

# 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## Twin Cities Jewish Community Mental Health Education Conference

FREE AND  
OPEN  
TO ALL!



Oct. 19, 2025 from 9 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.

*Temple Israel, Minneapolis*

**Keynote Speaker Melody Moezzi**

*"From Adversity to Advocacy"*

This conference is a collaboration of



# WELCOME

We are honored to commemorate 25 years of learning, connection, and growth of the Annual Twin Cities Jewish Community Mental Health Education Conference. This significant milestone reflects a profound and enduring commitment to supporting the mental well-being of the Twin Cities Jewish and broader community.

In a time when uncertainty and collective stress affect every aspect of our lives, this year's conference offers a thoughtfully curated lineup of speakers and programs designed to address our community's most pressing mental health needs. Renowned clinicians, lived-experience advocates, and spiritual leaders will guide us in exploring pathways to hope, healing, and practical resources. Together, we'll create an inclusive space to learn, connect, and renew.

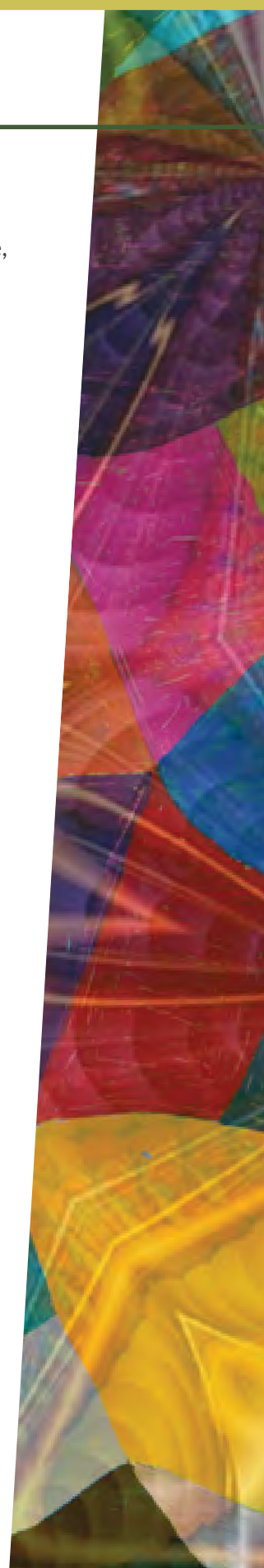
This conference is presented by Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis (JFCS) and Jewish Family Service of St. Paul (JFS), partners in improving mental health access, understanding, and education in the community. With generous support from community donors and partners, the conference continues to be **free and open to everyone**.

## SCHEDULE

9 a.m.	Registration check-in and Resource Fair open for browsing in Atrium
10 a.m.	Opening Welcome Address <i>Rabbi Zimmerman, Temple Israel</i> <i>Laurie Kramer, Founder of Mental Health Education Conference</i> <i>Kristi Murray, Director of Education &amp; Learning, JFCS Minneapolis</i> <i>Ruth Olkon, CEO, JFS St. Paul</i>
10:35 a.m.	Keynote Session - Melody Moezzi
11:35 a.m.	Lunch and Resource Fair
12:35 p.m.	Breakout Session One: #1-6
1:35 p.m.	Transition time
1:50 p.m.	Breakout Session Two: #7-12
2:50 p.m.	Transition time
3 p.m.	Closing - <i>Shir Harmony</i> musical performance accompanied by a candle lighting ceremony

# ADDITIONAL INFO

- When you register for the conference, you will receive a confirmation email. Prior to the conference, you will receive a reminder email with additional information.
- The in-person and virtual **Resource Fair**, available in the Resource Fair section of the Conference homepage, offers you the opportunity to check in with representatives and/or browse websites and contact agencies that can best suit your needs.
- You can access books and information from the Hennepin County Library at the conference. Also, look for a recommended mental health book list on the Conference homepage to read about the topics that are of interest to you.
- A **check-in room** is available for those who may need to take a short pause from complex conversations.
- Transition times allow you to get to the next scheduled opportunity, but also to meet self-care needs of stretching, eating, and staying hydrated. **Please bring a water bottle with you.**
- **Certificates of Attendance** can be found on the Conference homepage within five days following the conference.
- Individuals in need of **ASL accommodation** should contact Tabitha at [TDeRango@jfcsmpls.org](mailto:TDeRango@jfcsmpls.org) by **Sept. 30**.





