



# ANNUAL REPORT 2025

"זה המרחב היחיד היום שאני מרגיש  
בטוח לשתף."

"THIS IS THE ONLY SPACE TODAY  
WHERE I FEEL SAFE TO SHARE."

~Kehilanu Support Group Participant

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# Message from our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Kehilanu was founded in February 2025 in response to a reality Israel cannot ignore: **trauma is widespread, yet support is not**. With nearly **40%** of the population reporting trauma symptoms, capacity remains far below demand and many people are left waiting, unraveling, or convinced their trauma isn't "worthy" of care.

In the wake of national catastrophe, a painful "hierarchy of trauma" has taken hold. Those whose experiences are less visible are told, explicitly or implicitly, that others "have it worse," and so they stay silent. Even those seen as most "deserving" face long waits, limited availability, and bureaucratic barriers; others avoid care altogether due to stigma or fear of diagnosis.

Kehilanu exists to say clearly: you deserve support too. We offer evidence-based, destigmatized, diagnosis-free care led by seasoned trauma professionals, with a mission to help Israel heal on both individual and collective levels. We turn trauma's common denominator from isolation into belonging through customized support groups, and extend healing outward through Trauma-Informed Community Building (TICB).

What made 2025 remarkable wasn't only what we built, but how we built it: with agility. When communities reach out, we move quickly to form cohorts and launch tailored groups, from poker-based groups for reservists to therapeutic collage for mothers and photo/video therapy for CPTSD survivors.

I feel both gratitude and urgency. For every person we reached, many more are still waiting. With your partnership, we can open more cohorts and ensure overlooked people are not left without support- because untreated trauma doesn't disappear; it deepens. Kehilanu seeks to intervene before those shadows grow.

Thank you for believing that Israel's healing will come not only from rebuilding structures, but from rebuilding what holds us together: connection, belonging, and shared healing.

May we all share in rebuilding this broken world.

Together we will heal,



Miriam Schler

Founder & Executive Director

Kehilanu

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# Kehilanu: What We Do

Since the attack of October 7th, Israel's mental health system remains overwhelmed by trauma. A recent report from the government documented that trauma is affecting over 40% of the population. Individual therapy alone cannot possibly meet the scale of need. Also, polarization within Israel has skyrocketed leaving people more isolated at precisely the moment that connection is most needed.

**We need healing – as individuals, as communities and as a nation.**

Kehilanu was created to tackle both individual and collective trauma, and to reach more people with lasting impact. We harness the proven power of two scalable treatment models—professionally led support groups and Trauma Informed Community Building (TICB)—and adapt them for organizations, groups and workplaces.

**Kehilanu does more than just treat trauma; we shift trauma from an experience of isolation into a pathway for mutual support and collective healing.**

## What Makes Kehilanu Unique

- **Professionally led support groups, offered at no or minimal cost, without the need for a formal diagnosis.** By removing financial and clinical barriers, we make trauma care easier to access while reducing the stigma that too often keeps people away.
- **Each support group is customized for different populations suffering from different types of traumas** including the elderly, mothers of traumatized children, grandparents suffering loss, etc. We build genuine connection through creative, relatable experiences, including traditional psychotherapy, mind-body practices, art therapy, collage, and phototherapy. We also pioneer unconventional models of engagement, such as our groundbreaking Poker Support Groups for soldiers and reservists.
- **Trauma Informed Community Building (TICB) programs sustaining connection even after groups conclude.** Through a trauma-sensitive community center to be launched in Tel Aviv and programs anticipated nationwide, Kehilanu aims to create spaces where support networks can be built. We will bring people together across diverse trauma experiences, with facilitated cultural events, sports, academic lectures and activism.
- **Workshops that adapt the therapeutic power of support groups and TICB to the workplace.** Customized for companies, NGOs and government offices, Kehilanu's workshops provide practical tools that enable employees to succeed despite emotional strain.
- **Workshops that adapt the therapeutic power of support groups and TICB to those on the front lines of trauma care.** By addressing secondary trauma, profound burnout and compassion fatigue, Kehilanu provides professionals working in the trauma space with customized tools to continue helping others.
- **Research partnerships with academic institutions that will assess our impact.**

