

A MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE ON THE MEIRON DISASTER

This leaflet has been written in response to the Meiron Disaster, which occurred on Lag Baomer of this year.

In this leaflet, you will find information about Psychological Trauma, how it affects people, and what can be done to help yourself and others.

Understanding Trauma

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA?

Psychological trauma is a traumatic event's damaging effect in a person's mind.

WHAT IS A TRAUMATIC EVENT?

Unusually frightening, upsetting or painful events can sometimes cause trauma.

If you are actually in a traumatic event, you are likely to feel upset and overwhelmed. However, just hearing about upsetting events can also affect you, especially if you personally know someone who was hurt by the situation.

You might experience distress immediately following the event, but sometimes you might have a delayed response, with a reaction occurring even a long time (weeks or months) after the event.

TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES MIGHT INCLUDE:

- Serious accidents
- Witnessing somebody's death
- Seeing someone get badly injured
- Being in a war
- Being physically attacked
- Witnessing natural disasters, such as floods
- Being abused in childhood
- Hearing about a loved one's serious injury or death

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY TRAUMA?

There are some common symptoms people tend to experience after trauma:

- a) Feeling constantly tense, on-edge, annoyed, angry, sad or worried.
- b) Thinking and feeling something bad is about to happen.
- c) Feeling pessimistic about the future.
- d) You may feel numb and find it hard to feel anything, losing interest in people and things that you do normally .
- d) Upsetting memories called Flashbacks. These can be nightmares while you sleep, or vivid memories while you are awake. You might feel distant or cut-off from your actual surroundings. You might also feel you are back at the traumatic event and experiencing it again. When you think of the event, you might feel physically stressed, with symptoms such as rapid heartbeat or shortness of breath. You might really want to forget about the event but find it very difficult to stop thinking about it.
- e) Avoiding triggers, which are reminders of any details of the event. For example, following the Meiron disaster, people might avoid listening to Lag Baomer music, or staying away from crowded places.
- f) Panic attacks - sudden feelings of overwhelming anxiety. Sometimes, this comes with physical symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath or dizziness. During panic attacks, people might think or feel they are going to die. Panic attacks are upsetting but aren't dangerous. Please note that physical symptoms that are of concern to you should still be checked by health professionals to rule out any other issues or causes.

HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF AFTER TRAUMATIC EVENTS?

- Don't blame yourself for being affected by Trauma. Even Yidden with strong Emuna and Bitachon can experience Trauma as it is a common bodily and psychological response.
- Pay attention to your thoughts and feelings and try not to ignore difficult emotions. Instead, make a mental note or even write them down so you can deal with them later.
- Notice your behaviours. Are you avoiding reminders of the event? If so, is this making your life more difficult?
- Put aside some time to do something relaxing and enjoyable.
- Consider ways to minimise stress and workload for a short while.
- Find a friend, a relative or a Rov who understands you so you can talk about the traumatic event and how it has affected you.
- There are self-help books you might like to read to guide you through this time. Neshomo's Mental Health and Wellbeing Library can be reached by contacting Shulamit: 07741 625 697 or emailing: admin@neshomo.co.uk.
- Mindfulness and relaxation recordings can be accessed on Neshomo's website and downloaded onto an MP3 player.
- Avoid any upsetting recordings, videos or even newspaper articles about the event as these are not helpful and can deepen your Trauma.
- Remember that you didn't choose the Trauma, but you can choose to reach out for help.

WHAT IS POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)?

It is normal to experience symptoms of trauma after a traumatic event. Most people find they can get better using social support and self-help techniques. Sometimes, short-term counselling can be quite helpful. However, if your response to the trauma is beyond the normal response you may be suffering from PTSD the symptoms of which can be:

- a) Severe
- b) Last 6 months or longer
- c) Seriously disrupt your daily life
- d) Cause you great distress

if you are concerned about PTSD, speak to your GP to discuss your options, which may include specialist referral or psychotherapy.

FURTHER SUPPORT, ADVICE AND INFORMATION:

Please note that this is not an option for urgent support. In the event of an emergency, contact your GP or call 999.

If you feel you would benefit from personal support or therapy, please contact Neshomo at:

Daniel

Tel: 07741 625 345 or email: maleoutreach@neshomo.co.uk

Racheli

Tel: 07512 578 587 or email: femaleoutreach@neshomo.co.uk

For more information visit the Neshomo Website at neshomo.co.uk

