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Holocaust Community Services

Help at the Hardest Times: Maximizing Client Acceptance with PCTI Programs

JFNA Training Workshop: Compassion in Action
June 24, 2025 1:30 -2:45pm

Dr. Yonit Hoffman | Senior Director, Holocaust Community Services, CJE Senior Life
Vera Rodriguez Mancera | Care Manager II & Supervisor, CJE SeniorLife
Leah Rosenberg | Wellness and Education Coordinator, Care Manager, CJE SeniorLife
Cindy Laegeler | Program Support Specialist & Special Projects Coordinator, CJE SeniorLife

Jewish United Fund
TOGETHER for GOOD

ועידת התביעות
Claims Conference
Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

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Holocaust Community Services (HCS) Program History

- Founded by **Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago** in 1999
- Administered by **CJE SeniorLife** since 2015
- **HCS** provides services for Holocaust survivors including:
  - Financial assistance for home care, medication, food, transportation, and emergencies/urgent needs
  - Case management & counseling
  - Socialization & events
  - Support groups & wellness classes
  - Reparations assistance
  - Training, education, advocacy, and legacy programs

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How Does HCS Help?

2024 Overview

HCS SERVED

1,780 survivors

with financial aid, reparations assistance, social and educational opportunities, support groups, counseling, wellness classes, and resource referrals

including

1,671 clients

who received financial assistance to pay for food, medicine, personal care, transportation, or one-time emergency needs.

84 new clients received services in 2024 for the first time.



27% were 90+

Clients ranged in age from 79 to 104 years old



98% speak Russian

and are from Nazi-occupied territory in the former Soviet Union

1,446

received help paying for groceries through monthly food vouchers

1,280

received help paying for personal care

1,191

received help paying for medication not otherwise covered

507

received $949,000

in emergency financial assistance

99%

indicated they were satisfied with services on an Annual Satisfaction Survey

2025 YTD

January – May

Total served 1,624:

- **Financial: 1,534**
- **Non-financial: 90**

- **Attrition:73 (44 deaths)**
- **New clients: 27**

- Average age 88.5
- 22 are over 100 or turning 100 this year!

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Help at the Hardest Times
Survivor Needs

Increased concrete needs:

- Homecare
  - Increased need for more hours & 24/7 care
  - "Transitional care" now allowed by CC (advocacy efforts)
- Food & medication assistance (costs rise, State benefits decrease)
- Transportation assistance

Increased psychosocial needs:

- End-of-life planning & support
- Cognitive & mental health challenges
  - Dementia
  - Social Isolation
  - Impact of world turbulence & antisemitism
- Supporting Care Partners

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PCTI Assistance for Concrete Needs

- Individualized holistic assessments & case management
- All bilingual communication (policies, service approval letters, instructions)
- Use of flexible purchase cards for food, medication, and transportation (choice, dignity)
- Bolster community support & understanding
  - Linkage to internal and external partners & PCTI training (e.g. CJE/JUF legal services, Maot Chitim, etc.
- Transitional support program for continuity when survivors are most vulnerable
  - Caregiving
  - Food cards
  - Bilingual Flash cards

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PCTI Assistance for Psychosocial Needs

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Counseling & Case Management

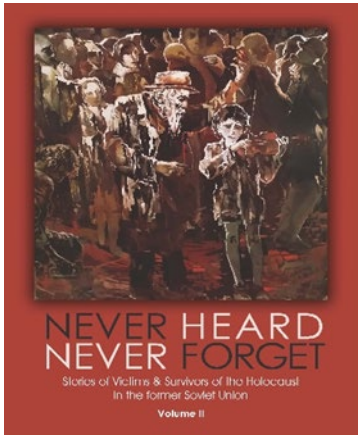
Support Groups & Wellness

Healing Arts & Helping Others

Legacy Projects

Socialization Events

- Trauma-informed
- Culturally-informed
- **Addresses concrete needs/safety first**
- Addresses Isolation
- Empowerment
- Enhancing self-care & Independent living
- Intergenerational Programming



