PRIDE

INCLUSION OF DIVERSE COMMUNITIES AND JEWISH MENTAL HEALTH

Inclusive communities welcome and value diversity, celebrating the presence of Jews from all different backgrounds, including Jews of Color, Jews by choice, LGBTQ+ Jews, interfaith Jewish families, Jews with disabilities and Jews navigating mental and physical health journeys. In addition to celebration, inclusion requires us to intentionally recognize the strengths these members bring to our communities and to honor and respond to the unique stressors these individuals may face. Inclusive practices help us welcome and support the beautiful tapestry that is our Jewish community and contribute to mental health and wellness for us all.

Grounding our Why

Jewish values are helpful guides to deepen your inclusion practice. According to Keshet, we can draw from seven Jewish values for inspiration for inclusive behaviors.

Kavod: Respect | Sh'mirat Halashon: Guarding One's Use of Language | B'tzelem Elohim: In God's Image | Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh: Communal Responsibility | Al Tifrosh Min Hatsibur: Solidarity | V'ahavta L'reiacha Kamocha: Love your neighbor as yourself | Shalom Bayit: Peace in the Home

These values invite us to practice inclusion in how we speak, in how we express respect and love and in how we advocate for others. Since members who hold these identities navigate stress related to having multiple marginalized identities, inclusion is especially important for fostering mental health in our Jewish community. We can draw on several Jewish mental health-relevant values to inspire our inclusion work as well.



Written in Collaboration with Dr. Dani Rosenkrantz, Licensed Psychologist and Expert in Jewish LGBTQ+ Mental Health
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רפואה שלימה - Refuah Shleimah - Healing and Wholeness

Judaism has a long tradition of recognizing that healing is not just physical; it is holistic, which is to say it has physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual components that are all interconnected. The Jewish tradition also emphasizes healing rather than curing. Even when mental illness is under control, healing and a return to wholeness is needed. The healing process has many components and may be a lifelong journey.

Pikuach nefesh - saving a life - פיקוח נפש

In Jewish law, there is no greater priority than saving a life.This leads to the idea that Jewish mitzvot, or commandments, are not about restricting life but rather about enabling us to live our most meaningful lives and helping others do the same.

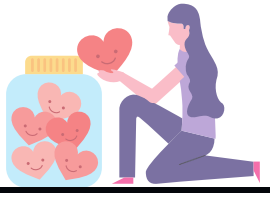
Lifnei iver - before the blind (inclusivity) - לפני עיוור

It is our responsibility to do our best to create communities that meet the needs and celebrate the value of everyone. Rather than looking at a disability or mental illness through the lens of a handicap, we can uphold this value by seeking to ensure all individuals can participate fully in the community.

Nosei b'ol im chaveiro - sharing a burden with one's friend - נושא בעול עם חברו

The Torah includes a story of a special friendship between Ruth, who has converted to Judaism, and her mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth and Naomi face many difficulties together but are able to overcome them, because they support each other.



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As you explore these values, which ones resonate with you, and why?

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Which ones help you think of inclusivity in a new way and why?

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Building Inclusion Tools: Ideas for Individual, Communal and Broader Advocacy

Start to think about how you can actively work toward the inclusion of Jews of all backgrounds. As you start to brainstorm we encourage you to do so with a "messy mindset." Developing a skill requires intentionality and vulnerability. Most of us do not wake up being an expert at something new. A messy mindset means acknowledging we will make mistakes and we can grow from them with intentionality and accountability. We can practice inclusion in a variety of ways:



Individual: Asking respectful questions and limiting questions that are private concerns. Ask about ways individuals might feel most supported by your community, and be an ally in creating those changes.



Communal: Expressing support through environmental cues like pictures on websites or in offices, questions in paperwork and safe bathrooms as well as by welcoming diverse individuals in events, rituals and messaging. Consider multiple perspectives, and make sure diversity is reflected in whose voices are heard when making decisions.



Societal: Engaging in advocacy, e.g., contacting federal and state legislatures, voting for policies that support inclusion, attending events as a community that celebrate particular group experiences like Pride or Juneteenth.

(2) Glaad.org - Unsafe America, New Glaad Data Shows Unprecedented Threats and Attacks Against lgbtq
(3)(4) The Trevor Project Survey

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At all levels: Investment in education and training to learn about diverse Jewish experiences, strengths & challenges as well as ways to prioritize safety & wellness.

What are we already doing well that we could build upon to support other diverse groups in our community?

What efforts most speak to you and are within your power to create inclusive change?



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