



# 2020 High Holiday Guide

Over the past few years, we have seen exploding opioid, mental health and substance abuse crises throughout the country. This epidemic has affected the Jewish community just as it has everyone else. [In response, the Blue Dove Foundation](#) is encouraging synagogues and their rabbis and/or leadership to consider joining our [#QuietingTheSilence](#) campaign and discussing the struggles of mental health and substance abuse in our communities. Education and dialogue further the conversation about these topics and help eradicate the shame and stigma that stop community members from getting support.

While you may not use everything in this toolkit, we hope you will find some pieces helpful as you find ways to include this critical topic in your words and thoughts during the upcoming High Holidays.

If you have any questions, or if you have something you'd like to contribute to the resources, please email [info@thebluedovefoundation.org](mailto:info@thebluedovefoundation.org).

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Jewish Text and Narratives to Utilize During the High Holidays  | Page 2  |
| Sermon Talking Points   | Page 3  |
| Tools for High Holiday Services   | Page 5  |
| Appendix A – Excerpts from Published Articles/Sermons Relating the High Holidays to Mental Health and Substance Abuse | Page 8  |
| Appendix B – Mental Health & Substance Abuse Statistics   | Page 11 |
| Appendix C – Flyer Inserts for High Holiday Newsletter  | Page 13 |
| Blue Dove Foundation Shop   | Page 14 |
| About The Blue Dove Foundation  | Page 16 |

# Jewish Text and Narratives to Utilize During the High Holidays

These texts and narratives may be used to draw parallels to things that happen in our own lives and help explain mental health and substance abuse through a Jewish lens. Please feel free to edit and use what applies to your sermons, announcements and synagogue community.

- Sisera's Mother – Rosh HaShanah 33b, Judges 5:28-30  
The rabbis recalled Sisera's mother, who wailed as she vainly looked out the window waiting for her son to return from battle. Some compared her cries to moaning, broken sighs, like the shofar sounds of *shevarim*. Others compared her cries to whimpers, like the short blasts of *teruah*.
- We read the Book of Jonah on Yom Kippur afternoon. Jonah's Hebrew name, Yonah, means dove, recalling the blue dove, which represents a safe space and support for mental health and substance abuse. The Book of Jonah reminds us we all make mistakes, we all have struggles, and we can change our ways for the better.
- [Unetanneh Tokef](#) - This poem tells of Rosh Hashanah as the Day of Judgment, when our fate is inscribed, and of Yom Kippur as the day when our fate is sealed. But it also affirms that “repentance, prayer and righteousness avert the severe decree.”
- The Binding of Isaac (Genesis 22)- As we read this narrative from the Torah, we question: Who do we listen to? When do we question? What happens when we do things without questioning? Who pays the price for our actions?
- Ishmael and the Well Hagar Could Not See (Genesis 21)- Hagar did not see the well until God opened her eyes. In our own lives, we know that even if the answer is in front of you, you cannot always see it.
- *Mi Sheberach* - One who blesses. *Brachah* (blessing), *sheberach* and *berech* (knees) all share the same root letters - bet-resch-chaf. What brings us to our knees?
  - Check out our versions of some special mi sheberachs in the High Holiday Services Tools section of this document. You'll find one for those in recovery and one for mental health.
- Yizkor- Memorial prayer- A moment to talk about and remember those we have lost to mental health and/or substance abuse.
- Tashlich (Micah 7:18-19) A custom that encourages forgiveness and self-love
  - Check out the [Mental Health Tashlich](#) resource.

# Sermon Talking Points

## *(Framing the topic)*

These are suggested speaking points; please feel free to edit and use what is applicable to your sermon and your synagogue community.

