

are even more shocking. We knew that we were heading toward freedom when we left the FSU for Canada, but learning what that meant in practical terms was a shock.

When we arrived, we did not know anybody in Ottawa, nor could we speak any English. Immediately, however, we visited Jewish Family Services, itself only ten months old, met with the resettlement worker, and were introduced to the then-director, Elaine Raban. Elaine Raban and her husband Eli subsequently played a very special role in our lives. We also came to meet many JFS volunteers who gave us moral support and encouragement in the very difficult period of adaptation to a new life. Some of them treated us as members of the family, and still today they invite us for family *simchas* or celebrations of Jewish holidays. We are very thankful to them and will never forget all that they did for us.

When we arrived, JFS helped us find an apartment, and start our 8-year-old son in Jewish school and our 2-year-old daughter in a nursery program. The Canadian government sponsored our English as a Second Language (ESL) courses.

Later on, JFS volunteers helped us understand that we ourselves are in charge of our lives. We had to learn from scratch how to live our lives in a free society without passports, permits for residence, fear of the KGB, and government control. For example, soon after our arrival in Ottawa, our good friend who had left the FSU a year earlier than us and had settled in Toronto came to visit. Out of the blue he said, "If you want, you can move right now to Toronto and we'll be together." We were shocked. We couldn't believe that we could move freely to another city. But we were also very fortunate to stay in Ottawa where, after approximately four months, we found jobs in fields that related to our past education and experience.

For the last eight years, I have been working for Ottawa JFS as an accountant. I also try my best to help my colleagues involved in the settlement and integration of the fourth wave of immigrants. I am proud to report that our job placement service helped fifty new Cana-

dians find employment in 1996.

Our agency settles about 100 newcomer families annually. With the help of our volunteers, Ottawa JFS provides ESL classes in the homes of new arrivals, senior club activities, workshops and mentoring programs for job-ready immigrants, and hosting new Canadians for holidays, communal seders, and cultural events. The agency believes that successful integration into the Jewish community includes both finding an adequate job to attain self-sufficiency and developing the ability to feel comfortable with the Jewish community. The social context is important. Often, it is initially much easier for the newcomer to relate to other non-Jewish immigrants from the FSU than to the alien Jewish culture of Canada. Building a Jewish identity after decades of oppression and alienation in the FSU requires real effort on part of the local Jewish community.

As a family, we have been trying our best to repay the Jewish community for its help by participating in volunteer activities, inviting new immigrants to our house, helping organize a club for senior immigrants, giving to charities, delivering Passover baskets to new arrivals from Eastern Europe, and providing musical entertainment in old age homes. We feel it is tremendously important to involve our children in helping others who are less fortunate.

There is a saying, "If somebody loses money, he lost nothing. If somebody loses health, G-d forbid, he lost half. But if somebody loses spirit and hope, he lost everything." We hope that our children will pick up the torch of *Yiddishkeit* from us and carry it to the next generation with determination, perseverance, and strong convictions. We hope that always, they will be proud to proclaim "*Ich bin a Yid*" (I am a Jew).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my husband Isaac and my children Sam and Paulina for their involvement in writing this article. I would like also to thank Ms. Donna Caplan and Mr. Victor Grostern for editing this article.

JEWISH FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

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Jewish Family Life Education is an innovative outreach mode of service offered by Jewish Family Service agencies. It is the natural link to the unaffiliated and to synagogues and other Jewish communal agencies. As well, in many agencies it becomes the staff development piece that propels them toward a more authentically Jewish delivery of service.

THEORETICAL BASES OF JFLE

The heart of the JFLE group is the process that develops among members that leads to growth, change, and support. The four major theoretical bases of JFLE are developmental theory, crisis theory, systems and communication theory, and the public health model.

