loss, but on a deeper level they will not have accomplished this task until they have fully accepted the depth of the relationship and correlating impact. Another common struggle with this task is around acceptance of the mechanism of the death. A death by

suicide or overdose, may present challenges to accomplishing this task if family or friends are unable to accept the reality of the mechanism of the death.

Task two is to work through the pain of grief. Rather than attempting to identify all the emotions of grief that one may experience and need to work through, Worden’s model acknowledges that each person and each loss will mean working through a range of different emotions. From sadness, fear, loneliness, despair, hopelessness, and anger to guilt, blame, shame, relief, and countless others, there are many emotions you as a griever will contend with. What is important in this task is acknowledging, talking about, and understanding these complex emotions in order to work through them. The danger, of course, is denying one’s feelings and avoiding them. This tendency can be exacerbated by society’s discomfort with the feelings that accompany grief, so the griever may feel like they shouldn’t feel or acknowledge these difficult emotions.



Photo Credit:  
Neville Karpas

Task three is adjusting to the environment in which the deceased is missing. Worden acknowledges that this task can also mean very different things to people depending on the relationship to the person who has died, as well as the roles that are impacted by the loss. This readjustment happens over an extended period of time, and can require internal adjustments, external adjustments, and spiritual adjustments. It may take a significant period of time just to realize the different roles the loved one performed or internal and spiritual adjustments that are required. This can be especially difficult for those who may need to learn a wide array of new skills and tasks, ranging from bill paying, parenting, and taking care of the home, to environmental changes, such as living alone, doing things alone, and redefining the self without the other person. This can also mean adjusting to a new spiritual environment, which may have been changed by the experience of the death. This task requires developing the necessary skills to move confidently forward in the changed environments – internal, external, and spiritual.

Finally, task four is to find an enduring connection with the deceased while embarking on a new life. This task asks you to find an appropriate, ongoing connection in your emotional life with the person who has died, while allowing you to continue living. Like the other tasks, this can mean varying things to grievers. But it often means allowing for thoughts and memories, while beginning to meaningfully engage in things that bring pleasure, new experiences, or new relationships. For Worden, not accomplishing this task is to not live. It is the sense that life stopped when the person died and that one is not able to resume life in a meaningful way with a different sense of connection to the person who has died. This last task can take a long time and be one of the most difficult to accomplish.

Tasks of Mourning adapted from

11



Photo Credit:  
Halley Turner

Psalm 16

Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extends not to thee;

But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.

Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: thou maintains my lot.

The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

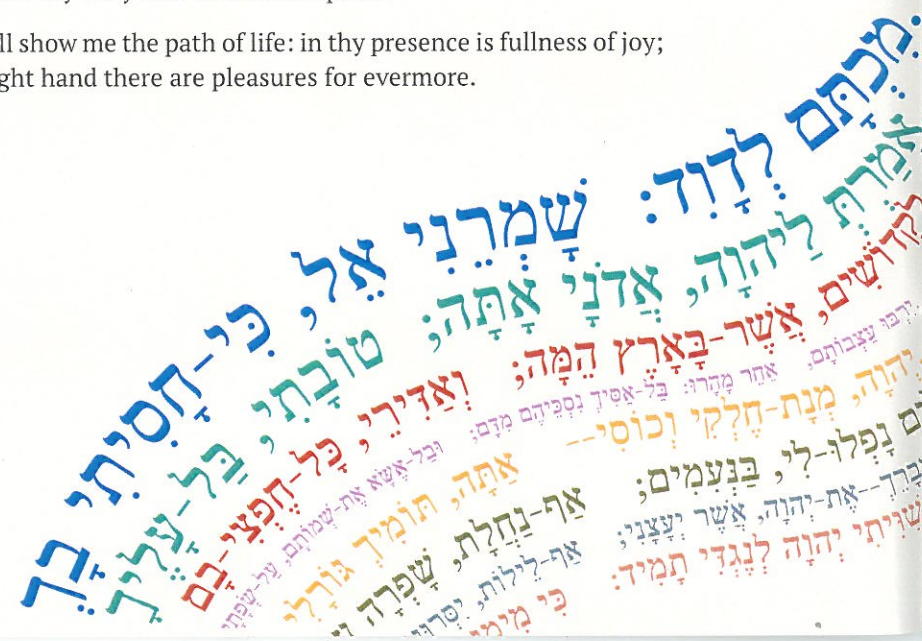
I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

I have set the Lord always before me: because God is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiced: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

For thou will not abandon me to the realm of the dead; neither will thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.

Thou will show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.



### What May Happen

The following information is designed to give you some idea of what practical things generally take place in the days and weeks following a death by suicide.

#### Jewish view of possible death by suicide

Jewish law speaks of an individual who acts on impulse or who is under severe mental strain or physical pain when they take their life by suicide of being an anuss, meaning a "person under compulsion," and hence not responsible for his or her actions. All burial and mourning rites are observed for those who may have died by suicide because of mental illness or physical strain.

Photo Credit: Arielle Harter

### Do the police have to get involved?

#### Remember that neither you nor your loved one has committed a crime.

Because suicide involves taking one's life, the authorities are required to investigate to determine the cause of death. Suicide is not against the law, but given that there are cases where a homicide has been made to look like a suicide, the authorities will want to make certain that the suicide has not been staged to cover up foul play.

At the scene of the suicide the police may limit your access to the body—and to your home, if that's where the suicide took place—until their initial investigation is complete. They may also take some of your loved one's personal belongings, including any notes or messages that they may have left. If the police take personal possessions, be sure to ask for an inventory so you can keep track of what should be returned to you. You have the right to get all of these possessions back once the investigation is complete.

As part of the investigation, the police will want to question you. You should cooperate with them, but you have every right to ask them to conduct their investigation quickly and sensitively. You also have the right to have a friend, family member or clergy with you at the time of the interview.

#### When the death occurs away from home

The investigation and post-mortem procedures all take place in the area where the person died, not where the person comes from or lives. This may be difficult, as it will mean you have to travel for the interview and then make arrangements to return the body home. You can expect support from the coroner's office, your hometown funeral home and your clergy. Remember you can ask

a family member, friend or clergy to travel with you during this incredibly stressful time.

#### Can I/do I have to view the body? Will there to be an autopsy?

If you are the immediate next of kin but not the person who discovered and identified the body at the scene of the suicide, you will be asked to identify the body either in person or through photographs. You may choose not to identify the body yourself and ask someone else to do so.

