

Speaker Bios



Lewis J. Abrams, ACSW, LCSW, CASAC has been treating those afflicted with addictions and mental health challenges including adolescents, adults, couples and families for the past 33 years. He has created and directed programs at all levels of care including traditional outpatient, partial hospitalization, intensive outpatient and residential services throughout New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Mr. Abrams was the Clinical Director of Marworth Treatment Center (1991 –2001), a nationally recognized system of addiction treatment services located outside of Scranton, Pennsylvania.



Sharon Burns-Carter, CAC is a Certified Alcoholism Counselor and Addiction Professional. She has completed the Institute for Experiential Therapy at On-Site Institute and has had extensive practice in experiential group therapy. Sharon specializes in the treatment of family systems and clinical case management related to families in crisis. She works on an ongoing basis with not-for-profit and community organizations working with the addiction community and humanitarian efforts. Sharon has extensive experience working with chemically dependent and dually diagnosed individuals and families. She is the founder of the highly acclaimed dual diagnosis program, Wellness Resource Center, Inc., and developed innovative clinical protocols treating a highly specialized population. Sharon has extensive experience in program and staff development, collaborating with programs and organizations to realize targeted treatment plans and objectives. Sharon maintains a private practice specializing in addiction training and transitional care services in Palm Beach County Florida.



Rochel Holzkenner is a mother of four children and the co-director of Chabad of Las Olas, Fla., serving the community of young professionals. She is a high-school teacher and a freelance writer—and a frequent contributor to Chabad.org. She lectures extensively on topics of Kabbalah and feminism, and their application to everyday life. Rochel holds an MS in Brain Research from Nova SE University.

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Rabbi Kaplan, fondly referred to by his friends as “Shneiny”, is the spiritual leader and rabbi of the Downtown Jewish Center Chabad in Fort Lauderdale FL . Together with his wife Devorah, they founded DJCC in 2001 and have been serving this diverse Jewish Community with devotion, love and acceptance embracing Jews from all backgrounds and ways of life! Rabbi Kaplan is a distinguished lecturer and inspiring teacher. He is also a cantor and musician, often performing uplifting and moving kumzits and spiritual farbrengens. In addition to his work in the Downtown Community, Rabbi Kaplan has devoted much of his time, energy and expertise in the world of recovery. He currently leads 2 groups in weekly spiritual sessions and is a personal mentor for numerous men and women. He is beloved by many and respected for his tremendous work assisting and guiding the many who reach out to him for support. Rabi Kaplan is married to Devorah Kaplan (nee Hecht) and is the father of 7 amazing children. BH!!



Devorah Kaplan is the Rebbetzin and program director of the Downtown Jewish Center Chabad in East Fort Lauderdale. Together with her husband Schneur, they founded the DJCC in 2001. Devorah has whole heartedly devoted herself to the fruition of the Jewish community in Fort Lauderdale, particularly in the arena of Jewish education. She received her teaching degree in France at the age of 19 and has made education the benchmark of her life and work. She is the founder and director of a thriving Reggio Amelia Preschool and flourishing Hebrew School. Devorah has taught children and adults of all ages for over 20 years. She teaches a weekly women’s class (since 2001), covering a breadth of topics from kabbalah, Talmud and biblical sources that attracts women from all walks of life, from ‘stay at home moms’ to Doctors, grandmas, lawyers and therapists. She has passionately embraced and connected with the diverse Jews of Fort Lauderdale with her love, wisdom and thirst for knowledge and growth. Her enthusiasm and ‘Joi De Vivre’ is contagious and palpable in all she does. Devorah is married to Rabbi Schneur Kaplan and has seven children.



Rabbi Meir Kessler serves as Chaplain and consultant at Caron Renaissance. He was ordained in 2001 in Israel by the head rabbi of Jerusalem, and is the director of the Jewish Recovery Center in Boca Raton, Florida. Rabbi Kessler began his career in South Florida in nearby Delray Beach, where he observed the need to make the spiritual principles of Orthodox Judaism accessible to people in recovery. The Rabbi offers weekly Shabbat services with a recovery focus, a halfway house for people who need additional recovery support. He serves as one of Caron Renaissance’s Spiritual Friday leaders, and has presented seminars and workshops to the general public through his relationship with Chabad of Boca Raton.

