JQY

2020 IN REVIEW

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO VIRTUAL SUPPORT

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JQY'S COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO VIRTUAL SUPPORT

WHAT FOLLOWS IS A BREAKDOWN AND DESCRIPTION OF OUR 2020 JQY PROGRAMING.

It is an opportunity to learn about our innovative activities as well as how JQY adapts to the challenges we face. We hope that this paper can be helpful to other organizations, youth services, therapists, community organizers, rabbis, and institutional leaders looking for best practices in supporting vulnerable youth populations during quarantine and stay at home times.

WHILE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC MIGHT BE UNDER CONTROL IN 2021, THERE WILL LIKELY BE FUTURE PUBLIC SCARES AND SHUT DOWNS.

Documenting our processes this year will help us develop templates for success that we can all build upon now and in the future.

THANK YOU
to all who have supported JQY throughout this extremely difficult year. We are incredibly blessed to have foundational funding and the support of many many individuals and alumni who make this work possible. 40% of our $512,000 budget comes from personal donations, with an average gift of $85. We invite you to join us and support the continuity of this life-saving work by making a donation at jqyouth.org/donate.

We are forever grateful for the generosity of our community.

JQY

MISSION

JQY (Jewish Queer Youth) is a nonprofit organization supporting and empowering LGBTQ youth in the Jewish community, with a special focus on teens and young adults from Orthodox, Chasidic, and Sephardic/Mizrahi homes.

VISION

JQY envisions a world in which no young person, regardless of Jewish denomination or community, feels alone, ostracized, or shamed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

VALUES

We provide crisis intervention, support services, and educational resources, guided by the conviction that access to mental health support should not be contingent upon religious or political beliefs. JQY honors the Jewish concept and philosophy of Eilu v'Eilu (both these and these), allowing us to create safe spaces where multiple truths are held and valued. At JQY, you do not have to choose between conflicting identities: your whole self belongs.

WHEN HOME IS NOT THE SAFEST SPACE TO BE YOURSELF

As the world responds to COVID-19 with important safety measures that include staying at home and sheltering in place, it is important to think about the young people who rely on resources outside of their homes in order to be themselves.

JQY PRIORITIZES LGBTQ TEENS FROM ORTHODOX, CHASIDIC, AND SEPHARDI/MIZRAHI HOMES WHO ARE MORE LIKELY TO FACE HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA IN THEIR HOUSEHOLDS.

The majority of JQY participants are not yet "out" to their parents. They often rely on their "chosen family" at school, on campus, or at JQY events for the opportunity to be their full, authentic selves. The pandemic has temporarily taken away these spaces which means quarantining at home can present serious challenges and risks for these young people.

JQY CRISIS AND SUPPORT RESOURCES ARE NEEDED MORE THAN EVER. More than just simply responding to these new challenges, JQY has monitored, studied, and learned how our virtual programming can be more responsible, impactful, and accessible. We have developed a comprehensive approach to virtual support that includes crisis, clinical, and communal resources that are specially designed to meet the needs of Orthodox, Chasidic, and Sephardi/Mizrahi LGBTQ+ teens. These new programs will not only continue in 2021 but will be integrated with our in-person programming once the pandemic subsides. At JQY, once a support resource is offered, we believe we must find ways to responsibly continue that resource.

JQY'S VIRTUAL REACH THIS YEAR

1,031

WE CREATED ZOOM PROGRAMMING FOR 1,031 INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS

66

WE HOSTED 66 VIRTUAL DROP-IN CENTER AND GROUP THERAPY SESSIONS

219

WE CONNECTED WITH 219 YOUTH VIA OUR CRISIS CALL/TEXT LINE

4,860

WE'VE REACHED 4,860 VIEWS ON OUR WEEKLY JEWISH QUEER COOKING SHOW

103

WE'VE SUPPORTED YOUTH OVER 103 SESSIONS WITH JQY LICENSED SOCIAL WORKERS

WE CONTINUED TO SHOW LGBTQ TEENS FROM ORTHODOX HOMES:

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

JQY 2020 VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

- THE VIRTUAL DROP-IN CENTER
- CLOSEUP CONVERSATIONS & SMALL GROUP THERAPY
- SPECIAL COMMUNITY EVENTS
- THE JQY CRISIS HOPE-LINE & TEXT LINE
- ONE-ON-ONE VIRTUAL CLINICAL CONSULTATIONS
- FIRESIDE CHAT OFFICE HOURS WITH JQY STAFF
- A WEEKLY JEWISH QUEER COOKING SHOW
- YIP FOR LGBTQ GAP YEAR STUDENTS IN ISRAEL
- JQYU FOR JEWISH QUEER COLLEGE STUDENTS
- SHTULTZ FOR YIDDISH SPEAKING TEENS
- USED PHONE DRIVE TO INCREASE VIRTUAL ACCESS
- SCHOOL & MENTAL HEALTH TRAININGS

THE VIRTUAL DROP-IN CENTER

"DROPPING IN" ONLINE

JQY's in-person Drop-in Centers are our hallmark programs providing weekly safe spaces for LGBTQ youth ages 13-23. The Drop-in Center is a place where queer teens from Orthodox homes can access specially trained social workers, group support, health and safety resources, friendship and community opportunities, and free hot kosher meals. They are local, community-based programs that serve teens who are mostly not out to their parents and consequently, can not travel far. Prior to March 2020, JQY ran Drop-in Centers in Manhattan, Long Island, and was in the process of opening a new branch in New Jersey. When the pandemic hit, all in-person programming came to a halt and we were tasked with transforming the Drop-in Center from in-person to virtual platforms.

