

TORAH THOUGHTS – AMERICA’S MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Last week, I completed an eight-hour training in mental health first aid. Thanks to this course, sponsored by Monmouth County, I now have a greater sensitivity to those struggling with depression and anxiety. I learned how to assist them as they try to get well, and if necessary, to connect them with health professionals.

It is estimated that one in five Americans will have a diagnosable mental disorder in any given year, which means that at least a few people you know are coping right now! If you notice that a family member, a friend, or a colleague seems sad or withdrawn, you could simply say, “I’ve noticed that ... I’m concerned because ... Could we ...?” Fill in the dots with what’s appropriate. For example, “Could we sit down and talk about it?”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. One way this crisis is manifest is the rate of suicide, which has steadily increased over the last twenty years. There are several hotlines for those contemplating ending their lives, including these which operate 24/7.
 - a. Second Floor Youth – (888) 222-2228
 - b. National Hotline – (800) 273-TALK (8255)
 - c. National Text Line – 741741
2. Biblical texts cover the gamut of human emotions. Consider Psalm 130. “Out of the depths I call to you, O Lord, hearken unto my voice ... I wait for the Lord, my soul waits ... more than the watchmen wait for the dawn. Oh Israel, hope in the Lord, for in the Lord is mercy ... and redemption.” Do you think the author was suffering from depression? How can faith, and faith communities, aid those with mental illness?

I will teach more about mental health in the future.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Pont