

SHALOM BAYIT

ENDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN JEWISH HOMES

Fall/Winter 2013 ~ Kislev 5774



Support Groups

Offered in San Francisco, the East Bay, Marin, and the Peninsula, all healing groups are free and open to women who have been abused in a current or past relationship. For details call our Bay Area Toll-Free Helpline

1-866-SHALOM-7

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THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN: Witnessing Domestic Violence in Childhood

Naomi Tucker, Executive Director

More than 15 million U.S. children live in homes where they regularly witness domestic violence. This is like living in a war zone: constant fear of what is to come, conversations that become land mines, unpredictable explosions. But unlike a war zone, it's happening right here: in the suburban quiet hills of Orinda, Los Altos and Marin; in San Francisco; in all the neighborhoods we know and love.

Living with violence is trauma enough. But when it involves fearing for the safety of your own parent (usually mom) and another person you love is responsible for that harm (often dad), the child experiences a lack of safety in the very place that is supposed to provide their greatest security.

Exposure to verbal and emotional abuse has dangerous consequences too. Watching a parent belittle and berate the other imprints direct negative messages about how to express feelings or treat others in relationships. This can affect the child's behavior, communication skills, friendships, future relationships, and sense of self. It can teach them to disrespect their own mothers. It violates the sacred trust of parent-child relationships: a child who frequently hears one parent calling the other a terrible person will eventually come to believe that parent is a terrible person. Finally, children are developmentally poised to view themselves as the center of everything; and so they are likely to blame themselves for what's happening.

All of us should pay attention to how we speak to our significant others in front of our children. What messages are we sending?

Long term effects

Children who grow up in abusive homes are statistically more likely to be victims or perpetrators of domestic violence as adults, perpetuating an intergenerational cycle.

Childhood exposure to violence in the

—continued on p.2

RABBIS' CORNER

Rabbi Dan Goldblatt

Sukkot is a time when we are directed to think about those who are most vulnerable. The annual Shalom Bayit *Sukkot* gathering was a moving celebration of the immeasurable value that the staff and volunteers of Shalom Bayit provide for our Bay Area community. It was an uplifting testimony to the most powerful *tikkun olam* – healing and repair of the world – when we transform fear and violence into sanctuary and the possibility of new beginnings. We filled the *sukkah* with prayers for women who had experienced domestic violence and expressed our profound gratitude that there is a Shalom Bayit to help prevent it and to be there to help and support those victimized by it. It was a powerful celebration of the essence of *Sukkot*.

I am also delighted to report that this year, the nearly two hundred members of OHALAH, the association of Jewish Renewal rabbis, cantors, rabbinic pastors, chaplains, and students received purple ribbons and cards from Shalom Bayit to affix to their synagogue and organizational *sukkot*. We received many notes of gratitude from around the country and around the world and we so appreciate Shalom Bayit's generosity and extraordinary work.

- Rabbi Dan Goldblatt

President of OHALAH,

Rabbi of Beth Chaim Congregation in Danville,

and proud member of Shalom Bayit's

Rabbinic Advisory Council

WE'RE IN SLINGSHOT!

Shalom Bayit is featured in the 2013-14 *Slingshot Guide's* first-ever supplement on *Women & Girls* — naming us as one of 18 leading Jewish organizations in the US impacting the lives of women and girls. Slingshot noted that they "are impressed with Shalom Bayit's strong leadership in the field and the organization's multi-pronged approach of education, support, and advocacy, which has proven extremely successful."

The impact on children

Continued from page 1

home can also cause a range of problems, from attachment disorders, depression, and anxiety to behavioral problems, academic struggles and of course, difficulty forming healthy friendships and relationships. Witnessing violence over time can also cause physiological changes to the developing brain. This month the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported medical research that exposure to violence in the home is also linked to higher rates of physical health problems.