Even if the body has already been identified, you have the right to view it, and also to request that the coroner or medical examiner give you time alone with your loved one.

Whether you view your loved one's body is up to you. Research conducted with people who chose to view the body indicates that most survivors later on feel they made the right decision in doing so. While they may forever carry that last image in their mind, they also feel that the experience helped them come to terms with the reality of the death. But this will be a difficult and stressful decision on your part – take your time – and try, as best you can, to decide what will be best for you in the long run.

Before you view the body, it is a good idea to have a friend or relative view the body (or photographs of the body) first to determine if the sight might be too traumatic for you.

In addition, family members can have different views on seeing the body and experts recommend holding a facilitated family counseling session to help to clarify individual needs among family to determine choices. Jewish Family Service clinicians are trained and available to counsel you and your family members as you navigate these painful decisions.

The medical examiner or coroner may discourage you from viewing the body if the suicide method has caused significant damage on the grounds that the sight will unduly upset you. This is a legitimate concern, but the decision about whether to view the body and how much of the body to view is yours to make.

In the event of a suicide, the medical examiner or coroner is required to perform an **autopsy** on the body, which is a surgical procedure used to determine the cause of death. The next of kin have a right to request a copy of the autopsy report. You can tell the medical examiner that the deceased is Jewish and request that the coroner performs as limited an autopsy as possible.

In Orthodox Judaism, autopsies are not allowed. If a coroner knows this tradition and the evidence of suicide vs. homicide is clear, the request to avoid an autopsy may be

You may even be hesitant to share with others that your loved one took their own life. While we cannot determine what is right for you, please note that in the long run, most survivors are glad that they decided to be honest about the facts of the death. One of the most important reasons to be honest about the way your loved one died is that it will give your friends and family the opportunity to support you in an appropriate way over the long course of your life.

#### What do I tell my children?

If you are the parent or guardian of a minor child (children), it is up to you to determine whether to tell your children the truth about what happened. Please bear in mind that people talk, and while you may not (yet) wish to share the nature of your loved one's death with your child (children), it's very possible that they will overhear adults discussing or speculating about the nature of the death.

When explaining the suicide to a child or adolescent, provide truthful information,

honored. Judaism also encourages a burial as soon after a death as can be arranged. Autopsies can sometimes delay a timely burial.

#### What do I tell people about what happened?

##### Feeling alone and isolated

Some of those bereaved by suicide find it hard to face others, particularly in the early days. Having to try to explain what happened and answer everyone's questions is extremely difficult and painful. Some also feel, mostly because of the stigma of suicide and the shame they feel, that they cannot face others and will not be able to express their true feelings. This too is just fine and experienced by many. Perhaps you can talk first to those you most trust and feel comfortable with, and as that begins to soften your fear, you can slowly turn to others and discover your discomfort is less than in the beginning.

encourage questions, and offer loving reassurance.

- Reassure children that they are not responsible, and that nothing they said or did caused anyone else to take their own life.
- Be prepared to talk about the suicide multiple times during the first days and weeks, and later throughout the child's life.
- Consider a children's bereavement support group to offer your child the comfort of grieving with others near their age.

### How do I handle the media if the suicide has caught the public's attention?

You are under no obligation to talk to the media about your loved one's death, but if you choose to do so, it can be helpful to designate someone as the family's spokesperson and for that person to have prepared remarks. With the death of a very public individual, you can also choose to give exclusive rights to the story to just one reporter. This way, if other reporters contact you or show up at your door, you can refer them to the reporter you've already entrusted with your story.

### What do I need to know about planning the funeral?

*The support of friends and relatives can make a huge difference in the bereaved person's capacity to manage their grief.*

If you have any concerns that the funeral home where you would like to hold your loved one's funeral might not be comfortable handling a suicide death, ask up front (or have a family member or friend ask for you).

**In our area, however, you are not likely to face this response.**



Photo Credit:  
Harry Samelson

**If the funeral is to include a Jewish clergy member, talk to them in advance to explore their understanding of suicide and consider discussing your views about suicide and the content of the messages or eulogies you wish for clergy to offer to mourners at the service. Work with the funeral home and clergy of your choice to structure the service in a way that offers mourners comfort during an intensely stressful time. Feel receptive to offers of support by family and friends as you plan a funeral service or ceremony.**

For those in mourning, taking time to plan who if anyone will join the immediate family in the "waiting room" prior to the service and who will join the family at the cemetery can add greater solemnity and reduce stress.

Research shows that death by suicide involves a combination of health and psychosocial (life) factors, and most all clergy will be both sympathetic and supportive of you and your family. Choose someone in the clergy who offers you comfort and understanding.

If you'd like to memorialize your loved one with charitable donations, provide an "in lieu of flowers" statement in the obituary or at the funeral home that informs people where they can send monetary donations in your loved one's name.

### In my loved one's obituary, do I have to say the death was a suicide?

Do what feels comfortable to you. However, by including the cause of death you will avoid repeated questions and rumors about how your loved one died later on, and you will again give people the opportunity to support you in a way that is meaningful and remove layers of shame and stigma from burdening your grieving path.

You might share that your loved one died after a long struggle with mental illness.

## How Death Affects Different Relationships

Those who live after the death of a person by suicide are referred to as "survivors of suicide." The term **suicide survivor** is potentially a confusing one, since it might logically refer to people who have attempted **suicide** and survived the attempt. But the term **suicide survivor** has come to mean someone who is bereaved after the death by **suicide** of someone they know.

Photo Credit:  
Evan Levine

Photo Credit:  
Gabrielle Howard

*No survivor can ever know the full story of a death by suicide because the person who has all the answers is gone. Haunting questions and incomplete narratives contribute to the trauma of grieving a death by suicide. Because of this, those who knew the person who died, whether a partner, family member, friend or colleague can be emotionally tormented by endless questions that will never have answers. The burden of these unanswered questions adds to the particular grieving faced by each survivor.*

*"How did I let this happen?" "What did I miss?" "What didn't I know or see?" "What if I hadn't left the house?" "Why didn't I find another doctor or seek a different form of*

### Partners

When a partner dies by suicide, you may feel the life you lived together has been completely rejected. You may ask unanswerable questions such as: "wasn't I enough reason to stay alive?" You may feel that the death has wiped out the memories of good times together for a very long time.