- Developmental theory emphasizes that life is progressive and that each new life stage requires the acquisition of concepts and skills that can be learned. This emphasis ties into the problem-solving focus and the educational orientation of the groups. One can learn new parenting skills, coping methods related to a divorce, or resources available for an aging parent without being in crisis or dysfunction.
- Crisis theory posits that there are certain expected crisis points at different stages in the life cycle, but during these periods there can be the potential for growth for those involved. It also stresses family normalcy versus dysfunction and reframes some issues as normal transitional crises. An example of this reframing involves divorce. People undergoing divorce generally experience many of the same issues, such as loss, anger, and loneliness, which can have the positive effect of leading to renewed growth and change.
- Systems theory views the individual in the context of his or her family and environment. Increasing the competence of an individual strengthens the family and community as well. Communication processes as explicated in communication theory are

Jewish Family Life Education (JFLE) developed as a defined service in the 1970s, and the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies (AJFCA) was instrumental in facilitating JFLE training and collaboration among agencies throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The development of JFLE paralleled that of Family Life Education (FLE), which in 1976 was formalized by Family Service America as one of the three major functions of a family agency, along with counseling and advocacy.

What is Jewish Family Life Education? As with any Jewish question, there is more than one answer. Traditionally, family life education was seen as a preventive mental health service, stressing education, group learning and support, and normal developmental or life-cycle issues. Under Jewish auspices, JFLE was further seen as a means of helping participants strengthen their Jewish identity by using Jewish culture, faith, and values to explore their life concerns. Formats ranged from single-session workshops to time-limited, multi-session groups.

As JFLE programming evolved, some variations developed. Some groups became less preventive in nature, comprising participants who were already in crisis. Other groups, using a short-term model, focused on clinical issues, such as anxiety, abuse, or eating disorders. Some developed into ongoing support groups and were labeled JFLE as well. All of these expanded models can be considered as forms of JFLE, and all have created a breadth and depth to the service that can only benefit the client.

explored in all JFLE groups, and the concept that people can learn new skills and can learn from one another is a key piece of JFLE.

- The public health model adds the concept of primary prevention. JFLE is available for people who otherwise might not use the services of a Jewish Family Service (JFS) agency. It is designed for healthy, well-functioning individuals who want to explore issues in a psychoeducational mode. This psychoeducational format is therapeutic because it is change-producing, yet takes place in a supportive, educational framework. JFLE is the public face of the JFS agency, the one program open to the entire community that lets people enter the building, learn about services, and meet the staff without needing to claim a problem.

JFLE AS AN ASSET TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

This public relations aspect of JFLE is one of its strongest assets in the Jewish community. JFLE is the program that can be taken to synagogues and agencies and can be discussed and experienced by lay committees in ways that confidential counseling cannot. It is a definable service, with such workshop titles as "In the Beginning: A Jewish Lamaze Experience" or "You and Your Aging Parent"; it is thus easier to market than a generalized counseling program. JFLE can be a vehicle to reach out to the unaffiliated through non-threatening programs held under Jewish auspices. Finally, by opening the door to its services, JFLE invites participants to utilize other JFS services as the need arises. Thus although JFLE may not always produce income directly, it may bring clients into the agency and widen the public's awareness of its services.

Another strength of JFLE within the Jewish community is in its collaborative focus. JFLE is the agency's natural link to synagogues and to Jewish communal agencies and organizations. JFS agencies do not have their own constituencies, but through JFLE, they

can provide services to members of other organizations. Providing a workshop on "Jewish identity for teens" at a Hebrew High School or a seminar on women's issues to a synagogue sisterhood are examples of these linkages. By developing specific workshops for each organization, a well-planned JFLE program is relevant to community needs and can further collaboration among Jewish professionals. Those individuals served through JFLE may then become involved more closely in the organization and in the community as a whole. The JFLE program has frequently been the impetus in communities for the development of citywide, day-long workshops on such topics as newly marrieds, interfaith couples, or victims of domestic violence.

