

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/ Seider	Matzah, 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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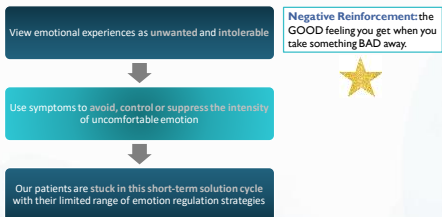
Considerations for Treatment- Continued



- **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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Patterns of Learned Behavior



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3 Components of an Emotion



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"The ARC" of an Emotional Experience

{Emotion(s) = }

Date/Time	Situation or Trigger	Physical Sensations	Thoughts	Behaviors/Urges	What happens next?
	Immediate		Physical Sensations		Short
	A		Thoughts		C
	Earlier		Behaviors/Urges	Thoughts	Long
			The 3-Component Model		

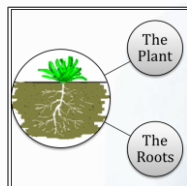


Helps develop an understanding of the antecedents and consequences of common emotional experiences

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Danya's Downward Arrow

- "I cannot eat shabbat dinner with my family."
- ↓
- "If I eat shabbat dinner with my family I will feel the need to restrict the next day."
- ↓
- "If I restrict, I will feel worthless and disconnected."
- ↓
- "My family will judge me and I will be alone."
- ↓
- "I am disgusting."



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