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Workshop Focus & Presenters

Vera Rodriguez-Mancera

- End-of-life Issues
  - Bereavement Toolkit and related programming (JFNA grant)

Leah Rosenberg

- Cognitive & mental health challenges
  - Memory Café in Russian (JFNA grant)

Cindy Laegeler

- Social isolation & impact of world turbulence
  - Compassionate Action/Helping by Helping
  - Mitzvah & Mingle

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Help at the Hardest Times
Grief Toolkit Origins

- Since 1859, JCFS Chicago has offered services infused with Jewish values to help, heal, and strengthen children, adults, and families in Chicago and beyond
- HCS was housed at JCFS for 10 years and Chicago area Holocaust survivors and their families benefitted from social services and counseling, especially as they came to a new country
- JCFS and HCS partner on various programs and share clinical and professional trainings with each other

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Help at the Hardest Times Grief Toolkit Origins

- Hosted the first **HCS loss group in Russian** in 2017
  - Met twice monthly for 2.5 years
  - Supported Survivors during their grieving process
  - Provided a safe environment and coping strategies

- During Covid, HCS partnered with a JCFS Chicago Chaplain & Rabbi to present a bilingual **Help at the Hardest Times webinar**
  - Shared resources related to grief, consulting a chaplain, spiritual counseling, funeral planning, and more

- HCS coined the term “Help at the Hardest Times” when we were looking for a way to engage Russian-speaking survivors who were resistant to discussing these difficult topics

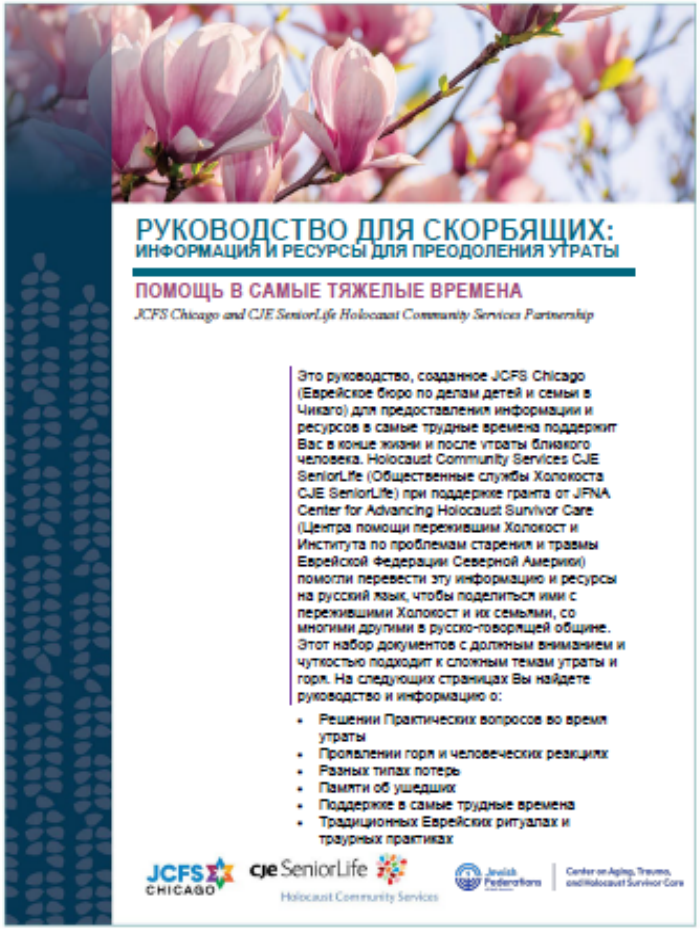
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Help at the Hardest Times Grief Toolkit Overview

- JCFS Chicago compiled a grief and loss resource kit - **“Guide for the Grieving: A Toolkit for Navigating Loss“** rooted in Jewish spirituality

- To better serve our community of mainly Russian-speaking survivors, HCS translated and is now distributing the materials, so clients and their families have this resource during the hardest times



