

## Talking About Death, For a Better Life

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A life-threatening illness might cause a person to shut down their lives – lose touch with friends, family, and generally lose hope in life. And many facing such an illness or condition do just that.

But an illness can also be a growing experience, says Dvora Corn, co-founder and executive director of **Tishkofet**, a Hebrew word that means “perspective,” she tells Arutz 7. “Many people who are facing what they believe to be the end of life, or a disease that will substantially change their lives for the worse, become depressed. But at Tishkofet, we try to help them get a new perspective on their situation – and to grow from it.”

The fear of death is at the root of much of mental suffering of the seriously ill, she says. “The medical establishment avoids the topic, and family members are afraid to talk with loved ones about their possible death.” But the patient realizes that he or she is facing the end – and they are unable to express their feelings, because there is no one to speak to about the situation. “They feel isolated, and that is one of the biggest problems they face,” says Corn.

“We work with families and professionals, showing them how to communicate with loved ones and patients,” Corn says. Tishkofet (the organization's English name is “Life's Door”) runs training programs for social service professionals, doctors, rabbis, and family members, teaching them how to relate to those with life-threatening illnesses. “When a family member faces a life-threatening disease, a rift in the family is created because of the isolation and fear of the future. By helping family members to deal with the situation, we help reunite families,” she says.

Tishkofet gets clients by reference, many of them coming to the organization when referred by friends and professionals. “We run many community programs all over Israel, so a lot of people know about us,” Corn says. Some of the issues patients and family members learn to deal with include fears that they will no longer be able to function as parents or on their jobs, that they will be dependent – or that they will no longer be loved. “The crisis they are facing makes it difficult for them to focus. We help them to face their fears and cope with them,” Corn says. By exploring these issues, the patients can come to terms with their situation, and “live life more authentically. Their lives are different, and their choices will be different – and they can live more satisfying lives.”

Tishkofet is a large organization, with some 5,000 people attending its programs in various capacities. Most of the work is done by volunteers – social workers, doctors, and rabbis from around the country who give of their time to help the seriously ill. Most of the organization's work is in Jerusalem, but it also runs programs in Ra'anana, Zichron Ya'akov, and Ashdod, where most of the clients are from the Russian community. The organization runs retreats and seminars to train volunteers, which are attended by many professionals. “They appreciate our work, especially since the hospitals and the health system are just unable to cope with these issues,” Corn says.

On March 27, Tishkofet will be holding a fundraising event: A special culinary event presided over by Israel's “master chef,” Yisrael Aharoni, and four of the country's top restaurant chefs: Mika Sharon, Yaron Kestenbaum, Omer Miller, and Ezra Kedem. “It's going to be a fun night

for foodies, and everyone else as well,” says Corn. “The chefs will prepare the menu, and demonstrate how they did it. A sommelier will match up wine selections with each, and at the end of evening we will be conducting an auction – and the winner will have Aharoni and the chefs come to their homes and prepare dinner.”

Tishkofet is such a unique and important organization that Aharoni, and many other celebrities in the past, have readily volunteered their services to help the group raise money. “Aharoni recruited the other chefs, and was more than happy to help out when he heard the event was for Tishkofet,” said Corn. She adds. “I am very proud that most of our money – three quarters – comes from donations here in Israel, with the rest being funded by the UJA-Federation of New York.”

Corn and her husband, Professor Ben Corn, an oncologist, have been in Israel for 11 years, with Professor Corn currently the head of the oncology department at Tel Aviv's Sourasky Medical Center. Both are very aware of the importance of their work. “My husband's father died when he was 11, and no one talked about it,” says Corn “He saw for himself what is was to become isolated and be unable to talk to anyone about his loss. We want to make sure that others are able to deal with these situations properly.”  
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