

From the Depths: Healthcare Professionals in the Trenches

Workshop at

“When the Healer Needs Healing: Illness and the Bikur Cholim Response

27th Annual Conference on Visiting the Sick

The Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin Bikur Cholim Coordinating Council of JBFCS

November 9, 2014/16 Heshvan 5775

At UJA-Federation of New York

Some Materials for Our Exploration

Selected and organized by Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW

Rabbinic Director, Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services

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The St.Vincents “Jewish Healing Torah Study Group for Doctors”

Out of a very well-received conference on “Religion, Spirituality, & Medicine” at St. Vincents Hospital and Medical Center in New York in June 1998, a monthly *Jewish Healing Torah Study Group for Doctors* began in November 1998, initially involving 12-15 doctors in an hour-long exploration over lunch. The group grew to attract 18-20 health care professionals, roughly half doctors and the remainder nurses, chaplains, and/or administrators. For each meeting, Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW, Rabbinic Director of the New York Jewish Healing Center, brought Jewish texts from across the centuries that touch on issues identified by the participants, using these texts as triggers for discussing very real, contemporary challenges in health care provision. Following each session, participants suggest themes or foci for upcoming meetings.

Noted below are the dates we met and the general area of discussion:

11/30/98	<i>Reaching Out to Those Who Suffer: The Basics of Bikkur Holim</i>
12/21/98	<i>The Physician-Patient Relationship: Problems and Potentials</i>
1/25/99	<i>Jewish Approaches to Anger</i>
2/22/99	<i>Humiliation/Shame and Illness/Healing</i>
3/22/99	<i>Dealing with Difficult Patients and Family Members</i>
4/19/99	<i>Truth-Telling: Patient, Family Members, and Self</i>
5/24/99	<i>Jewish Spiritual Self-Care for Health Care Professionals</i>
6/21/99	<i>Psalms and the Health Care Professional (Psalm 139)</i>
(major hiatus)	
2/14/00:	<i>Prayer and Jewish Healing</i>
3/13/00	<i>Jewish Stories for Healing</i>
6/5/00	<i>Pirke Avot’s Wisdom for Doctors (Dr. Alan Astrow presenting)</i>
6/26/00	<i>Jewish Law and Abortion (a doctor from/St. Vincents presented)</i>
(hiatus)	
9/18/00	<i>Forgiveness and the Medical Center</i>
10/16/00	<i>Dying in the Jewish Tradition, Part I</i>
11/20/00	<i>Dying in the Jewish Tradition and Community, Part II</i>
12/11/00	<i>Judaism and the Afterlife, with Dr. Neil Gillman, guest</i>
1/22/01	<i>Humility and the Medical Center</i>
2/12/01	<i>God’s Hidden Face and Medical Crises</i>
3/12/01	<i>Prayer, Healing, Metaphor, Rabbi Larry Hoffman, guest</i>
4/16/01	<i>Metaphor and Medicine: Looking at the Exodus</i>
5/21/01	<i>The Death of Rabbi Eliezer (Sanhedrin 68a) The Dying and Death of a Difficult Person, Dr. Devora Steinmetz, guest</i>
6/11/01	<i>All-day Conference: Spirituality, Religious Wisdom, and the Care of the Patient</i>

(summer hiatus, followed by 9/11 and the end of this group)

Some Jewish Sources Related to Anger....

Here's how Abraham Joshua Heschel addresses **the relationship of prophecy and anger**:

Few passions have been denounced so vehemently by teachers of morality as the passion of anger. It is pictured as a sinister, malignant passion, an evil force, which must, under all circumstances, be suppressed....Admittedly, anger is something that comes dangerously close to evil, yet is wrong to identify it with evil. It may be evil by association, but not in essence. Like fire, it may be a blessing as well as a fatal thing – reprehensible when associated with malice, morally necessary as resistance to malice. Its complete suppression, even in the face of outbursts of evil, may amount to surrender and capitulation, while its unrestrained drive may end in disaster. Anger may touch off deadly explosives, while the complete absence of anger stultifies moral sensibility.....