- Mention national mental health and substance abuse statistics (see Appendix B).
- Draw parallels from Jewish law/text/stories (see Suggested Text and Narratives to Utilize in High Holiday Services)
- [Eight middot that connect to mental health](#)
- The way to eliminate the shame and stigma around mental health is by talking about it.
- Discuss the symbolism of the blue dove. It represents a safe space and support for mental health and substance abuse
  - You'll see the blue dove on Kippahs - check mine out. "The small blue dove on my kippah says I can create a safe space and am a friend and ally for those affected by mental health and substance abuse.
  - You'll see the blue dove on jewelry pieces that can be purchased to show your support of mental health and substance abuse. Additional information is available on the Blue Dove Foundation website.
- Acknowledge the loss that has taken place recently in your local Jewish community and others
  - *Ask if anyone would be willing to share their personal story. Alternatively, ask someone who you know has a story if you may reference it.*
- Urge the community to learn more about mental health and substance abuse by attending events and trainings AND/OR introduce mental health training and educational programs in your community
  - Our community is creating opportunities to educate each other and to help each other.
  - Our synagogue community is also looking at hosting gatherings and trainings.
- Urge the community to keep an eye on loved ones and check in with them regularly
  - We all have to do our part to get rid of shame and stigma around mental health and substance abuse in the Jewish community
  - Don't diagnose yourself or someone else. Leave it to a professional. Instead, listen supportively and help connect the person to resources.
  - Better to talk to someone than to suffer in silence

- Your synagogue community is here for you, your rabbi is here for you, you are not alone
- Introduction of how you can offer support
  - Attend events, and invite others to join you
  - Utilize local resources and your community to educate yourself
  - Be a friend, and create a safe space

# Tools for High Holiday Services

## Personal Reflective Resources

- [Rosh Hashanah Self-Care Celebration](#)
- [Mental Health Tashlich](#)
- [Sukkot Shleimut – Wholeness and Peacefulness](#)

## Special High Holiday Shofar Blasts

- Connect the shofar blast on Rosh Hashanah to breaking the silence around mental health and addiction.
- On Kol Nidre, use the shofar blast to invite the community to vow to talk about mental health and substance abuse in the new year.

### *Liturgical Selection 1: Shofar*

The texts of Jewish tradition have indicated that the sound of the shofar is intended to rouse us from our sleep, to jolt us awake and into action. On Rosh Hashanah, as we dedicate this sacred moment to considering the year that has passed and the year still to be, we do so with hearts made heavy by missed opportunities. The liturgy calls us to reflect upon those moments where we fell short, where we could have done more, and the shofar challenges us to dedicate ourselves anew to those important tasks.

We have done important work in responding to the needs of others. But as we engage these final calls of the shofar, with the final blast of *Tekiah Gedolah* as the clarion call to action, may we find ourselves attuned to the deafening cries of mental illness and addiction that have been obstructed; while some have been screaming, many of us have heard nothing but silence. The shofar calls us to offer renewed attention to those struggling in our midst; the shofar calls us to answer their cries with “Hineni” – here I am.

### *Liturgical Selection 2: Mi Chamocha*

Mi Chamocha, the text we will soon encounter as a community on this yontif morning, is a piece found in the Book of Shemot, recited just as the people emerged from slavery to freedom. “Who is like You, God, among all that is worshipped?” Indeed, God is awesome in power and splendor, and those miracles that were worked in the days of our ancestors remain the legends we offer today.

We know slavery can come in many forms, and we encounter far too many in our friendship and family circles who have been, or are presently, enslaved by habit and addiction. May we dedicate ourselves to being God’s hands to work miracles

in those lives as well, offering support and encouragement as they move through the journey of recovery. As our ancestor Nachshon displayed bravery in taking that first step into the sea, may we celebrate the courage of first steps that our friends and family members take toward recovery. And to those whose journey to recovery has not yet begun, may you embark during this year to come on the trek through the wilderness of healing and wholeness... and may you never feel as if you are walking alone.

### **Mental Health Mi Sheberach Prayers**

We believe Jewish prayers and rituals can help to strengthen our mental well-being, resilience and recovery in the same way *middot*, or Jewish values, can promote them. Faith is an important part of healing for many, and Jewish thinkers and leaders historically have brought the two together.

When someone is ill or recovering from illness or an accident, we often recite a mi sheberach to wish them a *refuah sheleimah*, or a “full recovery.” We have expanded this prayer for those who are struggling with mental health in different variations of mi sheberachs.

