

SHALVA



SHALVA@30: Support-Impact-Hope

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Under 40 Group Yoga

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New Board Members

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SHALVA@30: Support-Impact-Hope

Sara Block, Board President

Anniversaries often usher in reflections on the past and visions for the future. While approaching our 30th year, the staff and board of SHALVA engaged in such reflection and visioning. Through thoughtful conversations, we chose three words to commemorate SHALVA's 30th year - "Support, Hope, Impact." While we incorporated these three words into an icon that we have been using throughout this year, explaining their meaning and relevance is a worthy way to capture the spirit of our existence at this milestone anniversary.

For thirty years, SHALVA has been *supporting* Jewish women who are experiencing or healing from domestic abuse. When they make that courageous first call to us or step bravely through our door, we *support* them by providing them a safe and confidential place to receive unlimited and free counseling as well as other supportive services, such as legal assistance and loans. We *support* them by believing them, by not judging them, and by educating them about domestic abuse. And we *support* them by helping them develop the tools necessary to make whatever choices they can in their lives. We *support* their strength, ingenuity, and abilities because we know that they can and will impact their own lives.

Through this *support*, our clients regain a sense of *hope* - *hope* that happiness, safety and love can one day be synchronous. Ultimately, our *hope* is that through the *support* they receive from SHALVA, they will heal from the abuse they have experienced.

It is our deepest *hope* that one day SHALVA will not have to exist because domestic abuse will cease to occur. We know this *hope* is only possible when the community takes an active role in ensuring that every person is safe in their home and relationship. Through our outreach programs, SHALVA has been *impacting* the Jewish community by raising awareness of this collective responsibility. As SHALVA's Founding Mothers believed, the community has the ability - in fact the obligation - to *impact* the lives of individuals in their times of need and to foster a society that does not tolerate harm to others.

For the past thirty years and into the future, when our clients need us, SHALVA has and will be here. SHALVA will continue to *support* women so their *hope* for a safe and tranquil tomorrow becomes reality and *impacts* the Jewish community by continuing to strive to eradicate domestic abuse from within its homes and relationships. This is SHALVA @ thirty.

I am pleased to share an excerpt from a letter written to the Board from one of SHALVA's Founding Mothers prior to the Annual Luncheon this summer.

It is with great Nachas, as one of the Founding Mothers, that I remember back and see how far forward you have all moved this very important and vital organization.

SHALVA truly changed the lives and well being for so many women and their children these past thirty years. SHALVA's positive impact on the families it served and continues to serve has enhanced our broad Jewish community.

Both the direct services and the education and awareness that SHALVA continues to provide are critical prevention pieces against all forms of abuse and insure that peace and tranquility, true Shalva, the hallmarks of a Jewish home, are possible for everyone.

I salute your accomplishments and want to join the celebration with the Bracha of Shehechyanu, V'Kiyimanu, V'Higiyanu l'Zman Hazeh. Thank you to Hashem, in His great beneficence that He has 'Kept us alive, Sustained us, and Brought us to this Time.'

Sincerest Mazel Tov wishes,
Hadassah Goodman

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Under 40 Group Yoga

A sense of renewal and growth was served with broccoli cheddar soufflé on Sunday, September 18th at the Dance Gallery in



Chicago where a group of "Under 40" community members met for a social and educational gathering. Certified Yoga Instructor Sunny Levy (pictured), founder of Sunny's Martial Arts and Fitness, led participants through an instructive class that stressed the importance of self-care as a means of strengthening the mind, the body and the spirit.

SHALVA's Under 40 Program is an unprecedented initiative to inform Jewish men and women, ages 25 to 39 about the dangers of abusive relationships in dating and marriage. SHALVA partnered with No Shame On U and Norton & Elaine Sarnoff Center for Jewish Genetics for this event. Education and Outreach Coordinator, Samantha Spolter, stated, "With Rosh Hashanah coming, we wanted to encourage participants to be reflective about their lives and consider self-care as an important ingredient in a healthy relationship.



Under 40 Outreach and Education is supported by the Breakthrough Fund: An innovation of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago.

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New Laws Benefit Victims

Survivors of domestic abuse may be more likely to talk to their hair dresser or manicurist about their relationship with their spouse or partner than law enforcement, medical professionals, or even family and friends. Recognizing this, Illinois is the first state in the nation to mandate domestic violence training for salon employees. This includes barbers, cosmetologists, estheticians, hair braiders, and manicurists. The Cosmetology Domestic Violence law requires one hour of Domestic Abuse training for nail technicians and hair dressers every two years when they renew their licenses.