...The prophets never thought that God's anger is something that cannot be accounted for, unpredictable, irrational. It is never a spontaneous outburst, but a reaction occasioned by the conduct of man. Indeed, it is the major task of the prophet to set forth the facts that account for it, to insist that the anger of God is not a blind, explosive force, operating without reference to the behavior of man, but rather voluntary and purposeful, motivated by concern for right and wrong...The word "anger" is charged with connotations of spite, recklessness, and iniquity. The biblical term, however, denotes what we can righteous indignation, aroused by that which is considered mean, shameful, or sinful; it is impatience with evil....

...

God's concern is the prerequisite and source of His anger. It is because He cares for man that His anger may be kindled against man. Anger and mercy are not opposites...

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (pages 280f, 282f, 283)

Hence Habakkuk's prayer: "...in wrath, remember mercy!" *Habakkuk 3:2*

From the Bible, K'tuvim/Writings:

Bible, Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger.

Bible, Proverbs 15:18

A wrathful man stirs up quarrel; but he who is slow to anger appeases quarrels.

Bible, Proverbs 16:32

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

Bible, Proverbs 19:11

The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger; and it is his glory to overlook a transgression.

Bible, Proverbs 21:19

It is better to live in the desert, than with a quarrelsome and angry woman.

Bible, Proverbs 29:8

Scornful men stir up a city into quarrel; but wise men turn away wrath.

Bible, Ecclesiastes 7:9

Be not hasty in your spirit to be angry; for anger rests in the bosom of fools.

Bible, Job 5:2

Anger kills the foolish man.

From the Midrash:

Midrash LeOlam, Chapter 15

Getting angry is like worshipping idols

Midrash Tehillim, 6:7

Anger and Temper are Death's executioners.

From the Mishnah...

Mishnah Avot 2:10

They each said three things...

Rabbi Eliezer said: Let the honor of your friend be as dear to you as your own...

and be not easily provoked to anger...

and repent one day before your death...

Mishnah Avot 2:11

Rabbi Joshua said:

"An evil eye, the *yetzer hara*/evil inclination, and hatred of one's fellow creatures put a man out of the world..."

Mishnah Avot 4:1

Ben Zoma said:

Who is wise? Who learns from every person...

Who is mighty? Who subdues his/her *yetzer*/evil inclination....

Who is rich? Who rejoices in his/her lot/portion...

Who is honored? Who honors his/her fellow person.....

Mishnah Avot 4:18

Rabbi Shimon ben Eleazar said:

Pacify not your fellow human being in the hour of his/her anger,

Nor comfort him/her in the hour when his/her dead lies before him/her,

Nor question him/her at the time of his/her vow,

Nor strive to see him/her at the hour of his/her disgrace.

Mishnah Avot 4:21

Rabbi Eleazar haKappar said:

"Jealousy, lust/desire, and the desire for honor put a man out of the world..."

Mishnah Avot 5:11

There are four types of character (in respect of) temperaments:

Easy to become angry, and easy to be pacified: his gain disappears in his loss.*

Hard to become angry, and hard to be pacified: his loss disappears in his gain.

Hard to become angry and easy to be pacified: he is a pious man.**

Easy to become angry and hard to be pacified: he is a wicked man.

*The 'loss' and the 'gain' cancel each other out

**Note: He is not free from the tendency, common to all men, to become angry, but by his self-control he reduces that inclination to the least proportions.

From the G'mara...

Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 65b

R. Ila'I said: By three things may a person's character be determined:

B'kosso/By his cup; *B'kisso*/By his purse; *B'kasso*/and by his anger;

And some say: By his laughter also.

Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 105b

A person who tears his clothes out of anger, and shatters his utensils out of anger, and scatters his coins out of anger should be considered as one who engages in idolatry; for this is the nature of the Evil Inclination: Today it tells him: 'Do this,' and tomorrow it tells him, 'Do that,' until it tells him: 'Go worship idols' -- and he goes and does so.

