



Health & Wellness

LABRIUT

Before You Can Love the World, You Have to Love Yourself

Practice self-hesed

By Ronit Feinglass-Plank • 10/23/2018 at 4:46pm • Published in the October 2018 issue of *Jewish in Seattle Magazine*

IMAGE: ISAEVA ANNA SHUTTERSTOCK

I was teaching my Tuesday night ninth-grade religious school class, passing out the next reading for our discussion on tikkun olam (repairing the world) and gemilut hasadim (acts of loving kindness), when one of my students slumped a little in her chair. “Can we take a break?” she asked. “We go all day at school, we work so hard, and then we come here, even though we have homework and tests to study for. Can’t we have a minute?” My arm still outstretched, handout attached, I paused and looked at my students’ tired faces. Some had come from soccer, some from play rehearsal, others from long bus rides. I glanced at the clock and tensed up. We still had so much to cover. But in asking me for a break, my student gave me the perfect opportunity to model the gemilut hasadim and tikkun olam we were learning about in the classroom. “OK,” I said. “Let’s relax for a few minutes.”

Most of us could use a little more gemilut hasadim than we get. Rabbi Sara Paasche-Orlow, in her article “Acts of Loving-Kindness,” explains that “hesed” (or “chesed”) appears in the Torah to communicate God’s kindness and love toward humanity as well as human kindness and love toward each other. While the first instance of the term “gemilut hasadim” appears in the Mishnah, the Talmud “established chesed as one of the core pillars of human behavior.”

As Jews, we are commanded to give back to our community, and that also means making room in our lives for self-care. “On a practical level,” writes Paasche-Orlow, “a person who has received love and aid is far more likely to be able to pass on chesed to another person.” When someone feels rejuvenated, they may then be able to become “engaged, empowered actors of chesed.”

Of course, moments of self-care can be hard-won. It’s not easy to balance work, family, and friends. There is so much to be done — especially here in Seattle, where myriad worthy causes abound — that slowing down might be challenging. But each of us deserves time to repair,

which is an important part of being Jewish, too.

“Judaism provides a path to not run yourself ragged — a path for not just physical health, but emotional and spiritual health, too,” says Rabbi Ruth A. Zlotnick of Temple Beth Am in Seattle. Shabbat, for example, enables you to “cease the busy-ness of everyday life and refresh your soul.” She points out that a “foundation stone of Judaism is Hillel’s teaching, ‘If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am not for others, what am I?’” Living a meaningful life includes caring for ourselves, because we cannot give from an empty well. When we honor our own needs, we have more to offer others.

At my next Tuesday night class, I put together a list of self-care ideas as part of my lesson. Go to a yoga class, play a board game, call someone you haven’t talked to in a while, remember to eat breakfast, take a deep breath. I asked my students to check off five that they thought they might like to try, and I did the same. The room was quiet for a few minutes while we made our choices. We were creating room in our lives to slow down so that we could replenish ourselves before we got back to repairing the world.

When my students put down their pencils, I opened a box of chocolate chip cookies I had brought to share in celebration. Cookies are a form of self-care I am really good at remembering.

Filed under [wellness, self-care, hesed](#)

Show Comments

Eat & Drink

<p>BEST JEWISH NEIGHBORHOODS</p> <h3>Long Lamented for Its Bland Deli Scene, Seattle Is Having a Pastrami Moment</h3> <p>11/26/2018 • By Naomi Tomky</p>		<p>THE SET TABLE</p> <h3>Arianna Garella Believes Food Can’t Be Separated from Culture</h3> <p>11/26/2018 • By Rachel Román</p>	
<p>THE SET TABLE</p> <h4>Prepare for Passover without Losing Your Mind</h4> <p>05/07/2020 • By Karin Vandrais</p>	<p>THE SET TABLE</p> <h4>Schmaltzy’s Deli Brings Pastrami to the People</h4> <p>02/10/2020 • By Naomi Tomky</p>	<p>THE SET TABLE</p> <h4>Joel Gamoran Wants You to Stop Wasting Food</h4> <p>11/12/2019 • By Meryl Alcabes</p>	<p>PRESS TO IMPRESS</p> <h4>Cook Like a Chef This Holiday Season</h4> <p>04/14/2020 • By Meryl Alcabes • Illustrations by Alison Cote • Photography by Carlton Canary</p>

