

Transcript: "Coping with Corona: Helping our Children & Ourselves", 4/13/2020, hosted by OU

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What can I tell you? To be here with you tonight, as we go through this tzaar. I've been doing this work for about 20 years. Hashem has put me in a very unique position in this world, and I have done hundreds, if not thousands, of presentations, interventions, training, and as much as whenever a Jew is in pain, I am in pain, and whenever another Yid's heart is broken, my heart is broken, but for all intents and purposes, I am on the other side of the table, the situation. Now, for the first time, we are all in this together. Ke'ish echad ve'lev echad.

A few weeks ago I had a Zoom conversation with my volunteers -- I have some really wonderful volunteers manning our crisis hotline, that runs 24 hours 6 days a week, and for the first time, they too, the people answering the hotline, are going through the same crisis as those people who are calling the hotline. We're going through something that is absolutely unprecedented.

I very much connect to the words of Hashem when He says to us, "Imo anochi batzarah, I am with you in your troubles." Every morning, in the Akeidah, we say, "Bechol tzartom lo tzar." Rabbi Efrem Goldberg, of Boca Raton, FL, in a video message that he sent to his congregation when he had to close the doors to his shul, like so many rabbis across the country, around the world had to do.

Rabbi Goldberg said that in that week's parshah, it says, "Veshabtosai tishmaru." Why is it in the plural? We can say, because of the double language of zachor veshamor. But, he said, there are two types of Shabbos. One type of Shabbos we experience in shul, when we are davening with our kehillah, our friends, our family, and we are listening to krias haTorah, going to a kiddush, going to lunch with our friends. Then there is another type of Shabbos, of this new reality that we are experiencing: just being home, celebrating Shabbos with our family. We have to make it leibedik and firedik and special. It's a new reality type of Shabbos.

I would like to suggest that it is not just the Shabbos of our new reality. It's everything. Everything has changed. It's Shabtosai. It's both. It's that our roles as parents are totally different; our roles as husbands and wives are changing. We're taking on new roles, new responsibilities. It's that our jobs are totally different. It's our attitudes, our perspectives. Everything in our lives has changed, from A to Z. It's just the new reality.

Everything I am going to say tonight applies to children as well as to adults. Everything that we

are living through, all these new realities, all these changes, so much about it is the unknown. There's that fear of the unknown.

Initially, when I was doing presentations -- Hashem has had me do presentations every single night since this started. Initially, the fear of the unknown was about the virus. We didn't know a lot about this coronavirus. The doctors didn't know, this one didn't know. We were taking precautions, not doing things because it was so contagious. There was a lot unknown about the virus.

Now, it's the fear of the unknown of the isolation, the quarantine; it's the being separated from loved ones, be it married children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents; it's the fear of the unknown of our financial situation. So many people are suffering financially, from the most financially secure to the most financially insecure. It's the fear of the unknown of how many people are getting sick, and really sick. It's the fear of the unknown of how many people are dying.

And when there are so many unanswered questions, that alone causes a tremendous amount of anxiety and stress. When we read storybooks to our children, and we don't finish them, when there's no ending, that causes anxiety and stress to the children. We are in the middle of a very scary story. Yes, im yirtzah Hashem, with G-d's help, there will be a happy ending, but right now there is a lot of fear and unknown, and that alone causes great anxiety and stress.

For children and adults, on any good day, we need, we thrive on, consistency, structure, routine; familiar comfortable safe places. So much of that is gone right now, and that alone causes tremendous anxiety and stress. So, if we can, when we can, for our children who are home, make some type of seder hayom, a schedule. For ourselves, if we can stick to some type of schedule. Even those little bits, if we can compensate with some kind of routine, anywhere, that will be helpful.

I heard from David Pelcovitz, that once we accept our loss of control, and our inherent vulnerability -- which, by the way, gives us an opportunity to work on our faith, our emunah and our bitachon -- once we consciously or subconsciously accept this, then we become automatically more capable of dealing with the anxiety of the unknown. This is a very important starting point.

