

THE LIFELINE

June 2021 - Hope, Help & Healing for Everyone Affected by Addiction.

MY REVENGE ON HITLER: IRMA'S STORY

I was born in 1929. A Jew in Eastern Europe.

I witnessed horrors. Experienced years of trauma. And somehow survived the Nazis and their death camps.

But this story is not about me. It's about my granddaughter.

I met my husband (of blessed memory) in a DP camp and we moved to Montreal three years later.

For many years, we were not blessed with a child. We met with doctors, and professionals.

That was the first time we gave up.

I was almost 40 when I got pregnant. We welcomed our miracle child Debbie* into the world and doted on her throughout her youth.

She was my revenge on Hitler. On the Nazis who murdered my family.

She represented all I had lost. She was a proud young Jew.

Perhaps we were overbearing. And for sure there was lots of trauma, growing up in a house where there were nightmares, the screaming and sobbing that had become part of our sleeping pattern.

In her early teens, Debbie changed. It started with small behaviours that were not like her at all, and eventually led to outright disrespect and what in hindsight was clear signs of addiction.

We weren't equipped to deal with her rebellion. This was the '70s. It spiraled out of control until (to our shame) we threw her out of our home.

That was the second time we gave up.

The next 5 years were torturous. We deeply regretted our behaviour and tried to reach out and reconcile. But she shut us out of her life.

One day, I got a call out of the blue. It was Debbie. She wanted money for bail.

When we picked her up from jail, we were stricken. She was a shell of her former self.

We brought her home. Tried to keep the peace. My husband and I sought advice from a therapist. We tried to let her be. She was home. Safe.

So we thought.

She also was constantly "borrowing" money and items from us (including my jewelry!) to support her terrible addiction.

Sometimes she would disappear for a week or so, and we would frantically search all over for her and worry for days.



We got into arguments too, but she was always welcomed back and she always returned home.

One day she surprised us with an announcement: she was engaged!

For the first time in years, we felt hope. Grandchildren! The continuity of our family!

Sadly, the marriage didn't last a year and left her a wreck. In her sadness and anger, she went back to her drugs and alcohol.

We gave up for the third time when she overdosed one early morning at our dining room table.

My husband fell into a deep depression. We felt that we had lost. No grandchildren. A child who is closer to death than life.

We saw no hope.

Several years went by.

We found out about Chabad Lifeline (back then it had a different name) from our rabbi. It was the early years of this incredible organization but they saved her life.

Her recovery was very difficult, but we supported her and she eventually regained her vigor and vibrancy.

Debbie met someone in recovery and together they began a life, eventually bringing two wonderful children into the world.

A week ago, I received the annual phone call from Rabbi Fine, asking me to support Chabad Lifeline and purchase a raffle ticket.

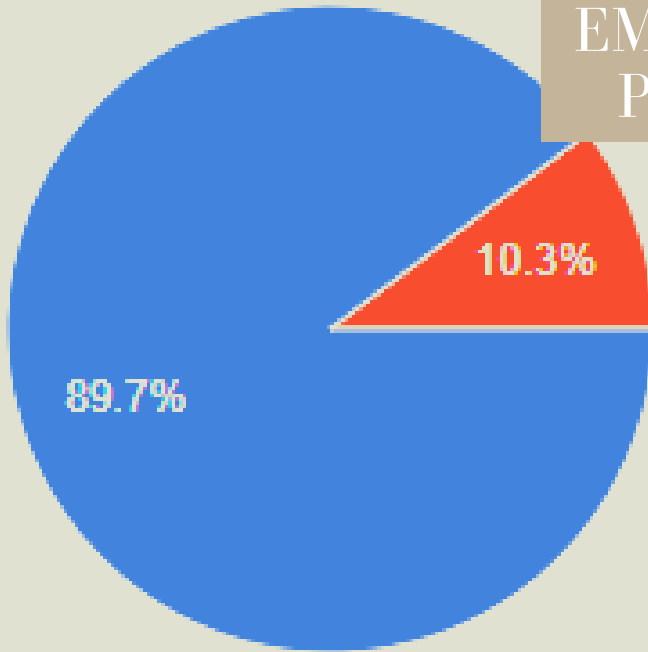
The timing could not have been better. My grandson Yosef* had just announced his engagement.

