

JFCS and JFGP Will Walk Beside You

BY JENN DIRECTOR KNUDSEN

Grief affects every part of our lives and can be a lonely road to travel. Due to the ongoing pandemic, coping with grief has been more isolating than at any time in recent memory.

To address individuals' grief and shore up their ability to cope, Jewish Family & Child Service created a grief-processing group for adults over the course of six sessions (see box for dates, registration).

Walking Beside You is co-facilitated by [Missy Fry](#), LCSW, a JFCS behavioral health social worker and certified advanced grief counseling specialist, and [Rabbi Barry Cohen](#), Jewish community chaplain of the greater Portland area.

The sessions will take place online; group members will have the opportunity to share their own experiences with grief, connect with others, learn about the grieving process and explore strategies for moving through loss.

In summer 2020, both Rabbi Cohen and Missy recognized the need for Walking Beside You, a debut program that could be offered again as the need continues to grow.

Shortly after the start of the pandemic, Rabbi Cohen began noticing people feeling increasingly emotionally untethered.

"Something is going on here that we need to address," says Rabbi Cohen, reflecting on spring 2020 visits with the dying and their loved ones, both within and outside the Jewish community, in retirement facilities, in hospitals, in their homes.

"The toll of isolation, concern about the unknown, pain over lost expectations and plans left unfulfilled" have contributed to a number of challenges, including coping skills when death enters the picture, he says.

Missy adds: "COVID-19 has impacted so much in our lives, including grief, which is a natural response to any kind of loss such



Missy Fry



Rabbi Barry Cohen

as being with loved ones or participating in traditional rituals."

Walking Beside You provides a path through grief. For example, while the grieving process is individualized, a group helps foster community and allows one to build connections – both antidotes to isolation, Missy explains.

She says the group's name – Walking Beside You – is very purposeful.

"We're not going to cure grief, but we're going to accompany you so you are not alone during this experience," she says.

Rabbi Cohen acknowledges that while an in-person group would be ideal, Zoom is a necessary tool and has its advantages.

"It still amazes me how strong a connection one can make over Zoom, and that connection can be so powerful, even if only in 2-D," he says. Plus the co-facilitators are aware that many people feel safer in an online rather than a shared physical space, and meeting via a Zoom link mitigates barriers to traffic, transportation and parking.

Ultimately, Missy says, she and the rabbi agreed the time for their grief-processing group is now. "We said, 'Let's not wait a moment longer.'"

Statistics shore up their observations, both real and anecdotal.

Rabbi Cohen cites an article from the "The Conversation," a nonprofit news organiza-

GRIEF PROCESSING GROUP WALKING BESIDE YOU

WHEN: 3-4 pm, Oct. 7, 14, 21 & 28, and Nov. 4 & 11

WHERE: Zoom

COST: JFCS requests a donation for participation, however no one will be turned away thanks to a grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland.

INFORMATION: jfccs-portland.org/walking-beside-you

REGISTRATION: Missy Fry, LCSW, 503-226-7079, ext. 133 or MissyFry@jfccs-portland.org

tion that publishes studies and articles by academic experts in numerous fields, to underline the need for the grief-processing group, now.

"Social distancing is different from social isolation, which leads to a sense of disconnection from the community. ... Socially isolated people have higher rates of not only dementia, but heart disease, high blood pressure, depression, cognitive decline and death," writes a University of Virginia associate professor of medicine.

Missy believes Walking Beside You is one of the only nonprofits offering a generalized grief-processing group, and it is not exclusive to members of the Jewish community.

The co-facilitators consider their role a privilege. "We get to be part of these really delicate moments," Missy says.

For more about Walking Beside You and JFCS' other programs and services, follow JFCS on Instagram and on Facebook.

History scholars, practitioners invited to apply for prize by Nov. 1

Early- and mid-career scholars and practitioners who study the human past are invited to apply for a \$300,000 Dan David Prize. Beginning in May 2022, the Prize will award up to nine \$300,000 prizes each year to early- and mid-career scholars and practitioners around the world to recognize outstanding achievements in the study of the human past and to support the winners' future endeavors.

First established in 2001 by the late entrepreneur and philanthropist Dan David to recognize achievements in the sciences and the humanities, the Prize will now champion a spectrum of emerging and more established scholars of the past, active within and beyond the academy. Winners

can include researchers from a wide range of fields, including history, archaeology, anthropology and art history, and also practitioners such as archivists, curators, public historians and documentary filmmakers.

"We live in a world in which investment in the humanities, particularly in the historical disciplines, is declining, even though we know how important studying the past is for understanding the present and building the future," says Ariel David, board member of the Dan David Foundation and son of the Prize founder. "For these reasons, we have decided to focus our resources on this field and help catalyze the next generation of scholars."

The Prize aims to advance history's place

in contemporary discourse at a time when political transformations underscore the importance of studying and remembering the past. The decision to shift the full Prize purse of \$3 million to scholars of the past comes at a challenging moment for the humanities. In addition to the nine prizes of \$300,000 for individuals, the remaining \$300,000 will go to establish a new international program for postdoctoral fellows who study the historical disciplines at Tel Aviv University, where the foundation is headquartered.

Nominations for the new Prize are due Nov. 1, 2021. Winners will be announced in early 2022. For the nomination process visit dandavidprize.org.