Tonight, I would like to offer you a framework that I have developed through my years of work in the unique position that Hashem has put me into, and I use it in all types of situations.

Tonight, I will plug in the details of the situation we find ourselves in with the coronavirus. It's a

3-step process: Educate-Validate, Reassure-Reframe, Express-Empower. We'll go through each one and plug in what we need to know.

The first is, Educate. Don't worry, I am not going to educate you any more. I am not going to go through all the facts and guidelines and rules and regulations that we have been flooded with. You get daily Achiezer updates; we have Hatzolah members, doctors, rabbonim. I'm not doing another education. What I will do is make sure that you have the facts, because as many facts as there are out there, that's how many rumors there are. For yourselves and your children, it's important to have the facts and not the rumors.

Just a few nights ago, I had a conversation with my children, and I kind of brought them up to date a bit. In the previous conversation I'd had with them about the virus, I'd downplayed it, "It's just like the flu, we're going into isolation because it's very contagious, we're social-distancing to protect each other, it's not a big deal." All of a sudden, it's become a very big deal, and I want them to know that I wasn't lying to them. I want them to continue to trust me, but really, nobody knew then. That's what we thought then.

Things have changed, and I explained to my children that this whole situation is just showing us that only Hashem knows and only Hashem is in control. It's important just to constantly have those family conversations, to make sure the lines of communication are wide open. Ask them what their understanding of the situation is. Ask them to bring to you whatever it is they are hearing or reading online or getting by text from their friends, and ask you about it, and you'll be happy to discuss it with them. Make sure that the lines of communication are wide open. I know you are hearing it from everyone else, you're just going to hear it from me again; I'm talking to myself as well. It's not good for us, it just creates more stress and anxiety, to be constantly checking all the news and the updates and the chats. We have very good sources of information in our neighborhood, let's stick with those facts.

Next is Validate. Validate is the first and most important step in this entire process, for yourself, for your spouse, for your friends, for your loved ones, and for your children. We are validating all parts of this situation. The isolation, the financial losses, the sickness, the deaths, the fear, the stress -- we're validating it all.

There is no right way and no wrong way to feel, to think, to cope, react, or respond to any crisis, trauma, or tragedy. Certainly not one of this magnitude that we are experiencing now. There is

no right way and no wrong way. Viktor Frankl, a famous psychiatrist who himself lived through Auschwitz, coined the phrase, "An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is totally normal."

Those who have heard me speak before know the Torah is my go-to. The Torah is not just a history book, not just a rule book, but also the first psychology book. All the experiences, emotions, and feelings that we go through are found in the Torah. There are several places in the Torah where Hashem validates that we go through experiences in exactly the way we need to. For me, it's very important to find those places of validation in the Torah.

I want to share one of those places that validate the point that we can go through a situation in whatever way works for us, because I think it is very powerful.

When Hashem took the Bnei Yisrael through the Yam Suf, when He split the sea for us, how did He split it? Did He split it in two, as depicted in the picture books of our youth? No. He actually split it into twelve parts. Picture a swimming pool with 12 lanes. Why? Because the entire nation was going to get to the other side together, but each shevet, each tribe, each brother, had to go through it in his own way, in whatever way worked best for him. The meforshim, the commentators say the lanes in the sea, like in a swimming pool, were see-through, because although each brother had to go through it in his own way, they were still looking out for each other, checking up on each other.

How validating is that? We are each going through this crisis together with our family. We may have children, spouses, the children look alike, we're all members of the same family, but each one is so different. We each have our own personality, our own emotional makeup. We are each going through this coronavirus in a very different way. Each one needs permission to go through this in whatever way works best for them. But, taking care of each other. The whole family is going through this together, while each one goes through it alone, taking care of each other. The same thing applies to the community. The community will get through it together, b'ezras Hashem Yisborach, but each one of us will go through it in their own way.