Babylonian Talmud, Pesahim 66b

Resh Lakish said: As to every man who becomes angry, if he is a Sage, his wisdom departs from him; if he is a prophet, his prophecy departs from him.

Babylonian Talmud, Pesahim 113b

Three the Holy Blessed One loves: he who does not display temper, he who does not become intoxicated, and he who does not insist on his [full] rights....

....

Our Rabbis taught: There are three (kinds of people) whose lives are not really lives: the [over] compassionate, the hot-tempered, and the [too] fastidious; whereon R. Joseph observed: And all these [qualities] are found in me.

...

Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 20b

Anger never went to bed with me (Adda bar Ahava)

Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 3b

Anger in a house is like a worm in a plant

Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 96b

An event occurred in the synagogue of Tiberius where Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Yossi quarreled over a matter of law until a Scroll of the Torah was torn as a result of their anger. Rabbi Yossi don of Kisma was there. He said: 'I will be surprised if this synagogue does not become (a house of worship for) idolatry' -- and so it was.

Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 22a-b

R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Jonathan: He who loses his temper is exposed to all the torments of Hell, for it is written, "Therefore remove anger from your heart, thus you will put away evil

from your flesh.” (*Ecclesiastes 11:10*) Now “evil” can only mean Hell, as it is written, “Adonai has made all things for himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of evil.” (*Proverbs 16:4*). Moreover, he will suffer from abdominal troubles, as it is written, “But Adonai will give you there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.” (*Deuteronomy 28:65*) Now what causes failing eyes and a sorrowful mind? Abdominal troubles.

.....

Rabbah son of R. Huna said: He who loses his temper, even the Divine Presence is unimportant in his eyes, as it is written, “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek God; God is not in all his thoughts.” (*Psalms 10:4*)

R. Jeremiah of Difti said: (Whoever loses his temper) he forgets his learning and waxes ever more stupid, as it is written, “For anger rests in the heart of fools” (*Ecclesiastes 7:9*) and it is written, “But the fool lays open his folly.” (*Proverbs 13:16*)

R. Nahman b. Isaac said: It is certain that his sins outnumber his merits, as it is written, “And a furious man abounds in transgressions.” (*Proverbs 29:22*)

From Medieval and Late-Medieval Ethical Writings:

Anger begins with madness, and ends with regret.
Hasdai, Ben HaMelekh v'HaNazir, 1230

Through anger, heroes fall.
Ezobi, Ka'aret Kessef, 1270

When a man is angry, his true nature can be recognized. If his wrath is stronger than his wisdom and he does things in the moment of his anger without regard to his wisdom, then you can see the character of his wrath. But if his wisdom is stronger than his anger and he does not say or do anything when angry that he would not say or do when he is free from anger, then you can see the extent of his wisdom.

Anger causes impudence, for because of anger, a person won't yield and confess the truth. Indeed, if you're looking for a good and faithful friend, make (a prospect) angry and if he can be sincere with you at the moment of his anger, become his friend, but if he cannot, then leave him.

Orhot Tzaddikim (Sefer HaMiddot), 15th century, German

From Hassidic Sources

Delay Your Wrath...

The Gastininer Rebbe made it a rule for himself never to express his displeasure with anyone on the same day when he was offended by that person. On the morrow he would say to the man: “I was displeased with you yesterday.”

Siah Sarfei Kodesh, by J. K. K. Rokotz (Lodz, 1929) vol. 3, page 29

The Bratzlaver on ‘Anger’...

1. Break your anger by compassion for the one with whom you are angry.
2. Anger and cruelty arise from a deficiency of understanding. Study the Torah to improve your understanding.
3. He who is obsessed by anger loses his image of God.
4. Abstinence from food is oftentimes a corrective of anger.
5. Anger prevents God's abundance from descending to us.
6. He who subdues his anger achieves a good name.
7. Anger causes a man to be far from truth.
8. An angry man cannot pray properly.
9. An angry man cannot attain the goal to which he aspires.
10. The holiness of Israel aids a man to break off anger, indolence, and melancholy.