If the death was unexpected, you are likely to feel that the ground has fallen from under your feet. If you have been supporting your partner through mental illness or previous attempts for a long time, you may experience confused feelings of frustration, exhaustion, ambivalence and relief.

*People whose partner has died by suicide sometimes say the manner of their death can*

*treatment?" "How will I ever recover from my own culpability?" "Why didn't I take certain comments more seriously?"*

*And as shocking and distorted as these words may seem, those who die by suicide genuinely feel those left behind will be better off without them. Some who have survived an attempted suicide explain reaching a point when desperation removed their ability to see anything beyond an end to their mental anguish. In that narrow reality, those who attempt or die by suicide also feel that those they love and care about will be spared further worry and suffering when they are gone.*

*make others treat them in a very different way, as if they were "tainted" or to blame for what has happened. This can sometimes be the case with a partner's relatives who are, of course, also grieving.*

If you and the person who died have children, you may feel hurt and anger on their behalf and carry enormous fear about their future wellbeing.

The death of an ex-partner can also hurt unexpectedly. You may not feel entitled to grieve and your reasons for grieving might not be easily understood by others such as your "ex-partners" family or friends; yet grieving will likely be inevitable as you shared part of your lives together. To not grieve the person you were in a relationship with and knew well, would feel unnatural.

### Parents

For any parent, the death of a child – whatever their age, whatever the cause – is a kind of physical, emotional and spiritual devastation that defies language. When a child dies before a parent, the natural order of life seems violated. For a parent whose child has died, the inability to see or hold or be with their child, to see their child continue to grow up, to share the milestones and challenges of their life, is a loss so crushing that survivors express that life feels broken and forever changed.

After a death by suicide, you may tear yourself apart with questions and then put yourself on trial, finding only guilt. You may also feel that others are judging you – and your child – in a way they would not if your child had died in any other way. Even if your child was grown up and no longer at home for years before their death, you may endlessly wonder and relive what you could have done that might have changed the outcome.

Partnered parents may grieve in different ways. While one may find it impossible to talk about what has happened, seem unmoved and keep themselves busy, the other may need to talk, to cry and to express feelings

and pain. This may lead to a sense of being estranged from each other at a time when you most need each other's support. This may lead one parent to think that the other does not care. Single or separated parents may feel very alone and unsupported.

Parents whose adult child has died by suicide sometimes feel they have to support their child's partner and any other children, thus putting their own grief "on hold."

It can be especially difficult to support other children while you are grieving. While you know they need your support, you may feel you have nothing left to give. You may end up hiding your feelings and not talking about the enormity of what has happened.

Parents bereaved by suicide may worry that their other children will also consider suicide, which can result in becoming hyper-vigilant and over-protective.

If you are a parent whose only child has died, you may wonder how you will ever define or describe yourself in the future. You may feel like "a mother without a child." This may make answering the question "do you have any children?" very painful.

### Children and the Young

*When a young person dies by suicide, intense support is needed for their network of friends. Friends have likely shared many things together and they can feel intense shock, confusion, worry and self-blame that there was more they could have done or might have said. Family and other adults may not understand just how important or how severe the grieving can be for friends of the person who died.*

*Often young people may struggle to share their thoughts and feelings with members of their family, so support organizations, school counselors and helplines can be critical avenues for sharing feelings.*

Photo Credit:  
Arthur Alexander

## Children

For children of any age, the death of a parent by suicide brings particular complexity and challenge. Children are likely to feel literally and emotionally abandoned. Many children find it excruciating to avoid believing that somehow they weren't enough of a reason for their parent to keep living. Other children may feel they were somehow the reason their parent took their own life.

With young children who have lost a parent or sibling to suicide, a natural response is to want to protect them from knowing what has happened and to provide an alternative explanation for the death. It is better for children to hear the truth from people who love them than from someone in the playground or on social media. At such a vulnerable time, children need to feel there are people they can trust. Holding a secret can not only be impossible but also carry damaging emotional consequences for a child's future.

Telling a child the truth about a death by suicide can bring great stress and pain to the adult who is sharing the news. But talking about what has happened sets a precedent of truth for a vulnerable child. By answering questions (within the limits of their age and level of understanding) an adult respects a child's right to have honest and true information. The adult can also determine what a child actually understands.

Ideally, a parent is the best person to tell the child what has happened. If this is not possible, ask another relative or friend that the child trusts to explain what has happened. Most important is continually reassuring a child or children that they are not to blame.

If the child has already been given a different explanation for the death, it is possible and important to go back and tell the truth. For example you could say something like, "You know I told you that your Dad had an

accident and that is why he died. Well, I've been thinking about this and I would like to tell you more about how he died. I didn't know what to say when it happened, it was such a shock. Now I'd like you to know what actually happened that day."

You may be wondering whether children should view the person's body or whether they should attend the funeral. These decisions will depend on your knowledge of the child's level of understanding. Children and young people value being given the information to make their own choice.

Young people may experience extreme anger not only with the person who died, but also with other members of the family and even with themselves. Grief can put a great strain on relationships and young people may become estranged from members of their family or friends. Children and young people can also be naturally scared that someone else in their family may die by suicide.

### **Children and young people learn to grieve by watching the adults around them.**

If adults grieve openly, expressing feelings will be acceptable. If adults close off, children and young people will not know it is okay to show emotion. Reassurance and open communication is essential and emotionally healing. When a grieving child or young person can share how they are feeling and talk about what has happened, healing can begin.

It is also natural to be afraid that affected children will grow up believing that suicide is a choice. Clearly telling a child or young person that **you do not believe that suicide is ever an option** will be a critical message that you continue to reinforce over time.

You can say things like: "I know I have not been myself since your Dad died but I am not going anywhere. I get sad and angry, because I am still so shocked, but I want you to know that I am here for you and I will never take my own life."

Children and young people also need help with answering questions from others because their friends may be very direct and intrusive. Help them find words they are comfortable saying, for example: "My sister died last weekend. I am very sad. It was suicide. Please don't ask me anything else. If I can talk about it, I'll let you know."

Children may find a graveside service to be a scary experience. Help them find a way to say whether they want to go to the funeral service only. If they go, prepare children for what they will hear or see at a funeral. If you can, give a child permission not to attend a funeral service or burial if they don't want to participate.

Children may give the appearance of coping well when an event unrelated to the death triggers a big reaction. Grappling with the permanence of death, children can exhibit regressive behaviors like bedwetting, thumb sucking, separation anxiety, wanting to sleep with parents, feelings of insecurity, wanting to be held, food demands or baby talk.