Very validating, from the Torah.

It is very, very important to give ourselves permission to be human. How do I say that? How do I know that? Because Hashem gives us permission to be human. Because Hashem created us. He created us with the capacity to feel, to be sad, to be scared, to be confused. Hashem gave us that permission; we need to give it to ourselves.

Of course, we need to bring those feelings back to Hashem and we will talk about that, but we

need to give ourselves permission to be Human. Hashem Himself gave us that permission, so it is certainly not a chisaron, a lacking, in our emunah to have those feelings. It is OK not to be OK. It's not a chisaron in our emunah.

Dr. Tal Ben-Shachar, an Israeli psychologist who is tops in the trauma field in Israel, talks about the fact that it is crucial to experience the full range of emotions: sad, angry, confused, scared, etc. I don't know about you but I'm finding myself going through this range of emotions, several times a day. It's very important to be able to experience the full range.

All emotions flow through one pipeline, and if you block one, you don't allow room for the gratitude and the joy and the happiness, which are so essential at all times but especially at a time like this. Imagine going through this type of crisis without also being so grateful for what we have, for being able to experience those moments of joy, of happiness. We're stuck at home? Yes, but baruch Hashem, we're home with our families. The weather is nice? Baruch Hashem, I can go out and get some air. I have to make Pesach myself? I have a fridge, I have an oven, I have the ability to make Pesach.

There is always a place for gratitude, a place for simchah. If we don't allow ourselves the full range of emotions, then we won't also have the gratitude and the joy. It's a very important point to remember, because we want to have both types of emotions.

Pesach is in exactly a week. My father, Rabbi Eliyahu Safran, wrote a book called "Kos Eliyahu" in which he speaks about Pesach in this exact way, that it is a study in contrasts. He talks about the fact that we would not appreciate, we would not be able to experience the geulah, the redemption, if we didn't experience galus, the exile. We wouldn't appreciate light if we hadn't experienced darkness. We wouldn't know happiness if we didn't experience sadness. So many of the simanim, symbols, that are present at the Pesach seder embody that concept of the dual emotions. The bitter maror and sweet charoses, the men wearing a kittel that represents tachrichim, the clothing of the dead but also represents the appearance of an angel; the matzah representing the bread of the poor man with the wine of the rich man, etc.

That's what Dr. Ben-Shachar is saying. If we don't feel scared, if we don't feel confused, we won't feel gratitude. We won't feel happiness. We won't feel joy.

So let's delve into these emotions and discuss them a little bit more in detail, in order to process and deal with them.

For example, fear. Fear I believe is a very big part of this nisayon. At a time like this fear is probably one of the most normal reactions and responses. In fact, every single morning, we

daven in Az Yashir, saying very clearly that the Jews who watched the Egyptians drown were so scared that they were shaking. "Tipul aleihem aimasah vepachad." Those were the Jews who saw it from up front. The ones who were standing in the back, the ones who heard about it from the texts and emails, they were also very nervous.

How validating is that? Hashem knows. He gets it. He gives us some situations sometimes that are very scary. He's telling us, it's ok, you're allowed to be scared. We see it every morning in Az Yashir.

I heard from my colleague, Rabbi Dr. Dovid Fox, an amazing thought from Yitzchak Avinu. Yitzchak is known as the "Pachad Yitzchak," for his attribute of fear, but also for the attribute of strength, resilience. So, when it talks about his attributes, it says "gevurah, strength" once but "pachad" twice. Rabbi Dr. Fox quoted the Ricanti (a 13th c. Italian Rishon and mekubal) who said that when Yitzchak was on the brink of the Akeidah -- I don't know about you, but I get panicky when I hear the story of the Akeidah being read in shul. I imagine Yitzchak Avinu lying on the mizbeyach with his father coming at him with a knife; it's a little bit scary.

