

The Healthy Jewish Families Project
Faith and Culture
as tools for abuse prevention,
health promotion, and healing

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Peace in the Home

Shalom Bayit
Ending Domestic Violence in Jewish Homes



Connecting



FAITH & CULTURE AS TOOLS

- Leveraging cultural values to create change
 - ✓ Transform cultural barriers into protective factors
 - ✓ Can apply to any faith or cultural community
- Encouraging influential leaders to create change
 - ✓ Prioritize DV as a health issue in community
 - ✓ Improve healthy behaviors
 - ✓ Encourage help-seeking (person being harmed)
 - ✓ Insist on accountability (abuser)

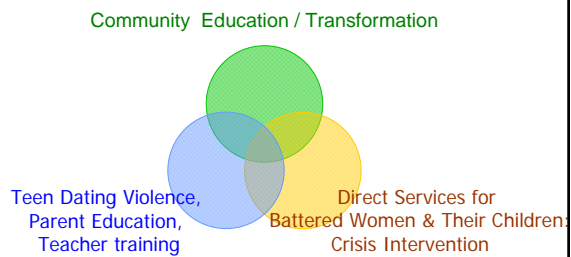
Shifting Normative Views of Health

INTERSECTION OF CULTURE:
Shifting health beliefs among community leaders

AT RISK / PREVENTION POSSIBLE:
Education & tools for healthy choices

ABUSE OCCURRING:
Screen, identify and intervene

Healthy Jewish Families Project:



Religion and Culture as Roadblock

- Beliefs may prevent victim from seeking help
- Beliefs may encourage abusive partner's behavior
- Insular nature of community may silence or endanger victims
- Victim's family, clergy, community may minimize the problem or discourage victim from seeking help, or believe she has to keep the family together at all costs

Religion and Culture as Resource

- "Religious permission" to go (e.g., Jewish law of *Pikuach Nefesh* or saving a life supersedes all other laws, including marriage laws)
- Sanctuary for the survivor
- Community can hold perpetrator accountable, set standards for acceptable behavior
- Clergy/faith leaders have strong influence
- Early identification of family dynamics
- Get message to people not otherwise reached
- Create culture shift: change beliefs

ROLE OF FAITH LEADERS

- Creating sanctuary
- Meeting spiritual needs of survivors
- Accountability for perpetrators
- Safety, Healing & Justice

ROLE OF...

Health Care Providers

Promote well being, heal illness
 Address patient needs/concerns
 Meet medical/health needs: BODY
 Promote healing, safety
 May or may not interact with partner
 Strong influence on patient

Faith Leaders

Provide sanctuary, address crisis
 Address congregant needs/concerns
 Meet spiritual needs: MIND/SPIRIT
 Promote healing, safety
 Can influence partner: accountability
 Strong influence on congregant

living a healthy lifestyle

eat healthy grow organic get health screening call your mother quit smoking wear your seatbelt exercise regularly improve your mental health get help to quit if you drink or use drugs fight cancer end environmental toxins brush your teeth and floss too be good to your body buy local save the planet reduce reuse recycle love your children get enough sleep watch the sunset **treat your partner with respect** run a marathon practice patience walk for a cure drink water go green take public transportation ride a bike climb a mountain take a yoga class meditate breathe relax your mind swim laugh dance play sing take care of each other eat dinner together wear sunscreen dream big turn off your TV eat your vegetables love yourself act on your values take your vitamins make new friends follow your heart healthy relationships are part of healthy living

SHALOM BAYIT ■ (866) SHALOM-7 ■ www.shalom-bayit.org ■ teens: www.love-shouldnt-hurt.org

what is health?

feeling good about my body fighting disease eating well getting exercise being in shape access to information chicken soup quality, affordable health care reducing chemical exposure new biomedical research Jewish healing Chinese medicine yoga herbal remedies acupuncture chiropractic psychotherapy meditation reducing stress vitamins antioxidants shopping at the farmer's market heart-healthy foods happy farm workers foods made with love self-awareness living our values ending global warming love in your heart finding a cure breathing clean air getting a checkup healing our planet healing our bodies healing our spirit finding hope healthy food for all communities clarity of mind strength of body **none of this matters if you are not safe in your own home**

Domestic violence is an assault against the body and soul.
SHALOM BAYIT ■ (866) SHALOM-7 ■ HOPE, HEALTH, HEALING

Intervention

- Spiritual counseling and support for abused person
- Safety plan – including who attends services when
- Include school staff & teachers in safety plan if there are children involved
- T'shuvah and accountability for perpetrator
- Accountability plan if abuser has leadership role / honors in congregation
- Set up a response protocol for the congregation

Prevention/Awareness

Healthy relationships education in religious schools (teens)

Parent education and Adult ed programs

Visible abuse prevention messages: flyers, website, news bulletin, sermons

EXAMPLES

- Re-examining biblical / sacred texts; don't quote out of context!
- Using stories ("Midrash & Medicine," Jewish healing movement)
- Using holiday celebration themes as teachable moments
- Claim positive cultural values – repair the world, peace in the home, spark of the divine in each of us, "To humiliate another person is tantamount to shedding blood" (Talmud), "Do not stand idly by the blood of thy neighbor..."
- Question negative cultural values – where do they come from; change from the inside. "wifebeaters," machismo, sexism, more...
- Intersection of healing modalities
- Provide culturally-based support for safety & empowerment
- No culture or religion actually condones IPV

EXAMPLES

- Judaism condemns verbal abuse** (*ona'at d'varim*, or oppression by means of words)
- Ancient Jewish law condemns sexual violence in marriage.** Yet in secular law, marital rape was legal in every state in the US until 1976 when it became illegal in Nebraska. It was still legal in many parts of the US until the 1990s. North Carolina was the last state to make marital rape illegal, in 1993.
- Discussions of spouse abuse can be found** in ancient rabbinic writings, documenting existence of IPV. If they had to debate what to do, we know it was happening.
- Communal responsibility for one another:** DV is NOT a private, family matter (biblical commandment to not stand idly by when your neighbor is being harmed)