Resilience and Healing

There is compelling research on children's resilience despite and beyond these traumatic parts of their lives. At the Child Trauma Project in San Francisco, experts work with babies and young children who have witnessed domestic violence at home. They have found that having a

close bond with their mother is a child's most important protective factor in recovery and resilience in the aftermath of witnessing abuse at home. At Shalom Bayit we see qualitative evidence of this as we watch young children blossom once they are safe. They become more trusting, less fearful, and joyful as they no longer need their fight-or-flight responses to daily trauma.

Shalom Bayit is reducing childhood exposure to violence by helping battered mothers to safety. We work with the family on the many complex steps involved in building a new life free of violence: healing from the trauma, long term safety, tangible resources, and the prevention of future harm. With each mother we help comes a child's opportunity for a much brighter future. That is a gift indeed: to that child, and to the community in which that child will grow and thrive.

BOOK REVIEW

Free Spirit: Growing Up On the Road and Off the Grid (by Joshua Safran, Hyperion Books, 9/2013)

"Free Spirit chronicles my years hitchhiking across the American west with my revolutionary mother, our struggles to overcome poverty and years of domestic violence at the hands of my stepfather, and my deep (and unlikely) reconnection with my Jewish heritage."
- Joshua Safran

Free Spirit is one of the most compelling books I have read in a long time. It is both hard to read and hard to put down. As a memoir it is remarkable not only for its captivating story but also because it is beautifully written: a poetic, colorful, take-you-right-back-to-the-moment retelling of a childhood that makes you wonder why the rest of us can't seem to recall our own childhoods in such stunning detail.

On the other hand, Joshua Safran's childhood was so unusual that it's no wonder he remembers so much of it.

Born in 1975 in a Haight-Ashbury commune amidst a coven of witches, Joshua's early years were spent living with his mother in an urban artist revolutionary counter-culture world populated with a wild array of memorable characters. At age five Joshua and his mom took to the road in search of utopia, living in shacks, cabins, tents, buses, a lean-to on a stump, and even an ice cream truck. The book's pages chronicle in marvelous detail their many adventures as they searched for the ideal intentional community.

Joshua's life spun into an abyss when his mother Claudia

married a Salvadorian revolutionary poet. Leopoldo fit the profile of the man of her dreams; but his violent alcoholic rages emerged as the dominant force in their home. Brutality and terror reign through years of Joshua's childhood until he helps his mother escape and put that chapter behind them.

The book gives us rare insight into a child's view of growing up in a violent home. To read this story of survival and resilience – and then meet Joshua as an adult – is an inspiring testimony to overcoming the trauma of abuse. Joshua is gentle, funny, loving and warm. He is respectful and kind to the women in his life. He is a true *mensch*.

In preparation for writing this book, Joshua and his mother met every Sunday for a year in a Berkeley café to talk about his childhood. Despite envious stares from other mothers intuiting "if

only my son would have coffee with me every week and ask me about my life...." Joshua's response was simply, "If they only knew."

I recommend reading this book with a box of Kleenex and a book club of friends.



About the author: Joshua Safran is an attorney, writer, speaker, and "occasional rabbi" who was featured in local Berkeley filmmaker Yoav Potash's award-winning 2011 documentary *Crime After Crime* (Sundance, Oprah Winfrey Network). The film chronicled Joshua's 7-year struggle to free Deborah Peagler, a wrongfully incarcerated battered woman. The Jewish call to free the wrongfully imprisoned initially compelled Joshua to take on this pro bono case. But in the film he revealed a more personal connection as well: witnessing domestic violence in his own childhood. He has since become a champion for the rights of domestic violence survivors and the wrongfully imprisoned. Joshua lives in Oakland with his wife Leah and their three children.

Joshua Safran will be the keynote speaker at *Creating Hope* on May 14th, 2014 (details p.6).

Joshua's mother Claudia Miriam is now a volunteer at Shalom Bayit.

To schedule a film screening of *Crime After Crime* or a book signing for *Free Spirit*, contact us at events@shalom-bayit.org or (510) 451-8874

Thank you!