Some friends may post intrusive questions on social media. You can help a young survivor find a comfortable way to say, "Please do not talk about my loss online because it causes me a lot of pain."

In contrast, some young people actually find it much easier to talk openly and may want to say things to their friends or teachers like "please don't stop talking to me about my mother just because of what happened. I know it is hard but I want to talk to you about her and what happened."

Photo Credit:  
Halley Turner







Photo Credit:  
Harry Samelson

### Siblings

Sibling relationships are the longest of our lives. If your brother or sister dies by suicide, you immediately lose a person who you have grown up with, laughed with, argued with, and with whom you share the deepest memories. You may feel you have lost your shadow or your closet person in your world. You may feel so devastated you cannot connect to the magnitude of the lifetime loss. You may feel you should have protected your sibling, or you may feel really hurt that they did not turn to you for support. If you have had a troubled relationship, you may feel you are left with unresolved issues.

When you lose a sibling, you are facing your own grief and confusion but you can also feel responsible for helping to support your parents with their grief. You may now feel you have additional responsibility for looking after your parents as they age. Friends may ask about your parents without realizing you are also grieving. Sometimes, you may feel you have lost all your family at once because your parents withdraw from you into their grief. You can reach out to your extended family and friends for support.

### Friends

Most people who die by suicide have friends they were very close to and often feel closer to than they do with some of their family. After the death, close friends may feel that their grief and needs are overlooked. As a best friend, it can be hard to find yourself in a secondary role after the death, having little or no involvement in planning the funeral or other arrangements. You may also have particularly intense feelings to deal with if you are the person who knew how low your friend was feeling. Maybe your friend who died also knew things about you that no one else did, and now they are gone.

Friends can sometimes feel that they are not “entitled” to any support after someone dies or that their feelings or needs are overlooked after a death. It is important to remember that what matters is how this loss affects you, not whether you were related as family to the person who died. If you are grieving, you deserve to be supported in your grief.

### Older People

Older people may grieve for the person who died and for the grief being felt by other family members. Or they may feel they should not express their grief, feeling it is in some way “less important” or that they need to “stay strong” for others in the family. Older people may also struggle more with the stigma of a death by suicide.

### People with Cognitive and/or learning disabilities

People often underestimate the capacity of a person with cognitive or learning difficulties to feel grief and understand death. Your knowledge of the person with learning difficulties is likely to help you know best how to support them in dealing with new experiences. It can feel particularly difficult if the person who died was one of the people who could best understand them and their needs.

Sometimes, because people may not be able to express their grief in the usual ways, those around them may assume they are not grieving when they are actually feeling distress and pain.

Any death can be a difficult concept to convey, and the idea of a death by suicide may be even harder to understand. Simple, clear, repeated explanations of what has happened could help; our language around death can be very confusing. People with learning difficulties may struggle to understand concepts such as “lost” or “passed away” and may prefer a more literal explanation such as “died.”

### The Impact on Many

Any individual death, especially a death by suicide, can affect people far beyond immediate family and friends.

Many people are sad and distressed after a death by suicide, and you don’t have to be a family member or friend of the person who has died to be deeply affected. For instance, you may be one of these people:

- Work colleague, ex-colleague or fellow volunteer
- School, college or university student or staff
- Social media contact
- Health professional (nurse, doctor, counselor) who may have supported the person through crises

- Emergency services (e.g. paramedic) who may have been first on the scene and tried to save them
- Police who may have had to break the news to a devastated family or may have found the person who died

Often when you are affected by a death, the impact brings other deaths and losses you have previously experienced more sharply into your mind. You may feel a deepened grief remembering those losses and you may wonder if there was something you could have done to prevent this person from dying.



Photo Credit:  
Melissa Shapiro

## Facing the Future

### The Shema

Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

Blessed be the name of the Glory of God's kingdom forever and ever.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be upon your heart.

Photo Credit:  
Gabrielle Howard

The most important factor in healing from loss is having the support of other people. Even if you are not comfortable talking about your feelings, sharing your loss makes the burden of grief easier to bear.

### Grieve in Your Own Way

Do what is right for you. If you are not ready to do something, (such as go to visit the grave) wait until you are ready. Don't let anyone tell you how to feel. It is your grief and no one can tell you when it is time to "move on" or "get over it." Don't worry about going crazy because you are not, even if you feel that way at times. Feelings of losing your mind are a result of emotions barraging you when you are most vulnerable. On the other side of these dark and unsettling experiences can be a path forward despite the often unbearable pain.

### Face Your Feelings

In order to heal, you have to acknowledge your feelings, or begin to talk them out with a professional. Avoiding or trying to suppress your grief, even if it is for the best of intentions (e.g. looking after the rest of the family) will only prolong the grieving and may lead to further problems down the road, such as depression, anxiety, substance use or other health problems.

### Don't Rush Yourself

Losing someone to suicide is devastating and your healing can only happen at its own pace. You cannot force your way through it. Nor are there any "quick fixes." You cannot compare your grief to anyone else. We are all different and unique and we all grieve in our own way and time. Be compassionate to yourself.

## Expect Set Backs

As you work through your grief, you will begin to feel more and more “good days” but some times you will experience setbacks that leave you feeling you are back where you started. This too is a normal part of grieving. Grieving is no longer thought of as a process of linear stages so your healing will not happen in a straight path. Even in the early days and months, mourners may feel guilty when good memories or thoughts of the person emerge. This is also part of the grieving process and can provide a bittersweet glimpse of hope.

## Grief Triggers

The first year of mourning is filled with triggers as each holiday or special time is reached without your loved one for the first time. Reaching the first month or first year of the anniversary of the person’s death is an especially painful trigger.

In fact, anniversaries, birthdays and other special occasions may always be painful reminders of your loved one’s death by suicide. In fact, professionals may share the reality that “body memory” may offer a foreshadowing of a coming grief set back. You may notice you are not feeling quite right in your body or you are off emotionally only to discover on the calendar you are about to reach a special date in the life of the person who died.

For some people the anticipation of these occasions is the hardest part and for others, it is the occasion itself.

Grief can be triggered at almost anytime unrelated to specific special events or times of year. A commercial on TV, a movie you are watching, an article you are reading, a song you are listening to, a sign you notice on the road can all trigger a grief response. Often the triggers come when the person least expects it and is least prepared for it. Such a grief reaction can feel like a “punch in the gut.”