Among some 31 points of Reb Nahman of Bratslav (1772-1810), from Likkutei Etzot HaShalem (Warsaw, 1913)

More Pleasing than Fast Days...

The Sassover said: “If your neighbor offends you, refrain from wrath, and it will be more pleasing in the sight of God than a thousand fast days; listen to revilings without retort, and it will stand you in stead of a thousand self-inflictions.”
Gemeinde der Chassidim, (ed. Chaim Bloch, Vienna, 1920)

The Covenant

The disciples of Reb Menachem Mendel of Rimanov entered into a covenant and signed a scroll wherein they made avowal: “This is a Covenant of Fellowship in a search for the truth and an everlasting striving after righteousness and humble bearing. We who signed it, essay with all our might to return to God, that a wall may separate us no more from His holiness and His Torah.” Whatever they decreed, they entered upon that scroll – as for example: “Resolved to abstain from words of scolding and denunciation, which our Holy Rabbi has barred as transgressing the law against murder (see Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 58a)
Em LaBinah, ed. By Y. A. Kamelhar (Lemberg, 1909) page 53

Anger Management

The Koretzer said: “Long ago I conquered my anger and placed it in my pocket. When I have need of it, I take it out.

MiDor Dor, ed. M. Lipson, (Tel Aviv, 1929) page 214

For the Sake of Heaven

Your anger should always be for “the sake of heaven.”

Direct your anger toward the kelipot (forces of evil) in the person who upsets you,

And not at the person himself.

Understand that the kelipot scare him into doing evil things.

Then you can use your anger to bring the kelipot under the sway of holiness.

*R. Dov Baer of Mezeritch, **Hayyim v’Hessed**, # 12; in God in All Moments: Mystical and Practical Spiritual Wisdom from Hasidic Masters; Ed./Tr.. by Or Rose (Jewish Lights, 2004; p. 77)*

A person who is sincerely interested in overcoming anger will make his awareness of life and death vivid. If you have a bad temper, be resolved that after each angry outburst you will make a special trip to the cemetery.

“Wisdom and Ethics,” Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv, 19th century, Chelm

From the 20th Century

While working on correcting anger, it is a tried and tested formula to let as many people as possible know about your plans. Constantly tell other people that you have made a resolution to control your temper. If possible, write your resolution in a place where others will see it.

A person who is easily angered will not be able to ask other people to give to charity or to do other acts of kindness. It takes much patience to influence people to do chesed. There are many people who are reluctant to give according to their means, and some people word their refusal to give in an insulting manner. If a fundraiser lacks patience, he will immediately get angry at people who refuse to give a donation and this will prevent him from influencing those people.

Rabbi Avraham Yellin, Erech Apayim (“Slow to Anger”), 20th century, Poland

The tendency of aggression is an innate, independent, instinctual disposition in man... it constitutes the most powerful obstacle to culture.
Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

Never go to bed angry; stay up and fight.
Phyllis Diller

(OK, so he's not Jewish.....:)

I have learned through bitter experience the one supreme lesson: to conserve my anger, and as heat conserved is transmitted into energy, even so our anger controlled can be transmuted into a power which can move the world.

Mohandas Gandhi

Working with Difficult People (or Difficult Situations) **Some Texts**

A Place to Start...

“You shall love your fellow as yourself.”

Leviticus 19:18

There was once a gentile who came before Shammai. He said to him, “Convert me on the stipulation that you teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot.” He drove him off with the building cubit (2 x 4) that he had in his hand. He came before Hillel, saying: “Convert me.” Hillel said to him, “What is hateful to yourself, do not do unto others. That is the whole Torah. All the rest is commentary. Now, go and study.”

Babylonian Talmud to Mishnah Shabbat 2:5 (31a)

Hillel used to say:

“If I am not for myself, who will be for me?

And if I am only for myself, what am I?

And if not now, when?”

