

TURN THE TABLES: QUIETING THE SILENCE

PERSONAL STORIES INSERT

HOPE AND HELP

My name is Caitlin and I'm 34 years old. I was first diagnosed with depression and anxiety when I was 19, but I've probably been struggling with anxiety for my whole life. I am writing this today after hearing others share their stories of recovery from mental illness and feeling inspired to do the same.

At times, living with depression and anxiety feels overwhelming and life feels hopeless. I have tried 13 different psychiatric medications and currently take four. I'm on my fourth long-term individual therapist. These relationships have been immensely helpful, but having them come and go has been painful. Last fall, things got particularly challenging and I spent three weeks in a day hospitalization program. Having to take time off from my daily responsibilities was something I never had to do before, and I'm still working to accept it.

My negative thoughts are telling me not to submit this because "who cares about my struggles," "others have it way worse," but I'm continuing to type this anyway because I want others who are struggling to know you are not alone. I also want to say that yes, I have a mental illness, but that is not all of who I am. I am a daughter, an aunt, a granddaughter, a friend. I am an Occupational Therapist (OT). My role as an OT has been continuously intertwined with my mental illness since I started practicing. How can I help others when I don't feel well myself? My negative thoughts continuously tell me I am not doing my job "good enough" and that I am letting others down at work.

This year has been one of my most challenging, but I still have hope. I am thankful to have a doctor who is willing to try new things. Currently, I am in my third week of TMS treatment for depression. All of this is still new, but I think things have slightly begun to shift. I notice it's easier to get up in the morning—some days, the work day seems more manageable, some days that voice that says I'm not good enough is a little quieter. My friends have also said I seem calmer.

My story of recovery is not over, but hopefully with continued treatment things will continue to improve. I am writing this to say mental health is important, mental illnesses are real, and help is available.

Guiding Questions

- Caitlin mentions her journey with multiple therapists and touches on themes of instability in her life. If you are comfortable, share about a time when you were taken aback by change or inconsistency. What are some ways that you coped?
- Later Caitlin states, "Taking time off from my daily responsibilities was something I never had to do before, and I'm still working to accept it."
 - What sort of pressures do we put on individuals professionally to uphold certain responsibilities? What can we do to create a work culture that treats mental and physical illness similarly?
 - How can we support individuals suffering from mental illness with their personal obligations, but also respect their privacy?

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PERSONAL STORIES INSERT

Guiding Questions...continued

- The idea that “others have it way worse” may prevent individuals struggling with mental illness from receiving treatment. Do you think this notion itself is based in any kind of stigma? Have you ever told yourself that your problems are insignificant or that others are worse off?
- By the end of the piece, it seems like Caitlin is hopeful. Have you had experiences with yourself, friends, or loved ones where hope was lost? What are the appropriate actions to take in this scenario?

LAYLA'S STORY

I have managed painful anxiety symptoms my whole life. Before school I was a very shy, cautious, and empathetic child. Throughout school I felt out of touch with my peers, and isolated, pushing away social contact by middle school. I matured a little in college, but became even more avoidant when I turned 25 after a traumatic event. At 36, I still struggle with social phobia, depression, and OCD.

Unfortunately, people tend to respond negatively to anxious, sad, and awkward individuals. For the most part, I do not attempt to talk about my internal life. I have had several ineffectual counselors, therapists, and doctors, as well as apathy (or cluelessness) from loved ones. It is painful to be dismissed and misunderstood. I am too embarrassed by my symptoms. Finding the right words is half the battle. Where I come from, people don't talk about mental health, or very much else. It has taken time, money, and perseverance to find a treatment path right for me. I am also an excellent 'performer', meaning I hide symptoms very well, to avoid scrutiny. Sometimes, I feel exhausted. It wasn't until my younger sister matured that I found a kindred spirit. We can talk freely about most things.

Self-expression has helped me greatly, as well as finding peers who accept and believe me. I now have employment with a non-profit helping adults with a mental illness. I believe that in the near future, the worst symptoms will be behind me.

Guiding Questions

- Layla mentions that she was a quiet child growing up. How do we reach out to those who may be isolated? How do we make “quiet” individuals feel comfortable to continue the conversation on mental health?
- Those with social phobia like Layla are frequently deemed “outcasts.” She mentions that “people tend to respond negatively to anxious, sad, and awkward individuals.” Has anyone dealt with this sort of labeling? How did it make you feel? How is our treatment of people deemed “awkward” contributing to our current mental health crisis?
- Layla points to a certain “cluelessness” from loved ones that was particularly painful. If you have ever struggled with a mental health issue, how have you navigated talking about these issues with friends and family?
- Layla had an insightful comment, “Finding the right words is half the battle.” How do we continue to talk about mental health when it can be difficult to even describe how we feel?