# Support Groups

As a new organization with a pioneering approach launched in a time of national crisis, Kehilanu had to hit the ground running. In 2025, we focused on mapping needs, developing customized programs, cultivating partnerships, and launching our initial pilots. Drawing on extensive landscape analysis, we initiated our first set of diverse support groups addressing a wide range of trauma experiences, while piloting innovative therapeutic modalities. Highlights include:

## GROUP

## DETAILS

IN PROGRESS

### **Poker Support Group for Soldiers and Reservists Suffering from Trauma**

A poker-based support group, framed around “Bankroll Management,” is engaging soldiers and reservists who avoid traditional therapy. Led by a trauma expert and a professional poker player, it builds skills in risk management, boundaries, and emotional regulation under pressure.

IN PROGRESS

### **Women’s Therapeutic Collage: "Deconstruction and Construction"**

In partnership with Women’s International Zionist Organization (WIZO), this collage-based group supports women who self-identify as “on the edge” since October 7. Using creative, nonverbal expression, it offers a healing space to process difficult experiences and rebuild connection.

IN PROGRESS

### **Therapeutic Collage for Mothers Facing Secondary Trauma: "Deconstruction and Construction"**

An art-therapy support group for mothers coping with emotional distress and secondary trauma linked to their children’s trauma. It offers a safe space to process, strengthen inner resources, and connect with other mothers facing the sharp rise in children’s psychological and physiological trauma reactions.

COMPLETED

### **Therapeutic Collage for Seniors 80-100: "Deconstruction and Construction"**

A collage therapy group for seniors (ages 80–100), launched following our successful resilience workshops during the Iran missile strikes. This often-overlooked community carries decades of untreated trauma. Many had children and grandchildren in active duty army service and/or reserves, meaning they have been carrying an added emotional load of worry for two years.

COMPLETED

### **Beyond Words: Film/Videography-Based Support Group for Triggered Trauma Survivors**

In partnership with the Reuth Association and through interactive video-based activities, our expert facilitators support women coping with eating disorders and Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), many of whom are survivors of sexual violence. Grounded in narrative therapy, this approach helps participants regain a sense of control over their personal stories and heal from trauma triggers.

# Voices of Impact

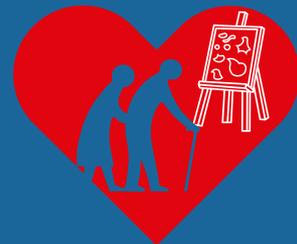
In our view, the clearest measure of our programming's success is what we hear directly from participants:

A member of Kehilanu's Poker Support Group for Reservists shared that when he didn't have the energy to go to the Friday session his young daughter urged him to go despite his exhaustion **"because after you go, you're much nicer to be with on Shabbat."**



**"Seeing the [other] women's art creations and hearing their sharing expanded my perspective... I'm so glad I chose to commit to the process."**- Feedback from our "Construction and Deconstruction" Collage Support Group for Mothers Facing Secondary Trauma.

**"The support and listening created a safe, accepting space for each of us, just as we are, reminding us to pause in wonder and through the collage [process], turning ashes into creation."**- Feedback from our "Construction and Deconstruction" Collage Support Group for Seniors Age 80-100.



**"I found a place for myself through my photographs...I found an understanding I didn't even know I was looking for. It was deeply meaningful to me."**- Feedback from our "Beyond Words" Photo/Videotherapy Support Group for Triggered PTSD Survivors

# Spotlight: Poker Support Group

**“When triggers overwhelm me, I disappear. I go to my car and stay there for hours, sometimes even days. It happened during the group too and for the first time, I was able to say out loud that this is what happens to me. Right there, in the group.”**

In today's Israel, too many reservists are carrying combat trauma quietly, functioning on the outside while their nervous systems remain on high alert inside. Many don't see themselves in “therapy,” and even those who desperately want support often can't find a doorway in: they shut down, they avoid, they don't have language for what they feel, or the idea of sitting in a circle and talking is simply too much. Kehilanu created the Poker Support Group for reservists because we needed a different kind of doorway, one that feels familiar, non-threatening, and engaging enough to bring reservists in.