A portrait of Melody Moezzi, a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, wearing a black leather jacket and sunglasses perched on her head. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred field of yellow autumn leaves.

# KEYNOTE

## *FROM ADVERSITY TO ADVOCACY*

### **Melody Moezzi**

What do you do when the world underestimates you simply because you're different? Our 2025 keynote speaker, Melody Moezzi, offers a powerful answer: "Let that be your fuel." As an activist, attorney, and award-winning author living with bipolar disorder, Melody has done just that—transforming adversity into advocacy. "Those of us with mental health conditions will surely have problems others don't," she says, "but we will also be able to see solutions where others can't." Join Melody as she shares how to thrive in a world not designed for everyone—and how to lead with love; even in the face of fear, anger, depression, anxiety, distraction, and isolation.

Melody Moezzi's latest book is *The Rumi Prescription: How an Ancient Mystic Poet Changed My Modern Manic Life*, for which she won the 2021 Wilbur Award. Her other books include *Haldol and Hyacinths: A Bipolar Life* and *War on Error: Real Stories of American Muslims*. Moezzi's writing has been published by "The New York Times," "The Guardian," "The Washington Post," "The American Scholar," "The Oxford American," and many other publications. She has also provided commentary on many radio and television outlets, including NPR, PBS, BBC, CNN, C-SPAN, PRI, and others. Moezzi is a graduate of Wesleyan University (BA), the Emory University School of Law (JD), and the Emory University Rollins School of Public Health (MPH). You can follow her work on her website [melodymoezzi.com](http://melodymoezzi.com)



## 1 Learning curve: Mental health in schools

Therapy in schools is highly effective and provides great partnership for educators, caregivers, and therapists. It moves beyond the basics of academics to create transformational care directly in the setting where kids spend the majority of their waking hours.



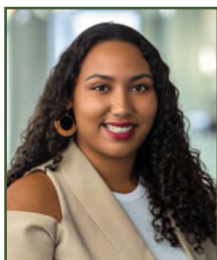
**Jenny Britton** has experience in elementary day treatment, in-home individual and family therapy, school-based individual and group therapy, children's mental health case management, outpatient therapy, and providing therapeutic services at a homeless shelter. Her areas of expertise include helping children who are severely emotionally disturbed, providing wrap-around services for children and families who have been exposed to trauma, and providing in-home family therapy. Jenny is trained in Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) and has a passion for treating the family as a whole to assist with long term and holistic healing.



**Jessica Mathwig-Olson** is the Washburn Center for Children Director of School-Based Services. She has 20 years of community mental health and leadership experience. In her clinical work, Jessica incorporates a strengths-based approach, along with mindfulness techniques, solution focused, and cognitive behavioral therapies to help clients with working through their issues. Her specialties include anxiety, depression, self-esteem, relationship issues, and substance abuse. For clients who request it, she explores with them how issues of spirituality can support their journey of healing. As a leader, Jessica is committed to remaining curious and agile while supporting her team in creating impact that aligns with the mission of Washburn Center.

## 2 Breaking barriers in the workplace: Communication, mental health, and inclusive team dynamics

"How can mental health be supported in the workplace, and what does communication have to do with it?" This session explores the "why" behind defensiveness, groupthink, and ego-driven reactions—and how these patterns impact both team cohesion and mental health. Through engaging discussion, psychoeducational insights, and role-play exercises, participants will reflect on their communication styles, learn to deliver and receive feedback with empathy, and examine how inclusive communication practices support psychological safety. Participants will walk away with practical tools for reducing conflict, improving emotional regulation, and creating an environment where difference is not only respected but leveraged for better outcomes.