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COPING WITH COVID-19 INSERT

For the first time in most of our lives, we are experiencing a global pandemic that has led to rising levels of anxiety, fear, isolation and emotional distress. The impacts of COVID-19 are stressful and it's easy to feel a general loss of control over our health and emotions during this time.

The theme of World Mental Health Day 2020 is "Mental Health for All", which addresses the need for accessible mental health support for everyone. We can all use advice on how to support ourselves and others struggling with mental health issues that have been amplified by COVID-19, and learn how to be there for each other despite social distancing.

Right now, it is normal to feel:

- Lonely or sad. It's hard to stay connected with loved ones, and difficult to make new connections during this time.
- Scared or anxious. In a public health crisis, it is normal to worry about the health of yourself and others, and what the future will bring.
- Irritated. You may be feeling annoyed by certain people or situations in your family, social circles, and the news.
- Hopeless. A pandemic can be overwhelming due to uncertainties regarding health, employment, finances, relationships, and larger societal issues.
- Bored or unmotivated. Having limitations such as staying home can become tiring and repetitive for many people.
- Guilty. There may be certain aspects of your life that you are feeling guilty about. These may include productivity, unintentionally spreading sickness, or not being able to be fully present with or care for loved ones.¹

All of the emotions you are experiencing are valid, and it is important to take the time to process them. Here are some ways to reduce stress related to COVID-19:

- Set limits on when and for how long you consume news and information, especially news that might cause distress.
- Follow healthy daily routines. Prioritize sleep, engage in self-care, move your body, eat nourishing food, and make time for breaks in your day.
- Practice mindfulness. Meditation and other forms of mindfulness, such as breathing exercises, can help calm your mind and body to reduce anxiety.
- Stay connected with others. Even if you can't see people in person, stay in touch with friends and family to manage feelings of isolation. We are all in this together!²

See the main guide for additional mental health resources.

¹ Rushton, Kevin. "Your Feelings (About Coronavirus) Are Valid". Mental Health America, Apr 2020. mhanational.org/blog/your-feelings-about-coronavirus-are-valid

² "COVID-19 Resource and Information Guide". National Alliance on Mental Illness. nami.org/Support-Education/NAMI-HelpLine/COVID-19-Information-and-Resources/COVID-19-Resource-and-Information-Guide



TURN THE TABLES: QUIETING THE SILENCE JUDAISM'S CONNECTION TO MENTAL HEALTH

There are many Jewish values, or **middot** which are grounded in the ideas of healing, wellness and community. In order to address the stigma of mental illness in the Jewish community and beyond, it is important to engage in these values when talking about mental health.

TIKKUN HANEFESH: REPAIRING THE SOUL

Tikkun hanefesh, or repairing the soul, suggests that we are responsible for ourselves before we are responsible to others. This directly connects to the concept of self-care, which is something that requires time and intention and can lead to growth and healing. Shabbat is a wonderful example of taking the time to nourish one's body and mind, and bringing intention to one's life.

TIKKUN OLAM: REPAIRING THE WORLD

The concept of wholeness and healing is also reflected in **tikkun olam**, or repairing the world. To repair the world is essentially to make the world whole again through acts of social change. It focuses on the importance of building community and accepting responsibility to help others in order to make the world a better place. The work of tikkun olam is believed to begin with tikkun hanefesh, and both are essential to healing the world and our own lives.



How will you work to repair the world?

JEWISH PRAYERS FOR HEALING

Mi sheberach is a fundamental Jewish prayer that asks for compassion and strength for those who are ill or recovering from illness, centering on the healing of one's community. Below is the traditional Mi Sheberach blessing and other special prayers for healing.

מי שברך אבותינו ואמותינו, אברהם, יצחק ויעקב, שרה,
רבקה, רחל ולאה, הוא יברך את החולים [names].
הקדוש ברוך הוא ימלא רחמים עליהם, להחלימם
ולרפאתם ולהחזיקם ולהחיותם, וישלח להם מהרה
רפואה, רפואה שלמה מן השמים, רפואת הנפש,
ורפואת הגוף, השתא בעגלא ובזמן קריב. ונאמר: אמן.



TURN THE TABLES: QUIETING THE SILENCE JUDAISM'S CONNECTION TO MENTAL HEALTH

Mi Shebeirach avoteinu v'imoteinu,
Avraham, Yitzchak v'Yaakov, Sarah, Rivkah,
Rachel v'Lei-ah, hu y'vareich et hacholim[names].
HaKadosh Baruch Hu yimaleirachamim aleihem,
l'hachalimam ul'rapotamul'hachazikam,
v'yishlach lahem m'heirahr'fuah,
r'fuah shleimah min hashamayim,
r'fuat hanefesh ur'fuat haguf, hashtabaagala uviz'man kariv.
V'nomar: Amen.