RUNNING THE DROP-IN CENTER ONLINE IS NOT AS EASY AS JUST CREATING A ZOOM GROUP.

The Drop-in program is a clinical resource for a highly at-risk population and as such, has multiple levels of security, accountability, reporting, and assessment. Closeted LGBTQ teens from Orthodox families risk visceral harm if outed or bullied. Unfortunately, this cohort is particularly targeted by hate groups against both Jewish people and queer people. The Drop-in center balances the need for low barriers to entry with security protocols ensuring that the resource is not exploited by those who wish our participants harm. Furthermore, all new members of the Drop-in Center must first undergo a comprehensive intake process with a JQY social worker. The intakes assess for self-harm, abuse, and suicidality. Subsequently, all returning Drop-in clients must answer a wellness survey each time before entering the Drop-in virtual space. These processes need to happen as teens arrive at the center because the nature of a Drop-in group is the ability to just "drop in" without previous applications or arduous preparation. It is also vital to respect that not all teens will want to participate in the nightly activity. Consequently, our Drop-in program must offer multiple rooms where clients can engage at their own comfort levels, while still being in a space facilitated by JQY mental health professionals.

Finally, accessibility tools including live transcription, chat capability, and call-in access must be offered for deaf participants, closeted teens who do not have the privacy in their homes to speak out loud, and youth who need to call in via phone do to restricted internet or technology. Incorporating all these elements into an online space is what makes the JQY Virtual Drop-in Center so unique, impactful...and complicated. Through a process of trial, error, consultation, and evolution, we now have created a Virtual Drop-in Center that meets our complex needs.

THE DROP-IN PROCESS

THE WELCOME ZOOM ROOM

Teens first enter a "welcome Zoom room" where they are greeted by our staff welcomer who guides them through initial registration, assesses for security, and triages for next steps. New participants are sent to individual break out rooms for an intake consultation with a JQY social worker. Returning participants are given wellness surveys, the option to sign up for a one-on-one check-in, and the special link and weekly password for the inner Drop-in Zoom room. Guests who do not fit the age requirements are politely referred to more appropriate resources.

Both intake and wellness data are incorporated into our protected database, which streamlines narrative accountability for each client. This allows us to know and monitor each individual's specific needs. Before entering the Drop-in Zoom room, participants are able to schedule private check-ins with JQY social workers – these can either take place during Drop-in hours or for the week ahead. This way vulnerable youth are immediately given a connection to free mental health professional consultations, should they need.