In creating our own versions of a traditional Jewish prayer for healing, we can engage with Jewish text in a way that is personal, meaningful and impactful in our lives. We encourage you to explore what a mi sheberach might look like for you, your loved ones and your community.

If you offer your own version of a mi sheberach or another prayer for healing and are open to sharing it as a communal resource, please email a copy to [info@thebluedovefoundation.org](mailto:info@thebluedovefoundation.org).

### Mi Sheberach for Mental Health

May the One who blessed our ancestors —  
Who named us Israel (Yisrael), those who “struggle,”  
Bless and heal those among us who struggle with mental well-being.

May they acknowledge their own strength and resilience in persevering,  
May they treat themselves with forgiveness and patience,  
May they find others who share their experiences, so they know they are not alone,  
May they find help, compassion and resources when they are able to reach out for them,  
May they find others willing to reach out first when they cannot,  
And may they find inclusive and welcoming communities that will uplift and celebrate them.

May the Holy One grant us the strength and resilience to support our loved ones,

May we find the patience and forgiveness we need for ourselves and others,  
May we find solidarity and support from other caregivers,  
May we find the capacity to listen without judgement and with the intention to help when asked,  
May we find the ability to notice when others are struggling and reach out to them first,  
And may we create communities that accept, uplift and celebrate those among us who are struggling.

### Mi Sheberach for Those in Recovery

God, there are those among us who struggle with addiction. We offer this special prayer for those in recovery:

- Mi sheberach, to the one who blesses: May God bless you with the courage to conquer your cravings, the strength to stay far from temptations and from people who can lead you astray.
- Mi sheberach, to the one who blesses: May God hear the cry of your soul and bless you with the knowledge that you have the power to remake your life, to repair what has been destroyed, to recover what has been lost, to receive all the blessings that have been ignored.
- Mi sheberach, to the one who blesses: When you fall into despair, may God bless you with hope. If you stray from the path of recovery, may God show you how to begin again. May God renew your faith in yourself. May God open your eyes to all the miracles that surround you.

Bless all those who are living in recovery. God, lead them on the path back to life, back to love and back to You. Amen.

# Appendix A

*Excerpts from Published Articles/Sermons Relating the High Holidays to  
Mental Health and Substance Abuse*

## **On Rosh Hashanah it is Written, and on Yom Kippur it is Sealed**

*By Rabbi Sandra Cohen*

[Full version available online](#)

“As we prepare for the new year, the words and melody of the *U’ne’taneh Tokef* ring in our hearts. Each year, some who are present with us at Rosh Hashanah will not live until the next year. And some who are present (or not able to be present) will experience a kind of death in life: not fullness of time, but a life that is troubled, disturbed. For some, life will not feel worth living.

As rabbis, we want to reach out to these people (and their families, who are hurting as well). How do we do so? What can we accomplish? The first step is to know our limits. We will not cure mental illness by mentioning the topic from the bima. Literature in our lobby will not prevent every suicide, and opening our study doors to those who want to talk will not convince every vulnerable person to come in.”

*Rabbi Cohen teaches, offers pastoral care and works in mental health outreach in the Jewish community in Denver. She lives with her husband and can be reached at [rausjcohen@gmail.com](mailto:rausjcohen@gmail.com).*

## **Physical and Mental Health During the High Holy Days**

*By Rabbi Ruth Adar, the “[Coffee Shop Rabbi](#),” Berkeley, Ca.*

[Full version available online](#)

“For those with a physical or mental illness, the High Holy Days can be a difficult time. The basic and most important rule is that we must choose life: In other words, do what we need to do to survive. Without life, there is no holiness...Whatever your situation, know that you are not alone! Many of us deal with some health issues over Yom Kippur. Help is available if you reach out for it.”



