



# SIMCHAT TORAH AND RECOVERY SPIRAL

Judaism encourages us to question, to learn and to grow; it's one of the unique and valued traditions of our religion. While we as Jews do this all year round, it is especially emphasized during the holidays at the beginning of a new year. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur offer us a chance to focus on self-reflection and improvement. Simchat Torah presents a different opportunity to celebrate and begin a fresh start to our Jewish growth and learning.

**On Simchat Torah we end the Torah and we begin again – which means we never cease to learn. You think you know everything? Begin again. To be a Jew is to be able to go on learning. And, to the last breath, to want to go on learning. - Elie Wiesel\***

During the Simchat Torah service, we come together as a congregation to both complete the cycle of reading the Torah for the year and to begin the next one. This is significant; Judaism is full of cycles and continuity, and our study of Torah is no exception. We read the same weekly parshiot (portions) from the Torah in the same order each year – or over the course of three years in the pattern of the triennial cycle, depending on your practice.\*\* The Torah and all of its accompanying text always has something new to teach us, and as we develop, mature and experience life, we cultivate new and deeper understandings of the same text. As Jews, we never stop learning; in fact, we are expected to never feel like we have a complete understanding of Torah or of Judaism. *That can take the pressure off of us to feel like we have to “know it all.”*

\*<https://www.92ny.org/archives/elie-wiesel-elisha-wiesel-simchat-torah>  
\*\*<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/why-jews-read-torah-on-a-yearly-cycle/>

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When it comes to mental health, recovery operates on similar themes. For most people, mental health recovery is also a cyclical process. Throughout our lives, we work on managing similar themes, challenges and symptoms, learning new and different strategies and more and deeper insights into our own cycles of thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Therapy can function in a similar rhythm. We tend to make changes in small ways, and if things still need to be addressed, they tend to resurface when we need to work on them again. Many models of treatment are based on this concept (particularly for post-traumatic stress disorder and other trauma recovery), and this revisiting and deepening process is expected and encouraged.

***The healing process is best described as a spiral. Survivors go through the stages once, sometimes many times; sometimes in one order, sometimes in another. Each time they hit a stage again, they move up the spiral; they can integrate new information and a broader range of feelings, utilize more resources, take better care of themselves, and make deeper changes. - Laura Davis\****