THE "J" IN JFLE

There are strong Jewish elements of JFLE in addition to its sponsorship. In numerous ways, a JFLE group may encourage participants to explore their Jewish identities, strengthen their Jewish families, and consider what their tradition can teach them. A group may highlight a specific Jewish life-cycle event, such as "Parenting a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Child" or "Parenting a Jewish Child in December." Another means is to program a generalized life-cycle event with a Jewish theme; for example, "Adoption and the Jewish Family," "Building a Jewish Home" (for newlyweds), or "Being Gay or Lesbian in the Jewish Community." Even in a group that may include non-Jews, a Jewish ambience can prevail. Using Jewish sources, examples, and vignettes in a parenting group brings the issue of religious identity of a child to the same level of importance as their social, emotional, or educational identities. Including Jewish articles in a bibliography sends the message that there are Jewish sources that are useful. Values-clarification exercises that focus on the role that our tradition and history play in our present choices helps individuals examine Jewish options. Thus, even with generalized topics and participation of non-Jews, the group can be a comfortable Jewish environment, one that takes Jewish experiences into account.

The incorporation of the Jewish element demands that the group leader be aware and comfortable with Jewish issues. A JFLE group leader is more active than a therapist might be in a therapy group. He or she teaches, models effective communication, facilitates the process among members, elicits needs from the group, and introduces topics. The Jewish Family Life Educator must have the conviction that Jewish identity is an important dimension in the strengthening of individuals and families, an understanding and respect for the variety of Jewish expression, and a concern with helping individuals connect with the Jewish community.

Thus JFLE in many agencies becomes the internal staff development and educational piece that propels the agency toward a more authentically Jewish delivery of service. This development process can be a very exciting experience for staff, who through their own training can explore the Jewish elements of service and add them to their groups. Many agencies around the country have developed in-service training on leading JFLE groups that includes Jewish values-clarification, Jewish life-cycle issues, and identity-building.

Clearly the agenda of JFLE groups is not to promote one particular form of Jewish expression, but rather to facilitate individuals' identification of Jewish issues and values as factors in their lives and family choices. The range of JFLE topics is immense. A review of brochures from agencies across the country uncovers such topics as "Living with Multiple Sclerosis," "And Baby Makes Three," "Being Single Again," "Helping Children Leave for College," "Stresses of Unemployment," "Adult Children of Holocaust Survivors," "Shabbat: Getting out of the Fast Lane," "Mid-Life and Menopause," "Strengthening Your Marriage," "Letting Go of your Food Obsession," and "Living with Chronic Illness." Each community seems to develop its own tradition for the kinds of groups that are offered and are successful. In Louisville, for example, groups that have been successful over many years include "Parenting a Child in December," "Helping Children Leave Home,"

and "Choosing Your Child's School."

Some topics are more universal: Divorce, interfaith marriage, senior adult concerns, and the range of parenting issues are areas that most JFLE programs have covered at one point or another. Although the number of sessions may vary, all groups for interfaith couples, for example, have certain similarities. Sessions begin with participants identifying their expectations and goals and end with them evaluating their experiences. Topics include wedding ceremonies, two religions in one household, choices about children's religion, holiday celebrations, family reactions and responses, and each individual's relationship to his or her own religion, ethnicity, and spirituality. Methods include small-group discussions, values-clarification exercises, surveys, memory activities, role-playing and vignettes, and homework.

Some JFS agencies, including those in Baltimore, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and San Francisco among others, have developed JFLE groups within a larger topic as part of community projects that are funded through Federations, endowments, or other foundations. Thus, a project for "Separated and Divorced" would include groups for adults, children, and people at various stages of the process. It might have an advisory Board, a program director working exclusively in this area, outreach efforts, and research. A project that is conducted in its own physical space, such as a Parenting Center, could also provide drop-in services, counseling, and support, in addition to JFLE groups. Not only does the project highlight a specific issue as a critical one for Jewish families, but it also creates an easy entry into other agency services and helps in funding group programs.

JFLE practitioners, in addition to highlighting innovative topics in programming, have also helped to develop interesting and creative tools to use as part of the group process. "Letters to a Friend" was an ice-breaker technique developed by Houston JFS to frame an issue between two people. "Jewish Voices from the AIDS Quilt" is a narrative developed by Cincinnati JFS to focus on Jews

with AIDS and the community's responses. There are numerous other examples of plays for living, questionnaires, and videos developed for use in programming that have enriched the practice of JFLE. A more recent trend, used effectively by New York Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, is the adoption of expressive techniques of art and movement.

