

# Spotlight on: Jewish American's Mental Health



OMH's Spotlight series highlights the challenges faced by different New York populations. We recognize the unique issues surrounding Jewish American's Mental Health and invite you to learn more.

## Did you Know?

6.7 million Americans (2%) identify as Jewish.



80% identify as Jewish because of their practiced religion



20% identify as Jewish based on ancestry, ethnicity, and culture.

### Jewish Americans can face increased mental health struggles, caused by:

- Discrimination
- Anti-Semitism — Anti-Semitic acts increased 48% from 2016-2018
- Generational trauma from the Holocaust and other oppression
- Stigma — A history of mental health struggles may impact arranged marriages
- Hesitancy to Seek Treatment or lack of culturally competent care

*Data from APA, Anti-Defamation League*

Many Jews who need substance abuse treatment avoid 12-step meetings because of the Christian roots and aspects of the program.

### Remember: Mental health impacts physical health.

Experiencing discrimination is a stressor to the body over time, the constant stress of racism can have long-term physical health effects like:



Inflammation



Increased heart rate



Higher cortisol levels



Decreased immune function



Higher blood pressure

Anti-Semitic incidents incite anxiety and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in some, and for many others, create a sense of insecurity and instability.

## Ways To Help:

**Educate Yourself.** Learn about the varying beliefs and experiences of Jewish people. "Being Jewish" is defined and experienced differently by different individuals. Some view Judaism as a religion; some identify with Jewish culture.

**Make it normal to ask about mental health.** Check in and ask directly how they are feeling. Thank them if they decide to share their struggles with you. Don't try to solve their problems or dismiss their concerns; instead acknowledge their feelings and let them know you hear them.

**Understand your implicit biases.** Sometimes the way our brain thinks isn't the same as how our heart feels. Take a bias test (without self-judgement) to expand your understanding of how you see the world and those around you.

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

**Be an ally.** Stand up for the Jewish American community and learn how to support them. Report instances of discrimination to the Division of Human Rights:

<https://dhr.ny.gov/complaint>

## Connect to Help

**988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** Call or text 988 or chat [988lifeline.org/chat](https://988lifeline.org/chat)  
**Crisis Text Line** Text Got5 to 741741  
**NYS Division of Human Rights** 1-888-392-3644  
**OMH's Customer Relations** 1-800-597-8481



Office of  
Mental Health