## **On Brokenness and Becoming Whole in the New Year: How the Jewish Community is Confronting Mental Illness and Addiction**

*By Rabbi Rachel Ain, Sutton Place Synagogue, New York City*

[Full version available online](#)

“Reb Nachman of Bratzlav once wrote: A certain king sent his son far away to study. The son eventually returned to the king’s palace fully versed in all the arts and sciences. One day the king told his son to take a large stone, and bring it up to the top floor of the palace. But the stone was so heavy that the prince could not even lift it up. Eventually the king said to his son, “Did you really imagine that I meant you to do the impossible and carry the stone just as it is up there? Even with all your wisdom, how were you supposed to do such a thing? That was not what I meant. I wanted you to take a big hammer and smash the stone into little pieces. This is how you will be able to bring it up to the top floor.” The hard work of the High Holidays is figuring out which stones need lifting, smashing and rebuilding. It isn’t easy to smash our hearts, but we need to begin to assess why we must do this.”

## **Kol Nidre Sermon 2014/5775**

*By Rabbi Stacy Friedman, Congregation Rodef Sholom, San Rafael, Calif.*

[Full version available online](#)

“Judaism has always understood that physical and mental illness are equally deserving of healing, and we are all a key to that healing. We need to make it safer for more people to come out from behind the shadows and find the support and care they need to continue to go on with their lives, both those living with mental illness and their family and friends who care for them. We need to start talking more openly about the ‘secret’ illness that nobody wants to talk about. It wasn’t so long ago that people only spoke in whispers about cancer. And while today we can speak about cancer and other diseases of the body freely, mental illness still carries with it a stigma and prejudice that prevents so many from seeking the help we need. But Judaism understands that emotional and spiritual pain are as real and serious as that of the body. Just look at the Mi sheberach prayer, the prayer for healing we recite every Shabbat and holiday: refuat ha-nefesh uh-refuat ha-guf, we pray for healing of spirit, the soul and healing of the body. And so many of us are in need of healing for both.”

## **NAMI FaithNet Sermons**

*[NAMI FaithNet](#) is an interfaith resource network of National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) members, friends, clergy and congregations of all faith traditions who wish to encourage faith communities that are welcoming and supportive of persons and families living with mental illness.*

*[Rosh Hashanah sermon available online](#)*

*[Yom Kippur sermon available online](#)*

“A man went to see his physician because he wasn't feeling well. "Doctor," he said, "I am suffering from a dark and unshakable depression. Nothing I do gives me any relief. I am overwhelmed with pain, and most days I can't even make it out of bed. "Doctor, what should I do?" The doctor thought for a moment then offered the following treatment plan. "This is what you need to do. Tonight, go to the theatre where the Great Carlini is performing. He is the funniest man in the world, and everybody who sees him finds him hysterical. By all means, go see Carlini. He is guaranteed to make you laugh and drive away your depression." Upon hearing these words, the man burst into tears and sobbed uncontrollably. "But doctor," he said, "I am Carlini."”

# Appendix B

## *Mental Health & Substance Abuse Statistics*

### **Substance Abuse Statistics**

Source: CDC - [wonder.cdc.gov](https://wonder.cdc.gov)

- Drug overdoses kill more people than cars, guns and falls do.
- In 2016, more than 64,000 people died from a drug overdose; two-thirds of those were attributable to opioids.
- In 2017, more than 72,000 people died from a drug overdose.
- The sharpest increase occurred among deaths related to fentanyl and synthetic opioids, with nearly 30,000 overdose deaths.
- The use of illicit drugs and prescription opioids doubled in a decade.
- From 2002 through 2017, the total number of deaths related to heroin increased almost eight-fold.

