



RABBI AHARON HERSHKOVITZ

SENIOR PSYCHOLOGIST OF OU ISRAEL'S CHAVERIM MAKSHIVIM HOTLINE

Roaring Lion

Since the beginning of this latest round of war, Am Yisrael has answered the cry: whether behind enemy lines (both near and far) or on the home front, we as a nation have aimed to rise to the occasion. Together with our faith in Hashem and our gratitude for His protection, we must also be honest and recognize that these two and a half years have not been easy.

All of us have experienced risk to ourselves and our families, especially our soldiers and their families, and so many have experienced loss, grief and sorrow. This, combined with uncertainty and disruption of routine in our workplaces, homes and families, may have many of us feeling that our internal reserves are depleted. Perhaps we're not fully in crisis mode, but we may not always feel the energy for another continued round

of fighting.

It's important to recognize that this feeling is not weakness: this is simply how prolonged stress affects people's energy. It's a completely normal reaction to an abnormal situation. But that does not mean we are condemned to be subsumed by it. What we need to do first is recognize it, because only then can we know

how to deal with it and move forward.

One helpful model for building resilience in the face of burnout is the BASIC-Ph model, developed by Prof. Muli Lahad and others (known in Hebrew

as גישור מאחד"ד). This model identifies six areas of life that support resilience: **B**elief (faith in Hashem, in the army, in our own ability to cope), **A**ffect (emotions, learning to recognize and express them, whether through speech, laughter or tears), **S**ocial (connection with others), **I**magination (creative thinking, humor, storytelling, being a little silly), **C**ognition (thinking rationally, gathering information,

planning, troubleshooting), and **P**hysical (movement, exercise, stretching). It can be genuinely useful to think about which of these channels come most naturally to each of us, and which ones we might be neglecting.

For young people looking for a friend to reach out to, the OU's "Chaveirim Makshivim" hotline offers a listening ear and helpful support in Hebrew and in English: you can reach us every weekday evening



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Research on post-traumatic growth is also worth considering here. Difficult experiences have a way of loosening things that had previously felt fixed. We discover that we are more flexible than we thought, both in what we're willing to let go of, and in what we're willing to reach toward.

On one side of that equation: there are things we've been saying yes to for years, commitments, habits, roles we've accumulated almost without noticing, that we may now realize we can actually put down. The disruption of the last two and a half years has a way of clarifying what was truly essential and what was just inertia. Saying no, even to things that felt impossible to refuse before, turns out to be survivable. Sometimes even necessary.

On the other side: having lived through genuinely difficult situations, many of us find that our comfort zone has quietly expanded. The conversation we've been putting off, the community role we didn't feel ready for, the relationship we wanted to invest in more deeply, these can feel less daunting when held up against what we've already navigated. Crisis, paradoxically, can give us permission to grow in directions we'd previously talked ourselves out of.

None of this means the difficulties weren't real, or that growth is automatic. But it does mean that within this very hard period, seeds have been planted. The question worth sitting with is: what do *you* want to say no to, and what have you been waiting for permission to say yes to? ■

Aharon Herskovitz is the senior psychologist of the OU's Chaveirim Makshivim hotline. Additionally, he is the Rav of Kehillat Shevet Achim in Netanya, founder and clinical director of Ogen LaNefesh in Raanana, a reserve mental health officer, husband and father of five.

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