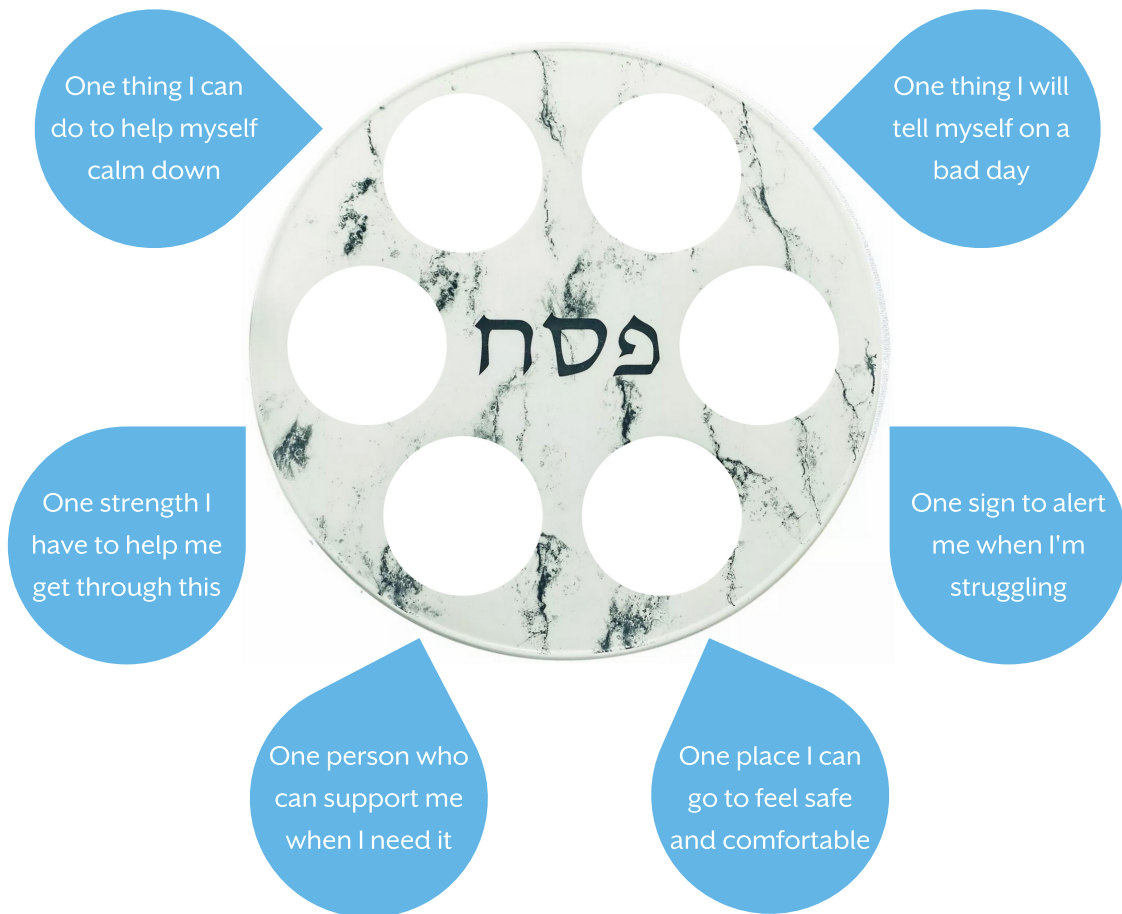




MENTAL HEALTH SEDER PLATE



WHAT GOES ON THIS SEDER PLATE?

Just as the symbols on the Seder plate keep us engaged with the story of Passover, each of us has self-care tools that keep us engaged with our mental health. Self-care refers to ways we attend to our mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. The more of these tools we have, the better prepared we are for days when we are at our most vulnerable.

We can use Passover as a time to stop and reflect not only on the Exodus story but on our own mental health. On those difficult days when we feel stuck in a metaphorical Egypt, this mental health Seder plate can offer us inner peace.

MENTAL HEALTH INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SEDER PLATE

Shank Bone (Zeroa): This roasted bone represents both the sacrifice Jews made to be spared from the tenth plague and the “outstretched arm,” which in the story of Passover brings the Jews out of slavery. The shank bone is the helping hand lent to those who need it most. We all struggle; that’s part of being human. We all will have tough times when we need that helping hand. If we can remember to accept help, we can move forward and start to heal. And when we are in a stable place (free from what kept us stuck and oppressed) we can reach out to those still struggling, remembering that, as humans, we will go back and forth between freedom and oppression.

Egg (Beitzah): The egg represents the life cycle. It’s a reminder that there are times of sacrifice but also times of hope! After winter comes spring, and so it goes for mental health. It’s traditional to roast or char the egg, leading to a fun interpretation— an egg, just like us, is resilient! The hotter the flame, the tougher we get. We aren’t weakened by struggle; we overcome it and become stronger.

Vegetable (Karpas): The vegetables represent spring and regrowth, but we also dip them in saltwater to remind us of the tears of slavery. At the same time, we are meant to keep in mind the sorrow of pain and the joy regrowth brings, remembering all the while we can both struggle and love ourselves. At any given time, we are struggling, and we are growing. We may feel broken, but we are worthy. We acknowledge our past, accept ourselves for who we are and then face forward, working on ourselves to help us get to a better place.

Bitter Herbs...Twice! (Maror and Hazeret): The bitter herbs we eat (sometimes begrudgingly!) remind us of the bitterness of slavery. We aren't meant to forget our struggles; rather, at Passover we bravely look them square in the face and acknowledge they are what have led us to this moment.

Haroset: This reddish or brownish mixture of apples, wine and cinnamon is meant to symbolize the clay used to make the bricks and mortar during slavery. Although it calls to mind hard work, it's sweet, representing the joy of freedom. In the Seder we mix the bitter herbs with haroset, a reminder that freedom, like resilience, is hard work. It's bitter and it's sweet, and, most important, it requires being an active participant in our own lives.

FOUR MENTAL HEALTH QUESTIONS FOR PASSOVER

1

AM I STILL IN EGYPT TODAY? OR AM I FREE NOW?

Mental health is not linear. Most of us oscillate day by day, or even hour by hour. How are you doing in this moment? Take a breath and check in with yourself.

3

WHO IN MY LIFE CAN BE MY OUTSTRETCHED ARM?

We all struggle. Anxiety, grief and failure affect us all. When you are struggling, who do you turn to for help and how? Choose one person you can trust to help you when you're having a bad day. How would you reach out to him or her? Consider having a conversation with that person about what supporting you might look like.

2

FROM WHICH STRUGGLES HAVE I FREED MYSELF?

We all struggle; that's how we grow. What have you done this year that you are proud of? How have you grown? What have you done to take care of yourself?

4

WHAT'S ON MY MENTAL HEALTH SEDER PLATE?

Just as the symbols on the Seder plate keep us engaged with the story of Passover, each of us has self-care tools that keep us engaged with our mental health. The more self-care options we have to improve our mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being, the better prepared we are for days where we are most vulnerable. What tools are front and center in your life? What's one you might want to add?