Yitzchak was on the brink of the Akeidah, and he was koneh, he accepted upon himself the middah of pachad. He was in a state of pure terror and tension, but he consciously decided he was going to face that fear, that he was going to be present in the face of that fear. Therefore, Yitzchak's gevurah, his strength, his resiliency, became a healthy product of his pachad.

It does not have to be a contradiction between fear and strength. The fear is normal, but the question is, what are you going to do with that fear? Are you going to sit on the couch and shake from anxiety? Is that what Hashem wants from us? Can we balance the fear with emunah and simchah, as everything in life is about balance? Will we going to build from it, grow from it, channel it into gevurah and resilience?

Gevurah can be a healthy acknowledgment of pachad, fear. Fear is healthy and normal, but if you don't channel it into strength and resiliency, it will just remain fear. This is a very important point to think about. Fear is normal, folks! It's a very normal, appropriate response to what we are going through. But if we just let it sit around and remain as fear, it will overwhelm us and overtake us and our children.

If we are able to channel it into something positive, into strength and resiliency, that will be a very healthy response.

A story I always use when I talk about feelings, responses, during or after a crisis or trauma, is

the story of Sarah Imeinu, when she dies after learning about the Akeidah. Sarah was someone who lived her life, as Rashi says, "kulam shovim latovah," seeing everything that Hashem gave her as for the good. And she lived through a lot of challenges.

As a mother, I try very hard to teach my kids that "it's all good, it's all good," but Sarah really lived it. So the commentators ask, How is it that Sarah died after hearing about the Akeidah? There are many different commentators who speak about why Sarah died, and they talk to some of the reactions we may be feeling right now. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz said she died of shock. Who isn't still in shock about what is going on around us? I don't know about you. I'm an adult, I'm considered to know something about what is going on here -- all the tragedies come my way, on my phone, my email, and I still walk around, saying to my husband at least five times a day, "I can't believe what we are living through." That's shock.

The Sfas Emes and Rabbi Akiva Eiger have a discussion. One says that Sarah died of sadness, that she cried out with grief, and the six shouts she cried out are the six sounds of the shofar that we are required to hear mede'oraisa. We are allowed to be sad when faced with a sad situation. It's not a chisaron in our emunah. We are allowed to express our sadness.

The other said Sarah was happy, that her neshamah was so connected to Hakadosh Baruch Hu that she knew that what was happening was the ratzon Hashem, and her neshamah was overcome with emotion and she died from happiness.

The fact that there was both teaches us one of the most important lessons when going through or following a crisis, both from the side of emunah and the side of trauma: Our heart is a muscle, and is able to expand and hold more than one emotion at a time. This is one of the greatest lessons for us and for our children. Say it again: our heart is a muscle, and is able to expand and hold more than one emotion at a time.

I will tell you that personally, on Friday night two weeks ago, when this was all just beginning, when I went to bentch licht, to light my Shabbos candles, I cried and I cried and I cried. The hour before Shabbos, all the shuls in Far Rockaway closed down. All of our yeshivos, all my boys' teachers live in Far Rockaway, we have many friends there, the children's roshei yeshivah and principals live there, a lot of our life is in Far Rockaway, and I was so sad, thinking about Far Rockaway, quiet over Shabbos. They were tears of stress, and of the unknown. What was going on? What would the next week bring? But they were tears also of emunah. They were tears of knowing that whatever it is, it is from Hashem, and it is good. Hashem loves us. They were tears of that relationship that I try so hard to maintain with Hashem, knowing that He loves

us but yet understanding that I don't understand. They were also tears of hope and excitement, feeling that this is chevlei Moshiach.

I felt very connected to Sarah, and very connected to this idea that my heart is a muscle, and it was expanding to hold many emotions at one time.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz gives another answer to why Sarah died, and that is, because she was alone. Avraham, Yitzchak, Eliezer, were walking to that mountain, to the Akeidah, together. Even if they weren't talking about it, they were together in the experience. Sarah was all alone. She was all alone when she heard the news and she couldn't handle it.