Poker is not the therapy, it is the bridge to the therapy. The game creates a focused, high-engagement space where emotion inevitably appears: fear, tension, hypervigilance, aggression, shame, disappointment, pride. Participants learn to notice what happens in their bodies and minds as the intensity rises; and then to practice regulation, grounding, and choice in real time.

One participant captured the disorientation of trauma's aftershock: After life-threatening danger, gunfire, RPGs in Gaza, he couldn't understand how a strong hand at the table could still send his pulse soaring. That moment makes visible what so many reservists live with: trauma doesn't end when the fighting ends; it remains in the nervous system, hijacking the body long after the mind says, “I'm safe.”

And then, something extraordinary happens. Once participants arrive and settle into the game, the group moves into its second part: a dynamic therapeutic conversation held with sensitivity, trust and deep respect. Again and again, men share that they are able to speak here in a way they cannot speak anywhere else. That only in this group can they touch the most vulnerable truths.



**The room becomes a place where strength does not require silence; where tears don't need explaining; where a person can be both capable and shattered at the same time.**

The impact is measured not only in insight, but in human moments of change. In one session, a participant disclosed a serious medical condition that developed due to his time in reserves. He had hidden it from everyone, even his partner. With the support of his fellow group members, he later found the courage to share this secret that had been weighing on him with his loved ones.

In another session, a participant cried during the game; not once, but repeatedly. The facilitators simply stayed present with him, gave him space to regulate and later helped him name what surfaced. For men trained to push through and always “hold it together,” this safe witnessing is profoundly reparative.



**Sometimes the group’s success shows up in the most moving place of all: at home. One reservist shared that when he didn’t have the energy to go to the Friday session his young daughter urged him to go despite his exhaustion “because after you go, you’re much nicer to be with on Shabbat.”**

In one short sentence, this girl gave language to what people often asked: Does this help people function again? Does it change anything outside the therapy room?

Yes. It changes the tone of a family’s weekend. It shifts a home from walking on eggshells to breathing a little easier. It gives children back a calmer parent.

Participants also describe the group as something they cling to when life feels unbearable. One man spoke about receiving a call that had to do with his service facing the massacres at Kibbutz Be’eri and not wanting to answer, because he knew it would pull him into painful memories. But he answered anyway, comforting himself that even if it was hard, “On Friday I have the poker group, I have a place.”

**Trauma isolates. It convinces people there is nowhere to bring the heavy load that is weighing them down. This group becomes their ‘place’ - an anchor where the unspeakable can be held.**



That is what Kehilanu is working to create across Israel: structured, evidence-based, trauma-informed spaces where people who have been carrying too much alone can finally exhale, connect and begin to heal.



# TICB Activities

Trauma Informed Community Building (TICB) is a holistic approach to fostering resilience and social cohesion in the face of collective trauma. It creates safe, life-affirming spaces where people can reconnect, breaking through the isolation trauma often brings and nurturing mutual support, trust, and communication.

All activities are to be facilitated by trauma-sensitive professionals and supported by a core of trained volunteers who help participants feel connected and safe. These volunteers serve as “floaters”- gently engaging anyone who seems to struggle with participation- and “benchers,” who remain in a welcoming, designated space for anyone seeking a listening ear or quiet support.

Through diverse curated activities- such as cultural events, sports, arts, education, volunteering, and activism- participants from varied trauma backgrounds build supportive networks and re-engage with society. This not only supports individual healing but also helps embed the values of solidarity and mutual care within the broader Israeli public, ultimately restoring a sense of normalcy and community well-being.

In 2025, we chose to invest more heavily in professionally led support groups to meet urgent, acute trauma needs on the ground. Meanwhile, we began laying the groundwork to launch a fuller TICB activity program to help ensure long-term healing in 2026.

## Resilience in the Workplace

Resilience is essential not only for individual well-being, but for organizational strength. Yet across Israel, widespread burnout and emotional strain are eroding the workforce, while most workplaces- especially NGOs, hospitals, mental health programs, and public institutions- lack the resources to provide critical support.