Pirke Avot 1:4

On Interactions with Colleagues and Associates:

“Rabbi Nehuniah ben Hakaneh used to recite a short prayer when he entered the study hall and when he exited.

They said to him, ‘What is the nature of this prayer?’

He said to them, ‘When I enter, I pray that I will cause no offence. And when I exit, I give thanks for my portion.’”

Mishnah Berakhot 4:2

“He would say,

‘If you have friends, some of whom give you criticism and some of whom give you praise, love the ones who give you criticism and hate the ones who give you praise. For the ones who give you criticism will bring you to the life of the world to come, while the ones who give you praise will remove you from the world.’”

Avot deRabbi Natan 29

The Honor and Dignity of the Next Person

If a person gives to his fellow all the good gifts of the world with a grumpy countenance, Scripture regards it as if he had given him nothing; but if he receives his fellow cheerfully and kindly, Scripture regards it as if he had given him all the good gifts in the world.

Avot deRabbi Natan 13, 29a

Rabbi Eliezer said: Let the honor of your neighbor be as dear to you as your own. As a man has pleasure in his own honor, so let him have pleasure in the honor of his neighbor.

Avot deRabbi Natan 15, 30a

Ben Azzai said: Despise not any man, and discard not any thing; for there is not a man that has not his hour, and there is not a thing that has not its place.

Pirke Avot 4:3

There were some lawless men who lived in the neighborhood of Rabbi Meir, and they used to vex him sorely. Once Rabbi Meir prayed that they should die. His wife, Beruriah, exclaimed:

What are you thinking?! Is it because it is written, 'Let sinners cease out of the earth'? But does the text say *hot'im* (sinners)? It is written *hata'im* (sins). Glance also at the end of the verse, '...And let the wicked be no more' – i.e., when sins will cease, then the wicked will be no more. Rather you should pray that they repent, and be no more wicked!"

Then Rabbi Meir offered prayers on their behalf, and they repented.

Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 10a

The Obligation to Reprove

“Do not despise your brother in your heart;
You shall surely reprove your fellow,
and not bear sin because of him.”

Leviticus 19:17

Though *reproving him*, you must not expose him to shame in public, because in that case you will *bear sin because of him*.

Rashi, quoting Sifra, on Leviticus 19:17

It is written, 'Reprove a wise man, and he will love you.' (*Proverbs 9:8*)

Rabbi Josi ben Hanina said: A love without reproof is no love.

Resh Lakish said: Reproof leads to peace; a peace where there has been no reproof is no peace.

Genesis Rabbah, Vayyera, 64, 3

To Tell the Truth

“Distance yourself from a matter of falsehood...” **Exodus 23:7**

From Genesis 18:

9. And they said to him, Where is Sarah your wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.
10. And he said, I will certainly return to you at this season; and, lo, Sarah your wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.
11. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well advanced in age; and it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.
12. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I am grown old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”
13. And the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’
14. “Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return to you, at this season, and Sarah shall have a son.”
15. Then Sarah denied, saying, “I laughed not”; for she was afraid. And he said, “No; you did laugh.”
16. And the men rose up from there, and looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.

From the Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 23b-24a:

Rav Judah said in the name of Samuel: “In the following three matters learned men do conceal the truth: In matters of a tractate (1), bed (2), and hospitality (3).”

Notes on the above:

1. If he is asked whether he is familiar with a certain tractate of the Talmud he will modestly say ‘no’ — even though in fact he is familiar with it.
2. This is explained in various ways. According to Rashi it refers to a question which may be put to a scholar regarding the performance of his conjugal duties, and to which he may decline to give a correct answer because of a sense of delicacy and propriety.
3. Regarding which a scholar may refuse to give correct information in order not to embarrass his host by inducing others to come and seek the latter's hospitality.