My friends, we are each alone in our houses, but none of us are alone in this experience.

Number one, we know that we are isolated in our homes in order to protect others, so in that way we have never been more connected to each other, and number two, even though, while we each sit in our homes alone, we know that we are all together in going through this experience.

Rav Shlomo Katz, with whom I am very close in Eretz Yisrael, last week did a Kabbalas Shabbos. He was singing Lechah Dodi, and hundreds of people joined by Zoom from all over the world. Instead of focusing the camera on himself, he showed the hundreds of Jews singing to welcome in the Shabbos. I really got very emotional. On the one hand, it made me sad to see different types of Jews, all over the world, each in their own homes, going through this tremendous nisayon. On the other hand, it was so beautiful to see different types of Jews, all over the world, each in their own homes, all together in the experience of welcoming Shabbos. So, how are these feelings manifested?

We use the acronym SCABS to describe the ways these emotions can come out:

Somatic: through your body. What we are feeling inside is manifested outside: headaches, nausea, dizziness, rashes, loss of appetite, loss of sleep. Kids and adults

Cognitive: your thoughts, perceptions, how you experience a situation.

Affect: your facial expressions, posture, body language. When I train volunteers in crisis work, I always tell them that percentage-wise, your facial expression and body language speak so much more than your words do. It's something very important to keep in mind now that we are home alone and stressed. There's a beautiful pasuk in Mishlei, "Kimayim hapanim lepanim, kein lev ha'adam le'adam. As water reflects a face, a heart reflects the feeling of the heart." Which means, that just as water reflects what you show it, so too what you feel within is felt by all. It's so important to remember, in your interactions with anyone, but especially in your interactions with children. In terms of discussing the situation, but not only that. I'm stressed about what's

going on, and I need to be very careful about what I look like -- not just the makeup and sheitel that I'm wearing, but my facial expression and the mood I'm giving over and the atmosphere I'm creating in the house. Do I want to create an atmosphere of fear and anxiety and sadness, or one of calm, comfort, menuchah, simchah?

There was an email going around today from Dr. Jennifer Gallagher, the superintendent of schools in Long Beach, NY. She was basically saying don't worry about how much your kids are learning right now, but the point I wanted to give over was that she said, "Twenty years from now, your children will not remember the coronavirus, or how much they learned or didn't learn during this time, but they will remember the time they stayed home with you. They will tell their children about feeling safe and loved and peaceful during an anxious time. They will remember the fun things they did with you."

Behavioral: your behavior. Crying, acting out, temper tantrums, aggressive behavior in kids and adults. You have to look out for maladaptive behavior, any behavior that may not be the norm. You know the norm, the status quo for adults and children. People always ask me about crying, if it's ok to cry in front of the children. First of all, if you look in the Torah, when it talks about Yosef seeing his brothers after so many years, I think it mentions five times that Yosef cried. That just shows that crying is a very appropriate response to emotions, that crying is a healthy response; you can role model that it is a healthy response and form of expression. A study was done comparing the tears of a woman cutting an onion with the tears of a grieving woman. It was found that the tears of the grieving woman contained stress hormones, while the tears of the woman cutting an onion did not.

However, I will say that you can cry, but you can't fall apart. You can't get hysterical. That is very scary for children to see. You need to leave the room, do your thing, and then come back. We learn that, also, from Yosef. We see that when he sees his brothers for the first time, the pasuk actually says, "Vayivakeish lebkos," he asked permission to cry, he needed to cry. Follow in the pesukim: Yosef left the room, he cried, he washed his face, he came back. That's amazing.