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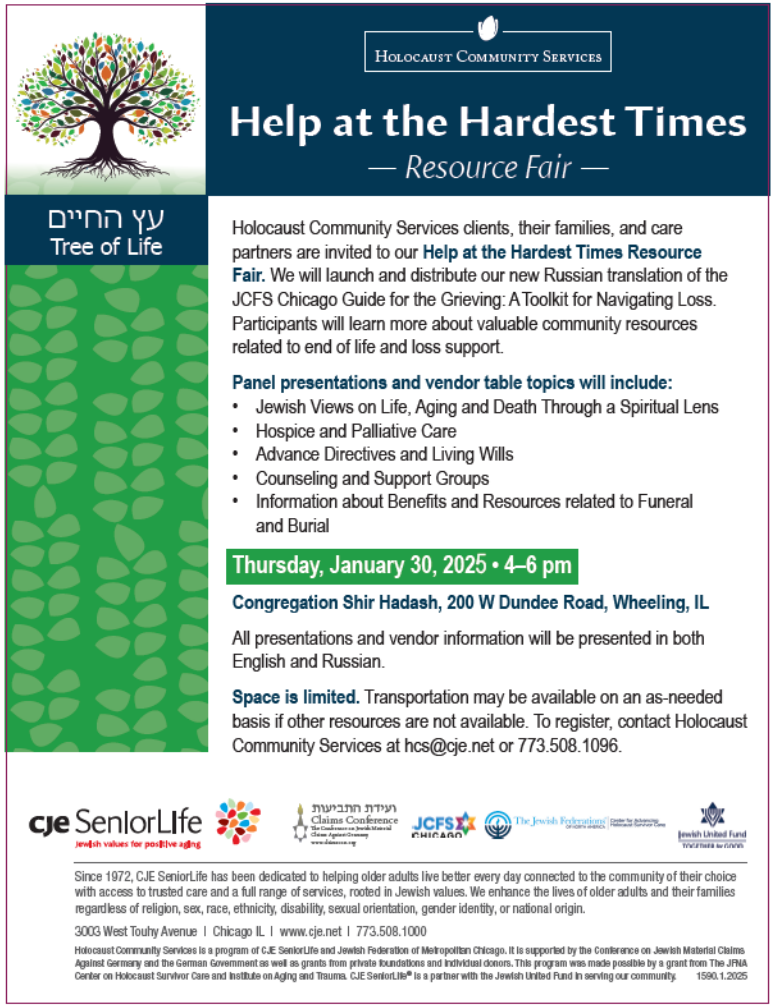
Help at the Hardest Times Grief Toolkit Content

- Navigating Practical Matters
- Common Manifestations of Grief
- Different Types of Losses
- Legacy and Life
- Support
- Traditional Jewish Ritual and Mourning Practices

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Distribution Method
Launch Event & Resource Fair



Holocaust Community Services

Help at the Hardest Times

— Resource Fair —

עץ החיים
Tree of Life

Holocaust Community Services clients, their families, and care partners are invited to our **Help at the Hardest Times Resource Fair.** We will launch and distribute our new Russian translation of the JCFS Chicago Guide for the Grieving: A Toolkit for Navigating Loss. Participants will learn more about valuable community resources related to end of life and loss support.

Panel presentations and vendor table topics will include:

- Jewish Views on Life, Aging and Death Through a Spiritual Lens
- Hospice and Palliative Care
- Advance Directives and Living Wills
- Counseling and Support Groups
- Information about Benefits and Resources related to Funeral and Burial

Thursday, January 30, 2025 • 4–6 pm

Congregation Shir Hadash, 200 W Dundee Road, Wheeling, IL

All presentations and vendor information will be presented in both English and Russian.

Space is limited. Transportation may be available on an as-needed basis if other resources are not available. To register, contact Holocaust Community Services at hcs@cje.net or 773.508.1096.

cje SeniorLife Jewish values for positive aging · ועידת תובעות Claims Conference · JCFS Chicago · The Jewish Federations · Jewish United Fund

Since 1972, CJE SeniorLife has been dedicated to helping older adults live better every day connected to the community of their choice with access to trusted care and a full range of services, rooted in Jewish values. We enhance the lives of older adults and their families regardless of religion, sex, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or national origin.

