

## CLERGY

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the practice is beneficial to her role as cantor.

"It is great for breathing," she said. "Connecting my breath to my body is wonderful for my singing."

Jacobson said the deep breathing, stretching and relaxation techniques taught in yoga keep stress



levels in check.

Rabbi Danielle Upbin of Congregation Beth Shalom in Clearwater and Tampa's Rabbi Sack also practice yoga regularly.

Rabbi Sack said he takes a 90-minute bikram yoga (hot yoga)

class once a week. "I love it. It's done indoors at 105 degrees," he said. "It involves 26 postures. It keeps my mind and body limber."

Some members of the clergy spoke of a strong spiritual connection to their physical exercise.

"The Torah obligates us to take care of our bodies," said Rabbi Sack, who works out in the gym before morning minyan in addition to the yoga and riding the recumbent.

"Judaism does not separate the body and soul — it's all connected," he said.

The rabbi added that exercise helps him connect more strongly to congregants.

"Exercise helps me gain focus," he added, "so when I am with someone I can be fully present."

As parents of three young children, Rabbi Upbin and her husband, Rabbi David Weizman, both of Congregation Beth Shalom in Clearwater, said they have to work hard to find the time to exercise.

Rabbi Upbin has a weekly routine. In addition to yoga classes, she runs and works out in the gym.

Rabbi Weizman said his schedule makes an exercise routine difficult.

"My main exercise is picking up the kids," he said.

Yet he has managed to work in other forms of physical exercise and seems to value its connection to his spiritual side.

What works best for him, he said, is taking a run on the beach and then a swim in the Gulf of Mexico.

"It's a form of thanksgiving," he said of the experience. "When I run I'm acutely aware of my body and my ability to be able to do that."

Taking care of the body, he said, is a way of recognizing God.

He referred to the great Jewish sage and physician of the 12th century, Maimonides, who also linked the body and the spirit.

"Maimonides suggested exercising before morning prayer," said Rabbi Weizman.

Some clergy appear passionate about their exercise regime. Cantor Jacobson is one of those.

"I do some sort of physical exercise five times a week," she said. "We incorporate physical activity into our lives as much as we can."

The Jacobson family, including the cantor's husband, Jordan, and

their two daughters, Maya and Shira, annually train for a mini triathlon called "Athletes Who Care," held in August.

"Every year as a family we do this mini triathlon for children with cancer," she said. "We train for it by biking, running and swimming."

Gym work, daily walks and yoga all play a significant role in her daily workouts.

"Exercise can do so much for mind-body-spirit," she said. "I get energy to go on with the rest of my day."

The cantor makes committing to exercise sound easy.

"If you can find the time to read the paper or chat on the phone you can find the time to exercise," she said. "If the president of the United States can find the time anyone can."

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## CHILD

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graduated from Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School, said part of the book came from contemporaneous material such as the journal she kept during the PGD experience and e-mail updates to friends and family during Henry's bone marrow transplant. After Henry died, she said she wove those together and "added Henry and his spirit and who he was as a person," which she said helped her deal with the loss.

"I spent almost 24 hours a day with Henry the last couple years of his life," she recalled. "It was an incredibly intimate relationship, and after he died, I still had a need to spend a lot of time with him. Writing about him fulfilled that need."

"It was painful, but also a beautiful way to remember everything that was so wonderful about Henry," she said, noting that the book is "infused with those good times" with her son.

Strongin said, though, that she still is unable to write about the final few days of Henry's life; to tell that part of the story, she used blog entries her husband wrote at the time.

Fanconi anemia, like Tay-Sachs, is considered a Jewish genetic disease because Ashkenazic Jews are disproportionately affected, said Strongin, who belongs to Adas Israel Congregation in D.C.

According to the National Institutes of Health, while about 1 in 300 people in the U.S. carry the gene, 1 in 90 American Jews of Ashkenazi descent have the faulty genes. Both parents have to be carriers for the child to inherit the disease.

The condition leads to blood failure, which necessitates a bone marrow transplant by the time a child is 6 or 7 years old.

Prenatal testing told them that Henry's younger brother, the now-13-year-old Jack, would be born without the disease. But the chance of producing an embryo with the bone marrow match, but without Fanconi, was only 18 percent, and nine cycles of in vitro fertilization

did not produce a pregnancy.

It was not easy going through IVF, a difficult physical and emotional procedure for any couple, especially those knowing that the life of one of their children hangs in the balance.

"It was an absolute real-life race against time," said Strongin. "That sense of urgency [was] paired with higher and higher stakes as time went by," as she and her husband watched Henry's blood counts drop. But Strongin said she always looked to Henry and wondered, "What did I have to complain about?"

Henry eventually had a bone marrow transplant from an anonymous donor, but complications resulted. He died not long after his seventh birthday. As a menorah burned in his hospital room, his final words before being placed on a ventilator were "Mom, this is a very bad last night of Chanukah."

They would be his last words; Henry died a few days later.

Since Henry's death, Strongin, a former nonprofit executive, has created the Hope for Henry Foundation. The organization fills a need Strongin saw during Henry's illness: hospital resources that lift children's spirits and allow them to "laugh and have fun." The foundation, operating in hospitals in the D.C. area, Baltimore and Philadelphia, provides patients with such things as birthday parties, iPods and cameras that allow them to send pictures to their friends.

And even after he was gone, Henry was still having an effect on others. At the young boy's funeral, one of his doctors from Georgetown University Hospital sat down next to a then assistant rabbi at Adas Israel. Dr. Ali Mendelson and Rabbi Jeremy Winaker were engaged a year later, with Max Henry Winaker born in 2007.

"It was so beautiful," said Strongin about the name. "It was such an incredible honor."

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