### **Mental Health Statistics in the United States**

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) - [nami.org](https://nami.org)

#### Prevalence Of Mental Illness

- 1 in 5 adults experiences mental illness each year
- 1 in 25 U.S. adults experiences serious mental illness each year
- 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experiences a mental health disorder each year
- 50 percent of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75 percent by age 24
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 10- to 34-year-olds.
- Roughly 1 in 5 adults experienced mental illness in 2018 (47.6 million people, or 19.1 percent).
- Nearly 1 in 25 adults experienced serious mental illness in 2018 (11.4 million people, or 4.6 percent).
- 16.5 percent Americans aged 6-17 experienced a mental health disorder in 2016 (7.7 million people)
- 3.7 percent of adults experienced a co-occurring substance use disorder and mental illness in 2018 (9.2 million people)

#### Suicide

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people aged 10-34.
- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death.
- The overall suicide rate has increased by 31 percent since 2001
- 46 percent of people who die by suicide had a diagnosed mental health condition
- 90 percent of people who die by suicide had shown symptoms of a mental health condition, according to interviews with family, friends and medical professionals (also known as a psychological autopsy)

- Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than straight youth
- 75 percent of people who die by suicide are male
- Transgender adults are nearly 12 times more likely to attempt suicide than the general population

Annual prevalence of serious thoughts of suicide, by U.S. demographic group:

- 4.3 percent of all adults
- 11 percent of young adults aged 18-25
- 17.2 percent of high school students
- 47.7 percent of lesbian, gay and bisexual high school students

### Mental Health Care Matters

- 43.3 percent of adults with mental illness received treatment in 2018
- 64.1 percent of adults with serious mental illness received treatment in 2018
- 50.6 percent of youth aged 6-17 with a mental health disorder received treatment in 2016
- The average delay between the onset of mental illness symptoms and treatment is 11 years
- 11.3 percent of adults with mental illness had no insurance coverage in 2018
- 13.4 percent of adults with serious mental illness had no insurance coverage in 2018
- 60 percent of U.S. counties do not have a single practicing psychiatrist

### Ripple Effects of Mental Health

- People with depression have a 40 percent higher risk of developing cardiovascular and metabolic diseases than the general population. People with serious mental illness are nearly twice as likely to develop these conditions.
- 19.3 percent of adults with mental illness also experienced a substance use disorder in 2018 (9.2 million individuals)
- The rate of unemployment is higher among adults who have mental illness (5.8 percent) compared with those who do not (3.6 percent)
- High school students with significant symptoms of depression are more than twice as likely to drop out compared to their peers

# Appendix C

## Flyer Inserts for High Holiday Newsletter

### National Resources

We encourage you to print this flyer and include it as an insert in your high holiday newsletter. It includes national resources to get help and information about the Blue Dove Foundation and is available for download on our website.


### Local Resources


People often ask us about local Jewish mental health and addiction resources. We have created this tool for individuals and Jewish organizations to tailor to their own communities.

[Download and customize the file](#) for your local community.

**LOCAL RESOURCES**  
MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTION

| Resource | Contact Information | About the Resource |
|----------|---------------------|--------------------|
|          |                     |                    |
|          |                     |                    |
|          |                     |                    |
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In Partnership With:  
Facebook: @TheBlueDoveFoundation // Instagram: @bluedovefoundation  
 The Blue Dove FOUNDATION  
Education. Awareness. Outreach.



Transforming the way  
**THE JEWISH COMMUNITY**  
responds to  
**MENTAL HEALTH  
& SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

The topic of mental health and substance abuse is one that is often not discussed in the Jewish community.

**It's time to stop suffering silently.**

The Blue Dove Foundation is working towards:

- Advancing the conversation
- Educating the stigma & shame
- Overcoming the financial barriers to seeking treatment


**Get Involved:**

- Amplify our work by sharing with your community
- Host an educational program
- Join a committee
- Share your story, thoughts and insights

**NATIONAL RESOURCES**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Al-Anon for Families of Alcoholics          | 1-800-344-2669 - www.al-anon.org            |
| Alcohol and Drug Helpline                   | 1-800-822-4357 - www.aa.com                 |
| National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) | 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) - www.nami.org        |
| National Center for Elder Abuse             | 1-800-500-3337 - www.ncsac.org              |
| National Domestic Violence Hotline          | 1-800-799-SAFE - www.thehotline.org         |
| National Drug Helpline                      | 1-888-623-3239 - www.drughelpline.org       |
| National Eating Disorders Association       | 1-800-914-2337 - nedeat.org                 |
| National Sexual Assault Hotline             | 1-800-656-4673 - www.rainn.org              |
| Veterans Crisis Line                        | 1-800-273-8239 - www.veteranscrisisline.net |

"Whoever saves a life, saves the world."  
- MISHNAH OF THE TALMUD



# Blue Dove Foundation Shop

All items are available at [thebluedovefoundation.org/shop](http://thebluedovefoundation.org/shop)

Want to show off your support for eradicating the shame and stigma around mental illness and addiction? Purchase a custom Blue Dove Foundation-branded item at our online store.