STRUCTURE OF JFLE

The JFLE of 1997 looks very different from the first groups offered in 1972. With increased funding constraints and the growing stress on reimbursable services, JFLE's ability to produce only limited income has resulted in structural changes. Most agencies no longer have a full-time position of JFLE Director. In some JFS agencies, this position has been replaced by several individual project directors whose work is funded through specific grants or endowments; elsewhere, JFLE responsibilities have been dispersed among all staff members. Some JFLE programs still stand alone, and others are grouped within outreach or community services rubrics.

Nonetheless, JFLE is still a vital part of the JFS agency. A 1993 survey done by AJFCA found that 92 percent of JFS agencies offered one-session JFLE programming and 80 percent offered multi-session series. JFLE continues as a major marketing and outreach piece, as the collaborative arm with other

Jewish institutions, and as one method, along with counseling, that can help strengthen Jewish individuals and families and assure Jewish continuity. It continues as a series of definable topics that often are on the cutting-edge of service to Jewish families and as the one agency service in which all members of the community can participate and explore their Jewish identity, and make it part of their family and community life.

Recent service trends have increased the value of JFLE. It is a tool to further inter-agency collaboration. JFLE can also play an important role in the increased interest in Jewish family education. There have always been strong links between JFLE and Jewish education: JFLE can provide the "family systems" piece and can help fuse Jewish values and family practices (see the article by Weber in this issue). As more community agencies and synagogues embark on their own Jewish family education programs, JFS agencies, through JFLE services, are a natural resource.

For the past 25 years, JFLE has been an important element of the JFS agency. With the ever-increasing complexity of Jewish families and their need to find a place within the community, JFLE will continue to be a vehicle that provides programming to all Jewish individuals and families, that is innovative and creative, and that helps strengthen Jewish individuals and thus the larger community.

OVERCOMING DENIAL The Challenge of Homelessness and Substance Abuse in the Jewish Community

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Over the past 25 years, Jewish Family Service agencies have stood at the forefront of combatting the Jewish community's denial of the existence of homelessness and substance abuse within our community. JFSs have led and shaped the Jewish community's evolving response to meeting the needs of its vulnerable individuals and families.

For the better part of its history on the continent, the Jewish community of North America publicly denied the existence of most social ills within it. How often did one hear lay and professional leaders of the community declare that "Jews don't drink or use drugs," "Jewish men don't beat their wives," "Jewish parents don't abuse or neglect their children," "There are few Jewish poor or homeless people," and many similar myths? Whether out of fear of fueling anti-Semitism or due to feelings of shame associated with admitting that "the people of the Book" who were destined to become "a light unto the nations" were as blemished as the rest of humankind, the Jewish community engaged in collective denial and self-deception in the face of a reality that it could not acknowledge and with which it did not want to deal.

Such was the general picture until the late 1960s and the early 1970s, when a combination of forces coalesced to jar the Jewish community from its collective denial and encouraged it to look at itself in a more open and honest way. These forces included Jewish communal pride ignited by Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, the spirit of the American civil rights movement, the passion of the anti-Vietnam War movement, the energy generated by the blossoming women's movement, the growing public revulsion at the criminal excesses of Watergate, and new public funding opportunities created by the emerging Great Society anti-poverty and community mental health programs (Feldstein 1995/96; Martin, 1990).

Since then, the Jewish community has acknowledged the many problems it faces: poverty and homelessness, alcohol and chemical abuse, gambling, family violence, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, and more. The community's willingness to admit to the existence of these social ills has been influenced by a number of factors, such as the realization by community leaders and major donors that their own sons and daughters are affected by one or more of these conditions, or an embarrassing media expose requiring the Jewish community's response. To its credit, each new revelation has been accompanied by an organized communal and institutional response. It is as though, once having decided to take off the blinders, the Jewish community grew determined to mobilize its significant organizational strengths and allocate substantial resources to confront the challenge.

This article discusses how Jewish Family Service (JFS) agencies throughout North America have addressed the problems of substance abuse and homelessness within their Jewish and general communities.

COMBATING POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS

"If there is a needy person among you, one of your kinsmen in any of your settlements... do not harden your heart and shut your hands against your needy kinsman. Rather, you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs... For there will never