3003 West Touhy Avenue | Chicago IL | www.cje.net | 773.508.1000

Holocaust Community Services is a program of CJE SeniorLife and Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. It is supported by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany and the German Government as well as grants from private foundations and individual donors. This program was made possible by a grant from The JFNA Center on Holocaust Survivor Care and Institute on Aging and Trauma. CJE SeniorLife® is a partner with the Jewish United Fund in serving our community. 1590.1.2025



Holocaust Community Services

Помощь в самые тяжелые времена

— Информационная ярмарка —

עץ החיים
Древо Жизни

Клиенты Holocaust Community Services, их семьи и партнеры по уходу приглашаются на нашу **информационную ярмарку «Помощь в тяжелые времена».** Мы запустим и распространим наш новый русский перевод Чикагского руководства JCFS для скорбящих: навигациия после утраты. Участники узнают больше о ценных ресурсах общины, связанных с оказанием помощи в конце жизни и в связи с потерей.

Групповые презентации и столы с информацией будут включать:

- Еврейские взгляды на жизнь, старение и смерть через духовную призму
- Хоспис и паллиативная помощь
- Предварительные распоряжения и прижизненные завещания
- Группы консультирования и поддержки
- Информация о преимуществах и ресурсах, связанных с похоронами и погребением

Четверг, 30 января, 2025 • с 4–6 вечера

Синагога Шир Хадаш, 200 W Dundee Road, Wheeling, IL

Все презентации и информация о вендорах будут представлены на английском и русском языках.

Количество мест ограничено. Транспорт может быть доступен по мере необходимости, если другие ресурсы недоступны. Чтобы зарегистрироваться, свяжитесь с Holocaust Community Services по телефону hcs@cje.net или 773.508.1096.

cje SeniorLife Jewish values for positive aging · ועידת תובעות Claims Conference · JCFS Chicago · The Jewish Federations · Jewish United Fund

С 1972 года CJE SeniorLife помогает пожилым людям жить лучше каждый день, будучи связанными с сообществом по своему выбору, имея доступ к надежному уходу и полному спектру услуг, основанных на еврейских ценностях. Мы улучшаем жизнь пожилых людей и их семей независимо от религии, пола, расы, этнической принадлежности, инвалидности, сексуальной ориентации, гендерной идентичности или национального происхождения.

3003 Вест Тухи Авеню | Чикаго, Иллинойс | www.cje.net | 773.508.1000

Общественные службы Холокоста — это программа CJE SeniorLife и Еврейской федерации Чикаго. Она поддерживается Конференцией по материальным претензиям евреев к Германии и правительству Германии, а также грантами от частных фондов и индивидуальных доноров. Эта программа стала возможной благодаря гранту Центра помощи пережившим Холокост JFNA и Института старения и травмы. CJE SeniorLife® является партнером Еврейского объединенного фонда в служении нашему сообществу. 1590.1.2025

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Distribution Method: Launch Event & Resource Fair

Panel Presenters:

- JCFS Chicago – Rabbi Joseph Ozarowski & Rabbi Dr. Pinchas Zusis (Chaplains)
- CJE SeniorLife Legal Services – Tamara Kushnir-Groman, JD
- LifeChoice Hospice & Palliative Care – Sara Vasilev, LCSW with Marina Kodryan, RN
- Anitya Doula Services – Catherine Durkin Robinson
- Ner Tamid Funerals – William Goodman, Funeral Director
- CJE SeniorLife Counseling Services – Vera Rodriguez-Mancera

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Distribution Method: Launch Event & Resource Fair



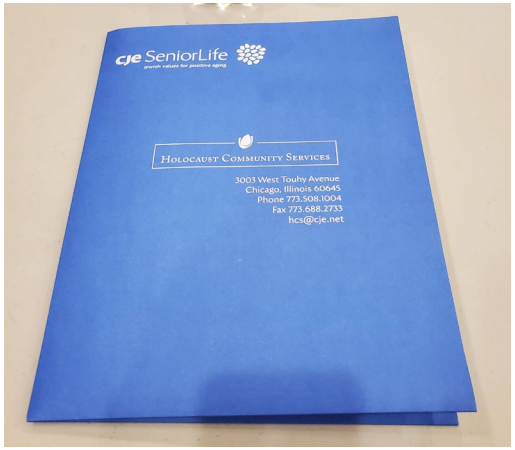
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Distribution Method: Launch Event & Resource Fair

