

SPIEGEL SEMINAR ON ADDICTION – Scenarios

March 24, 2009

1. There is a father in your congregation who frequently drives the Hebrew school or youth group car pool, is sometimes seen to be a bit "tipsy" at synagogue events. Some of the children in the carpool report stories of his driving being "scary". He is a prominent member of the board. No one wants to address the problem as they don't want to offend him. What steps would you take to address the problem?
2. You are a local advisor to NFTY. At a week-night event, you observe one of the high school students leaving the program repeatedly to go to the bathroom. You decide to follow him, and see that he's snorting something. Immediately, you confront him, angrily. He tries to explain to you that he only takes drugs in order to stay up late to finish his homework and study for exams. What do you do? Which other people (if any) do you involve?
3. On Yom Kippur, you give a sermon about healthy living, encouraging everyone to try losing weight by adjusting their diet and exercising more frequently. You cite recent studies on obesity and recent documentaries about the food industry. Several congregants come to you and indicate that they were offended by the approach that you took and they feel that you are insensitive to the realities of food addiction. They implore you to further action. What do you do? What is the role of the rabbi to deal with these kinds of issues?
4. You are the Administrator/Rabbi of a congregation and a woman in your congregation has come to you in order to ask for an extension on her and her husband's dues. She explains that her husband likes to gamble and has had a string of bad luck lately. It normally doesn't impact their financial situation much but in this case, he's been on quite a losing streak. She hopes you will understand and allow for an extension on their dues. You are surprised to hear of this because her husband is a very charismatic person and has been very generous with the congregation in the past. What do you do?