Kehilanu is meeting this urgent need through trauma-informed, resilience-building programs customized to each organization’s culture and challenges.

**After our pilot with Altschuler Shacham Ltd. in mid-2025, we began expanding this initiative, including presenting at a national Human Resources summit to equip HR professionals with tools to support their teams.**

By embedding emotional well-being into organizational systems, we help employees manage stress, adapt to change, collaborate effectively, and remain focused, motivated, and emotionally strong, even in times of crisis.

# Adapting Under Fire

Amid the ongoing crisis, acute emergencies, such as the twelve days of Iranian missile attacks, add new layers of trauma. Kehilanu swiftly adapted, delivering resilience workshops using art therapy in bomb shelters and protected spaces, focusing on at-risk groups like children and seniors. Our model's flexibility allows us to respond rapidly to emerging needs on the ground.



A participant viewing her work in one of Kehilanu's therapeutic collage resilience workshops with senior citizens during the Iran missile attacks in June 2025.

## Research & Evaluation

here are numerous aspects of this work that have not been applied in this unique manner previously. Therefore, we spent 2025 cementing academic research options to demonstrate efficacy, **Prof. Ofira Honig**, a tenured researcher, Chair of the Department of Art Therapy and the head of **Beit Berl's Art Materials and Materials of the Psyche Reserch Laboratory** and **Achva College's Community, Meaning and Healing (C.M.H.) Institute**, which was selected both to support excellent periphery institutions and its specialized research focus on the connections between community/belonging and resilience

# Partnerships are Foundational

Collaboration is at the heart of Kehilanu's work. We actively build bridges between trauma treatment and community-based programs with the goals of: (1) creating a strong, interconnected support network for traumatized Israelis, and (2) helping mend the communal fabric frayed by years of crisis. Rather than reinventing the wheel, we aim to unite existing efforts and collaborate across sectors, offering to integrate our services wherever they can strengthen organizations and communities, in order to meet the overwhelming national need.

Further, we partner with **Lo Levad "Not Alone"**- an art therapy collective based in Ofakim, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and founded by Dr. Ofira Honig in the wake of October 7th. This initiative has already provided treatment for over **1,800 survivors suffering extreme trauma from the attacks**. As Lo Levad wants to expand their support group work and sees the immense value of TICB activities, Lo Levad and Kehilanu are working closely. In 2025 we also made inroads regarding several other promising partnerships, including a partnership with **Tel Hashomer Hospital's new trauma treatment center**, which is slated to begin in 2026.

## Helping the Helpers

Another key part of Kehilanu's partnership approach is collaborating with public institutions and NGOs that seek our secondary-trauma prevention and resilience trainings for frontline professionals those at highest risk of compassion fatigue and secondary trauma. We specifically prioritize professionals who are most likely to be underserved and overlooked, operating in under-resourced systems where support is scarce despite the intensity of the work. Supporting these caregivers is essential to addressing the broader trauma crisis, because they are the ones helping others heal.

In 2025, we laid the groundwork to launch several new "Helping the Helpers" initiatives. For example, we are launching a group for **women lawyers**- particularly family lawyers- who are seeing a sharp rise in complex, volatile divorce cases, as preexisting conflict is intensified by collective trauma, prolonged uncertainty and emotional dysregulation as a result of October 7<sup>th</sup> and its aftermath.

We are also beginning a new partnership in February 2026 with the **Israel Prison Service** to support mental-health and welfare professionals working under chronic overload in one of Israel's most invisible and under-resourced systems. Importantly, our first cadre includes senior mental-health leaders positioned to drive system-wide impact.

