



HINDA
INSTITUTE
Everybody Deserves a Second Chance

ב"ה

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CAN EVERYONE REALLY BE FORGIVEN?

During the High Holidays, we explore a deep and sometimes difficult question: How can someone truly be forgiven if the damage they've caused still remains? What happens when a person sins—let's say something as serious as taking a life—but then feels deep remorse and sincerely wants to change?

Judaism teaches that teshuvah—returning to your true self, your soul, and to G-d—is always possible. G-d is infinitely compassionate and forgiving. Even the worst sins can be forgiven, if the person feels genuine regret, stops the harmful behavior, and commits to repair what can be repaired. This is a core message of the High Holidays, but it's relevant every single day.

But, forgiveness does not mean the damage magically disappears. This is where we must distinguish between forgiveness and healing. In our spiritual lives, when we sin, we create a mess in the world—sometimes in our relationships, sometimes in our bodies, sometimes in our souls. When we repent sincerely, G-d forgives us. That's the Divine compassion. But the "mess" still needs to be cleaned. That's our tikkun—our responsibility to repair what was damaged.

Sometimes that healing can happen in this lifetime. Sometimes it takes many lifetimes. Sometimes it requires help from a spiritual guide, a tzaddik, or deep work in mitzvot, prayer, and ethical living. But, the door to forgiveness is always the first step—and it is always open. Teshuvah literally means return—not just return to G-d, but return to your truest self, to your divine soul, which was never stained, only hidden. Forgiveness is about who you are.

Tikkun is about what you've done—and what you choose to do next. May we all have the courage to return, the clarity to repair and the faith to know that no soul is ever too far gone. (Adapted from Chabad.org, Rabbi Tvi Freeman)

HOLIDAY SERVICES

Every Jew has the moral and legal right to their identity, to communicate with G-d on their terms and to celebrate the Jewish holidays. The Hinda Institute organizes High Holiday services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in correctional institutions statewide. Our chaplains, volunteers and detainees celebrate the Jewish Holidays together with the sound of the shofar, the lulav and etrog and most importantly, hope for the New Year. We send prayerbooks, in addition to meeting with prisoners individually. The Yom Kippur themes of repentance and changing for the better resonates in a deeply personal way for those inside institutions. Everyone deserves a second chance.

- In addition, we deliver Rosh Hashana packages and goodies to over 80 families and children in Chicago.
- All our families and their loved ones are invited to the best Hinda holiday parties ever.

WISHING

YOU A

VERY

HAPPY

AND

HEALTHY

ROSH

HASHANAH

AND A

SWEET

NEW

YEAR



BRIDGING THE GAP: NATIONAL PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM TACKLES MENTAL HEALTH, ADDICTION, AND REENTRY CRISIS

In a country where mental health care is increasingly inaccessible and incarceration is often a default response to untreated trauma, a new initiative is aiming to rewrite the script. In 2023, the Hinda Institute in conjunction with Tikvah Healing and with the generous support of the JUF and the Walder Foundation is launching a ground breaking program: the National Reentry, Addiction and Mental Health Peer Support Program—one of the first of its kind in the United States.

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TOGETHER for GOOD

This innovative program addresses a gaping national service shortfall: the lack of structured, trauma-informed peer support for individuals navigating the complex intersection of mental illness, addiction, and reentry. Illinois is one of the states hardest hit, with just 1,200 psychiatric beds for its 13 million residents. As noted by Sheriff Tom Dart, Cook County Jail has become “the largest de facto mental health facility in Illinois.” Instead of further institutionalizing the vulnerable, Hinda’s approach empowers them.

A Growing National Crisis

Over 70% of people with mental illness will encounter the criminal justice system, often due to minor infractions stemming from untreated symptoms. Released from jails, prisons or psychiatric institutions, these individuals frequently find themselves with no housing, no income and no support. “People don’t relapse or reoffend because they want to,” said a spokesperson for Hinda. “They fall through the cracks because the system isn’t built to support recovery. Peer support is a game-changer.”

Peer support is a model backed by extensive research from institutions like Rutgers and the Hogg Foundation. It has been shown to improve clinical outcomes, reduce hospitalizations, and enhance long-term stability for individuals with anxiety, PTSD, bipolar disorder and substance use disorders.

The Power of Lived Experience

What sets peer support apart is the central role of lived experience. A Reentry Peer Support Specialist isn’t just trained—they’ve lived through the very challenges their clients face: incarceration, addiction, family estrangement, trauma. Their empathy is authentic, their support credible. Through Hinda’s program, participants receive months of intensive training designed by a social work professor, professional educators and an accredited peer support specialist. It includes coursework, self-reflection, and hands-on practice.

Participants benefit in multiple ways:

- They access a no-cost, accredited training program, which can also satisfy probation or parole requirements.
- They become eligible for Medicaid-reimbursable roles in an emerging field facing severe workforce shortages.
- They develop confidence, self-awareness, and purpose while empowering others to recover and reconnect.

Agencies benefit, too—by expanding their reach, relieving staff burnout, and improving client outcomes with a proven model that complements traditional clinical care.

