

PREVENTION



Series On:
 **TRAUMA**
 PARENTING IN A POST-OCTOBER 7 WORLD.

ISSUE **4**

Presented by
 Operation Survival,
 in partnership with
 Mayanei Hayeshua



How can I manage intense emotions without resorting to **EMOTIONAL NUMBNESS** as my coping mechanism?

Parents ask, professionals answer.

**BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH PROF. RAEL STROUS
 MEDICAL DIRECTOR - MAYANEI HAYESHUA'S MENTAL HEALTH CENTER**

Life is not what happens to us, but rather how we deal with it. You are now dealing with those strong emotions by shutting down, and that is one way to deal with it. However, we need to consider if it is the best way to deal with it. It's probably affecting other aspects of your life and your ability to feel and to express love, care, and understanding. You don't want to do that because usually when one becomes numb and disconnects and shuts off, it's not compartmentalized to only one particular area.

Shutting off is a defense mechanism, and it's a legitimate defense mechanism, but not necessarily the best and most functional and most adaptive defense mechanism to help the person in other aspects of their relationships or connecting to the world. Here is an example from Rav Dr. Avraham Twerski, a well-known psychiatrist and educator, who relates the following story about a lobster.

The lobster begins its life as a soft, vulnerable creature with a delicate shell. As it grows, this shell becomes confined, hindering further development. So, what does the lobster do? The lobster goes

under a rock, under the sea in an area that is safe, gets rid of its outer shell, and grows a new, bigger shell. Emerging anew, it continues to expand until once again, it outgrows its shell and feels constrained. Feeling discomfort, the lobster goes back under that rock in the ocean, sheds its old shell, and emerges with a fresh one. In a continual cycle of growth and renewal.

It is that discomfort that is the stimulus for the lobster to grow. If every time the lobster felt discomfort it went to its doctor and got a pill or started using a drug or felt numb and disconnected from the world, that lobster would never have any stimulus to grow because it would never go under that rock and develop a new shell. Discomfort and being uncomfortable is not necessarily a bad thing. It's all about what we do with it.

If a person is numbing themselves to avoid feeling discomfort, they will never grow because they will always take that medication, get rid of the discomfort, and remain the same tiny, little lobster.



We want to grow in life. That is a value that we think is positive. It makes us human. It makes us special, and it's what elevates us above animals.

We don't want to run away from discomfort because that does not enable us to become better people and to grow. Use discomfort for positivity - to become a better person and to contribute more to society. ♥

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This content is not intended as a substitute for professional diagnosis, or treatment.

Prof. Strous, MD, MHA, is a Professor of Psychiatry at the Faculty of Medicine of Tel Aviv University, editor-in-chief of the Israel Journal of Psychiatry, and the chairman of the ethics committee of the Israel Psychiatry Association.



Mayanei Hayeshua opened the world's first full Mental Health Center within the orthodox Jewish community in Israel, offering a range of treatments that cover every aspect of human functioning, respecting the dignity and individuality of every patient, all in a colorful, clean, and cheerful environment.



The National Committee for Furtherance of Jewish Education established Operation Survival in 1988 to provide prevention services in schools in the Crown Heights area such as rap groups, family intervention, and classes for the parents of these students. The program networks with other agencies and provides information to educators and clergy. Operation Survival is directed by Rabbi Yaacov Behrman. Visit operationsurvival.org for more information and videos.

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