From the Babylonian Talmud, Ketubot 16b-17a:

Our Rabbis taught: How does one dance (1) before the bride? Beth Shammai say: The bride as she is. (2) And Beth Hillel say: ‘Beautiful and graceful bride!’ (3) Beth Shammai said to Beth Hillel: If she was lame or blind, does one say of her: ‘Beautiful and graceful bride?’ Whereas the Torah (4) said, ‘Keep thee far from a false matter.’ (5) Said Beth Hillel to Beth Shammai: According to your words (6), if one has made a bad purchase in the market, should one praise it (7) in his eyes or depreciate it? Surely, one should praise it in his eyes! Therefore the Sages said: ‘Always should the disposition of man be pleasant with people.’

Notes on the above:

1. What does one sing or recite?
2. One does not exaggerate in praising the bride. If she is not beautiful one does not say that she is.
3. Every bride has to be regarded and praised as beautiful and graceful.
4. i.e., the Pentateuch.
5. Exodus 23:7.
6. i.e., according to the view you have just expressed.
7. The thing purchased.

From the Babylonian Talmud, Mo'ed Kattan 26b:

“Our Rabbis taught: If one who is ill sustains bereavement, they should not inform him thereof, lest he thereby become distracted in mind; nor do they direct to have any garments rent in his presence and they direct the women to keep silent [from lamenting] in his presence....”

From Midrash Rabbah, Ecclesiastes 5:4:

When Hezekiah fell ill, the Holy Blessed One said to Isaiah, “Go, and tell him, ‘Set your house in order, for you will die and not live.’” (*Isaiah 38:1*). Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “Isaiah! It is usual when a person visits an invalid to say to him, ‘May mercy be shown you from Heaven,’ and the physician comes and tells him, ‘Eat this and do not eat that; drink this and do not drink that.’ Even when he sees him near to death, he does not say to him, ‘Set your house in order,’ that his mind not be upset.

You, however, tell me, ‘Set your house in order, for you will die and not live!’ I pay no attention to what you say, nor will I listen to your advice. I hold on to nothing else than what my ancestor said: “Don’t let your mouth bring you into disfavor, and don’t plead before the messenger that it was an error, but fear God...” (*Ecclesiastes 5:6*). Immediately Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed (*Isaiah 38: 2*).

from the Shulkhan ‘Arukh, Yoreh De’ah 335:7, 338:1

A patient should be instructed to turn his attention to his affairs, to make appropriate arrangements in the event that he has lent or deposited money with others or others have lent or deposited money with him, but the patient must explicitly be told that such instructions should not be construed as an indication that death is imminent. A patient should be told to repent and to confess his sins, but must be counseled that many have confessed and have not died, while many who have not confessed have died...

The officers of the Chevrah Kaddisha were wont to pay a visit to all persons on the third day of their illness. Upon arrival, they informed the patient that it was their custom to pay such a visit to all who fell sick regardless of the severity of the illness and thereby endeavored to relieve any anxiety their visit might occasion. They then spoke to the patient regarding the matters outlined in the Shulkhan ‘Arukh. Since this was an established custom, neither the visit nor the conversation was viewed with apprehension.

-- Rabbi Abraham Danzig (1748-1820) in his Hokhmat Adam, 151:10

“A healing tongue is a tree of life,
but a devious one makes for a broken spirit.”

Proverbs 15:4

Related to Truth and Speaking Truth to Power
Some 13 Jewish Quotes

All God's works are truth, and all God's ways justice.
Daniel 4:34

What honor can there be where there is not also truth?
Philo, Decalogue, 20 BCE – 40 CE

Truth can stand; falsehood cannot.
Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 104a

A little truth overcomes much falsehood, as a little light dispels much darkness.
Bahya, Hovot HaL'avot, 1040 (5:5)

Accept the truth from whomsoever speaks it.
Maimonides (1135-1204), Commentary to the Mishnah, Introduction

Wish to learn the truth, not just to win a wordy victory.
Maimonides (1135-1204), Sha'arei HaMusar

The truth is neither shy nor timid.
Joseph ben Abba Mari Caspi (1297-1340), Yoreh De'ah, chapter 15