# Professional Advisory Board

We are proud to be guided by an exceptional advisory board of professionals who generously contribute their decades of expertise to help us develop the highest-quality programming:

- **Maggie Feinstein** – Executive Director of the 10.27 Healing Partnership and a master’s-level counselor specializing in integrated mental health. She leads trauma-informed community-building efforts supporting the Pittsburgh Jewish community in the wake of the Tree of Life synagogue shooting—the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history.
- **Dr. Daniel Rosen, PhD, MSW** – Professor of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh, specializing in community health, urban social challenges, and health social work.
- **Dr. Adam Raff, M.D.** – Psychiatrist with decades of experience in medical and mental health care.
- **Meredith Jacobs** – CEO of Jewish Women International, a global leader in ending violence against women and girls, and spearhead of the I Believe Israeli Women / Global Advocacy and Engagement initiative launched after the sexual violence of October 7.
- **Hagit Tzon, MSW** – Psychologist, group analyst, and nationally renowned expert in group dynamics. She also provides supervision for our professional staff in Israel.
- **Idit Shani Adom** – Clinical psychologist and nationally recognized expert in group therapy and facilitation.
- **Rany Levy, MSW** – Psychotherapist, group analyst, and trauma specialist with three decades of experience and a research and teaching background at Bar-Ilan University.
- **Dr. Ofira Honig, PhD** – Senior researcher and tenured professor of Clinical Art Therapy at Beit Berl College. She founded the Lo Levad art therapy initiative, impacting 1,800 since October 7, 2023.

## Volunteers

We are fortunate to have a dedicated core of volunteers ready to support our TICB activities, along with several top professionals contributing their expertise pro bono. Currently, we receive legal counsel, accounting, and bookkeeping services as in-kind donations, allowing Kehilanu to focus its funding on direct support for trauma survivors.

## Professional Team

We have a committed, core team of expert therapists/group facilitators who are ready to join. Each one of these team members has at least 20 years of professional experience in the field of trauma treatment/group facilitation (many have more than that) and are truly the "best of the best." Right now, when so many mental health professionals are stretched to the breaking point and hard to come by as a result, so many all-star professionals are so excited by this program that they are thrilled to come on board! We have many more potential facilitators who are interested in joining us as well once we have expanded our programming - every one of whom is of the highest caliber.

**We Couldn't Have Supported  
Anyone or Accomplished  
Any of These Strides Forward  
Without the Generosity,  
Compassion, Kindness and  
Trust of Kehilanu's Partners!**



**Thank You!**

**The Dan David Foundation**

**Seed the Dream Foundation**

**The Skoller Family Fund**

**Cowboy Angel in Memory of Jerry Sternberg**

**The Jewish Foundation of Greensboro**

**The Dan Nir and Jill Braufman Family Foundation**

**The Liz Kanter Groskind and Eric Groskind Fund**

**The Sharna & Irvin Frank Foundation**

**The Paul S. Nadler Family Charitable Trust**

**The Ullman Charitable Trust**

**The Debra Pell Fund**

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**The Levy Family Fund**

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**The Gottesman- Kurlandsky Family**

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**The Jeff and Molly Goodman Fund**

**The Kaufman Family Charitable Fund**

**The Jewish Healthcare Foundation**

**Keshet DAF**

**The Sherman Family Fund**

**The Sandy Family Foundation**

**United Jewish Foundation of Metro Detroit**

**Our enthusiastic private donors who have given so much!**

# Inspired?

## Here are 5 ways to help Kehilanu: Helping Israel Heal

1

### REACH OUT

Connect with us if you are in need, want help for someone else who is in need or want to get involved with kehilanu's work.

Help more people find support and help more partners find us.

Share Kehilanu with friends, community leaders and potential funders.

Learn more / share: <https://www.kehilanu.org/en>

Contact: [ceo@kehilanu.org](mailto:ceo@kehilanu.org)

2

### GIVE TO FUEL TRAUMA SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY HEALING

Your donation makes it possible for Israelis carrying acute and ongoing trauma to access high-quality, stigma-free support - and to rebuild connection, belonging and resilience.

[CLICK HERE TO DONATE](#)

3

### SPREAD THE WORD

Follow, share, and amplify.

Stay connected and help us reach the people who need this most.

[LinkedIn](#)

4

### HOST OR JOIN A GATHERING

Bring Kehilanu to your community- online or in person.

We can speak with your network, share impact and invite partnership.

To host an event or discussion: [ceo@kehilanu.org](mailto:ceo@kehilanu.org)

