



(12 STEP)
TOOLS FOR
TESHUVAH



Workshop with
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August 17, 2020



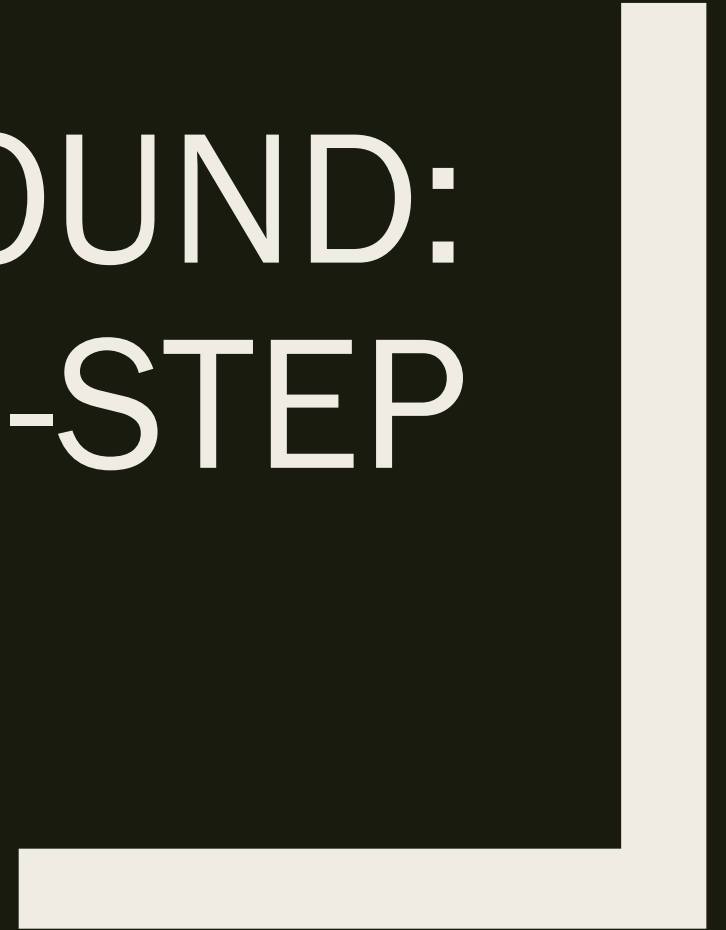
Workshop: What to Expect

- Introduction to Teshuvah & 12-Step
- #1 Take It Easy
- #2 Powerlessness + Exercise
- #3 Personal Inventory + Exercise
- #4 Amends
- Wrap up & Q&A

Workshop Reminders

- Expectations & Ground Rules:
 - *Please mute if you're not speaking*
 - *Everyone is welcome; no background in either Judaism or 12-step is assumed*
 - *Opportunity to share: The work is personal; the sharing doesn't need to be*
 - *“What's said in the group stays in the group”*
 - *Workshop is intended solely to aid your personal practice; as such **please refrain from commenting on other people's sharing***
- Do you have paper + pen for exercises?

SOME BACKGROUND: TESHUVAH & 12-STEP



Month of Elul

- Month of preparation & introspection leading up to the High Holy Days
- Starts this Friday, August 21
- Several tradition practices including:
 - *Blowing the shofar each day*
 - *Saying the “selichot” prayers*
 - *Reciting Psalm 27*
 - *Visiting graves of loved ones*
 - ***Reflection – looking back on the actions of the past year, taking stock, apologizing where necessary, and seeking forgiveness.***

Teshuvah

- תשובה = “repent” but also “return”
- Comes from Biblical story of Reuven, who “returns” to (repents near) the pit where his brothers have thrown Joseph into.
- Jewish law – 2 types of sins:
 1. *Against God (breaking mitzvot)*
 2. *Against other people*
- According to Maimonides, atonement (teshuvah) includes three stages: confession, regret, and a vow not to repeat the misdeed.
- But for sins against others, first restitution, then atonement

Why Is Teshuvah Hard?

- Who's had the experience of returning to Temple year after year, only to find oneself repenting for similar actions?
- Confession (Maimonides' first step) requires acknowledgement to yourself that you've wronged another – much easier said than done.
- Often our “sins” or bad actions arise from habits of self that can be difficult to see, let alone change
 - *“That which resists persists” – Carl Jung*
- “Insanity is doing the same thing over again and expecting different results” – Rita Mae Brown (not Einstein)
 - *“Hitting a bottom”*
 - *People with a background in addictions (alcohol, drugs, spending, gambling, codependency, love & sex or other behaviors w negative consequences) have no choice but to learn a number of tools to help with sobriety*

Why Teshuvah is Hard (cont'd)

- What 12-Step has to teach us:
 - *The harms we cause others (and ourselves) often arise from jealousies, insecurities, resentments, and fears*
 - *Shame gets in the way*
- CONSIDER:
 - *Doesn't almost everyone you know do something "insane" from time to time?*
 - *We all do something that doesn't reflect "our best self"?*
 - *Could some of the tools from recovery help the rest of us?*

Exercise #1: Generate A List

- Take paper and draw a line down the middle
- Left Side: spouse or SO, parents, children, extended family members, close friends, co-workers, any other significant people grouping + random people
- Right Side: Take 5 minutes. Jot down negative experiences or encounters you may've had with people in each grouping. Something that left you with a bad feeling, or feels unresolved in some way.
 - *Include experiences you may not think are your "fault"*
 - *Include experiences you may *not* be ready to apologize for!*
 - *Write down at least 3-5 experiences if possible*
 - *Set this list aside for now*

Exercise #1 (example)

Who	What
My spouse	
My kid	
My parent	
My cousin	
My best friend	

Reactions

- What is this bringing up?
- Negative feelings/self talk: If it hasn't, it will...
- One of the reasons that introspection/inner work is hard...brings up feelings of shame, resistance, blaming, etc.

