

# Principal Summit

## to Learn About Mental Health

Pesach Tikvah hosted an enlightening Summit for menahalos on October 28th, where over 80 attended. The purpose of this event was to encourage menahalos to be partners in providing mental health care for their students.

**Lea Scharf, LCSW, Director of the Pesach Tikvah Training Institute**, delivered opening remarks. Alluding to a little-known Midrash on Parshas VaYeira as a metaphor, she established the importance of treating every student as someone special. When Avram Avinu sent Yishmael away with Hagar, he made sure to visit Yishmael and give him feedback on his life choices. From Avram's visits, Yishmael knew that although he had been sent away, his father cared about him. From this Lea Scharf derived a lesson for educators: there is a critical need to follow up with girls who have been expelled or sent out of class. It is imperative, she stressed, that the student feel that their dismissal stemmed from a place of concern rather than anger, and that true empathy, care, and consideration must continue to follow the dismissed student wherever she may be.

**Rebbetzin Sima Spetner** was the keynote speaker at the event. Having made a special trip to Brooklyn from Eretz Yisrael, bestowing her

knowledge to a generation of menahalos. She is a renowned teacher and speaker who works with schools to support their struggling students and their families.

Captivating her audience, Rebbetzin Spetner emphasized the uniqueness of each child, clarifying that every student has a special gift to the world. Each child has her own journey to success. She stressed honing the strengths and hidden talents of the struggling student because she has seen that many go on to succeed in the most wholesome ways possible. If teachers, parents, and school administrators focus on the strengths of these students, the students will develop confidence and trust in themselves.

Present-day students are very perceptive of innate respect versus judgment. She brought to light the importance of giving students a space to feel heard and respected. That in itself can be healing.

In addition to Rebbetzin Spetner, **Dr. Yaakov Freedman** spoke. He is a Board-Certified Psychiatrist in America and Israel who works with students, their families, and their schools. He is a graduate of The University of Massachusetts Medical School, and The Harvard Longwood Psychiatry Residency Training Program where he was Chief Resident of Inpatient Psychiatry and the recipient of The Henry G. Altman Award for Excellence in Medical Education. Dr. Freedman is the author of a weekly column in Mishpacha Magazine and is recognized as an expert in the treatment of mental illness within the Jewish community.

Dr. Freedman spoke to the menahalos for two hours. He gave them a primer on mental health care, emphasizing the effect that family involvement has on the outcome of treatment. He said, "Engaging the family and encouraging them to share the information that they have can be so critical. When the family gets together and everyone is on the same team, the outcomes are so much better."

One menahale asked, "What can a school do about that?"

Dr. Freedman replied, "When you sit down, you explain to them that we are one team and that team involves school, a mental health professional, mom and dad, and that we know the best outcome is going to be when we're all on the same page."

He spent much time discussing the role that stigma has in people's reluctance to seek mental health care for their children. He also discussed the fact that "families deserve culturally sensitive care. The professional has to understand the cultural nuances and what constitutes dysfunctional behavior."

If you or a family member needs mental health care, contact Pesach Tikvah. It has been removing the stigma of mental health care for over forty years. All of Pesach Tikvah's services are sophisticated, culturally sensitive, professional services including

individual therapy, school-based therapy through the Yeshiva Satellite program, play therapy, marital counseling, psychiatry, and addiction counseling.

Pesach Tikvah owes a great debt of gratitude to Lea Scharf LCSW, for her indefatigable work in producing these fabulous events. The unparalleled success of these Summits and their seamless execution bear testimony to Lea Scharf's personal attention to every

minute detail. Pesach Tikvah's Executive Director Yerachmiel Stern, LCSW and Yeshiva Satellite Program Director Rabbi Avrum Grunwald also made this Summit possible.

**Pesach Tikvah looks forward to an ever growing relationship with yeshivas and girls' schools in New York. With much gratitude to Hashem for this spectacular success, we continue on in prayer that we may continue to serve our community faithfully, and bring**

**a Door of Hope — Pesach Tikvah — wherever needed.**

Under the executive leadership of **Yerachmiel Stern, LCSW**



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