Jewish Federations of North America

Center on Aging, Trauma, and Holocaust Survivor Care

Innovative Models of Holocaust Survivor Support

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PCTI Support for Holocaust Survivors in Israel AMCHA - Living Model of Human Connection

Dr. Dror Golan & Dr. Liron Ben-Ezra



Introduction with AMCHA

- Founded by survivors, for survivors
- "AMCHA" was a code word of recognition and belonging
- Today: 18 centers, over 600 staff, and thousands survivors and second generation reached across Israel

Holistic responses for emotional needs

- Social-therapeutic clubs
- Clinical services
- Volunteer visits
- Second Generation

Therapeutic work with elderly holocaust survivor

- Childhood trauma in later life
- Physical and cognitive decline deepen vulnerability
- Adjustment to the intersection between trauma and old age

Trauma & Community

“Traumatic events destroy the sustaining bonds between individual and community. Those who have survived learn that their sense of self, of worth, of humanity, depends upon a feeling of connection with others. The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair… Trauma isolates; the group re-creates a sense of belonging… Trauma dehumanizes the victim; the group restores her humanity” (Lewis Herman, 1992).

Our social-therapeutic Clubs

- A space for daily life and deep emotional currents
- Activities addressing diverse needs
- A therapeutic lens in everyday interaction
- Clinical insight and psychological holding by staff

PCTI in Action: Trust, Choice, and Human Connection



PCTI values grounded in real-world care



Healing through trust, safety, and meaningful relationships



We listen, offer choice, and meet each person where they are



Active members of the community



Empowerment of members to take part and lead



Survivors as partners: supporting others after October 7

Club and clinic as a shared holding environment

- Complex club member referred to therapy
- Deep scars—physical, emotional, and relational
- Staff worked together to understand, support, contain and foster change

In their own words

- Survivors speak about what AMCHA clubs means to them
- The club as an important and meaningful holding environment
- How does AMCHA club reflect through their words?

Shared Space – Learning Together: Holocaust Survivors and MSW Students

Bob Shapell School of Social Work – Tel Aviv University

AMCHA – The Israeli Center for Mental and Social Support of Holocaust Survivors and the Second Generation

About the course

Participants:

12 Holocaust survivors
12 MSW students

Format:
Three days at the AMCHA club in Holon
One day at Tel Aviv University

Funding:

Equity Diversity & Community Commission - Tel Aviv University

Course Objectives

- Holocaust remembrance
- Learning from aging Holocaust survivors' lived experience
- Sociotherapeutic models
- Survivors' visibility, recognition, and empowerment
- Challenging ageist attitudes

Course Structure

Each study day was divided into three time segments, all taking place on the same day



Shared club activities



Joint academic learning



Reflective learning

Theoretical Learning: Key Themes

- Aging, vulnerability, and resilience in later life
- Trauma, with emphasis on Holocaust trauma and its long-term effects
- Lived experience as knowledge in social work learning
- The therapeutic community model

Amcha Holon club

The club opened in December 2006

As of April 2024, it is run by two social workers and an art therapist

The club has 80 active members
A few statistics:
61 women and 19 men
Born in 17 different countries
The youngest member is 78; the oldest is 100 and a half
The average age is 86.2





In Their Own Words — MSW Students

"So often we read things in texts, but here I had an experience that was more powerful than any text I could read. I met people—hearts, eyes—I spoke with you, and I learned so much from this encounter. It was a privilege to meet you and to get to know this meaningful club"

"The meetings felt deeply human. I didn't feel like I was sitting in front of a stereotype of an elderly person—I felt I was sitting with people who shared their experiences, their lives. I drew so much strength from that—not only on an academic level, which was endless—but also from seeing the forces that sustain this community, which has so much to give. It really stayed with me. I kept thinking about it in my work and how I might apply it, even in a totally different setting"

In Their Own Words — Survivors

"The very fact that your generation is interested in what happened to us and what we went through—that, I think, is very encouraging"

"I've never been to a university before—this was my first time. I studied for five years, but even my high school in Romania expelled me because I was Jewish. They didn't accept us. They called me 'Zhyd'—a slur for Jew. Until now, I was just a simple person, a new immigrant. And suddenly, I'm a university student"


יציאה

Carrying survivors legacy Into Today's Crises

Trauma-informed therapy for trauma-affected populations

Training professionals in trauma-sensitive care

Thank you!

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Amcha - the Israeli Center for Holocaust Survivors and their Families
https://www.amcha.org/amchaenglish/

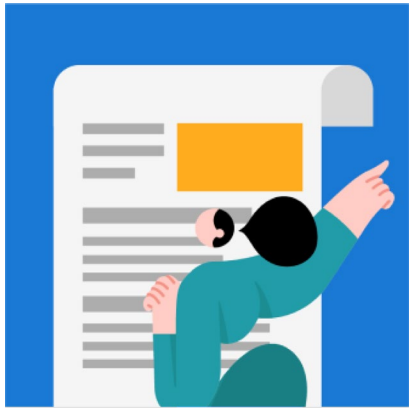


Q&A

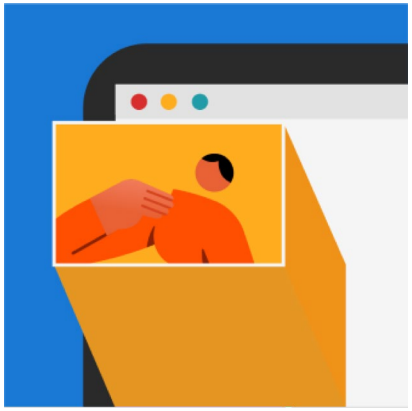
Resources

www.AgingAndTrauma.org

Aging@JewishFederations.org



Publications



Webinars



Training



Grants

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Thank You!