Allow yourself to be prepared and aware of your feelings and accept that this too is normal. Don’t blame yourself or believe that you have made no progress in your grief. Periods like these, no matter the length of time since the suicide, are terribly painful but mourners can emerge with a sense of deeper healing.

## Professional Support

You may have moments of “knowing” you need or want to seek professional help from those trained to work with “survivors” of a death by suicide. This may be a very difficult step but the benefits to you and your grieving can far outweigh your anxiety and doubts.

Your loved one may have been under the care of a mental health professional at the time of death and your feelings toward that provider may be complex. You may have complex questions or you may seek insight. You may want to express overwhelming feelings toward a provider such as anger or confusion or disappointment or regret. Most mental health providers will encourage these conversations and expect your instinct to reach out for a meeting or series of appointments. Often such interactions can bring relief as well as deeper understanding to grieving loved ones.



Photo Credit:  
Halley Turner

## Helping the Bereaved

### Family or Friend

Love, kindness and non-judgmental support are the most important ways to be there for your family or a friend who has been bereaved by suicide. The bereaved person can find it almost impossible to explain how they are feeling or to ask for help. They may tell you that they are fine when actually they are not.

People who have been bereaved by suicide say that regular contact from friends and loved ones is of great comfort. Most important, making yourself available to simply listen or talk if needed is the most generous support. You may want to provide offers of practical help: such as shopping or you may want to drop by with a cooked meal. Even a simple text to let the person know they are in your thoughts can feel so welcome to the bereaved.

Photo Credit:  
Evan Levine

The key things – as with any loss – are to let your relative or friend talk and for you to listen without making judgments. Sometimes, people bereaved by suicide say that they discover that many people find it very awkward to talk about what has happened. This can leave the bereaved person feeling even more isolated.

People bereaved by suicide have many questions running through their heads and the most difficult are: “why did this happen?” and “could I have done something to stop it?” Your friend or relative may want you to tell them that they were not to blame and sometimes they may need you to let them express their feelings of guilt and responsibility. Sometimes they may want to cry without being told to stop, or they may simply want you to spend time with them. People usually appreciate hearing others’ memories of something the person did or what they meant to you. It may be hard, but try not to focus only on the death, but also on when the person was alive and enjoying life.

**It is likely that, for some considerable time, the bereaved person will find it difficult to concentrate or function as they have in the past; they may lose confidence in their ability to perform even simple tasks. Alternatively, they may want to work themselves to exhaustion to avoid thinking about what has happened.**

You may find it too hard to hear some of the things that your friend or relative feels they need to say. You could gently suggest they may want also to talk to a professional or join a support group.

You could also make a note of particular dates (e.g. the birthday and the date of death of the person who died, Father’s Day or Mother’s Day) and remember to mark and acknowledge these in the years to come.

If there are children or young people in the family, they will appreciate it if you acknowledge that they are grieving too. Children sometimes report being told to “look after their parent” when they need support themselves.

### Colleague or friend

Someone who has been bereaved through suicide may feel aware of the stigma associated with a suicide and find it difficult to return to work and the spotlight of people’s attention. It may help to ask them beforehand what they would like people to know about the person who died and how they died and to give colleagues hints about what would help. For example, you could tell all staff something like this (language applied to a male colleague):

*“Our colleague is coming back on Monday. Most of you will know that his daughter (name) died a month ago. He wants everyone to know that (name) took her own life. As you can imagine he and the entire family are reeling with shock and grief. He has asked me to tell you that he doesn’t mind people expressing their condolences but would prefer not to be asked about the details of what has happened.”*

Equally, your colleague may not want to disclose this information. Either way, it is important to respect their wishes. People bereaved by suicide often appreciate colleagues acknowledging what has happened, even very simply: “I was so sorry to hear about your daughter,” rather than having it ignored completely.

Bereavement never follows a neat pattern and bereavement by suicide can be chaotic. It is possible your colleague or employee may need time off early on or around the anniversary of the death. Reminding your colleague or friend of support within the community and the workplace can be welcomed.

### Students

The death by suicide of any member of a school or college community whether student, relative of the student or member of staff, needs to be taken seriously and responded to appropriately. You may find that young people react in different ways: some may find it hard to talk, some may find it hard to stop crying. Young people appreciate staff acknowledging what has happened, even very simply such as: “I was so sorry to hear about your brother,” rather than having it ignored completely.

The fear and stigma around suicide can be particularly strong within a school or college, especially if a young person has died. Staff may fear some imitative reactions and because of that, avoid talking about what has happened. This may be the response that is most likely to put both the bereaved young person and others at risk.

If the person who died was a student’s parent or sibling, the student will need a lot of support and understanding as they try and keep going with their studies while their head is full of questions and whirling emotions. They may be feeling deeply hurt and rejected as well as desperately sad and they will bring these feelings with them to school or college.

Your school will, hopefully, have a bereavement strategy that includes supporting any students who have previously been bereaved for whom this event brings additional feelings and memories. Schools vary in what they can offer, but you may have available a range of options for support, from one-to-one conversations to group activities.

Of course, as a member of staff, you may also be affected by the death and it may remind you of previous losses. Make sure you have sufficient support too.



Photo Credit:  
Molly Levinton

### Wisdom From Our Prophets

Two of our prophets אליהו - Elijah and משה רבנו - Moses suffered setbacks and mental anguish during their lives. Elijah even asked for his life to end. May we be moved by God's wisdom. We can all walk in God's ways and serve as a listening ear and source of encouragement for those around us who may feel down, dejected or unsupported.

I've had the honor of serving as the inaugural graduate fellow for Elijah's Journey, an organization which helps to serve as a voice regarding suicide awareness and prevention in the Jewish community. This Shabbat we will read the Haftarah (prophetic portion) from which the organization gets its name. There, in I Kings 18:46-19:20, Elijah has just performed a miracle and proved God's power over the prophets of Baal. Yet he is pursued by the evil, idolatrous Queen Jezebel, and dejected, asks God to take his life.

God instructs Elijah to eat and drink and take a 40 day journey in order to reassess the situation. Elijah eventually hears God's voice in a still, small voice, and decides to continue his calling and mission. Elijah's desire to stop living, his lonely period of reconsideration, and the reception of a line of hope from a barely audible source, can strike a strong chord with those who have considered ending their lives.