Bilingual Supplemental Materials:

- Support Group/Counseling Services brochure
- CJE LifeNotes about Legal Documents
- Five Wishes (in Russian language)
- List of Emergency Preparedness Documents
- NorthShore Advance Care Planning Guidebook
- Vidui Prayer Guide
- Funeral Reimbursement Resource
- List of local funeral homes
- Invitation to follow-on Power of Attorney Clinics
- Feedback Survey





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Distribution Method: Launch Event & Resource Fair











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Other Distribution Methods

- Bilingual online version of Toolkit
  - https://cje.net/supprotiveservices/руководство-для-скорбящих/
- Event presentation slides and recording posted online
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nJ9qrZrXLY
  - https://cje.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Slide-Presentation-1.30.2025_x.pdf
- Two Power of Attorney Clinics (March & May, ~40 attended)
  - Bilingual instructional videos
- Individual distribution of printed materials by Care Managers
- Included in our monthly newsletter
- Sent to partner organizations, including via the JFNA Library!

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Online Help at the Hardest Times Grief Toolkit



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Help at the Hardest Times Client Vignette

- Boris attended our Help at the Hardest Times event when his spouse, a Holocaust Survivor, was terminally ill
- Met with several vendors at the Resource Fair and his spouse started hospice care a few days later
- When his spouse passed away, Boris reached out to the funeral director and legal counsel he met at the event
- He also attended our legal clinic, where he prepared his own power of attorney documents for “a rainy day”
- Even though several months have passed, Boris continues to receive ongoing support from the hospice team

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Help at the Hardest Times
Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Difficult/uncomfortable topic for clients to address
  - Important to engage in conversations and normalize
  - Personal invitations from care managers
- Make sure to invite/include care partners (especially children)
- Death Doula did not resonate with this audience
- Changing the presentation timing to “lunch and learn”
  - Maintain resource fair format for individual vendor engagement
- Physical toolkit enables care managers to distribute and initiate 1:1 conversations with clients

