



Studies Show: Jewish Religiosity Protects Against Anxiety

by Hillel Fendel

Kislev 11, 5769, 08 December 08 01:30

(IsraelINN.com) A series of research studies – known as the JPSYCH program - at Bowling Green State University in Ohio reveals that traditional religious beliefs and practices are protective against anxiety and depression among Jews.

Spearheaded by David H. Rosmarin and Kenneth Pargament in Bowling Green's psychology department, the studies are amongst the first to examine the impact of Judaism on psychological health. "Most research in this area has been conducted with Christians," says Rosmarin, and some has been conducted with Muslims and Hindus as well, "but now we have strong evidence to suggest that religiousness is correlated with lower levels of stress in the Jewish community."

Rosmarin and Pargament's research indicates that frequency of prayer, synagogue attendance, and religious study, and positive beliefs about the Divine are associated with markedly decreased levels of anxiety and with higher levels of happiness. "In this day and age, there is a lot to worry about," Rosmarin notes, "and the practice of religion may help people to maintain equanimity and perspective."

"Not all facets of religion are helpful," Rosmarin acknowledges. "Spiritual struggles involving negative beliefs about G-d, or conflicts with clergy, seem to be predictive of higher levels of distress."

General information on the research is available at Rosmarin's website www.jpsych.com, though hard statistics are not easily accessible. Since its inception, nearly 2,000 individuals around the world have participated in JPSYCH's empirical studies of religiousness and psychological variables.

Bowling Green State University is one of a few centers of psychological research on spirituality and religion, being home to two full time faculty members and about 15 graduate students conducting research in the area.

Rosmarin and Pargament are currently conducting a [web-based study](#) to investigate whether spirituality and religion can be used to help Jews suffering from worry and stress. The study is part of a body of research on web-based treatments which do not involve an actual psychotherapist. The therapy system being tested seeks to empower clients by giving them skills so that they can reduce their own stress. Jewish individuals currently suffering from anxiety can receive free treatment by participating in the on-line study.

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