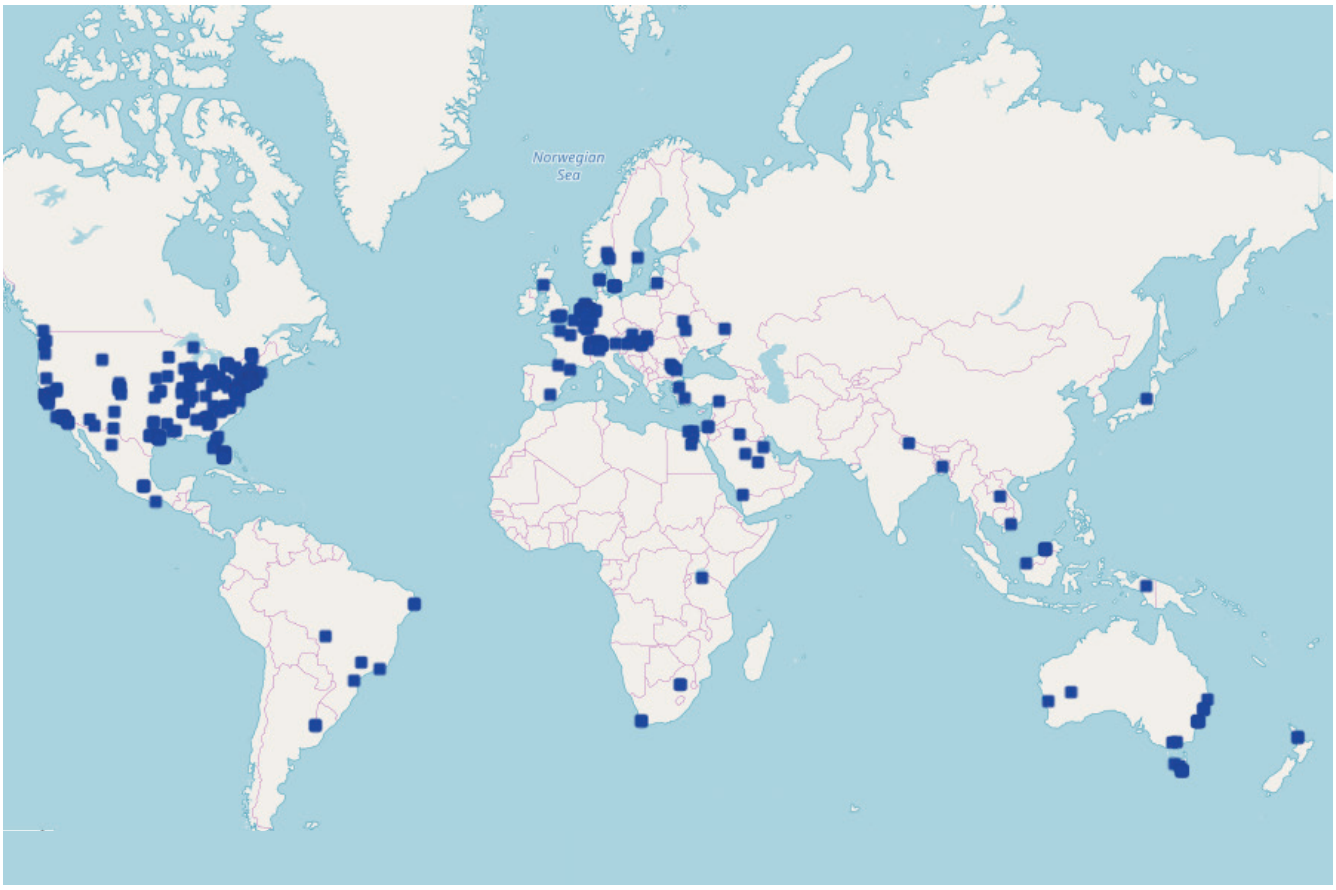




THE MAIN DROP-IN ZOOM ROOM

Once teens enter the main Drop-in space, they join a group of their peers in a social worker facilitated ongoing icebreaker activity that encourages participants to open up, feel seen, connect to each other, and build peer relationships. Teens are also given the option to join breakout rooms within the main Zoom group for more directed programming, which might include speakers, games, health information, and even content watch parties. Each week we have a new theme and special program devised to keep the virtual Drop-in Center fresh and exciting. As Drop-in nears the end, all participants are moved back into the main Drop-in space where we have a final share, administer closing surveys, and inform participants about crisis resources and upcoming events.

GEOGRAPHY OF THE VIRTUAL DROP-IN CENTER



Locations of participants at JQY virtual events based on zip code

In order to run this sophisticated and multi-pronged program successfully, JQY has expanded both our part-time administration and social worker staff hours. Our virtual Drop-in Center has served over 1,050 individuals since the beginning of the Pandemic. The average number of participants per session has increased 15% from our in-person programing. Participants at our virtual Drop-in Center include teens from multiple states, countries, and continents. From Miami, Baltimore, Houston, and Chicago to Jerusalem, Argentina, London, and Paris, LGBTQ Jewish Youth from all around the world now join our New York queer Jewish community, making our Virtual Drop-in program more diverse, more expansive, and more inclusive.

CLOSEUP CONVERSATIONS

CONNECTING IN SMALLER DIRECTED GROUPS

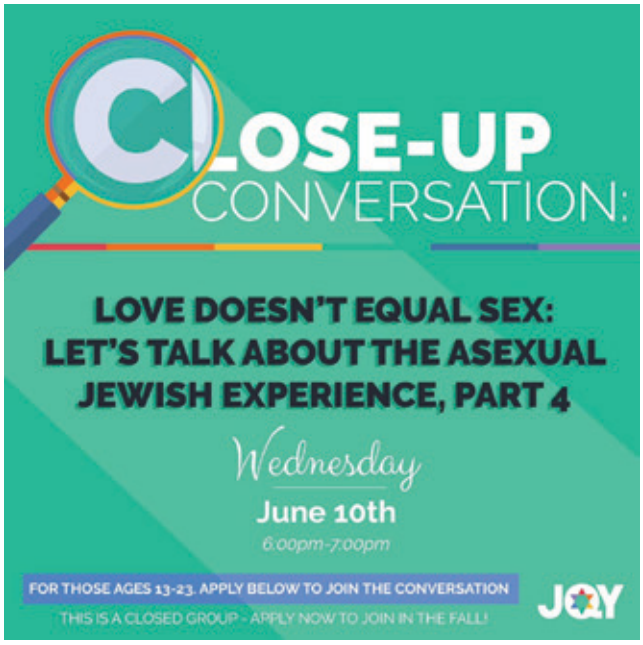
While the Virtual Drop-in center does offer new opportunities including national and international reach, it also presents unique challenges that have led us to create a new virtual program called Closeup Conversations. As reported by many organizations serving teens, there is a new phenomenon called "Zoom Fatigue". This is exemplified by a growing frustration (and sometimes even animosity) to Zoom programming over time. By early summer, we assessed that this was impacting our Virtual Drop-in center program. Furthermore, with the expanded reach of a virtual platform, Drop-in sessions became broader, larger, and less identity, geographic, or affinity focused. This presented as an issue for our members who found themselves a minority within the greater minority of the JQY population. It became easier to fall through the cracks and some began to feel that their unique needs were not being met.

In consultation with facilitation experts at UJA and other nonprofit leaders serving youth, we learned that smaller, more focused closed groups that revolve around specific personal issues that are relevant to teens are less subject to Zoom fatigue than larger open zoom events. In July 2020, we introduced Closeup Conversations. These are groups that address a particular concern in the lives of LGBTQ Jewish youth from Orthodox families and require members to apply and commit to meeting once a week, with the same small group, for an eight-week period. The weekly support groups are limited to ten participants each. Every group is facilitated by specially trained mental health professionals who are culturally competent and proficient in both LGBTQ and Orthodox sensitivities and norms.

We have intentionally devised the subject matters of these groups to resonate with minority populations within the greater populations we serve. Each group targets unique needs and provides a more intimate, continuous, and responsive small group environment to process these complex experiences.