Arts & Culture

<p>THREE OPINIONS</p> <h3>What Jewish Book Has Had the Most Impact on You?</h3> <p>11/26/2018 • By Alicia Jo Rubino and Shellee Shulkin</p>		<p>JPOP</p> <h3>Ophira Eisenberg Wants to Make You Feel a Little Less Alone</h3> <p>11/26/2018 • By Seth Sommerfeld</p>	
<p>FEATURE</p> <h4>A Rose by Any Other Name</h4> <p>04/14/2020 • By Emily K. Alhadef</p>	<p>JPOP</p> <h4>Two Local Arts Institutions Celebrate Milestones</h4> <p>04/09/2020 • By Michu Benson</p>	<p>MOT</p> <h4>“The Sound of Jewish Music Is Always in My Ear.”</h4> <p>04/09/2020 • By Haley Shanley</p>	<p>FEATURE</p> <h4>Seattle Wants Another Shot at the NBA</h4> <p>04/09/2020 • By Hillel Kutler</p>

Travel & Outdoors

<p>JEWISH CONNECTIONS</p> <h3>With Germany Close Up, Young Adults Reflect on the Past to Look to the Future</h3> <p>11/26/2018 • By Jim DiPao</p>		<p>JEWISH JOURNEY</p> <h3>Lessons from a Teen Tour of Israel — for Life</h3> <p>11/26/2018 • By Matthew Rubenstein</p>	
<p>TEVA</p> <h4>Festival Inspires Jewish Seattle to Take Urgent Climate Action</h4> <p>04/09/2020 • By Meryl Alcabes</p>	<p>KEHILLA</p> <h4>Gaining Perspective on Distance and Danger in Israel</h4> <p>04/09/2020 • By Edece Polyakovsky</p>	<p>FEATURE</p> <h4>Bronka Sundstrom Still Finds Solace on the Trail</h4> <p>02/10/2020 • By Gregory Glatman-Sergies</p>	<p>KEHILLA</p> <h4>Explore Israel Through Food, Wine, and Art with the Federation</h4> <p>12/16/2019 • By Jim DiPao</p>

Health & Wellness

<p>TEST YOUR IQ</p> <h3>Here Is What We Can All Do to Heal After Pittsburgh</h3> <p>11/26/2018 • By Ruxy Pomyko-Klarenk</p>		<p>INNOVATORS</p> <h3>Myles Harlow Kahn's Colorful Career Takes a Green Turn</h3> <p>11/26/2018 • By Haley Shanley</p>	
<p>LABRIUT</p> <h4>A Local High School Student Brings Support to Nut Allergy Sufferers</h4> <p>02/10/2020 • By Haley Shanley</p>	<p>MOT JEL</p> <h4>Everyone Has Their Obstacles</h4> <p>12/16/2019 • By Emily Rowton</p>	<p>SURPRISE, YOU'RE JEWISH</p> <h4>Recreational Genetics Helps Us Understand Who We Are — and How We Want to Live</h4> <p>12/16/2019 • By Haley Shanley</p>	<p>LABRIUT</p> <h4>This Yom Kippur, Try Apologizing</h4> <p>09/23/2019 • By Michael Stitzer</p>

Community

<p>JWS OF SEATTLE</p> <h3>Captain Larry Kezner</h3> <p>11/26/2018 • With Meryl Alcabes</p>		<p>BEST OF JEWISH NEIGHBORHOODS</p> <h3>Jewish Day Schools Face New Challenges. Do They Have What It Takes?</h3> <p>11/26/2018 • By Rachel Román and Emily K. Alhadef</p>	
<p>FEATURE</p> <h4>A Graphic History of Jewish Washington</h4> <p>04/14/2020 • By Emily K. Alhadef and Meryl Alcabes • Illustrations by Lexi Hastings</p>	<p>FEATURE</p> <h4>The Early History of Jewish Washington</h4> <p>04/14/2020 • By Emily K. Alhadef</p>	<p>HISTORY OF JEWISH WASHINGTON</p> <h4>Amalgamation: An Opera</h4> <p>04/14/2020</p>	<p>FEATURE</p> <h4>5 Things You Didn't Know about Seattle's Jewish History</h4> <p>04/14/2020 • By Meryl Alcabes and Emily K. Alhadef</p>

Holidays

<p>THE SET TABLE</p> <h3>Prepare for Passover without Losing Your Mind</h3> <p>05/07/2020 • By Karin Vandrais</p>		<p>PRESS TO IMPRESS</p> <h3>Cook Like a Chef This Holiday Season</h3> <p>09/23/2019 • By Naomi Tomky • Illustrations by Alison Cote • Photography by Carlton Canary</p>	
<p>LABRIUT</p> <h4>This Yom Kippur, Try Apologizing</h4> <p>09/23/2019 • By Michael Stitzer</p>	<p>PRESS TO IMPRESS</p> <h4>Adeena Sussman Believes Cooking Delicious Food Shouldn't be Difficult</h4> <p>09/23/2019 • By Naomi Tomky</p>	<p>PRESS TO IMPRESS</p> <h4>Take Your Holiday Table to the Next Level</h4> <p>09/23/2019 • By Lara Hale</p>	<p>ARTICLE</p> <h4>Adeena Sussman's Challah</h4> <p>09/23/2019 • By Naomi Tomky</p>