

THE 10 MENTAL HEALTH PLAGUES OF 2020

The role of the plagues in the story of Exodus was to signify the start of the beginning to freedom. We hope 2021 will mark the end of the pandemic — freedom from the plague.



When we remember the plagues of Egypt on the Seder night, we are remembering the miraculous things that G-d did for us in Egypt. However, for some of us there are things plaguing our own lives that are far worse, and as much as we spend Passover talking about the plagues of Egypt, we should also talk about the mental health plagues of today.

As you recite the traditional 10 plagues in your Haggadah, consider adding the following list:

1 Fear

Being in a constant state of fear (fight-or-flight) affects our body's processes, e.g., digestion, blood pressure, body temperature (byjus.com). Our body functions best when we are not on edge.



2 Self-judgment

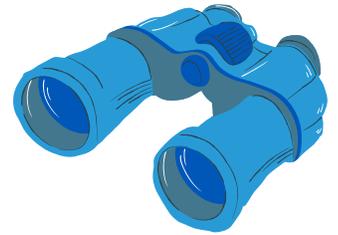
Just as life's pace has changed during the pandemic, so has our daily routines. We are allowed to be less productive than before the pandemic. We must be kind to ourselves during a time where the world is not so kind to us.



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3 Imposter Syndrome

Thanks to social media, it is common to think we are not doing enough. Remember that everyone has these fears — even the people who post these career updates.



4 Burnout

It is difficult to draw the line between the work day and the post-work day. Since everything is online, it feels like the work day never ends. Remember to emphasize the demarcation between work and relaxation to avoid burnout.



5 Bereavement/Grief

The most difficult part of a deadly virus must be not being able to grieve in the traditional manner. At a time when one wants to sit shiva and be physically close to others, most cannot be. With more than 500,000 deaths in the United States, many people are experiencing grief they are not able to deal with in the traditional manner.



6 Anxiety and depression

As of September 2020, eight out of 10 people experienced severe anxiety symptoms (mhanational.org). And since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, even more people have experienced moderate to severe symptoms of depression (mhanational.org). These people can be a family member, a friend or the neighbors on either side of your house!



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7 Trauma/Stressor-Related Symptoms

More than a quarter (26 percent) of adults experienced symptoms of trauma or stress-related disorders since the start of the pandemic (cdc.gov). This means that one in four people, might be experiencing these symptoms right now.



8 Isolation/Loneliness

Seven out of 10 of those screened for moderate to severe symptoms of depression and anxiety noted isolation and loneliness to be among the top three contributors to their depression and anxiety (mhanational.org). Now is the time to take advantage of technology — get on a Zoom or Facetime call with your friends and family!



9 Substance Abuse

More than 13 percent of adults use substances as a coping mechanism for anxiety and depression in 2020 (cdc.gov). This is about three students from my small statistics class of 25.



10 Suicidal ideation

Nearly 11 percent of adults seriously considered suicide in the past month (cdc.gov). That number is 0.15 percent more than the previous year — .015 percent might seem like a small number, but it accounts to about 500,000 people.

