

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.



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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.



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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 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.



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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:

בָּרוּךְ 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:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא 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):

בָּרוּךְ 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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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