**Brittany Clausen** is a dynamic speaker, business consultant, leadership coach, and the CEO of Envision Greatness, a consulting firm specializing in leadership development, inclusive workplace culture, and change management. Brittany brings a trauma-informed, equity-centered lens to her work with non-profits, government agencies, and mission-driven businesses. Her engaging, real-world approach challenges audiences to rethink leadership, shift organizational culture, and build more human-centered systems.

## 3 Never a safe bet: How gambling addiction and mental health impact each other

As access to gambling and its influences on society and communities increases, the need for problem gambling awareness becomes vital to ensure that those communities remain healthy. The typical gambler, now younger and more diverse, can also be affected by mental health issues, substance use disorders, and financial distress – all of which can co-occur with problematic gambling behavior. This presentation will include current trends in gambling – including sports and online betting – the signs of problem gambling, the gambling risk factors for those affected by mental health issues, common co-morbidities, treatment, and tools that are available, and the concept of low-risk guidelines and other prevention topics.



**Sonja Mertz** is the Community Educator for the Minnesota Alliance on Problem Gambling (MNAPG). Formerly a prevention research specialist with the Minnesota Prevention Resource Center, Sonja expands MNAPG's outreach efforts throughout Minnesota and develops programs specifically geared towards youth, young adults, families, and educators, while also promoting general awareness of gambling issues.

## 4 I Am Safe: Mind-body skills for teen mental health

*I Am Safe* is a trauma-responsive practice that teaches teens how to regulate their nervous systems and access inner safety. *I Am Safe* helps build resilience and restore hope. This session will help participants experience accessible, practical mind-body strategies they can share with teens in schools, families, synagogues, or youth programs. Understand how stress and trauma impact the adolescent brain and body and how mind-body skills can offer relief and repair. Participants can develop their own plan for sharing these practices as public mental health advocates within their communities. Whether you are a parent, educator, youth leader, or mental health professional, this session offers tools you can use immediately to support teen mental health with compassion, science, and hope.



**Kathy Flaminio, LGSW, MSW, E-RYT 200** is the founder and CEO of *movemindfully*® trainings, workshops, products, and curricula that teach trauma-responsive mind-body practices to support self-regulation, focus, and overall well-being. With a master's degree in social work, Kathy brings over 20 years of experience in Minneapolis Public Schools, working in both general and special education, and has served as adjunct faculty at Saint Mary's University. She has trained more than 75,000 professionals in mindfulness, movement, and social-emotional learning strategies.

# BREAKOUT SESSION TWO #7-12

## 5 System of care: How providers' implicit bias affect parenting children of color with mental health challenges

This presentation aims to illuminate how unconscious biases can shape interactions between providers and families, influencing the quality of care and support available to children of color. Participants will gain insights into the systemic barriers that disproportionately affect families of color within the mental health care system. Attendees will learn practical strategies to mitigate bias, enhance cultural competency, and adopt more inclusive practices that respect and empower families of color in navigating the mental health care system. By fostering an understanding of these critical dynamics, this session aims to promote more equitable outcomes for children of color and their families, ultimately leading to improved mental health support and resources.



**Triasia Yun-Robinson** is a passionate mental health advocate, children's book author, and a passionate speaker. She is the Director and co-owner of Healing & Restoration Consulting, LLC. She was appointed by Gov. Tim Walz in 2023 to the position of Parent Advocate on the Minnesota Mental Health State Advisory Board. In addition, she focuses on providing essential support and resources to families with a deep commitment to her mission of eliminating Black youth suicide. She works tirelessly to uplift and empower Black children and families in her community by writing children's books.

## 6 Supporting yourself and others during times of change and uncertainty

Join us for a conversation on how to navigate difficult times and uncertainty. In this session, we will explore concepts like the window of tolerance, trauma, and processing. We will identify practical tools you can use to help regulate emotions while in moments of distress.



