

Compassion and Mental Health

Posted by wellmadecolors - 03 Aug 2022 22:00

Mental health is a difficult subject for many. Just like addiction it can lead to feelings of shame and confusion particularly if you're not being supported by people who understand. But I want everyone to know that as someone who is in treatment and recovering-- there is hope, there is upward movement and there is a means of breaking the cycle.

So why do I bring this up here? Well, I just want to throw out there that many of us ought to consider the ways this struggle may effect our mental health and the way our mental health effects this struggle. This does not mean, G-d forbid, that one should say "ah, this is taking a tole on my mental health-- I ought to give into my urges..." NO! Never is this a justification. Stay strong!

We want to consider, though, that ultimately through refining ourselves we should see our mental state improving. If this is not happening it does not mean giving up or slowing the process of refinement--- it means doubling down by *seeing our work on our mental health as an act of refinement*. Indeed, every aspect of our lives can be a service; and when our minds are healthier, we will be better able to resist our urges. This is comparable to a finely tuned machine. When it is clean and well oiled, it will perform the task better than one which is rusted and clogged.

Working on one's mental health does not mean weakness. In fact-- the willingness to go where things are uncertain and confront danger-- to face head on the factors that lead our lives astray-- this shows an incredible amount of strength. This is true both for work in addiction and in mental health.

Do not be afraid if you find that many of the things that brought you to this forum are a part of a broader mental health paradigm. Working on one does not mean negating the other. They fit together seamlessly. Indeed, two of my diagnoses are connected to challenges that brought me to this website. That doesn't mean that I can now neglect refining and disciplining myself-- it means that I now have a better understanding of how to do that.

Finally, being humble doesn't mean putting yourself down always. There is a deep humility in embracing the fact that you aren't the supreme judge of your own life-- Hashem is. It doesn't matter how many times you have hit bottom-- you admit your iniquity, ask for forgiveness and resolve to do better. You move upward with greater strength. Its hard to find that strength when

you are ruminating over the fact that you've hit bottom. Unfortunately, it can lead a person to stay at bottom even longer.

I am not saying that its easy. In fact that is *exactly* what I'm not saying. Because I'm saying its a challenge, its a daily challenge and one that requires an incredible amount of determination. Because of that very challenge, however, we are obligated to be humble enough to find support and ask for help when we need it. Showing your soul the compassion of not stewing in how low you've gotten is an act of strength and discipline. Sometimes those of us with mental health challenges can think the opposite and feel that *we need* to put ourselves down even lower than we already are. Instead, through the humility that I've already explained, and the ability to admit one's wrongs in a directed, specific and healthy manner; one can return-- and that is the return that awakens abundant compassion from Hashem.

Keep it up everyone: keep up the strength and good work. And don't forget to say thank you.

PS. I left a message of sorts in the bold text.

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Re: Compassion and Mental Health
Posted by Sapy - 04 Aug 2022 01:02

Beautiful! So much great insight and powerful points in this post. Very well written.

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Re: Compassion and Mental Health
Posted by wellmadecolors - 05 Aug 2022 00:21

I am grateful for your kindness, you should receive infinite kindness in return!

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Re: Compassion and Mental Health

Posted by turning.point - 12 Aug 2022 03:01

Thank you for bringing up this topic. Yes, mental health is important. Because the brain is part of the body that can get injured and bruised just like any part of the body, and the thinking-mind is in the brain, sometimes a mind trapped in a vicious cycle needs to break that cycle by healing the brain.

The Jewish people have Shabbat and prayer to help break the cycle. Cherish it!

Many doctors nowadays prescribe medication to help heal the brain and to free the mind. When I hear "mental health," this is what I hear: the **chemical balance** of the brain, *sometimes with medication*. In this sense, a "mental illness" is like a cough. I take medicine for a cough, and I take medicine for a mental illness. Do I keep taking cough medicine when the cough is gone?

Sometimes I hear that a mental illness is never gone, because of genetics. So then we talk about genetics. The genes are inside of our cells and determine our characteristics. But, do our genes determine our fate??? If my genetics made me short, I would build a ladder. If my biology makes me short-sighted, I wear glasses. If my mental health makes me confused, I talk and write things down to seek clarity. *I'm not doomed to be unable to make a choice in the face of my struggle. **I CAN CHOOSE.***

So, yes, I know that maybe medications might be part of healing for me or someone else. But that is not the whole answer.

I know that immoral decisions led me to the pain and suffering of the consequences from p&m and pms.

When the medication is done, I will still have to face the challenges in my life. That requires good ethics, Avot, Mishlei.

So, do we say we struggle with "mental health" or with "**moral health**"? Because we are in a

Torah framework, I feel much more comfortable to put it in those terms. There **IS** a common morality here. Yes, there is a biological component to mental health. ***There is also a moral component.*** What works for me, when I am done with the doctors and the medications, is that I **do good deeds** and gain merit so that I can receive HaShem's blessings, in this world and in the next.

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