*Gabe Kretzmer Seed, Rabbinical student, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah,  
Graduate fellow at Elijah's Journey, New York based suicide prevention program*

Photo Credit:  
Debra Simms



## The Jewish Mourning Cycle

### The Kaddish Support in Your Grieving

Adapted from sermon

Rabbi Oren Hayon, Congregation EmanuEL, Houston

In traditional Jewish observance, the Kaddish is recited by those in mourning not only at the time of the funeral, but also three times each day throughout the first eleven months following a death when one loses a parent. When one loses a spouse, a sibling or a child, Kaddish is said for the first thirty days.



“Although the Kaddish is normally thought of as an obligation that weighs only on the mourner himself, the most ancient core of this elegant prayer is one that stands as a dialogue, a conversation in prayer, when those who are temporarily intact stand ready to respond to those who are broken.”

Grief in a Jewish community is fundamentally a call and response. When we stand up for Kaddish we show that we are ready to be called upon to respond. The grief of the person who has just learned of the tragic death of a loved one issues a call that awaits our response as a community.

In Judaism, we are forbidden to respond to suffering with silence; it is our work to comfort and soothe, to help and heal, to make the words of the Kaddish come true a little bit more: that God’s peace on high can be brought down to ease the pain of the mourners here below.”

In that spirit, this bereavement guide is for you, to offer hope and comfort as well as informational support during the difficult days, weeks and months ahead.

The Jewish tradition offers defined mourning rituals and stages of grief during the first year after a death as well as for each year following. This Jewish path of grieving supports the mourner from the moment of learning of a death, through the funeral, the first week, the first thirty days and the balance of twelve months. For those who find solace in this faith-based path, the Jewish way is rich in both spiritual and psychological wisdom.

### Chevre Kadisha

Our tradition includes communal participation in the preparation of the body for burial. Just as the community comes together to welcome a new Jewish child into this world, the community comes together to help us leave this world and enter the world to come.

The family may request that the body of their loved one should be prepared for burial by members of the “chevre kadisha.” The funeral home will make these arrangements.

The focus of the volunteers of this burial society is to maintain a quiet, respectful environment during the ritual cleansing of the body and subsequent dressing for burial according to Jewish traditions.

At the heart of the society’s purpose is the ritual of *tahara*, or purification. The body is seen as having been the receptacle for the soul, the eternal part of our life, and thus is accorded the honor of ritual cleaning.

The body is first carefully washed by members of the group, men attending to men, and women to women, all the while maintaining the modesty of the body. After the body is cleaned, a continuous flow of water is poured over the body while prayers are recited.

After this ritual washing, the body is dried completely and then dressed in *tachrichim*, simple white muslin or linen garments which are identical for each person, representing the idea that while we all have differences throughout our lives in wealth or possessions, during this transition, all stand equal before our Creator. Sand from the land of Israel is added inside the casket, and the group closes the casket.

This tradition often gives the family comfort to know that the final time the body of their loved one is handled, it is with dignity, in a spiritual environment and by a member of the Jewish community. This is considered a “chesed shel emet,” a good deed which will never be repaid. Members of this group do not speak of mundane things during their time preparing the body and keep their contact with your loved one confidential.

The high premium the Torah places on the honor of the dead is shown through all the rituals of the burial society, and even those who pass away with no known relatives will be accorded this service by the chevre kadisha, so that everyone can be assured that they will be surrounded by their community at this time.

A “shomer,” someone who stays near the body and casket until burial while reciting psalms is available through the Chevre Kadisha as well. Your Rabbi can share with you any additional information about the local Chevre Kadisha and these thoughtful traditions.

### Aninu

The first stage of mourning is *aninut* or “intense mourning.” Aninut lasts until the burial is over or if a mourner is unable to attend the funeral from the moment he or she is no longer involved with the funeral itself.

An *onen* (a person in aninut) is considered to be in a state of total shock and disorientation. With a death that may be by suicide, the period of shock and disorientation can last long after the funeral because grieving such a death is considered a complex and traumatic type of grieving.

### Keriah

Some Jewish mourners follow the tradition of Keriah or making a tear in an outer garment before or at the funeral. The tear is on the left side (over the heart and clearly visible) for a parent and on the right side for siblings, children and spouses. Non-Orthodox Jews will often make the keriah in a small black ribbon that can be pinned to a lapel or dress. Spiritually, the tear indicates the rupture in the lives of the mourners. The tear in clothing represents the literal tearing apart of life as it was before the death.

### Avelut

Aninut is immediately followed by *avelut* (mourning) that consists of three distinct periods. Judaism wisely recognizes that life cannot possibly return to normal after the funeral and thus offers a gentle path to guide the mourner through the tragedy and loss.

### Shiva-Seven Days

The first stage of *avelut* is shiva, a weeklong period of grief during which the mourner or mourners are surrounded by loved ones, friends and spiritual leaders. For observant Jews, shiva involves additional rituals all intended to recognize that life is being lived on a different calendar and with different rules following a death. The mourner is essentially “instructed” to set aside routine day-to-day life and surrender to the reality that life will no longer be the same. Grieving loss can be uncomfortable and unfamiliar but Judaism asks us to take time to be still and to begin mourning.

Some of those in mourning will find comfort during the Shiva if they are surrounded by family and friends who love and care for them. Others may experience Shiva as a period of “suspended animation,” feeling overwhelmed and uncomfortable with visitors who may not know how best to offer meaningful support. Mourners may find it hard to speak to everyone who attends the Shiva or may forget who came. Offering a sign-in book will allow family and friends to remember those who attended when they reflect back on the Shiva at a later time in their grieving.

The end of Shiva may be a vulnerable time for mourners as it can be the first time the bereaved is alone. Out of town family and friends may have returned home. Mourners still need the support of family, friends and clergy and reaching out for continuing support can help during this transition.

There are various customs as to what to say to the mourner upon leaving a shiva. One of the most common is to say:

*“The Omnipresent will comfort you and yours among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.”* Others may add such wishes as, “You should have no more *tzaar* or distress.”

### Shloshim-Thirty Days

The thirty-day period following burial is known as shloshim. The mind and body intuitively know that returning to the normal routine of life is impossible. Shloshim is observed by immediate family to help move through the initial shock of death. Mourners can return to their jobs but resuming life as it was before the loss can be a slower and more painful process. Those who are actively mourning sometimes describe feeling they are walking on a different path than those who are living life without being in the midst of grieving.