THE GROUPS WE ARE PLANNING OR HAVE PILOTED INCLUDE:

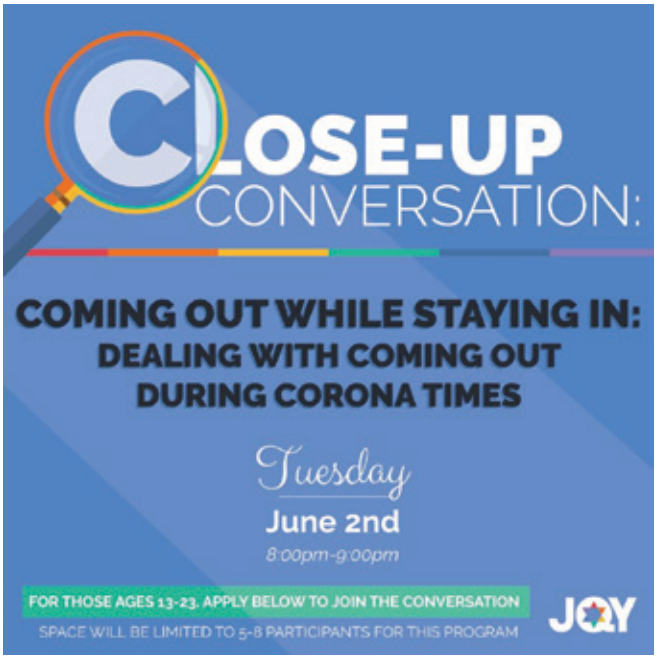
"TALKING TO YOUR ORTHODOX PARENTS ABOUT GENDER" which is geared toward trans, nonbinary, and gender expansive JQYers.
"THE ASEXUAL JEWISH EXPERIENCE" which is a place where ace-identifying JQY members feel that their narratives are centered.
"BI ERASURE IN QUEER ORTHODOX ADVOCACY"
"REMAINING ORTHODOX AGAINST ALL ODDS"
"COMING OUT IN THE TIME OF COVID"

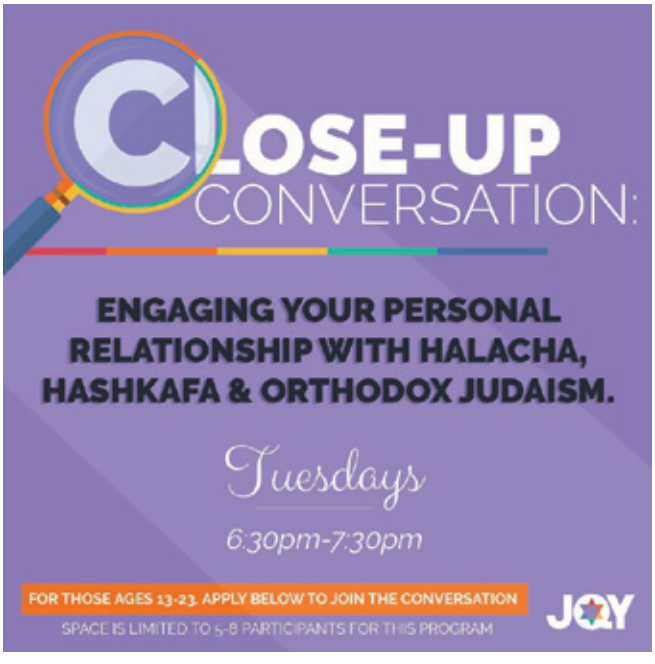


Admission to each of the groups is rolling and at the end of eight weeks, a new eight week group begins with 10 new participants. Each Closeup Conversation topic will have a corresponding group on Discord, a unique social networking platform that cultivates dynamic and interactive communities. Graduates of each cycle of the Closeup Conversation groups will gain access to the corresponding Discord group, allowing it to grow into a larger sub-support community. By the end of one year we will have completed six cycles amassing to 60 members in each Discord group. These 60 youth in each group will be invited to a special gathering celebration event. Graduates of the following year's Closeup Conversation groups will also join their Discord community, growing these organic communities into larger dynamic spaces.

Guided small group work on topics like speaking to Orthodox parents about gender, or being an asexual Orthodox teen are completely unique to JQY and not offered anywhere else. This is particularly important given that trans, nonbinary, and asexual teens in Orthodox families face particular risks and have the least amount of targeted programing.

We currently run two Closeup Conversations per week, and anticipate that we will do 3-4 groups per week for six cycles a year. This means that at then end of the year we will have 60 teens per closeup topic, and the program will have served 180-240 teens. The program has been incredibly successful with full attendance and the highest feedback scores of any JQY program.





JQY SPECIAL COMMUNITY EVENTS

GOING BIG WHILE STAYING HOME

Another established strategy to combat Zoom fatigue is the creation of one-off large special virtual events that inspire excitement, intrigue, collaboration, and FOMO (fear of missing out). This gives the teens something to look forward to and can, in some ways, make up for the lack of large in-person gatherings such as parades, proms, and holiday parties.

WE HAVE LEARNED AND INCORPORATED THREE KEY COMPONENTS TO ENSURE SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL MEGA-EVENTS.

1. INVEST IN BOOKING CELEBRITY GUESTS THAT HAVE VISCERAL MEANING TO OUR TEENS' QUEER JEWISH NARRATIVES. We want to know which musicians our teens are listening to. Who are their favorite influencers? Which performance artists are making the most impact?

2. DON'T USE THIS CELEBRITY TO ENTERTAIN FUNDERS ONLY. The teens should know that when we pull out the big wigs, it is for them and them alone. They deserve our best, and they know when the special guests, money, effort, and time are diverted to funders. Teens can sense authenticity in this way.