Speaker Bios



Sarge Pickman is an extraordinary entertainer. SARGE has performed worldwide to adoring audiences. His sidesplitting comedy, touching vocals and stunning display of dexterity as a pianist have wowed crowds for decades. He is one of the highest energy, multi-talented acts in show business today. Not only a hysterical stand-up comedian, SARGE sings in his own voice and a dozen others including Harry Connick, Jr., Sammy Davis, Jr., Lionel Richie and Stevie Wonder. Additionally, his dead on impressions of Marv Albert, Mike Tyson, Kermit the Frog and Gilbert Gottfried leave audiences howling and clamoring for more. SARGE has been clean and sober since December 26, 1990, and he has dedicated himself to assisting others who are facing the battle of addiction.



Menachem Poznanski, a New York State licensed clinical social worker, has worked in the field of substance abuse prevention, addictions treatment, and recovery support for the past fifteen years. Since 2004, Menachem has served as Clinical Director of The Living Room (TLR), a recovery clubhouse for Jewish young adults. TLR, a division of Our Place of NY, Inc., was the first Jewish program of its kind, providing clubhouse style faith-based outreach and ongoing support services for Jewish young adults in and seeking recovery. Menachem received his master's degree in social work from the Yeshiva University Wurzweiler School of Social Work in 2005. He maintains a private practice in Cedarhurst, New York, where he lives with his wife and their children.



Rabbi Shais Taub is the author of the bestselling *God of Our Understanding: Jewish Spirituality and Recovery from Addiction*. He was the keynote speaker on spirituality at the very first annual Convention on the Evolution of Addiction Treatment in Los Angeles. His work in recovery has been covered by major media outlets including National Public Radio and the New York Times. He lives in Pittsburgh, PA.

Speaker Bios



Toronto-based **Felix Vikhman** is a member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario. He has been practicing psychotherapy and addictions counselling since 2008. He holds a Master's degree in Mental Health Counselling from Seton Hall University and a Certificate in Mental Health and Addictions from Ryerson University. He is the former Clinical Director of The Recovery Place, a sober-home environment, and a counsellor at The Renascent Foundation, a residential substance abuse treatment centre. Since 2009, he has been facilitating a group for family members of those with addiction issues at JACS (Jewish Addiction Community Services). Felix is often a guest lecturer on issues of addiction and family systems at Toronto's numerous colleges and universities. He has also worked as a consultant on addiction issues for Toronto-based TV production companies.



Arnie Wexler, CCGC and **Sheila Wexler, LCADC** have presented educational work shops nationally and internationally. Sheila Wexler is the Executive Director of the Compulsive Gambling Foundation. Arnie is a recovering compulsive gambler whose last bet was April 10, 1968. Sheila and Arnie also run a national help line (888.LAST.BET) and work at Recovery Road, a treatment facility in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida that specializes in the treatment of those suffering with gambling addiction.



Moshe A. Yachnes LMSW, CSAT, CASACT, graduated from Fordham University with a masters degree in clinical social work. He has extensively trained in addictions therapy as well as fulfilled therequirements for a credentialed alcohol and substance abuse counselor (CASAC). In 2007, Moshewas awarded with a specialization in education and training in substance abuse. He has worked with individuals and families struggling with abuse and addiction for ten years including two years as weekend supervisor at MLN National Jewish Youth Rehabilitation, an inpatient dual diagnosis residential facility for Jewish adolescents. Moshe has been trained by the International Institute for Trauma and Addiction Professionals (IITAP), and is a certified sex addiction therapist (CSAT). He has been acknowledged by the BECK Institute for his training in CBT interventions. Moshe served as clinical director of Madraigos in Woodmere N.Y where he was responsible to all therapeutic programing. He spent 3 years providing psychotherapy in private practice in Cedarhurst NY. Moshe currently works at Sunspire Health Recovery Road of Palm Beach Gardens, FL, as a primary therapist and is Program Manager of IOP services while also maintaining a private practice.