I bought two tickets and thought about the journey my family has endured. Then I called Yosef and told him that great-grandchildren would be the perfect revenge on Hitler.

Please note that names and certain identifying details were changed to protect the anonymity of those helped in this story.

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EMSB STUDENT SURVEY PROVES OUR IMPACT

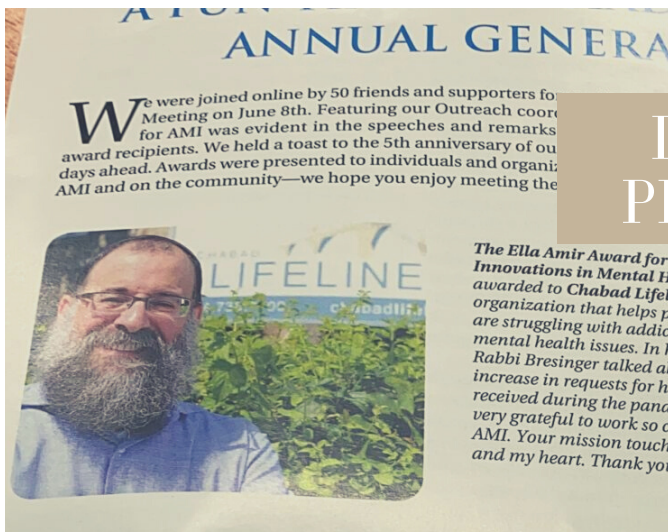
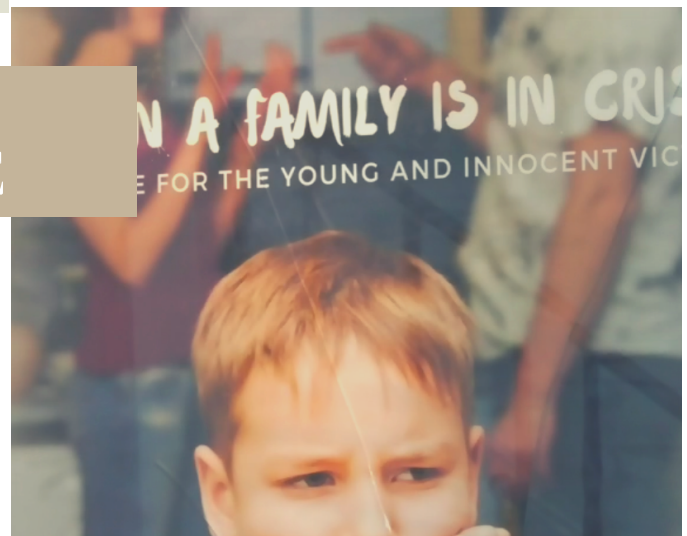


A recent student survey conducted by the EMSB highlighted the impact Chabad Lifeline's Youth Counsellors have had in schools we service under the English Montreal School Board.

Over 90% reported progress through counseling, 89.7% saw positive changes in their lives, and over 80% get along better with family as a result of our life-saving services. Incredible!

WHY WE KEPT A BROKEN PICTURE

Just days before the first lockdown in Montreal, someone broke a picture hanging on the wall of our lobby. We filmed a video explaining why we haven't replaced the frame. Watch at <https://youtu.be/f5tw1vNhxBs>



LIFELINE RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

We are proud to be the 2021 recipient of the Ella Amir award for innovations in mental health. "Your commitment and continued efforts to expand and innovate your services is exemplary," said AMI-Quebec President Donna Sharpe.