3. COLLABORATE WITH AS MANY ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS AS POSSIBLE. Teens want to know that this is not just another event, but that this is THE event. If another organization is doing a similar event for a similar audience, we've found the best practice to be contacting that organization and consolidating events. While for in-person events it could be argued that the more events the better, successful virtual mega-events for teens rely on one main program for the whole community.

JEW YORK PRIDE

Our first Virtual special event was called Virtual Jew York Pride. Taking place on the last Sunday in June, the program occupied the space usually held by New York's Pride Parade and our annual pre-parade Jewish queer youth brunch and marching contingent. We followed all three key components to make this event a major success. With a core collaboration between major New York queer Jewish initiatives including Keshet, CBST, JCC Manhattan, BBYO, and UJA, we were able to garner nearly thirty cosponsoring organizations for this event. Furthermore, we made the case to our partners to invest more funds than we all would regularly spend on Pride, because it was essential to book the best and most impactful celebrity figures. Our efforts paid off and we were able to get Troye Sivan, the most high profile queer Jewish young star in music today, as well as Sasha Velour, the winner of Rupaul's Drag race (the most popular show among queer youth) who just happens to also be queer and Jewish.



The event was a huge success with over 800 registrants and thousands more views on our shared Jew York Pride streaming content. The feedback for this program was also some of the best we have seen. This was an example of understanding that with traditional Pride events being canceled, queer Jewish teens were missing something very essential. We took it upon ourselves to create something truly special in its place.

We like to think of this as the magic of JQY.

USING THIS TEMPLATE, WE CONVENED FOUR MORE VIRTUAL SPECIAL EVENTS IN 2020.

Mid-summer we facilitated a virtual event called **"MOMMY, TATTY, I'M A DRAG QUEEN"** – a community conversation about talking to your Orthodox family about drag. The event starred Orthodox drag sensation Lady Sinagaga and her parents. In the fall we ran **THE VIRTUAL PRE-YOM KIPPUR MUSICAL TESHUVA EVENT** event with Jewish singing sensation, Neshama Carlebach, and author, Rabbi Avrohom Mlotek. On Sukkot we convened a massive **INTERNATIONAL QUEER JEWISH VIRTUAL SUKKAH HOP** where queer Jewish teens and young adults from all over the world were able to visit unique virtual Sukkahs, each hosted by different LGBTQ Jewish organizations from around the world. Finally, this winter JQY produced a landmark role model event for youth called **LGBTQ ORTHODOX WEDDINGS & SIMCHAS** featuring a live Q&A with four Orthodox queer couples who were recently featured in the Jewish Week and Forward Magazine. Each event built on the other, and resulted in a year full of unforgettable milestones and iconic moments for LGBTQ Jewish youth.





We have intentionally devised the subject matters of these groups to resonate with minority populations within the greater populations we serve. Each group targets unique needs and provides a more intimate, continuous, and responsive small group environment to process these complex experiences.

THE JQY CRISIS HOPE-LINE & TEXT LINE

THERE WHEN YOU NEED IT MOST, HOW YOU NEED IT MOST

Since 2017, JQY has been running a crisis hopeline staffed by trained JQY social workers. We usually average about 5 crisis calls a week during the spring and summer, and 8 calls a week during the Fall and Winter Jewish holiday seasons. As the stay at home orders began in the Spring, we noticed a sharp decrease in crisis calls. This initially confused us because we knew from our virtual support programming that teens were going through a hard time and experiencing trauma. Family tension and mental illness were flaring. It became clear that the reason why the hopeline was not ringing as much was because of accessibility.

CLOSETED TEENS SHELTERING IN ORTHODOX HOMES HAVE FEWER PRIVATE SPACES WHERE THEY CAN FEEL SAFE ENOUGH TO TALK ABOUT THEIR STRUGGLES OUT LOUD.

In response to this challenge, JQY expanded its crisis hopeline resource to include a fully responsive texting service, also staffed by JQY social workers. As soon as the teens found out about our crisis texting capabilities, the program became markedly busier than years past. We began to average around 11 crisis interactions per week, and 19 crisis interactions a week during the fall and winter Jewish holiday seasons. While crisis text support is generally not as easily navigated as a traditional crisis call, our social workers have used this opportunity to keep the connection with these vulnerable youth alive. We've also worked with the youth on setting aside times where they can feel comfortable enough to reach out via phone. This fall and winter Jewish holiday season we also noticed an increase in crisis calls related to suicide attempts and an increase in hospitalizations as referred in these crisis calls. This is unfortunately in line with the general increase in suicidality among teens during the pandemic. In response we are expanding our crisis line staff and offering enhanced suicide response training to make sure we are as responsible as possible.

ONE-ON-ONE CLINICAL VIRTUAL CONSULTATIONS

ACCESSING FREE WEEKLY INDIVIDUAL THERAPY

At JQY all of our resources have to be free because we serve closeted youth who cannot simply ask their parents for money to pay for an LGBTQ program. Similarly any receipt from a credit card or insurance document could out them to their parents and put them at risk. This prevents many of our teens from seeing therapists. Unfortunately, even the ones that do have therapists often fear coming out to their therapists lest they feel judged. Some are concerned that their therapist will tell their parents. Others complain that their Orthodox therapists actively discourage LGBTQ identity and are motivated by their religious beliefs. At JQY, we believe that every LGBTQ teen struggling with family acceptance deserves a competent therapist.