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS AT SF STATE UNIVERSITY

Amy Neumuth, Youth Program Intern

In honor of Domestic Violence Awareness month, Shalom Bayit participated in an anti-violence rally held on the San Francisco State University (SFSU) campus on October 22nd. As the organization's new intern and a student at State, I was lucky enough to be Shalom Bayit's representative for this event. Many other organizations participated, including La Casa de las Madres and the Riley Center, with whom we collaborate regularly. The event was infused with creative spirit as activists and students gathered to hear music, poetry, spoken word and participate in a variety of collective art projects.

The purpose of our gathering was to bring awareness to an issue that affects our communities in the most intimate way: domestic violence. The fight to end domestic violence is a community project. No organization can do it alone; the community must be committed. The task of challenging patriarchal systems of oppression, as well as developing accountability strategies, can be an especially important role for male allies.

For this reason, I was especially impressed with the "Walk in Her Shoes" campaign at the event.



"Walk in Her Shoes" is the international men's march to stop rape, sexual assault, and gender violence. Although men can be victims

of domestic violence and sexual assault, women are most often the targets. "Walk in Her Shoes" focuses on men's accountability in stopping gender violence.

SFSU's event was filled with men from this organization walking around campus to promote awareness and collect donations. Some wore street clothes, some wore tee shirts with anti-violence slogans; some wore signs with grim statistics of sexual or domestic violence; and all of them wore heels. That's right, they wore heels! To me, the heels symbolized the silent suffering women experience from the pressure to perform "beauty" at the expense of their body (and how this informs gender violence). The men dramatized how one can never truly appreciate the pain and loss that women experience from gender violence unless they have "walked in her shoes."

Needless to say, these guys creatively and effectively promoted awareness and support for the movement while inspiring others to interrogate their own role in violence prevention.



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AROUND THE BAY...Announcements & Programs

SAVE THE DATE FOR

Creating Hope

*A gala benefit for Shalom Bayit
Celebrating 22 years of changing lives*

Featuring keynote speaker:

JOSHUA SAFRAN



*Wednesday, May 14, 2014
6:15 p.m.*

At the Jewish Community Center of SF
Individual tickets: \$118

*For sponsorship opportunities or more information,
call (510) 451-8874 or email events@shalom-bayit.org*

OUR NEW WEBSITE IS HERE!

Now in an easier-to-navigate format, the newly designed site reflects Shalom Bayit's growth and powerful impact in our community. Huge thanks to the SF-based Jewish Community Federation and our talented volunteers:

Lee Bearson

For countless hours of time and talent designing our new site

Roger Feigelson

For creating our first website and maintaining it for many years

Adam Harms

For stepping in as long term web guru

Today raba. We couldn't have done it without you!

Check it out! www.shalom-bayit.org



Wish List ~
Gift cards for food and basic necessities (Target, Safeway, etc.). Used laptop computer.

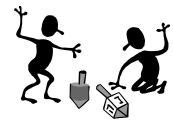
In-kind & financial contributions are fully tax deductible.

Please send your gift to "Tides Center / Shalom Bayit" at PO Box 10102, Oakland 94610
or **donate securely online at www.shalom-bayit.org**

THANK YOU

to the 20 incredible
sponsors of our annual
Chanukah
Adopt-A-Family
program

This year you gave toys,
gifts and necessities to
more than 20 Shalom Bayit
families. We are grateful for
the considerable support
and sense of hope this
gives to the women and
families we serve.



Don't forget
to send us
those old
cell phones,
iPods, &
iPads!

You will be helping to provide
911 emergency phones for
battered women, and raising
funds for Shalom Bayit too!

Become a part of our life-changing work.

Help Shalom Bayit remain a
lifeline for all who need us.
Get involved. Donate.
Volunteer. Tell your friends.
Resolve conflicts peacefully.
Bring Shalom Bayit to your
synagogue, school or
workplace. Encourage a friend
or relative to call for help.



***We can all take part in
saving a life today.***