May the one who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, bless and heal those who are ill [names]. May the Blessed Holy One be filled with compassion for their health to be restored and their strength to be revived. May God swiftly send them a complete renewal of body and spirit, and let us say, Amen.

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.

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SHABBAT RITUAL

For many, Shabbat is a time to rest, be present, and make connections with others. This prayer card can be used alongside your dinner discussion guide to incorporate Shabbat ritual into your conversation about mental health, and provide opportunity for personal reflection in prayer. Each prayer includes a mental health alternative text to share.

LIGHT

Traditional ritual prayers over the candles:

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצוותיו, וצונו להדליק נר של שבת.

- Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat.
- Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to kindle the light of Shabbat.

Officially end the workweek and welcome the weekend with the light of two or more candles. Use candle lighting to welcome Shabbat into your mind.



What do you want to welcome into your life over the week to come? What do you want to work on? Use the light of the candles to illuminate your goals.

SANCTIFY

Traditional ritual prayers over the wine:

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי הגפן.

- Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, borei p'ri hagafen.
- Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Wine, grape juice, or another special drink serves as a conduit to sanctify the seventh day of the week, setting apart the time of Shabbat as “other,” different from the daily grind of the other six days.



When thinking about mental health, take time to sanctify Shabbat by leaving behind the past week. As you pick up your glass, imagine what you are putting down in order to welcome the weekend.



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SHABBAT RITUAL

CLEANSE

Traditional ritual prayers over the hands:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל גְּטִילַת יָדַיִם

- Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu al n'tilat yadayim.
- Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments, and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands.

A formal practice of washing hands recalls an ancient practice during Temple times when Shabbat was accompanied by special offerings.



Take time to cleanse your mind, your spirit, your soul. Friday night is a clean slate.

NOURISH

Traditional ritual prayers over the bread:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצֵיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

- Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, haMotzi lechem min haaretz.
- Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Breaking bread makes a meal, and Shabbat is a time to enjoy a special braided bread called challah that just might steal the show.



When thinking about mental health, nourishing your mind, body and soul is key. Take time to nourish you. Without self-care, you won't be at your best to help others.

APPRECIATE

Traditional Shehecheyanu (Prayer of gratitude):

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁחַיָּנוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה

- Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam shehecheyanu v'kiyamanu v'higianu lazman ha'zeh.
- Blessed is the Oneness that sustains us and lifts us up, and has enabled us to reach this season.



When thinking about mental health, appreciation and gratitude are incredibly important. Take time to be grateful for who you are, the friends and family in your life, your commitment to helping others and what you bring to the world.

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PRACTICING SELF-CARE AND GRATITUDE

PRACTICING SELF-CARE

The following list includes suggestions of how to incorporate self-care into your daily or weekly routine. There are many ways to practice self-care and this list is only a starting point. Everyone has their own way of taking care of their mental health, and it is up to you to figure out what helps you manage stress, be present, and nourish your mind and body.

- Be social. Make plans with friends or family, join a new social club, or get involved in your community.
- Get organized. Create achievable to-do lists, keep your living and work space tidy, and plan weekly meals.
- Say no to plans if you don't feel up to it or have limited time.
- Move your body. Try a new exercise, do some yoga, walk your dog, or visit a local park for some fresh air!
- Reflect. Write in a journal, compose a gratitude list, and engage in mindfulness exercises or brain puzzles.
- Relax. Meditate, get adequate sleep, and find a creative outlet that you enjoy. Try cooking or baking, listening to music, writing, or reading a book.
- Treat Yourself. Have a nice meal, or indulge in something that you wouldn't normally do.

"If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete."

- Jack Kornfield



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PRACTICING SELF-CARE AND GRATITUDE

EXPRESSING GRATITUDE

Gratitude is something that, if practiced consistently, results in feelings of joy. Use the following suggestions to help you find ways of expressing gratitude that are meaningful to you.

Send a Card to Someone. If you're grateful for someone, let them know by sending a hand-written card-- they will acknowledge and appreciate the time you took to think about them, write a note, and mail it.