Before the pandemic, JQY offered free in-person weekly individual consultations with members of our mental health team. This opportunity was limited to teens who could travel into Manhattan during the limited available work hours of our social workers. Consequently, many teens could not take advantage of this service.

As in-person services began to shut down, virtual therapy consultations began to be normalized in the general zeitgeist, which affected both the interest and potential access to therapy at JQY. We received more requests for therapy appointments and our social workers could give us more flexible hours given that they could practice remotely. This encouraged us to expand this program and build out our free therapy services.

TODAY, WE ARE THE ONLY ORGANIZATION IN THE WORLD THAT OFFERS FREE ONGOING INDIVIDUAL THERAPY SPECIFICALLY FOR LGBTQ JEWISH YOUTH.

JQY participants can sign up for therapy hours in the beginning of each week or set a consistent time for a weekly check in. Additionally, both the crisis line and the Drop-in Center intake processes are feeders into our one-on-one weekly social work check-ins. We have also started offering free virtual family therapy for families looking for help navigating their child's LGBTQ identity and coming out. JQY has been consistently increasing our social workers' hours to be able to accommodate this growing virtual program. We are in the midst of expanding our social work team to make sure that any one of our teens who needs a weekly check-in with our social work team can get the support they deserve.

FIRESIDE CHAT WITH JQY EXECUTIVE STAFF

"MAY I SPEAK WITH YOUR MANAGER PLEASE"

When providing services to teens, it's important to be aware that adolescents are prone to question the process, suggest programmatic changes, and challenge authority. At JQY, we encourage this kind of engagement. We want our participants to feel like they can provide direct feedback to the executive staff on any issue relating to JQY. Additionally, many new members have a lot of questions about JQY and need to better understand the organization before they can feel comfortable and safe.

Before the pandemic, there were limited opportunities for JQY members to directly meet with the Executive and Clinical director regarding organizational feedback, complaints, suggestions, and questions. While teens could email executive staff members and schedule phone calls with them, we did not have a designated place where clients were encouraged to talk about JQY with the people running the organization.



Our shift to virtual programming inspired us to create the weekly Fireside Chat virtual office hours. Every Monday at 6:30pm eastern, anyone can log into our Fireside Zoom group and pose their questions, comments, or complaints about JQY to Executive Director, Rachael Fried, and Clinical Director, Mordechai Levovitz. This is not a clinical hour and there is no intake process.

THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERYONE TO FEEL HEARD AND GET TO KNOW AND INFLUENCE THE ORGANIZATION'S DECISION MAKERS.

Because of our Fireside Chats, we have gotten some great programmatic suggestions from teens that we will be putting into action in 2021. Additionally, we became aware of blind spots in our support strategies and got a better sense of whose needs were not being met. During the election period we heard a lot of conservative Trump supporters who expressed feeling isolated and judged at JQY. This enabled us to be more intentional about making sure that support was never contingent upon political belief at JQY. All in all, the Fireside Chats are an important outlet for our members and is a vital tool for the executive staff to keep making JQY better, safer, and more welcoming. This is certainly a virtual program that we will be keeping far after the pandemic is over.

A WEEKLY JEWISH QUEER COOKING SHOW

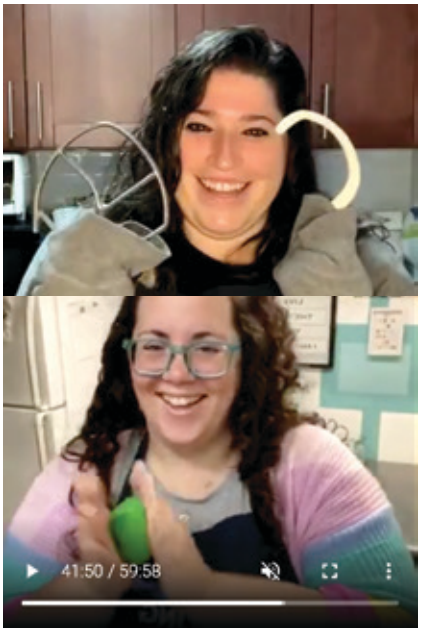
QUEER JEWISH COOKING WITH LOVE

In a time where feeling connected is so rare and valuable, we wanted to offer weekly live video content where participants can tune into familiar JQY faces doing silly queer Jewish things together. JQY members can drop by, say hello, see their friends watching too, and enjoy the shenanigans. We developed the concept of a cooking show where our JQY resident baker tries to teach our JQY administrative staff how to create queer Jewish food. Every Tuesday at noon, our show Tasty Tuesday airs live on Instagram. Live viewership has been consistently growing every week, as well as views of the recordings of each show.

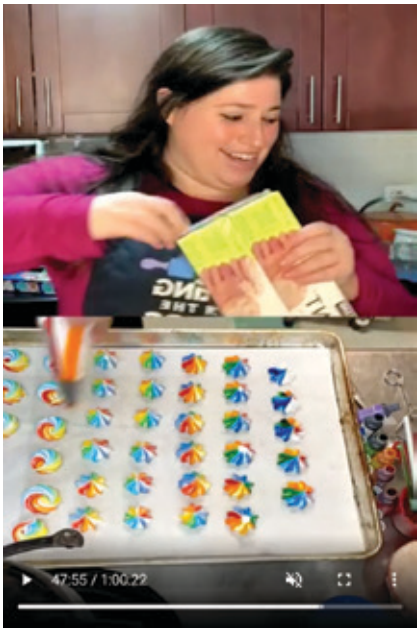
THE SUCCESS OF TASTY TUESDAY HAS TAUGHT US ABOUT THE VALUE OF SIMPLE SHARED ENTERTAINMENT WITH PEOPLE YOU CARE ABOUT.