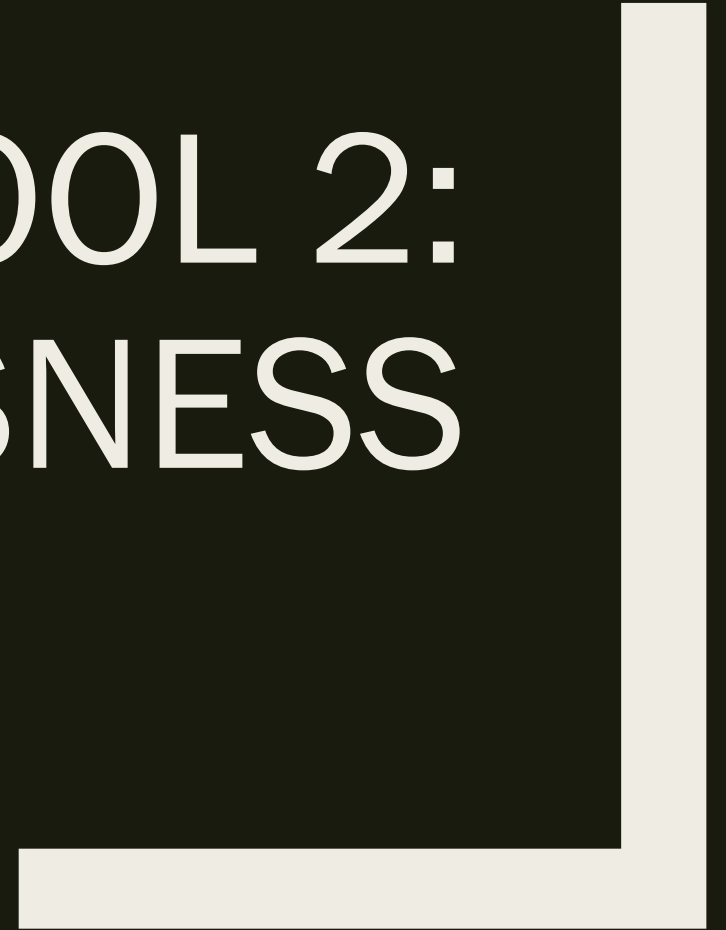


TOOL 1:
TAKE IT EASY

“Easy Does It!”

- Any kind of serious internal work is tiring (think: therapy!)
- Take breaks
- Meditate
- Nap
- Hang out with your dog, cat, pet ferret
- Take a walk or hang out in nature
- Read
- Watch a sunrise/set
- Take another nap

TOOL 2:
POWERLESSNESS



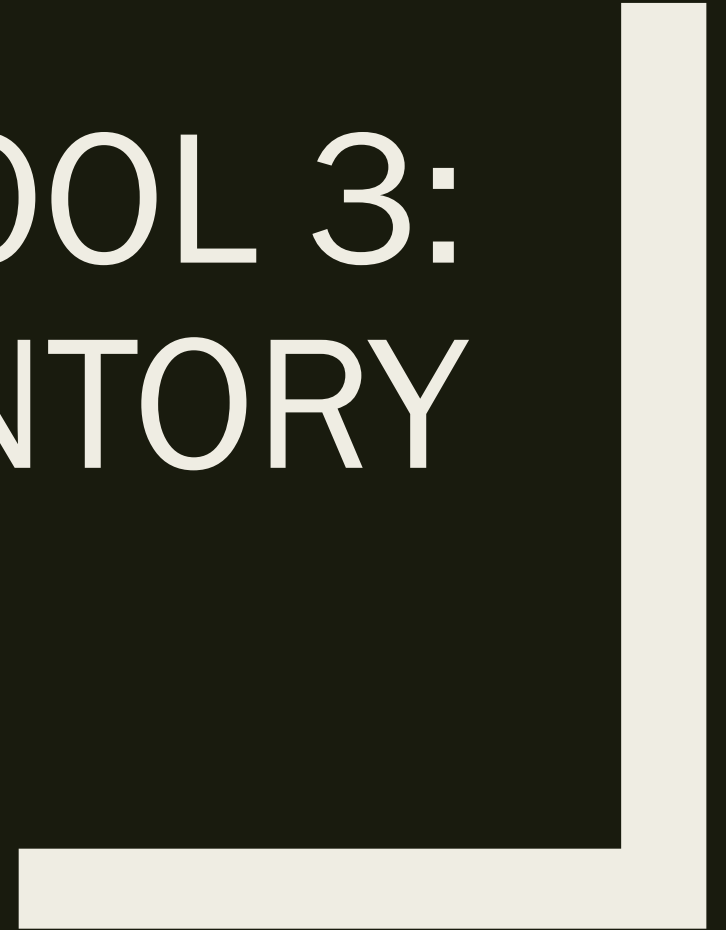
Powerlessness

- Step 1: “Admitted we were powerless over [fill in the blank], that our lives had become unmanageable.”
- How do I apply this to my teshuvah practice?
 - *When have you gotten into trouble by trying to control too much in a situation?*
 - *Can you name a few? (Discuss)*
 - *Takeaway: There are many things we don't have control over*