Know the truth, and you will know its Master.
Shem-Tov ibn Falaquera (1225 – ca. 1290), Iggeret HaVikuah,

Truth is to be accepted from any person. Its touchstone is not the rank or position of its professor, but its intrinsic worth.
Shem-Tov ibn Falaquera (1225 – ca. 1290), Sefer Ma'a lot

The truth is its own witness.
Moses ben Joshua of Narbonne (died after 1362), Commentary to Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed

One who comprehends that his soul is extracted from the very source of truth will never permit a lie to enter truth's sanctuary.
Orhot Tzaddikim, 15th century, chapter 23

The truth is heavy, therefore its bearers are few.
Samuel ben Isaac of Uceda, Midrash Sh'muel (16th century)

A half-truth is a whole lie.
Yiddish – and Yemenite -- Proverb

Seven Guidelines of Helping People Ask for, and Accept, Help

Summary © Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW, August 2009

*** Outreach/Education/Exposure**

Regular, consistent promotion of services and programs (*Connect-to-Care* name and literature visible and prominent, even ubiquitous!) – “For Everybody in Need.”

*** Testimonies/Normalizing/Destigmatizing**

Concrete stories/examples of *need-and-helpful-response* that make asking for/accepting help more and more familiar, routine, expected, and respected – through sermons, divrei Torah, bulletin pieces, courses, committee meetings, etc.

*** Flexibility, Openness, Fluidity**

People need a variety of opportunities and channels in order to get help: Gifts, Loans, Shared Equipment, Business Transactions, Networking Connections, Service Bartering, Moral Support and Informal Encouragement, Help with Marketing, etc., etc. (“It was taught in the name of R. Joshua: ‘More than the householder does for the poor man does the poor man do for the householder’...”-- *Midrash Ruth Rabbah 5:9 on 2:18*)

*** Required Helpfulness -- Key is Empowerment**

So many folks do not want to be (or be perceived to be) dependent – *and* it is an important part of people’s healing and growth for them to do for others. Utilizing their hard-won skills, and also developing new ones, can be a great blessing and an important aspect of growth and healing. (“Even a poor man who lives off *Tz’dakah* must perform acts of *Tz’dakah*.” -- *Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 7a*)

*** Tactful, Judicious, Discreet, Compassionate Partnering**

Interpersonal stance of leaders and of the community is critical – accompanying words need to be sensitive and supportive. (Consider, e.g., metaphor of *Hashavat Aveidot*.)

*** Building a Tolerance for Change and the Cyclical Nature of Socioeconomics**

Part of our human nature relies heavily on routine, predictability, and consistency – but social, political, and economic realities shift, sometimes rapidly. (“Poverty is a Wheel” – *Shabbat 151b*)

*** The Ultimate Value, and Imperfection, of any Community**

The extended *mishpucha* of the Jewish community will do its best – and make some mistakes, as mortals.

Seven Jewish Quotes about the Physician and the Patient

Physician, heal your own limp!
Midrash B'reishit/Genesis Rabbah 23:4

If a physician cannot give a patient medicine for the body,
he should somehow find and give medicine for the patient's soul.
Zohar, D'varim/Deuteronomy, Section 3, (Soncino edition) page 299b

Comfort the sufferer by the promise of healing,
even when you are not confident,
for thus you may assist his natural powers.
Isaac ben Solomon Israeli, Manhig HaRofoim, ca. 930 (Egypt and the Maghreb)

The properties of the soul depend on the condition of the body.
Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed, 1190

In order to strengthen the vital powers,
one should employ musical instruments
and tell patients gay stories which will make the heart swell
and narratives that will distract the mind
and cause them and their friends to laugh....
Maimonides, The Preservation of Youth, 12th century

Who is a skilled physician? One who can prevent sickness.
Sefer Hasidim, 13th century, # 17, p. 22

Ask the patient, not the doctor.
Yiddish Proverb

Surgeons must be very careful
When they take up the knife!
Underneath their fine incisions
Stirs the Culprit - Life!
Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) (OK, so she wasn't Jewish)