It is the lightest of our programs, but has become vital in our comprehensive support approach.

We will be adding another virtual live weekly queer Jewish themed show to our calendar in 2021 that will also be available to listen to on podcast platforms. The show will be called School's Out, and it will be about the lives of queer youth in different Orthodox high schools. The shift to dynamic content creation is how we stay ahead of social trends and empower teens to utilize and enjoy this content on their own time and in their own space as is convenient to each individual.







YIP FOR LGBTQ GAP YEAR STUDENTS IN ISRAEL

THIS YEAR IN JERUSALEM

The Yeshiva Inclusion Project (YIP) is a resource for LGBTQ Orthodox students applying to and studying in Israel gap-year yeshivas and seminaries.

YIP AIMS TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALLY TAILORED GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FOR HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS TO ENABLE THE MOST POSITIVE AND SUPPORTIVE JEWISH GAP-YEAR EXPERIENCE POSSIBLE.

All guidance is based on our research, conversations with Yeshiva hanhala (administration), and the collective experience of past LGBTQ students. YIP also serves as a way for these LGBTQ students to connect to each other while studying in Israel and access JQY support throughout. The pandemic has introduced new policies in these Yeshiva programs limiting opportunities for students to leave their campuses and preventing students from meeting with students from other schools or accessing off campus in-person resources in Israel. This presents a unique challenge for queer gap-year yeshiva students who rely on both their connections with other JQYers studying in Israel and LGBTQ Israeli support resources for connection, safety, and support.

JQY has met this challenge by creating a virtual meeting place for LGBTQ gap-year Yeshiva students in Israel. We run a JQY social worker facilitated WhatsApp group for these students and host monthly Zoom meet-ups, post night seder discussions, and will eventually host cafe and restaurants meet-ups once the pandemic subsides.

YIP representatives continue to virtually meet with Yeshiva and Seminary rabbis and leaders to assess the safety of each school for LGBTQ students. The collected information is stored in our database allowing for LGBTQ high school students to make more informed decisions when choosing a gap-year program.

JQYU FOR JEWISH QUEER COLLEGE STUDENTS

WHEN THE INTERNET IS YOUR CAMPUS

JQYU (JQY UNIVERSITY) IS A CROSS-CAMPUS NETWORK FOR LGBTQ JEWISH COLLEGE STUDENTS. JQYU serves as an umbrella community for queer Jewish campus organizations as well as queer Jewish individual students. In 2019, JQYU began as a partnership between JQY, UJA-Federation of New York, Columbia-Barnard HIllel, CUNY Queens College Hillel, and NYU Bronfman Center. Together, we created Queer Jewish College student Shabbatons, picnics, campus think tanks, and holiday events. The JQYU students formed their own JQYU student council and launched a Jewish queer college newsletter called "Pride and Prejewdice". JQYU also created a fund open to all queer Jewish college students to cultivate Jewish life on campus and form new queer Jewish clubs and initiatives in their respective universities. During the pandemic, JQYU has supported four virtual college events, one outdoor socially-distanced picnic, and is partnering with over 10 Hillels across the country on creating a national queer cross campus Virtual Purim Drag Ball.



In 2020, JQYU helped to fund and empower the Yeshiva University Pride Alliance, YU's first LGBTQ student organization. Because Yeshiva University won't yet recognize the Pride Alliance as an official club, they rely on funding and resources from outside, making it a perfect fit for JQYU. JQYU works closely together with Yeshiva University students to fight for inclusion, equality, representation, and safety on campus. In December 2020, JQY worked with Yeshiva University students to organize a landmark college event called "Being LGBTQ+ in an Orthodox World". The event would be the first time in eleven years that Yeshiva University students and alumni held a public event regarding the experience of being queer in Yeshiva University. The event had 953 audience participants and has already been credited as a huge success, likely to improve the safety and atmosphere for LGBTQ students on the YU campus. The program was recorded and is accessible on the JQY website.

SHTULTZ FOR YIDDISH SPEAKING, CHASSIDIC, & YESHIVISH TEENS

JQY FEELS LIKE HOME, NO MATTER HOW RELIGIOUS THAT HOME IS

Shtultz is JQY's newest support initiative that focuses on youth from Ultra-Orthodox, Yeshivish, and Chasidic families. Some may not speak English, might have little exposure to the secular world, and dress in religious garb that may make them feel different from the other teens at JQY. Queer Chasidic youth are one the most disadvantaged demographics in the queer Jewish community. It is essential that when they join JQY they do not feel "othered" and can easily learn and understand all the new queer terminology surrounding coming out as LGBTQ.





The Shtultz program makes sure all of its online and print literature is translated into Yiddish. Messages are formulated with this population in mind, teaching the basics about sexuality and gender identity in ways that are meaningful and relevant. Shtultz also uses its platform to advocate and tell the stories of these youth. At Shtultz events, LGTBQ Chassidic youth will see and meet teens that look and sound them. While many of Shtultz's marketing initiatives are not online because so many ultra-Orthodox youth do not have access to the internet, with the help of JQY's used phone drive, Shtultz has been building an online presence for this population, featuring Zoom events, Instagram campaigns, and upcoming virtual safer sex seminars in Yiddish.