From Pilot to National Program

In 2023, the Hinda Institute launched the pilot phase. The results were impressive. Participants consistently rated the program highly. In 2024, three certified graduates provided peer services at Hinda to 250 clients. In a follow-up survey, 96% of those clients reported high satisfaction with the support they received. Encouraged by these outcomes, the Hinda Institute is now expanding the program into a national model. The National Reentry, Addiction and Mental Health Peer Support Training Program is a one year initiative designed to scale training and supervision for hundreds of certified peer support specialists across the country. The Family Institute MIDRASH Lab at Northwestern University will conduct program evaluation and outcomes research to refine best practices and publish findings in peer-reviewed journals. Goals for the national expansion include:

- Increasing access to timely, community-based mental health and reentry support.
- Creating a replicable, accredited peer training program available at little to no cost.
- Offering critical employment pathways to impacted individuals.
- Conducting rigorous evaluation to inform future policy and practice.

A National Model for Change

At its core, the Hinda Peer Support Program aims to do more than fill service gaps—it aspires to redefine how we respond to mental illness, addiction and incarceration. By turning lived experience into a professional asset, it transforms former “clients” into changemakers. It empowers them to support others, reduce stigma and reintegrate with dignity.

The program envisions a future where recovery isn’t a lonely road, but a shared journey—one where support comes from someone who’s been there. It’s not just about reducing recidivism. It’s about restoring hope. “Peer support saves lives,” said one graduate of the pilot program. “This isn’t just a job—it’s a mission.”

From Shame to Strength:

How Peer Support Helped One Mother Reclaim Her Life

Sarah, a retired counselor from a middle-class Jewish family, had always been an active supporter of Jewish and political causes in her community. But her life took a devastating turn when her adult son was suddenly detained and she discovered his ongoing struggle with addiction—something he had hidden from the family. The shock, combined with the trauma his children faced and the shame she felt, plunged Sarah into a deep depression.

HINDA HEROINE

Continued...

Her son's incarceration, especially far from home, left Sarah overwhelmed and isolated. She blamed herself as a mother and became emotionally and physically exhausted, trying to hold her family together. Although she had access to a therapist, the emotional toll weighed heavily.

It wasn't until she was connected with a Peer Support Specialist through the CARES program that she felt truly seen and understood. Megan, her peer counselor, had firsthand experience navigating incarceration within her own family and raising a child with autism. Her empathy was grounded in a lived experience, not just training.

"Megan never judged me," Sarah said. "She understood the silence, the shame, and the stigma. She knew what it was like to be excluded from social circles, to feel like a failure and to still show up for a loved one who is struggling."

With Megan's support, Sarah began to reclaim her sense of self. She learned how to navigate the prison system, visitation rules and how to prioritize her own healing.

"Peer Counseling is such an important part of this journey," Sarah shared. "It is helping me not only survive- but also thrive in a way that I couldn't have before."

For Sarah, peer support was the turning point from silent suffering to a hopeful, healing future.

UPCOMING COURSES

For more info on our Zoom courses click on www.hindahelps.com/courses. Consider sponsoring a course or learning in the name of a loved one.

AUGUST Tech 10 - A course designed to help those who want to develop tech skills, including creating a Google account, using Gmail, LinkedIn and AI.

SEPTEMBER Legal Panel: Understand the Criminalization of Mental Health. In conjunction with the Decalogue Society of Lawyers.

OCTOBER Community-Led Justice: Learn how to become more involved and advocate for change on both individual & group levels.

NOVEMBER Living With Anxiety: Examine the roots and triggers of anxiety. Practical tools for daily management and embracing a fulfilling life alongside anxiety.

JOIN US FOR PRESENTATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY!

For more information click on www.hindahelps.com/community In conjunction with...

Boundaries with Compassion
Sunday, September 7 @ 7:15 PM, JCFS Seigle Building, Skokie



This collaborative in person supportive workshop is for parents and caregivers of adults facing mental health challenges, systemic gaps and the criminalization of mental illness. It offers a safe space to share experiences, build community, and explore practical strategies.

No Shame On U
END STIGMA. SAVE LIVES.



Everybody Deserves a Second Chance
Sunday September 21 @ 10 AM
Skokie Valley Synagogue - Lecture on Teshuva/return for for Rosh Hashana led by a 45 year Prison Chaplain - Rabbi Binyomin Scheiman.

In the News

- ★ Our summer Restorative Justice panel was a huge success. Dr. Alissa Ackerman, Felix Rosado and Chris Miner led the discussions from a psychosocial, prison, reentry and spiritual perspectives. The panel was recorded by the Prison Podcast (Valerie Cartonio)- and is accessible to individuals nationwide through tablets provided across correctional facilities. It is also available to the public on all major podcast platforms
- ★ **June - Finding Joy in the Depths:** Our reentry education community joined together to discuss how to confront challenges and grow spiritually from pain.
- ★ **News from Inside**
 - We are now able to visit a new correctional facility - McHenry County Jail making over 30 institutions in total receiving visitations services from our Hinda Institute chaplains
 - We completed the first in prison course given at Marion Federal Prison - "Seven Paths to Love, Life, Purpose and Serenity." Participants received FSA good time credit.

IN MEMORANDUM

Brian

Brian brought warmth and thoughtfulness to the lives he touched. Through it all, he leaned into spirituality and personal growth, showing how positivity can shine through life's complexities. Brian was intelligent, kind and sensitive. He will be missed by those who remember him in good times.

Kevin

Every person you met received joy from your kind heart and beautiful smile. This world benefited from your love and light. We love you and miss you!

Thank you to David and Doug of Chicago Jewish Funerals for their compassion, heartfelt support, and dignified care.





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