Exercise

- Look at your list
 - *Consider what would happen if you **didn't** have to solve it? Or what if there are parts of this experience you didn't have to "solve"?*
 - *What if you could just "turn it over"?*
 - *Does this solve the problem completely? Does it help us to see the parts we are responsible for?*
 - **Serenity Prayer:** *"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference."*

TOOL 3: PERSONAL INVENTORY



Negative behavior...

Often arises from:

- Resentments
- Fears
- Misused anger

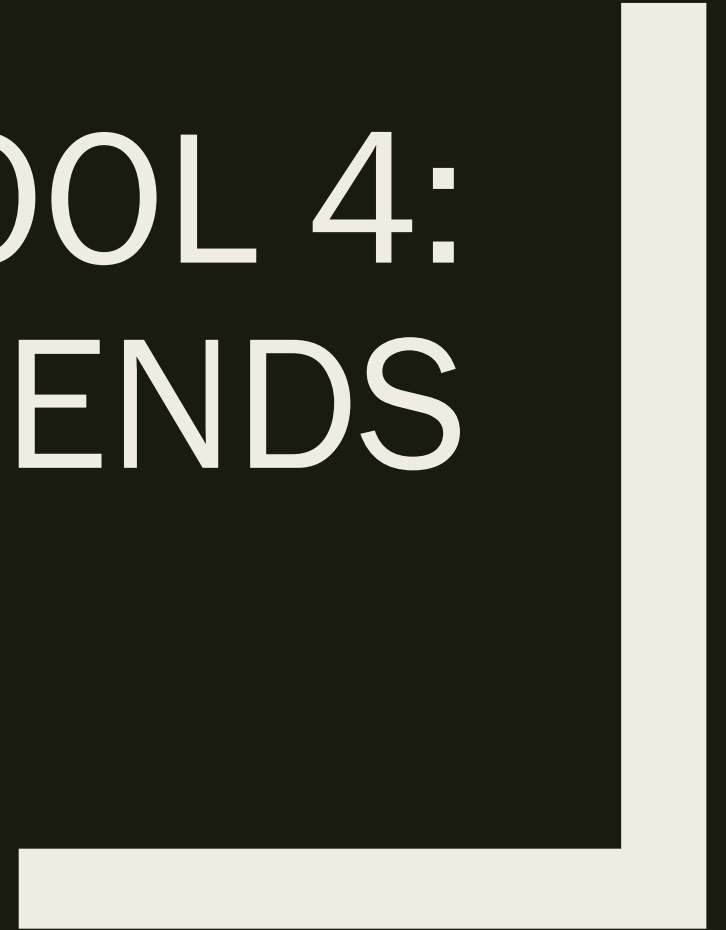
Exercise #3: Personal Inventory

Who	What	What Was My Part	How did this make me feel?
My spouse		Jealous	
My kid		Resentment	
My parent			
My cousin			
My best friend			

Deepen Your Practice

- Fill out the rest of your list
- Once you've completed your list of negative behaviors ask yourself: is there a larger pattern to the behaviors I'm seeing?
- Do I act out of resentments a lot? Fears? Anger?
- Do a deeper dive: what are my resentments? What are my fears? What am I angry about?

TOOL 4: MAKING AMENDS



Making Amends

- Judaism: you ask forgiveness (3 times), you commit to stopping the behavior, and you acknowledge harm done & that repair is not always possible
- 12 Step: A complex process (Draw up a list of all the people you've harmed, make amends & then repeat the process as part of "working the steps" again and again)
- 12 Step: Amends are made for the person seeking forgiveness, not to "solve" the mistake
- Some important takeaways for our practice:
 - *Learn to let go of outcomes (you don't have to control the outcome)*
 - *"Keep your side of the street clean"*

For Further Study

- “The Power of Teshuvah” – Background on “teshuvah”
 - <https://www.aju.edu/ziegler-school-rabbinic-studies/our-torah/back-issues/power-teshuvah>
- Primer on Repentance at My Jewish Learning:
 - <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/repentance/>

For Further Study: 12 Step

- 12 Steps For the Rest of Us: General Principles for Becoming a Better You:
 - <https://medium.com/@MikeSturm/the-12-steps-for-the-rest-of-us-general-principles-for-becoming-a-better-you-1a579179315c>
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (AA)
- A Gentle Path through the Twelve Steps (Patrick Carnes)

Questions & Answers