Spiritual: your connection to Hashem. This is definitely affected now, we hope in a positive way. We hope there is no spiritual crisis, but we are given all this time alone with Hashem now. I keep telling my kids, "Use it! Talk to Hashem. Communicate with Him. Go out in the backyard and pull a Rebbe Nachman." And when you do, keep in mind that according to Rav Shimshon Pincus in his sefer, *Shearim BeTefillah, Pathways to Prayer*, there are at least 10

avenues to connect, communicate with Hashem. Our tears are a prayer. Screaming to Hashem, whether out loud or silently in your heart, is a prayer. Falling to the ground feeling like you can't get up is a prayer. Simply talking to Hashem is a prayer. And there are more. Spend time with Hashem; He's giving you this time, it's a time to improve our relationship with Him. Another one of these things going around, that is so simple yet so brilliant. The Hebrew word they are using in Eretz Yisrael for "isolation" is "bedud," and its gematria is 26 -- the same as "Hashem." We are home alone, spending time with Hashem.

Next is Reassure.

Reassure. There are different levels to reassurance.

I'll do the simple one first. Isolation is definitely confusing and difficult. We need to validate that for ourselves and our children. Reassurance is the ability to connect to others in ways that we can. Call people, see if they are ok, by phone or facetime or Zoom. Baruch Hashem, k'nine'ahara, I have kids of all ages, and I can tell you that my youngest, my 10-year-old, has been spending hours having playdates on Zoom. It's so important that children see each other, just to know that they are ok and keep that connection. We are living in an age where there is a lot we can say about technology in terms of negative, but thank You, Hashem, that this is happening to us in an age where we can be using technology for shiurim and webinars and classes.

In terms of kids and adults, in terms of reassurance right now, just connecting to others, the ability to see other people's faces who you can't see in person right now, is tremendously reassuring both for children and adults. Knowing that they are ok, just to see their faces, sounds so simple but is so important.

My parents always love to see pictures of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I feel that now, even more so, seeing pictures of them just to know they are ok. My father has been learning mishnayos and sending them to his grandchildren. My mother has been reading stories to the younger ones both here and in Israel. I have two married couples and they each have a child, and it's just hard not to see them. So we are connecting with them, spending quality time in whatever way we can.

There are many, many people spending yomtov alone. There's been a lot said about that, and any out-of-the-box way we can connect with them -- send them something cute for the seder, whatever it is. There is a very big difference between feeling lonely and feeling alone. Any way

that we can help someone who is alone feel less lonely, goes a long way.

The second level of Reassurance. Last week, it was enough for me to say that Reassurance was, wash your hands, follow the guidelines, isolate, etc. Usually, when I deal with a tragedy, something sudden, an illness, I use the words "rare and unusual." Here, coronavirus is definitely a rare and unusual illness, but Hashem yeracheim, there are many people getting very sick, and Hashem yeracheim, the number of deaths is definitely rising. Reassurance is getting harder and harder.

Today, I had to do two classroom interventions for classmates of a child whose father died, in our neighborhood. First of all, to see the kids' emotions coming out -- they were definitely very upset about their friend's father, but it was ultimately also a lot of their emotions about the whole coronavirus situation coming out. The sadness and the fear, that it was now in their school and in their class. At the end, one little boy who was very brave asked the question, "How do we know my father won't get sick and die?"

He needed that Reassurance, and ultimately, the only reassurance we have for that type of question is another saying that is going around, "When we wash our hands, we need to remember Whose hands we are in."

Finally, the only Reassurance we have is emunah. We've been spending our lives, no matter how old we are, learning emunah, teaching emunah, raising our children on emunah. Now is the time to be living emunah, like never before. Every Torah on emunah, every tefillah on emunah, has brought us to this place. "Tzadik be'emunaso yichyeh"--now is the time to really strive to be that tzadik living by his faith.

I can tell you personally that the relationship that I try very hard to have with Hashem, is that "I know You love me, like an only child, and I know that You care for me and do for me whatever You think is best," and I feel such a shleimus from that. I have heard today from a dear friend that she quoted, "Simchah is the shleimus of knowing that whatever is going on in my life, Hashem decided is perfect for me right now." I know it comes from Your love, Hashem, but I also understand that I am not going to understand everything. Certainly right now I understand that I don't understand.