**Becca Hotchkiss (she/her), MSW, LICSW**, is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker at JFCS. Becca has experience working with people across the lifespan; from toddlers in early childhood therapy and preschool day treatment, to school-age children and teens impacted by foster care, to adults navigating the anxiety and challenge that comes with life changes.



**Michel Rousseau (he/him), MSW, LICSW**, is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker at JFCS. As a psychotherapist, Michel leads with compassion, a listening ear, and a respectful dose of humor. He works with adults who are experiencing grief/loss, anxiety, depression, and life transitions, including loss of a loved one, troubling medical news, or any life circumstance that requires finding what their "new normal" will be.

## 7 Creating communities of belonging

In this session, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ folks. Learn how to create brave and safe spaces for our LGBTQ+ community members and explore how LGBTQ+ inclusive practices positively impact our communities. This session will offer concrete action steps informed and inspired by Jewish values.



**Rabbi Heather Renetzky (she/they)** is the Director of Congregational Engagement at Mount Zion Temple. Prior to working at Mount Zion, Rabbi Renetzky served as Student Rabbi at Temple Shir Tikva in Wayland, Mass., and as a rabbinic apprentice with the Center for Small Town Jewish Life in Waterville, Maine. Rabbi Renetzky also trained as a chaplain at Mercy Hospital in Coon Rapids and at Hebrew Senior Life in Boston. Previously, Rabbi Renetzky served as the Program Coordinator for J-Pride, bringing together the Twin Cities LGBTQ+ community and supporting Jewish organizations in creating inclusive and welcoming spaces.

## 8 Reflective writing and meditation workshop

Discover clarity and insight through the process of meditation and writing. No writing experience is necessary as you are guided through ways to access healing and growth. This process entails alternating between writing and short meditation using prompts. During the workshop, you will practice letting go of your inner critic and allowing your curiosity to lead. There will be no sharing in this group, as all writing is for your own cultivation of self-knowledge.



**Beth Johnson** is a therapist in private practice that utilizes writing and meditation in groups and for her individual adult clients. She has seen many clients gain valuable insight, growth, and healing through her approach to writing. Beth also facilitates meditation and mindfulness groups at Shakopee Women's Prison and various Twin Cities agencies. Beth is trained in EMDR, Accelerated Resolution Therapy, and Developmental and Relational Trauma Therapy. Beth was a fellow at the Harvard Medical School's Mindfulness and Psychotherapy program and has also trained around the country with various writing teachers, including Natalie Goldberg and the teachers at Jon Progoff Associates.

## 9 Navigating scarcity mindset: Insights and strategies for compassionate care

When individuals face financial, emotional, and/or cognitive crises, their decision-making can be shaped by a scarcity mindset, which is a psychological response to limited resources that narrows focus to immediate survival. While these decisions may seem impulsive or irrational, they are often adaptive responses to overwhelming stress and constrained options. This interactive session will explore how scarcity mindset manifests in real-life situations drawn from examples of PRISM's basic needs work. We will also discuss reflective practices, self-care approaches, and practical strategies for responding effectively and compassionately as service providers.



# BREAKOUT SESSION TWO #7-12

1:50 to 2:50 p.m.



**Michelle Ness, MSW, LISW**, has more than two decades of experience advancing equity, dignity, and resilience through human services. Since 2013, Michelle has served as Executive Director of PRISM, a thriving social services non-profit based in Golden Valley. Michelle is known for her visionary yet pragmatic leadership, her ability to nurture strong community partnerships, and her passion for fostering a healthy organizational culture. She is an engaged leader in local and statewide service networks and is a passionate advocate for kindness and community connection.



