

FAMILY ISSUES

Feuerman

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song, singing out loud, and in unison.

One final possible strategy: Make shul about *davening* only and only say what is absolutely necessary according to *halacha*. This will allow people to *daven* thoughtfully, without speeches, *misheberachs*, *hosafos*, *piyyutim* and other distractions. As *Chazal* say, “It is better to pray a small amount with proper intention and concentration than a large amount with no concentration (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim*, 1:4).

This reminds us of another practice prevalent in

many shuls: automatically saying a *kapitel* of *Tehilim* after *davening*. While it is understandable for additional prayers to be said during a time of distress, given our generation’s difficulty with the *required* portions of *davening*, is this practice truly wise? Additionally, are we really doing G-d a favor by absentmindedly mumbling an additional psalm while winding our *tefilin*? Sadly, this brings to mind the words of Yeshayahu (1:11-15): “Says Hashem, ‘Why do I need your numerous sacrifices?... When you come to be seen before me, who asked this of you, to trample my courtyard?... I grew to loathe your holidays and festivals; they became a burden that I disdained. And when you will spread your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you...

even if you pray extensively...”

Perhaps a better response to communal crisis would be for the *rav* of the shul to ask the congregation to specifically focus during *davening* on a pertinent and related part of the existing required prayers. For example, during *Refaenu* in *Chazaras HaShatz*, the shul could agree to pause and focus on certain members of the *kehilla* who are in dire health.

Prayer is central to our religion and we believe in its power to effect change, even when the circumstances seem hopeless (see, for example, *Shabbos* 156a, Rashi “Eyn Mazal”). We all need help, and we all face challenges. Let us do something to help make our prayers count.

Lieberman

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a person cannot see beyond himself, the soul’s desire to make connections is supplanted by the ego’s own self-oriented correlations. Since he cannot find meaning, he invents it. (In fact, psychosis – and, to a lesser degree, neurosis – and prophecy lie at opposite ends of the spectrum. The latter is an all-encompassing perspective, while the former is exceedingly myopic.)

Further compounding the emotional strain is the confusion between affliction and accomplishment – when we make distress the objective, rather than success, and where pain equals progress. While it is true that “according to the effort is the reward,” a person

cannot heap challenges on himself. We are rewarded for the effort put forth and the pain endured, but we are not compensated for self-inflicted wounds.

Yet all too often, we unconsciously create obstacles to give ourselves the feeling of growth without movement. An example of a common tactic: the file that we absolutely cannot afford to lose, our cellular phone, vehicle registration – just about everything and anything that we can misplace, we will misplace. Essentially, we manufacture a challenge in a controlled environment that, once overcome, gives us a sense of excitement and accomplishment. (In some instances, we create these little challenges because, unconsciously, we want to inconvenience ourselves. Feelings of guilt and self-reproach cause us to inflict harm upon ourselves. Note that this is the very epitome of self-destruction.)

Some people are miserable even though by all accounts they are making good choices. This is because we each stand on a never-ending ladder whose starting point is irrelevant. We might be capable of climbing easily but choose to be complacent and climb only a few rungs at our leisure. Genuine progress – and therefore self-esteem and emotional health – is assessed only through looking at our effort in relation to our ability. Pioneering psychologist Abraham Maslow succinctly summarizes this point: “If you plan on being anything less than you are capable of being, you will probably be unhappy all of the days of your life.”

In the next installment we’ll see how living a life with meaning not only brings pleasure and bolsters our emotional, spiritual, and physical health, but it also means that we experience less suffering.

Yankovich

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days you don’t speak to or see this friend? This could be a sign that you two are not a perfect fit. Jamie Marich, Ph.D., a clinical counselor and consultant from Ohio, explains that often this is not “an all or nothing experience; it can happen in degrees. Having some of this in any friendship can be within healthy limits, yet if you notice that with consistency you are feeling drained simply by interacting with the person in any way, it may be time to look for an exit strategy.”

