

TRN Update – Rockland County TRN

Life shattered for Gelly Asovski, LCSW-R RPT-S, with a traumatic car accident 17 years ago. A collision with a Ryder truck barreling down a steep grade toward her vehicle in a heavy downpour began Gelly's EMDR journey. She woke up after the impact with her car smashed into a guardrail on the side of a mountaintop where she had planned to hike a section of the Appalachian Trail. While no bones were broken, in the hospital she learned she had sustained deep tissue damage throughout her body.

The mother of a 4 and 6 year old at the time, Gelly focused her recovery on overcoming serious vertigo and all the ensuing medical issues. She found that while she worked strenuously on healing physically, her mind could not move past the traumatic accident and the pain of her injuries. Despite immediately starting to drive again, driving near trucks and in the rain would cause her body to physically veer away from any truck she encountered. Over the next five years, her days became a carousel of medical appointments, physical therapy and traditional behavioral health therapy. She wondered if she would ever function normally as a mom and therapist again. Then a clinical colleague told Asovski about EMDR therapist Victoria Britt, LCSW, LMFT who had helped one of her clients.

Life Changing Therapy

Gelly began EMDR treatment and found after three months that she felt safe and normal, and could drive without any terror, in rain and even truck traffic. She says, "EMDR transformed my emotional suffering into peace and strength." She was so awed by the power of EMDR to heal human suffering that she worked with the EMDR Institute to bring Dr. Gary Quinn from Israel to her hamlet of Monsey, part of Ramapo, New York, to train her and other NY Orthodox therapists in EMDR therapy. She and several of her colleagues became certified in EMDR and some, including Asovski, went on to become EMDR consultants.

Treating a Traumatized Community

In 2019, Asovski was galvanized to bring EMDR healing to her community due to a horrific hate crime. Anti-Semitic violence had surged in the New York area over 2019. Violence, some described as domestic terrorism, filled the press, including the stab and slash assault on a man steps from a Synagogue in Ramapo in November, followed by a deadly gunfight between gunmen and police at a Jersey City kosher grocery that killed six in early December, and Tiffany Harris slapping three Jewish women on a Brooklyn corner during Hanukkah in late December.

Violence returned to Asovski's community December 28, 2019, when a man wielding a machete stormed a Hanukkah party at the home of Rabbi Chaim Rottenberg, in Monsey, NY. Five of the seventy attendees, which included both adults and children, were stabbed. One person died of their injuries. Asovski reached out to help the

traumatized survivors by contacting the Rabbi's assistant the next day and started treating many of the large families with children of all ages. Asovski and a colleague did a stabilization session and RDI for 28 women survivors in the immediate aftermath of the hate crime. She went on to treat 100 clients in the family systems over the next 30 days due to her Yiddish language skills. Asovski canvassed her EMDR trained colleagues to treat individuals in need across the area to conduct R-TEP and G-TEP sessions.

After the Hanukkah hate crime, Asovski had enough with the onslaught of anti-Semitism. Gelly realized a team approach would better serve emergency treatment scenarios, and ensure there was a roster of local EMDR therapists prepared to respond in the event of another incident. Many Tristate TRN's had offered help during the after effects of the hate crimes. She had long known of Trauma Recovery HAP, and reached out to form the Rockland County TRN. After much delay due to her own COVID illness, the TRN officially launched in August of 2020 with the mission to address hate crimes.

Her group of ten therapists is particularly suited to address hate crimes against the Jewish community, but ready to respond to tragedies from violence or natural disaster across Rockland County. The group uses the full 8 phase EMDR protocol, R-TEP, G-TEP and EMD, in 6 to 10 pro bono sessions. [You can find out more from Gelly Asovski here.](#)