USED PHONE DRIVE TO INCREASE VIRTUAL ACCESS

ACCESS TO SUPPORT MEANS A LIFELINE TO HOPE



Today virtual connection is the only way for LGBTQ youth to access JQY resources. Without full access to a smartphone, the internet, and Zoom capabilities, many queer youth from Orthodox, Chasidic, and Sephardi/Mizrahi homes cannot reach the support that they need. While our JQY virtual resources have expanded, they are only accessible to those who have access to smartphones and unrestricted internet. Unfortunately, some of our most at-risk members in the Orthodox and Chassidic communities are not allowed smartphones and have Kosher phones with internet filters that block all social media platforms and LGBTQ websites. In other times, these youth have found computers in libraries or have found their way to our in-person programming. Today, they are left without any access to the support resources they so desperately need.

WE REALIZED THAT OLD PHONES CAN BE A NEW LIFELINE FOR TEENS TO CONNECT TO VIRTUAL SUPPORT.

We launched a used phone drive collecting smart devices and legally giving the technology to the youth who need it most. We figured if we can get them phones that can access JQY virtual support resources, they can find public WiFi areas where they will be able to connect to personal and group support. Through the used phone drive, JQY makes sure that vulnerable queer Jewish youth do not just have great virtual programming, but that those facing the largest risks can actually access these resources.

SCHOOL & MENTAL HEALTH TRAININGS

EXPERIENCE SHARED MEANS TRAUMA PREVENTED

JQY is the only organization in the world with over ten years of clinical experience serving LGBTQ youth from Orthodox homes. This experience has translated into best practices, data points, cultural competency, and expertise unique to JQY. Our trainings for schools, leaders, and mental health professionals are an essential part of our mission to not only serve as a healing resource for traumatized teens, but to help prevent this trauma altogether. While JQY has trained at over 25 Orthodox institutions and over 700 Orthodox educators, mental health professionals, and Jewish leaders, there is still a taboo among more right wing communities about attending an LGBTQ sensitivity training.

VIRTUAL TRAININGS ALLOW FOR PARTICIPANTS TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS AND ATTEND A TRAINING FROM THE COMFORT AND PRIVACY OF THEIR OWN HOME.

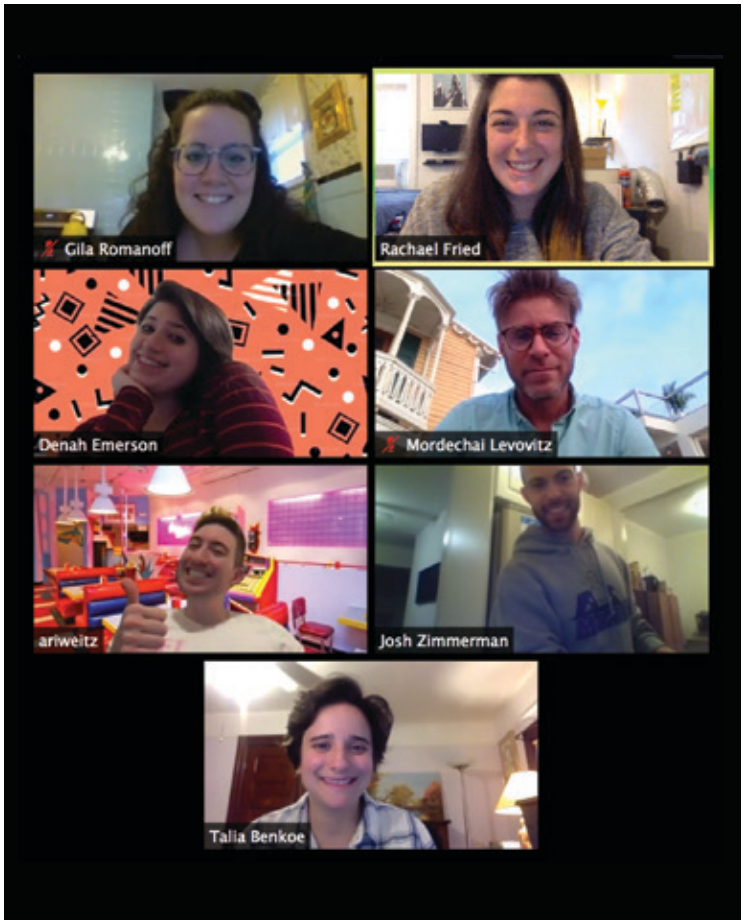
2020 was the first year that JQY ran a training for an Orthodox middle school. We facilitated seminars for both the staff and students – some as young as eleven years old. Being able to intervene at the age when bullying is shown to be the worst was particularly impactful and indicative of where LGBTQ trainings are heading in the future.

Virtual trainings have also opened many doors that were once closed to JQY. In the Fall semester of 2020, for the first time ever, Yeshiva University undergraduate schools green lit a mental health based virtual training with JQY clinical supervisor, Dr. Sara Gluck, and a virtual LGBTQ sensitivity training for students with JQY's Executive Director, Rachael Fried.

Additionally, JQY has used the summer of 2020 to begin developing the largest and most comprehensive summary of all scientific research with respect to the risks, trends, and treatments that affect LGBTQ teens from highly religious families. Information from this project has already been shared with major Orthodox rabbinic institutions looking for the latest science and data on this population. We hope to publish our findings, as well as use the significant amount of data collected from our programming to build on this research in 2021.

THE JQY TEAM

IT TAKES A VILLAGE



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