

The Renfrew Center Foundation's 2021 Jewish Women's Seminar for Professionals  
2 CE CREDITS

## FEASTING, FASTING AND FEELINGS; OY VEY!

A Transdiagnostic Approach to Treating Eating Disorders in the Jewish Community

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### Use of Judaism in Therapy

**What is the therapist's role when using Judaism in therapy?**

- Assess needs/ levels of religiosity
- Meet the client where they are
- Understand/respect unique cultural and religious needs
- Customize Treatment Planning
- Respond to their needs

**Some questions to ask:**

- What are your practices/rituals/beliefs?
- Have any of your practices possibly contributed to the development of your illness?
- How have these practices/rituals/beliefs made your recovery process more challenging?
- What planning and supports will be helpful for you in your treatment?

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### Jewish Concepts and Terms

- **Torah** – Bible, or The Old Testament
- **Halacha** – Jewish Law (includes the Torah and 3,000 years of rabbinic commentary covering all aspects of Jewish life)
- **Shabbat** – The Sabbath which for Jews is on Friday night and Saturday. Orthodox Jews observe extensive laws to protect the sanctity of the day
- **Keeping Kosher** – Dietary laws derived from the Torah including but not limited to separating meat and milk
- **Large Families** – Many Orthodox families have many children (there is commandment to "be fruitful and multiply.")
- **Laws of Family Purity** – Jewish law defines how and when sex can occur in marriage. (Mikvah- ritual bath)
- **The Get** – A Jewish writ of divorce
- **Role of the Rabbi** – Many Jews feel that they must talk to their Rabbi before making important decisions

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### Jewish Rituals vs. Eating Disorders (not about blame)

- A conundrum occurs when **Jewish patients use their observance** of religious rituals as a way to **obscure** and, thus, perpetuate use of eating disorder symptoms
  - Keeping kosher can lead to rigidity in eating and normalization of restriction
  - Jewish Holidays and Fast Days - cycles of feasting and fasting
  - Sabbath Observance- aside from the focus on food, observing Sabbath may limit resources, alter schedule and meal timing, and create need for emotional tolerance skills



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### Jewish Rituals vs. Eating Disorders (not about blame)

- Some patients who are suffering from eating disorders may use faith as an excuse to perpetuate the eating disorder.
  - It's against my religion
  - I can't eat that (not kosher)
  - I'm not supposed to have that- in order to be holy I need to deny myself pleasures (thinking traps)



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### Examples

	Challenges	Ideas
Shabbat	Food, meals, family, sabbath observance	Day of rest, mindfulness and present in the moment.
Passover/ Seder	Matzo, 4 cups wine, meal plan changes	Freedom, 4 affirmations
Chanukah	Donuts, latkes, oil	Light in the darkness, miracles, gifts
Mikvah	Body image, OCD, trauma	Ritual and spiritual cleansing, relax and renew



► What does it mean to you?

► What do you want to get out of it?

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### Considerations for Treatment

- Know that **life and health come first** in Judaism
- Explore how **Rabbis can be resources** in treatment
  - Observance of a Fast day
  - Observance of Kashrut, Sabbath, and holidays
  - Coordination of care
- Assess level of religiosity and explore how religious observances have affected them.
- Use treatment for concrete planning that is consistent with level of religious observance.
- Examine ways emotional tolerance skills can be used in accordance with religious observances and practices (ex: no phones on the Sabbath)
- Explore ways that **faith can provide motivation** for their treatment and help strengthen emotional tolerance.

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### Considerations for Treatment- Continued

- **Understand meaning** of holidays/rituals and examine reasons for observance (**What** is this about? What is your reason for observing?)
- Use **Jewish Values to guide behaviors**- values-based approach
- Challenge thinking traps- be prepared or ask questions to differentiate between religious practices and disordered thinking
- Refer to specialist or seek consultation
- **1-800-Renfrew:** We will help you identify resources

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### Primary and Secondary Emotional Response

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Primary emotional response</b></li> <li>• “First” emotional reactions to a situation or memory</li> <li>• Often functional</li> <li>• Directly related to the cues in the situation or memory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Secondary emotional response</b></li> <li>• “Emotions about emotions”</li> <li>• Tend to be judgmental</li> <li>• Not based upon information from the present moment</li> <li>• Often result in disordered emotions</li> </ul>
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Example:



Anxiety →



Anger

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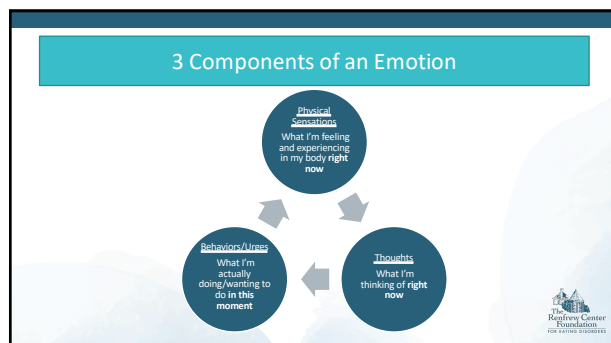
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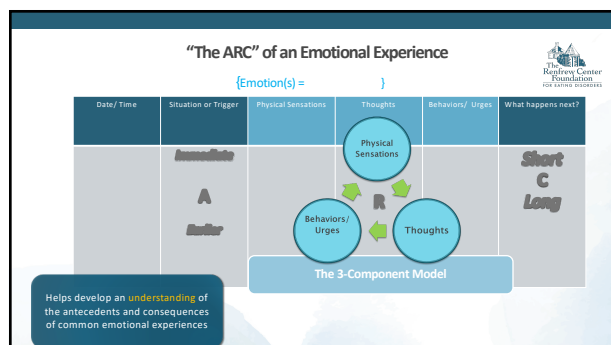
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**Danya's Emotion Exposure Hierarchy Example**



Do Not Avoid	Hesitate To Enter But Rarely Avoid		Sometimes Avoid		Usually Avoid		Always Avoid	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No Distress	Slight Distress		Definite Distress		Strong Distress		Extreme Distress	
Description							Avoid	Distress
1	WORST HOSTING PEOPLE FOR SHABBAT AND PARTICIPATING IN THE MEAL WHILE SEATED AT THE TABLE							
2	BEING AROUND A LARGE GROUP OF PEOPLE						7	8
3	COOKING WITH OTHERS						7	7
4	SEEING SELF IN MIRROR						6	7
5	FEELING FULL						5	7
6	EATING WITH OTHERS						5	7
7	SHOPPING FOR CLOTHES						4	6
8	HOSTING PEOPLE FOR SHABBAT WITHOUT EATING OR SITTING AT THE TABLE						5	5

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**Contact Information**



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For more information about The Renfrew Center's programs and services, please call **1-800-RENFREW (736-3739)** or visit [www.renfrewcenter.com](http://www.renfrewcenter.com).

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