## Kippahs

We are asking rabbis, clergy, staff, temple presidents and lay leaders to consider wearing a kippah to show unity and support for sparking a conversation around mental health and/or substance abuse in our communities. #QuietTheSilence



## MantraBand

This custom bracelet says *TIKKUN HANEFESH - HEAL THE SOUL* on custom MantraBands.

[MantraBands](#) are simple, elegant bracelets with a touch of delicate polish and an uplifting message promoting a lifestyle of optimism, positivity and mindfulness. Wear your MantraBand every day as your daily reminder, affirmation and inspiration. Made with love.



## #QuietingTheSilence: Personal Stories

This book offers a chance for people to share stories and perspectives related to their own life-changing experiences involving mental illness and addiction. Through these personal stories of struggles and loss, we hope to show individuals they are not alone and to work toward eliminating the shame and stigma many feel around these topics.



### Gratitude Cards

Box of 12 mixed Blue Dove Foundation Gratitude Cards with white envelopes. All cards have an image on the front and an explanation on the back. They make a great way to send a note to someone you're grateful for and to check in on them. Buy them for yourself or as a gift for someone.

*thankful*  
FOR YOU

you are  
**awesome.**

*You're My  
Jam*



JUST  
POPPING  
BY TO SAY HELLO



I DONUT  
KNOW WHAT  
I'D DO  
WITHOUT  
**YOU**



# About the Blue Dove Foundation

## Who We Are

The Blue Dove Foundation was created to help address the issues of mental illness and addiction in the Jewish community and beyond. Based in Atlanta, we work with people and organizations across the United States and around the world.

## Our Mission

To educate, equip, and ignite our Jewish community with tools to understand, support, and overcome the challenges presented by mental illness and substance abuse. As a community with a focus on tikkun olam, we work to eradicate the shame and stigma surrounding these issues. Once we achieve this goal, we can begin to improve and save lives.

## Our Work

1. *Education, awareness and outreach:* We encourage conversations and provide information and tools for individuals and families seeking assistance.
2. *Financial assistance for treatment:* We provide hardship scholarships and/or interest-free loans.
3. *Scalable programs:* We develop, design and launch easily replicated programs for schools, synagogues, community centers, camps, institutions and affinity groups. Programs include speaker series, mental health Shabbat dinners, community trainings utilizing the Blue Dove Foundation Mental Wellness Toolkit and more.

## Connect With Us

- Phone: (404) 490-2391
- Email: [info@thebluedovefoundation.org](mailto:info@thebluedovefoundation.org)
- Website: [thebluedovefoundation.org](http://thebluedovefoundation.org)
- Facebook: [facebook.com/TheBlueDoveFoundation](https://facebook.com/TheBlueDoveFoundation)
- Instagram: [instagram.com/BlueDoveFoundation](https://instagram.com/BlueDoveFoundation)

## Get Involved with Us

We seek individuals and like-minded organizations to partner with to amplify our message and create meaningful resources.

*Like to write? Share your story.*

We're always looking to share personal stories, insight and professional thoughts about topics related to mental health and/or substance abuse.



*Got skills? Join a committee.*

Share your expertise by joining one of our several committees: financial or medical evaluation for interest-free loans/grants for treatment, grant writing, medical advisory, program development or rabbinic advisor.

*Got Community? Host an educational program.*

Use our program-in-a-box guides to host a small parlor meeting in your home, a community training or a larger educational program for your local community using our successful [#QuietingTheSilence platform](#).

*Love to share? Amplify our work*

Help us expand our work by sharing our resources and programs with your members.