I had the great zechus to be learning and teaching Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh once a week, a very simple but very impactful sefer that helps us connect with Hashem. Just two nights ago, on Monday night, when I really didn't have the strength, I didn't know how I was going to prepare for or give the shiur that night, Hashem knew the exact words that we needed to hear. In that

night's lesson, we learned about the Chofetz Chaim. The holy, holy Chofetz Chaim.

We learned that when the Chofetz Chaim felt spiritually weak -- we don't know what it means, that the Chofetz Chaim felt spiritually weak, but that's what it said in the sefer -- what did he do? He went back and learned Bereishis, just the pesukim, the poshut peshat. Hashem's story of when He created the world.

Why? Just to remind himself, Yeish Borei Olam. There is Creator of the world. He created me, He created this world, He knew what He was doing. That's it. There's nothing else. Everything else is a lot of noise, in my opinion. There's a lot out there, and a lot of it is so good, good Torah. Don't get me wrong. But there's a lot out there, "You must do this, and coronavirus will go away" and "You must stop doing this in order to not get corona" and "Do this right now! Stop everything and say this." A lot of yelling through WhatsApp and through shiurim and in my humble opinion, you have to know with whom and what you are comfortable. You need to find what speaks to you.

Don't feel the pressure. Find the chizuk that speaks to you and that you can give to your children. That's it. Yeish borei olam.

First, give yourself reassurance. Find what works to reassure you. Remember the oxygen mask on the airplane, you have to give yourself one first before giving one to your child. Find your reassurance and then give it to your children.

Remember the Chofetz Chaim. He went back to Bereishis bara Elokim; yeish borei olam.

We are almost done.

Reframe. I'm going to tell you a quick, intense, and powerful reframe. Remember I was crying by my candles that Friday night? When we came to the Shabbos table, I shared with my children about my tears, the tears of sadness and stress and emunah; I shared with them that I feel this is chevlei Moshiach, whatever that means, the birth pangs and the labor pains and how it is written in the holy sefarim that the times before Moshiach comes will be difficult and confusing. I shared that I believe that Moshiach is nearby.

My son who is just turned 12 said, "Well, you know, the Holocaust was also difficult and confusing."

I said, "You're right, good point." The conversation shifted to something else. Then, on Sunday, when we got the news that school would be closed until Pesach, my kids' reactions were, "That's not fair, we won't see our friends, etc., etc." I validated that, I did my job.

Then I said, "You know, I'm just thinking out loud. On Shabbos, we were talking about the Holocaust, and it seems to me that we have games and we have bikes, and we have food, and we have clothes, and we have each other. We are not in concentration camps, and the Nazis aren't hounding us. Maybe it's not going to be so bad." My kids got the point.

This is a very simple, important, and powerful psychological tool that I use all the time in my work. Reframe is the ability to take a situation and know that there are two ways to look at it. Just reframe it, turn it around, look at it from a different perspective.

That's reframing, and there is always an ability to reframe everything.

Express.

Everybody, every adult, every child, needs a mode of expression. Always, but especially in this situation. This is too big to bury. Even now, even before we are past it. This is too big.

Everyone needs a way to express themselves. We cannot hold this inside. If we do, it will grow and grow and grow and burst at some other point in our lives. That is not ok, either for ourselves or for our children.

My favorite line regarding children is, "A monster without a name or shape is very scary, but once you give a monster a name, it becomes less scary." Naming the monster, giving clarity to emotions, labeling emotions, leads to better anxiety management.

How do we do that? Talking is ideal, it is definitely the best form of expression.

Again, Pesach is in like five minutes. Pharaoh and Mitzrayim and avdus, slavery, represent galus dibur. Our speech was in exile in Egypt. What is the antidote to that? How do we fight that?