Additionally, changes to the Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA) grant all employees in Illinois the right to take unpaid leave from work to deal with the consequences of domestic or sexual violence. This could be time to go to a doctor, therapist, attorney or a court date. There are limits on the amount of time a person can take.

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Crazy-Making, Not Crazy

A response from SHALVA's Clinical Department...



"Why does she stay? She must be crazy," is a question the SHALVA clinical staff is frequently asked.

In almost every abuse circumstance, there are barriers to leaving. It is not as simple as just walking out. Leaving a relationship or marriage is frightening, especially when abuse is part of the picture. A woman can be frightened of losing her children and/or home, having limited finances, the legal system and the feeling that she will never be safe. She is confused, worn out, and often embarrassed. She usually believes it is her fault.

The women we see at SHALVA have experienced complex trauma. The effects of this trauma are often misunderstood by family, friends, the community and the legal system. Domestic abuse is not 24/7 and is often interspersed with kindness and care. Since abuser's behavior is often erratic, the woman begins to question herself. She wonders what she has done to cause such behavior in a man she loves and who professes to love her. The mixed messages are *crazy-making*.

Victims of abuse are often in denial and will minimize the level of danger. They do this in order to justify remaining in the relationship and avoid making difficult and frightening choices. A woman may feel safer taking no action, but do not mistake her strategy of doing nothing for passivity or indifference. Respect her pace, do not judge and be patient. No one decides to give up a relationship overnight.

If an abused woman finds the courage to divorce, she expects the legal system to be fair. Unfortunately abusers can manipulate the courts and further the abuse by non-compliance, thus creating a lengthy and costly divorce process, which contributes to her feelings of hopelessness. Over time she sounds irrational, emotional, unfocused and yes, crazy.

Here is what some clients experience as they try to make sense out of the senseless:

- *"Why does my family call ME the crazy one when I stand up to defend myself and my children?"*
- *"My husband is charming on the outside and well-respected in the community. Nobody will believe me. I am alone and have nowhere to turn. I feel like I'm going crazy."*
- *"Trying to free myself and my children from the tyranny of abuse has required me to suffer and endure further abuse. I've lost custody of my youngest child because I cried and tried to speak up in court. He was considered to be the better parent. It is crazy."*

Abused women are not crazy. *What is crazy is that women and their children are being abused in the sanctity of their home.*

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New Board of Directors

SHALVA welcomes new board members Rebecca Berlin Melzer and Diane Brazen Gordon. Rebecca Berlin Melzer practices matrimonial and family law with a passion for helping women through difficult times. "I have seen abuse victims put back together the shattered pieces of their pasts and move forward into fulfilling, happy and abuse-free lives. Being able to contribute to the work that SHALVA's Board does, not only to help abuse victims, but also to educate and increase awareness about abuse, is truly an honor."

Diane Brazen Gordon practices bankruptcy law with a unique focus on women. "I have seen many hundreds of women during my career and found it rewarding to help them recover from their financial abuse. Some of these women might never have been able to pursue their life goals due to the debt that followed them everywhere." Brazen Gordon looks forward to using her expertise to help SHALVA meet the needs of women facing many forms of discrimination so that they may not only recover from financial abuse, but develop the independence and stability needed to thrive.

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Create a Legacy

SHALVA is proud to join the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago as a partner in Create a Jewish Legacy Chicago (CJL). Endowment giving - planning a solid financial future for our community, so that those needs will always be met - is a vital element of *tzedakah*. Please remember SHALVA and the Jewish community in your will and estate plans. For a confidential, no obligation conversation or for more information, contact Carol Ruderman, Executive Director at 773-583-4673 or info@shalvaonline.org.

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Avodah Corps Member Assists SHALVA Team

SHALVA welcomes AVODAH Corps member, Mimi Stern, for a year-long working and learning experience as Clinical and Outreach Assistant. Through the AVODAH program, Mimi (pictured) will have ample opportunity to

further develop her leadership skills and engage in meaningful tikkun olam.

Mimi, a recent Oberlin College graduate, was thrilled to be placed at SHALVA, her first choice of assignments. The position complements her experience in reproductive justice and sexual assault advocacy and support. On her commitment to helping women, Stern says, "I believe, first and foremost, in listening to and believing women - and I'm so grateful to do my part to eradicate violence against women in my own communities." Founded out of a Brooklyn home in 1998, AVODAH's Jewish Service Corps has been built with a mission of strengthening the Jewish community's response to the causes and effects of poverty and oppression through service that is rooted in and nourished by Jewish values.

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SHALVA supports women experiencing and healing from domestic abuse, through counseling, supportive services and community education.

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