**Nathan Hesse, LGSW**, is an accomplished non-profit leader with deep expertise in hunger relief, housing stability, and equitable food systems. As Program Director at PRISM, Nathan oversees the organization's hunger alleviation and housing programs, leading a dedicated team of staff and volunteers to provide consistent access to nutritious food and critical support services. Nathan ensures operational excellence while upholding the highest standards of food safety and program compliance. Their career is grounded in a commitment to social justice, community engagement, and systems change that empowers underserved populations through innovative, collaborative, and compassionate approaches to service delivery.

## 10 What about the kids? Supporting youth whose parent has a mental illness/PTSD

Join Dr. Michelle Sherman and advocate DeAnne Sherman to learn about children's needs as they navigate life living with parents who have mental health challenges. Research has found these youth are at increased risk for many short-term and long-term emotional, behavioral, and physical health problems. Children also often experience many feelings of sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger, and guilt. Michelle and DeAnne will share promising clinical interventions and resources for supporting families. They are co-authors of the newly published book, *I'm Not Alone: A Teen's Guide to Living with a Parent Who Has a Mental Illness or History of Trauma*.



**Michelle D. Sherman, Ph.D., LP, ABPP**, is a board-certified clinical psychologist in MN who has dedicated her career to supporting families of adults living with a mental illness or trauma history. She is a fellow of American Psychological Association's Society for Couple and Family Psychology and was named their Family Psychologist of the Year in 2022. She is the Editor in Chief of the scholarly journal *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*. She worked for 17 years in the VA system and as a professor at the University of Minnesota and Oklahoma medical schools. In her personal life, she writes books with her co-author mother for family members who love someone living with a mental illness/PTSD.



**DeAnne Sherman**, Michelle's mother, is a mental health advocate and educator. She volunteers with NAMI-Minnesota, gives workshops with her daughter about mental illness in the family, and mentors people of all ages in the performing arts as a choreographer. DeAnne's mission is to affirm, educate, and empower others. She has strong passions for combatting stigma, offering hope to people who are hurting, celebrating diversity, and promoting open discussion about mental health.

## 11 Turning pain into purpose: The science and story of post-traumatic growth

Trauma changes us, but sometimes, it changes us for the better. In this session, we will explore the concept of post-traumatic growth, which is a positive psychological change that emerges in the aftermath of adversity. Grounded in research and real-life stories, participants will gain a deeper understanding of how growth after trauma is possible, the conditions that support it, and the ways clinicians, caregivers, and communities can foster healing. Whether you are a provider supporting others through hardship or someone who has walked through trauma yourself, this session offers hope, insight, and practical tools to help turn pain into purpose.



**Dr. Nicole Beckmann** is the Doctor of Nursing Practice Director at St. Catherine University and Director of Advanced Practice Research and Education at Children's Minnesota. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Hospice & Palliative Nursing* and the *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing*. Her dual expertise as both a clinician and researcher provide a unique perspective on supporting families through some of their most challenging experiences while identifying pathways to resilience and growth. Dr. Beckmann was recognized as a Jonas Nurse Leader Scholar 2016-2018 and Minnesota Chapter of National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners of the Year in 2025.

## 12 Caregiving: Fostering a circle of caring

Caregiving is an ambiguous challenge for all involved. The word caregiving carries multiple meanings, encompassing a complex web of expectations, losses, opportunities for collaboration, and moments of both beginnings and endings. In this session, participants will address stressors and hopes, the practical necessities and actions related to physical and mental health, practical matters, trauma, even dying and death. How to foster a circle of caring for all will be emphasized.



**Ted Bowman** is a grief and family educator. He specializes in changes and transitions. For over 40 years, he has been a frequent trainer, consultant, and speaker with many groups throughout Minnesota, the United States, and other countries.

# REGISTRATION

*FREE AND OPEN TO ALL!*

## REGISTRATION IS EASY!

- 1 Visit [jfcsmpls.org](https://jfcsmpls.org) and click the graphic on the homepage
- OR
- 2 Open your phone camera and scan the QR code below



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**OCTOBER 19, 2025**  
**9 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. at Temple Israel**

**Keynote Speaker: Melody Moezzi**