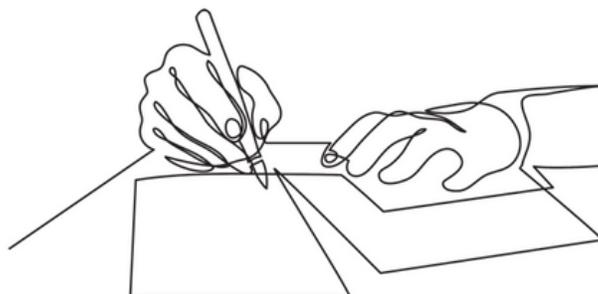
Create a Gratitude List. Starting with broad categories, compile a list of everything in your life that you're thankful for. Then, engage your senses to identify the particular items you're grateful for relating to the larger category. If one of the categories is your pet dog, here are examples of what these more specific items might look like:

- I love that my dog is always waiting at the door for me when I get home.
- The soft touch of his head on my lap.
- His excitement when he puts his head out the window.

Start Journaling. If you're feeling stressed out or confused, write down what you're thinking and going through. The act of writing can help you clear your mind and find a sense of calmness. With a commitment to journaling, you'll learn more about yourself and how you react to different situations. This will be a chance for you to develop a new outlook on life, and focus on what brings you joy.

“There is a calmness to a life lived in gratitude, a quiet joy.”

- Ralph H. Blum



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SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR GUIDE

Important Notes to Keep in Mind

- It is okay if there are silences - sometimes people need a little bit of time to formulate thoughts or process what has been shared. If there is a lull in the conversation, wait longer than you think you need to before stepping in to drive the discussion.
- The following are general guidelines. Feel free to facilitate in your own way and skip around if need be - just be cognizant of what your group needs or is spending more/less time on and adapt accordingly.
- It is important that participants are not interrupted or cut short when sharing personal experiences and stories.
- Focus on asking guiding questions, and be supportive and reassuring toward participants' responses. Examples of guiding questions include open-ended questions or asking for more clarification about information that has been shared.

General Guidelines

Do some quick introductions.

- Share your name, pronouns, and any additional information about yourself that you'd like.
- Remind participants that you are here to help facilitate this conversation and maintain a safe environment for participants to discuss and share experiences without judgement. Reassure them you are aware that mental health can be a sensitive topic for many people.
- Review the guide to respectful conversations found on the third page of the main discussion guide. Participants should feel comfortable sharing at any point during the conversation and know that any personal information given is completely confidential.
- After introducing your role, allow participants to introduce themselves. Have them share their names, pronouns, and maybe a fun fact. It's up to you how the group will get to know each other!

Feel free to review the mental health facts, set intentions, and go over the definitions of shame and stigma before delving into the discussion.

Tips for Sharing Stories

Invite participants to go to page three of the main guide to the section titled "Sharing Stories." Encourage them to reflect on a personal experience with a mental health struggle, using the instructions detailed on the guide. Reassure them that although this can be intimidating, no one is here to judge - just to listen. Participants can share when ready.

- If necessary, provide examples of experiences that participants can share. These may be: a stressful time in your life, an emotionally intense period/event, or a time when you were just not feeling like yourself.
- If someone begins to speak, let them share their story and thank them after for their thoughtful reflection and willingness to be vulnerable.
- Wait to see if anyone else wants to speak. Let everyone who feels comfortable share before letting the group respond.

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SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR GUIDE

Tips for Sharing Stories...continued

After stories have been shared, ask any of the following questions:

- What stood out to you in the stories that were shared? Was there something that resonated with you? Was there an experience you related to?
- To those who shared, how did you feel before sharing your story? How did you feel after sharing your story? Did you have any hesitations about sharing, and why did you decide to?

If no one feels comfortable sharing, ask participants to look at the personal stories insert and choose one or both of the two stories included. Invite them to read the stories out loud.

- Use any of the guiding questions from the document to facilitate discussion.

Additional Sections

Work through the main guide and any additional inserts that your group chooses to use. Invite participants to read the Entree texts out loud, and use the pre-existing questions to spark conversation. The following are additional guiding questions that can be used for this section to deepen the conversation.

- Has anyone ever felt shame in living with mental health issues? Has anyone ever observed or experienced mental health stigma in their community? What are some examples of ways that stigma can be experienced? If participants need help, experiencing stigma could mean: sharing a personal mental health experience with someone close to you and receiving judgement for it, being hesitant to ask for help or seek treatment, feeling like you can't talk about mental health with others, or feeling ashamed for struggling or needing help.
- Where do you think this stigma comes from?
- Why do you think mental illnesses are sometimes perceived differently from physical illnesses?
- What factors might be involved in the perpetuation of this stigma? What do you think are some ways that we can reduce this stigma?

Wrapping up the Conversation

Thank participants for sharing stories, allowing themselves to be vulnerable, and listening to each other with respect. Most importantly, thank everyone for helping to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental health!

When your group is finished, follow along in the "Dessert" section with the larger group.