

Words from a Recipient of Tikvah Peer Support

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me" and "If I am only for myself, what am I?" ~Rabbi Hillel

Our family has faced multiple medical crises over the past several years, but the most difficult experience of my parenting life came with the illness of our teenager - our youngest son. He was ill 24 hours a day, for 3 years, facing severe symptoms, in excruciating pain due to undiagnosed and untreated Crohn's disease. Our family was living with fear, even terror, one day to the next with no logical answers; propelled forward only by the tireless inner drive to seek explanations to the hundreds of questions that went unanswered.

Praying morning, noon and night for the strength to rise again with the resolve to help my child; to sustain the energy to educate him, despite his daily bouts of pain. If the Lucille Packard professionals were floundering in their efforts to address my child's needs, I would need a squadron of support to help him. I was in over my head and well past expecting myself to handle this alone. When my husband also developed a medical problem, I found myself in the position of holding everyone and everything together on my own. Who would hold me? My family needed me to be strong, and that required me to seek out and draw strength from every source available—family, friends, community and Beth Am.

Rabbi Marder asked if I would like to talk to a congregant, a peer counselor with Beth Am Tikvah Peer Support (Tikvah) who had personal experience parenting a child with special needs. Without hesitation I said yes! Tikvah offered resources that fulfilled one of my essential needs -- to have my Jewish community in my corner. I was matched with a peer counselor who was able to comprehend the layers of stress caused by the complexity of emotional, educational and medical issues. She is loving, patient, empathic and identifies with my situation. She can listen to the complexity of our crisis without her eyes glazing over. I never felt that I was burdening her because she is a volunteer who is there to generously offer support. Several times we walked the Baylands and she wanted to know more, gently asking questions that might lead me to a new perspective. Never telling me what to do, but sharing what she had to do for her child and being there is a genuine way.

My child's diagnosis and treatment has improved his health and he is finally launching a new start in his life. My relationship with the peer counselor transitioned from counselor to friend in a gratifying and loving way. Hope can rise from the nurturing and loving company of one individual who holds another's hand. This hand extends like a chain that connects us to a community of care, engendering trust and a sense of security in knowing our Jewish community is there in a real way -- not merely in words but in actions.

Tikvah is here, a rare volunteer resource in our community for which I am truly grateful. If you are struggling with a personal problem or even a crisis, I encourage you to find hope and comfort through Tikvah. It is available for the asking.

If you or someone you know could use some Tikvah support, please contact any member of the Beth Am Clergy at (650) 493-4661 or by [email](#). **All information will be kept confidential.** Or send an email to tikvah@betham.org to learn about how the *Tikvah* Program may be helpful to you or your family.

Congregation Beth Am is here for you....to listen, to support, to care...

Learn more about Beth Am's [Tikvah Peer Support](#).