



Raise Your Hand if You Need Help

We have a mental health crisis on our hands. And I'm living it.

Intellectually I know that there's no shame in mental health issues. Yet here I am writing this article anonymously for fear of being judged by my Jewish communal friends and colleagues. You see, I have a significant position within a large Jewish organization. On any given day, I am a rock and I'm excellent at balancing work and my home life, which includes a handful of kids. This current situation has thrown me for a loop, and put me in a place of great stress – to a breaking point. That makes me horribly uncomfortable, scared, and vulnerable. I mean, who else has had to send their normally adorable and stable elementary school-aged child to a psychiatric inpatient program? That's a real question.

I know I'm not alone in the struggle. The struggle is real and happening across the majority of individuals and families. But since I'm responsible for dozens of staff and important responsibilities during the crisis, I feel an incredible sense of responsibility to the work and to help keep everyone else feeling supported. The work and the people who do the work have always brought me joy, and a sense of pride, accomplishment and gratitude. Particularly in the present, the work gives me purpose. But I'm really worried about showing weakness and vulnerability. I think of leadership as being synonymous with strength. But perhaps right now what we need from leadership is an acknowledgement of weakness and vulnerability to validate how others are feeling.

One child of mine is already in intensive treatment. Two others are teetering on the edge. And one seems to be enjoying this situation and thriving pretty well. And the spouse? Well, his mental state is debatable depending on the day. And me? Up until now I didn't feel like I could even begin to think about that. But I have come to the conclusion that both fulfilling my work to the level that it deserves and fulfilling my parenting to the level it deserves isn't possible today or in the next several months. (Was it ever possible? Debatable.) So I'm going to muster up the courage pretty soon to raise my hand and ask for help. I'm not sure yet what that means and how I might best be supported while also doing my work and continuing to support others. But it's important. And I encourage everyone else to think about raising their hand, too.

If you need help please visit <https://mhanational.org/covid19> or in Connecticut call 211.

<https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/raise-your-hand-if-you-need-help/>