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Memory Café Overview

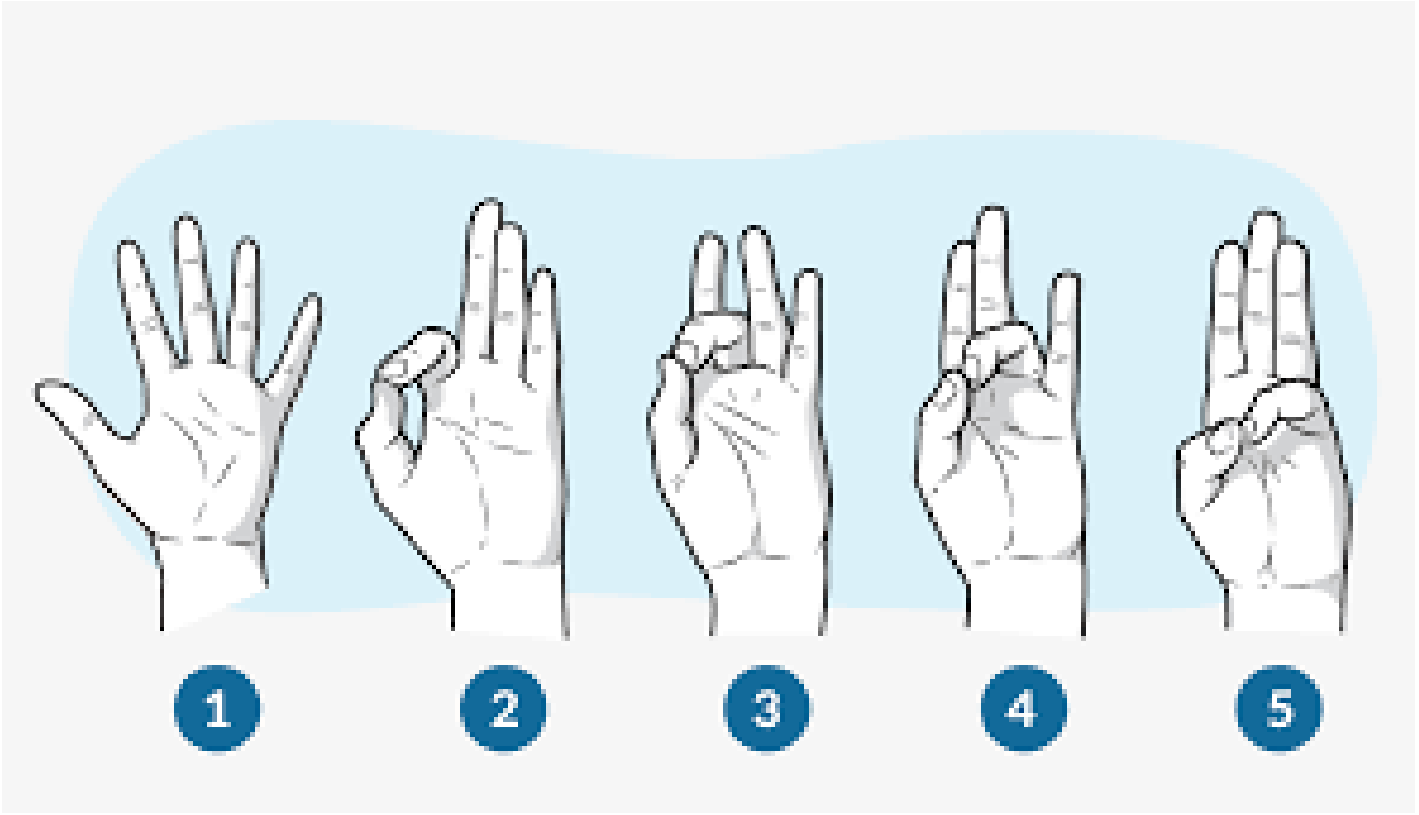
- Place for persons experiencing memory changes and their care partners to gather for connection and conversation while enjoying a guided activity

- Goals:
  - Engage people at any cognitive level
  - Promote memory
  - Stimulate both brain hemispheres
  - Enhance social connections & reduce stigma

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Memory Café
Hand Exercises



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PCTI Adaptations to Memory Café Model

- Russian language programming, resources and presenters
- Brought into residential buildings where clients live
  - transportation
  - hoped care partners would attend with clients
- Worked with care managers to identify clients who might benefit
- Mailed invitation, frequent phone call reminders (one week before class, 1-2 days before)
- Adapted activities to make them culturally appropriate for our clients
  - Homework assignments and pride in accomplishment
  - Reframing play

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Memory Café Activities

- Hands-on craft/art projects
- Music therapy
- Memory exercises
- Utilizing Russian language Memory Games and Exercises Manual *
- Hand-outs from JFNA Resource Library that were already translated (thank you!)

* Written by Israeli pedagogue and memory specialist Irena Kudman, Atid Bamidbar Program Director.

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Memory Café in Action
Art Therapy



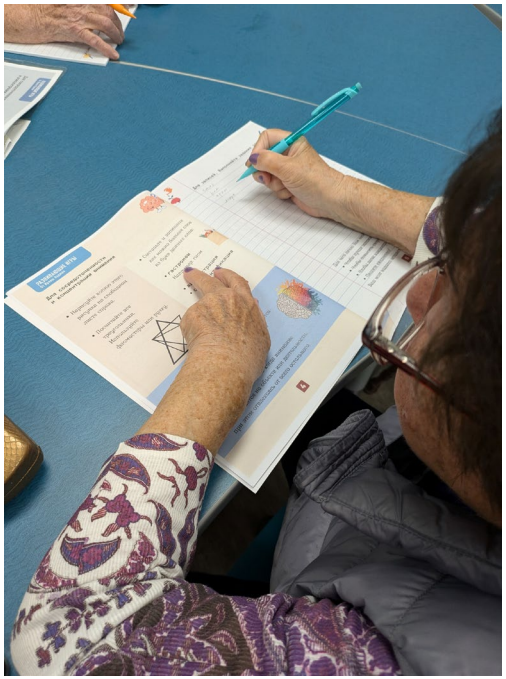


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Memory Café in Action Memory Games and Exercises Manual