Lack of support: Does it seem that you devote hours to listening to your friend’s problems but when it’s your turn to vent, she always has to go? Is your friend overly critical and does she always seem to disagree with you? Friends are meant to uplift, inspire and strengthen us, not tear us down. Friends should be reliable and dependable.

A survey of 8,000 women and 4,000 men conducted by TODAY.com and Self Magazine discovered that 84% of women and 75% of men said they had a toxic friend at some point and 84% confessed they had remained in the friendship longer than was healthy. Oftentimes, individuals are reluctant to end a toxic friendship because they feel this friend needs them. They feel their friend will fall apart without their guidance, advice or listening ear. If this is the case, you have to acknowledge that it’s not your responsibility to “fix” your friend, and that until she decides to take action or seek profes-

sional help, there is nothing you can do.

How Do You Get Out of a Toxic Friendship?

Set clear boundaries: Let your friend know that speaking to you in a critical manner is no longer acceptable. If your friend says something mean-spirited or takes advantage of you, call her out. Focus more on your self-care and less on pleasing the toxic friend. When you are asked to do something you don’t feel like doing, stay strong and just say “no.” There is no need to give an explanation or apology. “In the end of the day, it’s your – and only your – responsibility to express your own needs, and boundaries that feel appropriate to you, and then enforce them. Keep lines of communication open, be clear on needs and expectations with each other, and when an irreconcilable mismatch develops, wish the other person well and move on to people who are a better fit for you,” says Jim Hjort, LCSW, a licensed psychotherapist in California.

Stop responding to fake drama: You have gotten numerous frantic calls or texts from your friend who is devastated and needs you to call her back ASAP, so you drop everything and respond only to hear that the cleaning lady canceled or another in-law story. Stop taking these calls and your friend will get the message, will find someone else to bother, or, better yet, resolve these minor issues on her own.

Suggest professional help. No matter how many hours you spend trying to steer this friend in the right direction, you are wasting your breath; she just might need professional help. You can phrase this delicately

by saying, “You are a good person, and I hate seeing you stressed or in pain. I wish that I could fix this, but I am not qualified to help. I think speaking to a therapist will really transform your life.”

“Just like you can’t make another person love you, you can never make another person be nice to you. You are on your own journey and what’s important is to recognize the pattern that you repeat with toxic friends, acknowledge the pattern, integrate it back into yourself and own it... and then you can move through it by individuating,” says Dr. Gross.

End the friendship: Firmly tell her that you have given this a lot of thought and you don’t feel you two are compatible any longer. You don’t need to stage an intervention or have a “big talk” to address this, as this will be futile; simply slowly backing away will convey the message. Dr. Marich warns that if you decide to make a clean break, be prepared for some blow-back (e.g., nasty emails, rumors getting back to you). “Just keep breathing and hold your ground... remember, this is the reason you’re getting out of this! There is no one-size-fits-all solution here. In some circumstances a complete break may be best, and in others, keeping that friend more at a distance may be acceptable. You may choose to stay friends on Facebook and transition into more of an acquaintance-style interaction.”

Make new friends: Invest in people that you connect with and enjoy.

Schonfeld

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Rest. When you sleep, your body relaxes. Therefore, help your child get as much sleep as his body needs.

Exercise. Exercise is great for your body and brain! Exercise relieves stress and fights anxiety. Get your child kicking a ball or running around the track.

Proper nutrition. Highly processed or sugary foods can feed anxiety. Eat foods that are high in vitamin B and low-fat proteins.

Daily routines. Routines help calm anxious children because they allow them to feel in control. Estab-

lish daily routines and do your best to stick to them (without stressing out!).

Replace worry with positive and rational thinking. Help your child change his thinking. When he wants to think an anxious thought, help him transform it to a positive or rational one. With practice, this can become a way of life.

Model calm. If you are anxious, there is no way that you are going to help your child overcome his anxiety. Therefore, work on your own anxiety. In the end, it will benefit your child as well.

Register now for an anxiety workshop by Dr. Paul Foxman on November 17. Please call Mrs. Schonfeld at 718-382-5437 for more information.

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