### Shneim asar chodesh-Twelve Months

Those mourning a parent or sibling who observe a twelve-month period, counted from the day of death. Observant Jews continue to recite the Kaddish prayer daily in Synagogue for eleven months during this time period.

### Matzevah-Unveiling of the Tombstone

Although there is no obligation to hold an unveiling ceremony, the ritual has great meaning to many and is often held at the graveside by the end of eleven or twelve

months of mourning. At the end of the ceremony, a cloth covering the headstone is removed and the Kaddish recited. The El Malei Rachamim prayer, in which God is asked to remember and grant repose to the soul of the departed is also recited.

### Yahrtzeit-Each Year

Grieving, however, can defy a timeline. Judaism provides a formal ritual known as Yahrtzeit, which means “time of year,” in Yiddish. The word is used to refer to the anniversary of the day of the death of a relative or friend. If one attends a synagogue Sabbath service, the name of the deceased is said by a rabbi and loved ones recite the Kaddish prayer. On that day each year, a Yahrtzeit candle is lit to honor the memory of the person who died. This ritual acknowledges that while grief does not end, a path of enduring connection can allow a return to living for those left behind.

### Memorial Through Prayer

Jewish custom calls for the Mourner’s Kaddish to be said at all prayers services and memorials. This prayer of dialogue offers support for those grieving as well as predictable times for all mourners to remember their loved one who died.

### Yizkor

Yizkor which means “remembrance” provides an enduring ritual of prayers recited four times a year during services held on Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeret, the last day of Passover and the second day of Shavuot. Yizkor allows the entire community to pray together every year, remembering those loved ones who died as long as they live.

## Resources

Jewish Family Service Mental Health Programs has as its goals:

- to increase awareness and decrease stigma
- to provide support to those suffering and those effected by mental illness
- to develop a conversation in the community about mental illness
- to decrease suicide in the Houston Jewish community
- to promote and train the community in Mental Health First Aid
- to be a model for other communities facing these issues

This guide is available to those who are grieving a death by suicide or by those who wish to support family, friends, colleagues or acquaintances in their grieving. JFS also offers bereavement support groups for those mourning a death by suicide. Grief counselors are available to meet with family and friends immediately following the news of a death through the first full year of mourning. 713-667-9336

**Linda Burger**

281-236-6849 - llburger@jfshouston.org

**Laurie Silver**

713-542-5544 - lsilver@jfshouston.org

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
**1-800-273-8255**

### Additional Resources

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255**  
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

**JFS Mental Health Programs**  
www.mentalhealthletstalk.org

**American Association of Suicidology**  
www.suicidology.org

**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**  
afsp.org

**Jed Foundation**  
www.jedfoundation.org

**The Trevor Project 1-866-488-7386**  
www.thetrevorproject.org

**Bo’s Place 713-942-8339**  
www.bosplace.org

### Links

[www.griefhealingblog.com](http://www.griefhealingblog.com)  
[www.myjewishlearning.com/article/suicide-in-jewish-tradition-and-literature/](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/suicide-in-jewish-tradition-and-literature/)  
[www.whatsyourgrief.com](http://www.whatsyourgrief.com)

### References

\*The Kaddish, Senor Rabbi Oren Hayon, Congregation Emanu El, Houston  
Some excerpts from Public Health England ([www.gov.uk/phe](http://www.gov.uk/phe)) and the National Suicide Prevention Alliance ([www.nspa.org.uk](http://www.nspa.org.uk))

Credited photos in this guide were taken by artists from **Celebration Company**, a Jewish Family Service social entrepreneurial program for adults with disabilities.

This guide was informed not only by professionals but also by the voices of many survivors who have navigated this painful journey toward healing.

We offer these words to meet the expressed needs of those in our community who seek guidance in their grieving.

Written by **Laurie Morgan Silver, LCSW**







## Bright Stars

When a friend or loved one dies by suicide, their life story can become focused on their death rather than the contributions and meaning of their life. JFS will be hosting a memorial service in December to honor loved ones who have died by suicide including an opportunity to share the story of your loved one in a special memorial booklet.

To participate in any way, please contact **Laurie Silver** at [lsilver@jfshouston.org](mailto:lsilver@jfshouston.org)

For any information on our mental health services, please contact **Linda Burger** at 281-236-6849 or **Laurie Silver** at 713-542-5544.

## AFTERCARE SERVICES

### Grief and Bereavement

JFS is here to support you after any significant loss in your life. Whether a death, a divorce, a significant job change or the impact of a community tragedy such as a hurricane—JFS offers a wide range of counseling specializing in bereavement support. JFS also offers in home visitation after a loss.

**Please reach out to us in your grieving.**

**Contact Ada Cheung at [acheung@jfshouston.org](mailto:acheung@jfshouston.org) or Laurie Silver at [lsilver@jfshouston.org](mailto:lsilver@jfshouston.org)**

### Support Groups

Currently, JFS is offering support groups for adolescent males, caregivers, those affected by substance abuse, those who have lost a friend or loved one to suicide and those who suffered after Hurricane Harvey.

**To join a group please contact Ada Cheung at [acheung@jfshouston.org](mailto:acheung@jfshouston.org)**

**National Suicide Prevention Hotline**  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)  
1-800-273-8255

JFS is a beneficiary of



Photo Credit:  
Gabrielle Howard

JFS  
MENTAL HEALTH  
PROGRAMS

let's talk  
about it



**Jewish Family Service**  
4131 S. Braeswood  
Houston, Texas 77025

**Phone:** (713) 667-9336

**Fax:** (713) 667-3619

**E-mail:** [info@jfshouston.org](mailto:info@jfshouston.org)

[www.jfshouston.org](http://www.jfshouston.org)

We Want to  
Talk About Your  
Mental Health &  
Wellbeing

[www.mentalhealthletstalk.org](http://www.mentalhealthletstalk.org)

Jewish Family Service is proud to lead the conversation about mental health and wellbeing in our community. We are among the many voices speaking openly about your mind and your mental health so that the stigma of caring for yourself, your family and friends will finally end. Our services are here for every person in the Jewish community of Houston.

Let us support your wellbeing!