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Memory Café in Action
Music Therapy



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Memory Café in Action
Play-doh







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Memory Café
Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Clients didn't want caregivers to participate as they thought their time could be better spent on household tasks
  - Underlying vulnerability and acceptance of help

- Pivoted to a **"chavruta" model**
  - Jewish term for a learning partner
  - Empowered clients to choose their own
  - Clients who paired themselves seemed to look out for one another, encourage attendance/participation

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Memory Café
Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Scheduling Memory Cafe in a building with a large variety of social programs resulted in decreased attendance
- Modifying structure for next sessions
  - **Community settings** will encourage care partners to stay, particularly as many care partners provide transportation for our clients
  - **Extended time frame**, providing opportunity for unstructured socialization over lunch

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Helping by Helping: Compassionate Action

Plentiful research on the connection between mental health and compassionate action. Engaging in activities that offer a sense of purpose can reduce depression.



- Viktor Frankl, Holocaust Survivor, author of "Man's Search for Meaning"
  - Individuals can find meaning in life by making a difference in the world, reaching out to serve others and causes larger than oneself



- Martin E. P. Seligman, UPenn researcher, author of several books, "father of positive psychology"
  - Individuals are happier when they use their strengths and virtues to contribute to society and find ways to apply their unique talents and abilities in service to others.

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Helping by Helping
Engagement at Social Events



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Helping by Helping Mitzvah & Mingle Series

- Started with trial mini-series of three events over six-week period
- Russian language
- Hosted at a local synagogue
- Invited participants from an existing support group as well as other survivors living proximate to the venue
- Incorporated Russian-speaking rabbi to lead discussion on mitzvot
- Mailed invitations and made reminder phone calls
- Selected hands-on projects that take Survivors' abilities into consideration
- Foster partnerships with local nonprofits
- Incorporate Jewish holiday themes

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Helping by Helping
Mitzvah & Mingle Projects

- Challah baking
- Painting inspirational rocks for The Daffodil Project Living Holocaust Memorial
- Intergenerational holiday meal box preparation with partner Maot Chitim (Rosh Hashanah + Passover)
- Sandwich preparation for a local women's shelter
- "New Life for Old Bags"
- No-sew scarves
- Assembling flower arrangements for distribution to isolated/homebound Survivors or nursing home residents
- Sewing scent hearts for NICU babies and their parents
- Creating enrichment toys for cats awaiting adoption

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Helping by Helping
Mitzvah & Mingle Series





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Helping by Helping
Mitzvah & Mingle Series





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Helping by Helping
Mitzvah & Mingle Series





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Mitzvah & Mingle Series Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Original events were more discussion-based. Survivors seemed to **prefer hands-on activities**
- Need for increased staff participation to assist clients with project
- **Get One/Give One** model
  - Our Survivors are vulnerable and appreciate receiving a symbol of our help as well
- Include printed pictures from prior events with invitations – really delights our participants!
- Survivors seem to gravitate toward the same seating arrangement each time
- Plan **intergenerational** activities
- Solicit participant input for future projects

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Mitzvah & Mingle Series Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Concept of volunteering is foreign to the FSU generation
- Scale programming to increase benefit
  - Host larger-scale events that can accommodate more participants
  - Consider offering programs in residential buildings so that homebound Survivors can attend
  - Plan additional mini-series or one-off events
  - Enlist support from volunteers or partner organizations to run programs

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Interactive Brainstorming

Please take a few minutes to think about the questions on the sheet in front of you and jot down your thoughts:

- Which ideas from today's presentation might you bring to your community?
- What programs or new ideas can you share from your own organization or community to "help the hardest times"?
- What are the primary challenges or opportunities when "helping at the hardest times"?

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Thank you!