The antidote is we come to the seder and have Magid. Naming the monster; telling the story; talking about the slavery. Sipur yetzias Mitzrayim. "Sipur" comes from the word "sapir" which can mean shining light, telling our story can help transform our darkness to light.

Not everyone is a talker. You can write, you can make a Haggadah with your children and have them write their own Magid; you can keep a journal; a diary; there's always art and music and making projects. Sherrie Mandel, who made aliyah many years ago and lost her son Kobi to a terrorist attack, wrote two excellent books ("Blessings of a Broken Heart" and "The Road to Resilience"), and does amazing things with the Hebrew language. She said that the shoshon, the root, for the word "sad, atzof," and the shoshon for the word "creation, atzvus," is the same. She also said that the shoshon of the word "briah, creation" is the same as that of "briut, health."

When we channel our passions, emotions, our feelings, into creating something, it creates better emotional health. That includes, of course, self-care. Self-care cannot be spoken about enough. Whatever works for you. I know that if I can get in that walk, I can face the day.

Finally, the last one: Empower.

We need to find that nekudah tovah, that good spot, in every person, whether child or adult. To find that little bit of light in the darkness, in each and every person. Each person is being empowered to face this situation.

I learned recently that Rabbi Nachman's entire Torah of Azamra is what? Finding the nekudah tovah in every person. His entire Torah on Azamra is based on the small alef of Vayikra. What is the whole sefer Vayikra about? Korbanos, sacrifices. Our yesurim, our difficulties, our challenges, our efforts, are our korbanos. When we go through a challenge, when we experience a korban, we must find the nekudah tovah in ourselves, in other people, in our spouses, in our friends. We have to find that small alef, we have to find that nekudah tovah. We have to find that Azamra.

"I know this is hard for you, I know it is hard for you to be enclosed, and I am so proud of you and the way you're handling it."

Or, "I know that you are so stressed about the finances, and thank you for not showing that to the kids."

Or, "I know that you always wanted to take guitar lessons, but you never had time in school.

Let's look online for guitar lessons, and maybe you can create a song about the situation we are going through."

I will end by saying the following. We are going through a major nisayon together. A challenge, a difficulty, a hardship. That's a nisayon, in Hebrew. How do you spell that? Nun-samech-yud-vov-nun. In every nisayon is the little word "nes, miracle."

First, we have to validate, we have to acknowledge that it is a nisayon. This is really hard. The greatest tefillah we can say at this point is just, "Hashem, this is really hard. I am having a hard time. Please help me, help us, help klal Yisrael, get through this." We have to validate that it is a nisayon.

The next step is to look for, and find, the nes in the nisayon. What's a nes? A nes is first and foremost a miracle. The miracles are there, we know they are. We just have to open our eyes

and find them. How Hashem is helping us through this, how Hashem is holding our hands through this, how Hashem is guiding us, how Hashem is hugging us.

A nes is also a banner, and a banner is something that lifts us up. We will find the ways in which this nisayon will lift us up. As individuals, as families, as communities.

Finally, the fact that it is Chodesh Nisan now, nun-yud-samach-nun. I give us all a brachah, that we as individuals, as families, and be'ezras Hashem as communities and as a nation, are able to find the nissim in this nisayon, in Nisan, the nissim geluim, revealed miracles, and that we are zocheh to the ultimate nes, the yeshuah and the geulah bimheirah bekarov.

Thank you for your time, for listening tonight.

If we can be of any help, if there are any questions or concerns, we have a crisis line open 24/6: 855-3-Crisis (855-327-4747) or crisis@chailifeline.org.

Also, if you will allow me to say, that I am zocheh, baruch Hashem, through Yeshiva Ateres Shimon to do a short daily message of inspiration and chizuk, Torah and psychology, as you heard tonight. You can get it through email of WhatsApp. You can sign up at SoulSisters@ateresshimon.org or text 516-404-7594.