**Linda Burger, CEO, Jewish Family Service**  
[llburger@jfshouston.org](mailto:llburger@jfshouston.org)

## PREVENTION SERVICES

### Mental Health First Aid

Just as CPR helps you assist an individual having a heart attack, *Mental Health First Aid* teaches you to assist someone experiencing a mental health or substance use-related crisis. JFS is seeking to train as many people as possible throughout the Jewish community in *Mental Health First Aid*. Synagogues and Jewish organizations around the city will be teaching the course to help you understand the risk factors and warning signs for mental health and addiction concerns, the strategies for helping someone in a crisis or non-crisis situation and where to turn for help. **Please contact Gittel Francis at [gfrancis@jfshouston.org](mailto:gfrancis@jfshouston.org) to sign up and join a training course.**

### Sources of Strength

*Sources of Strength* is a youth suicide prevention project designed to harness the power of peer social networks to change the norms and culture within school and youth activity networks. JFS is implementing *Sources of Strength* in our day and religious schools as well as youth social networks with the goal of reducing suicide, bullying and substance use and increasing help-seeking behaviors between peers and caring adults. By increasing support and connectedness (protective factors), JFS hopes to support our young individuals so when times are tough, they have strengths to rely on.

**Please help us reach your young individuals by contacting Katelyn Bleiweiss at [kbleiweiss@jfshouston.org](mailto:kbleiweiss@jfshouston.org)**

### Touching The Heart

Human beings thrive on connection. When this need is met, we feel we are cared about and that we belong. Connection softens feelings of isolation and loneliness. Human connection is as important each day as the basics of food and water. In times of crisis or transition, the need for connection increases. Certainly, we all seek connection from those we know whether family, friends or co-workers. Current research however, has turned up a remarkable finding about human connection, concluding that even contact from an anonymous person has enormous value for the wellbeing of the recipient.

With rates of completed suicide at very high levels in the military, the concept of sending anonymous text messages to those at risk was put into place to discover if hopelessness and the desire to take one's life might be positively impacted. This text program has been shown to reduce rates of depression.

With this tested program as our model, Jewish Family Service is launching a pilot program that we have named *Touching the Heart*. Our initial goal is to connect with students who are heading to college. We know that young adults leaving home and heading to college face a transition period as they settle into a dorm, make new friends and begin classes. This transition can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation for many.

Our volunteers will be sending text messages just to say hello and provide a message of caring. We will also send tips on settling into college life, provide ideas for increasing wellness and managing stress and always include words of support for those new to experiencing life away from home. We will also offer phone or Skype consultation to any student who would like to schedule an appointment with us.

**Please help us to reach out to those of any age who would benefit from connection by contacting Laurie Silver at [lsilver@jfshouston.org](mailto:lsilver@jfshouston.org)**

### Counseling

JFS offers individual, couple and family counseling to anyone in our community across the age span who seeks psychotherapy and psychiatric support. Our skilled clinicians are trained to meet you where you are and guide you toward meeting your counseling goals. **For further information or to schedule a session, please contact Ada Cheung at [acheung@jfshouston.org](mailto:acheung@jfshouston.org)**

### Meditation

JFS is offering ongoing meditation training sessions to support you in managing stress that impacts your daily life. Research has shown that the regular practice of meditation reduces stress and anxiety, increases emotional health, enhances self-awareness, lengthens attention span, may reduce age-related memory loss, supports sobriety, and improves sleep. **To participate in our meditation training, please contact Laurie Silver at [lsilver@jfshouston.org](mailto:lsilver@jfshouston.org)**

### Be Well & Social Media

Each week, JFS is offering a column named *"Be Well"* in the Jewish Herald Voice and on our website, [www.mentalhealthletstalk.org](http://www.mentalhealthletstalk.org). This column supports understanding of your mental health and wellbeing. We will include tips about taking care of your mind and mental wellbeing and answer your questions about any concerns or topics that need our feedback.

JFS has also implemented an expansive social media campaign geared to reducing rates of suicide within our community and connecting those who need care with those who can provide care. **To suggest a topic, read our column or reach out for support, please contact Laurie Silver at [lsilver@jfshouston.org](mailto:lsilver@jfshouston.org)**

### Suicide Prevention & Protocol Training

Knowing how to handle congregants, employees, friends and family who may be suicidal is increasingly important in our community. JFS is available to train your employees or organization in identifying and responding to suicidal warning signs. **For further information, please contact Linda Burger at [llburger@jfshouston.org](mailto:llburger@jfshouston.org) or Laurie Silver at [lsilver@jfshouston.org](mailto:lsilver@jfshouston.org)**

### Speakers Available

JFS is available to provide speakers to your organization, corporation, company, school or network on many mental health topics. We will customize our talk as a lecture, interactive presentation or small group chat depending on your needs. **Please call upon our speakers to increase mental health awareness throughout our community. Contact Laurie Silver at [lsilver@jfshouston.org](mailto:lsilver@jfshouston.org)**



## SPEND A SUNDAY ENGAGED IN A HIGHLY INTERACTIVE AND FULFILLING TRAINING

Light breakfast and lunch included



### Sources of Strength is:

- A peer led suicide prevention program for anyone in the greater Houston Jewish community that allows students to create positive message campaigns within their schools and social networks.
- Kicked off with a highly interactive training day that students call "fun, interesting, empowering, and not what I expected."
- A critical tool for supporting young adults in distress.
- An evidence-based program that shows that young adults who participate in Sources of Strength are four times more likely to report themselves or someone else in trouble than those not involved in the program.
- A bridge of connection between young adults and trusted adults so that when a need arises for support, the connection is already in place.

### For Peer Leaders (Young Adults):

- Be the change agent in your school and social network by leading a campaign to build resilience and strength.
- Make your voice heard.
- Add a meaningful experience to your resume.
- Engage your school and congregational peers in building tools for dealing with stress and pressure.
- Be in grades 6-12.

### For Adults (Adults Advisers) Sources of Strength is:

- A way to make a difference in the lives of young adults.
- A program for empowering young adults you know.
- A path toward being a supportive adult for Jewish youth in our community.

## Sunday, October 14, 2018

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM for Adults

1:00 PM – 5:00 PM for Young Adults

(Adults Stay to Participate)

ERJCC Merfish Teen Center-Ballroom  
9000 South Rice Ave, Houston, TX 77096

### Sign up by October 11, 2018

Register to Katelyn Bleiweiss at

[kbleiweiss@jfshouston.org](mailto:kbleiweiss@jfshouston.org)

or register to these links:

**For Youth**

[www.tinyurl.com/peers-sos](http://www.tinyurl.com/peers-sos)

**For Adults**

[www.tinyurl.com/adults-sos](http://www.tinyurl.com/adults-sos)

For questions, contact Katelyn Bleiweiss  
at **713-986-7858**