

Monthly Profile: This month we feature Jodie Snyder! Read her interesting story here and more member profiles at: <https://templeemanuellakeland.com/member-profiles/>

Tell us about your family: Where did you grow up? Who are/were your siblings, parents, and grandparents and what effect did they have on the person you have become? What was your childhood like? Are there any family stories you can share?

I grew up in New Jersey, about a half hour outside of New York City, with my mom, Alex, my dad, Howard, my sister, Stacie and my close, large extended family. My mom's parents were Ukrainian immigrants, and my dad's family emigrated from Eastern Europe to the Lower East Side in Manhattan. My parents are both Jewish, and my father's side of the family is as well. My mother's side of the family was a mix of Catholic, Greek Orthodox and her oldest sister was Morman. I mention this, because growing up in this kind of blended interfaith extended family role modeled tolerance, acceptance and flexibility, both traits that I value, for me.

Something else role modeled for me was religion being a personal choice. A personal choice to have a relationship with G-d and religion, to choose what religion you are connected to, and to choose how you want to participate in your religion. Both of my parents were involved in my temple growing up. My mother taught Sunday School and my father was on the board. They were involved in lots of committees, the temple softball league, etc. We had Shabbat dinner at home every Friday night and went to services most Friday nights. I attended religious school at our Temple Sinai in Summit, New Jersey, I was bat mitzvahed and confirmed there. As a teenager, I taught Hebrew on Wednesdays, I was a Madrachim (teaching assistant) in the Sunday school and I was president of our youth group. Needless to say, Temple has consistently been a big part of my life and I have always felt connected to my congregation there, and now here, as a second family. My best friends were at my temple (and still are).

Education – Work/Career: Where did you go to school-college-degree-major? What is your occupation? How did you meet your spouse? Tell us about your children?

After graduating from Stockton University in NJ, the father of two of the students I had taught Hebrew to, offered me a job at 1010WINS radio in Manhattan, right across from Carnegie Hall. I worked in Human Resources there until September of 2001. My last day was several days before 9/11 which was a shocking and scary time to live through. I went to graduate school at Antioch University in Keene, New Hampshire where I studied Marriage and Family Therapy. After graduation, I worked as a therapist in community mental health in downtown Keene. A while later, on a trip to visit my cousins in South Florida, I met my husband, Raymond. He flew to NH nearly every weekend for almost a year and then we packed up my studio apartment and squeezed it into a UHAUL and I moved back to NJ and then to South Florida.



In South Florida, I had an exciting culture change (New Hampshire to Ft. Lauderdale) and enjoyed living near my maternal grandmother, aunt and uncle and many cousins, enjoying the opportunity to be geographically close with them, which was something I was always interested in doing. I worked in South Florida as a family therapist for SOS Children's Villages, with foster care children and their variety of families (adopted, reunifying, terminating, etc.) In 2007, Raymond moved to work at his company's (Harrells) headquarters in Lakeland. He also found Temple Emanuel and with the help of Rabbi Fox he converted to Judaism. We were married later that year and I moved to Lakeland just before the wedding. Interesting story, the house that was on our current property where we live, was hit by a drunk driver one night when we were out of town. The house was badly damaged and we built our current house in its place. In 2008 we moved in, our son, Ben, was born in 2009 and our daughter, Kassie, was born in 2012.

Prior to Ben and Kassie, I worked for a year in Riverview at an inpatient facility as the unit therapist for children and adolescents. Then I opened a small private practice in a shared office space in the Dr. Phillips area of Orlando. My father passed away suddenly and unexpectedly while I was pregnant with Ben in 2009 and between that and having a new baby, the commute and logistics of my private practice led to my decision to close that practice and focus on nurturing Ben. This was a big change for me. I had intended to continue working because I enjoyed being a therapist so much, but my father's sudden passing, combined with having my first baby, significantly shifted my personal priorities in a way that I had not expected.



Two children later, a wonderful and satisfying experience as a stay at home mom with them, and with them both in school, I felt myself being pulled to return to work. I started my own behavior coaching business called, "The Kid Coach -Behavior Coaching for a Harmonious Home." Let me tell you how "The Kid Coach" was born. As a mental health provider, you are required by insurance companies to submit a diagnosis. Often times, I would see a family or a child with a problem, not a pathological or pervasive diagnostic problem, but more simple behavior problems. Following protocol, I always had to give a diagnosis, labeling that client. For example, a child who is not listening at home or having out of control temper tantrums, does not necessarily mean that they have ADHD, or Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), etc. They just simply have temper tantrums or poor behavior and the methods and attempts to help them at home or at school were exhausted and not working. Parents are at their wits end. They often think there could be something deeper going on with their child. When this behavior reaches a fever pitch, help is needed and they see a clinician who starts treatment by assessing and diagnosing (labeling) them.

Often times, I found these labels ineffective and counterproductive for treatment. That diagnosis or label would be the new "lens" that child would be seen through, by parents, siblings, teachers, etc. The child might even start to see themselves this way. I heard lots of things like "our child can't be expected to participate in class like other children because he has ODD, let's make accommodations for him" or "we can't take our daughter to the parade, she has a sensory processing disorder, let's not expose her to that." I am by no means saying that there are not people, children, and families out there who don't have a true diagnostic issue. There are. What I am saying is that I found in my own practice, that that was a much smaller percentage of the whole. The Kid Coach is a different approach to these kinds of issues. It is solution and future focused and targets the problem behavior by teaching effective tools and strategies to cope with or replace the issue. The child is not the problem, the behavior is. It's meant to be a first line of defense when a behavioral problem occurs. I am happy to say that The Kid Coach is doing well and I am so happy to be back doing what I love and filling a gap for kids, couples, families, that just need a little help from someone who has been trained to stabilize things and get them on the right track. Hence the tagline, Stop the Chaos with Behavior Coaching for a Harmonious home.

Interests: What was the most interesting or unusual job you have had? What are your interests and hobbies? What books are on your nightstand right now?

Hobbies: I enjoy painting. Walls and art. I also enjoy hiking, leisure bicycle riding, and being outside in general. Also, teaching Sunday school. =) Books on my nightstand: The Red Tent by Anita Diamant and The Second Mountain by David Brooks.

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The most interesting (and fun) job I ever had was working in HR at 1010WINS and WNEW radio station in NYC. The salespeople there had lots of tickets to things and a perk of mine was access to those tickets that weren't given away. I went to Broadway shows, Yankees and Mets games, comedy clubs, concerts, etc. Once in a while, I would have as many as 10 tickets and I would bring my friends and family. It was a super fun time.

On Being Jewish: How long have you been a member of Temple Emanuel? What committees or leadership roles have you had or perhaps would like to have at Temple Emanuel? What does being Jewish mean to you?

I have been a member at Temple Emanuel for 12 years. I am a board member and I have been chair for the Live Artfully fundraiser for several years. I teach Sunday School (7 years) and I have run many events at the temple like the Purim Carnival and the Hanukkah party. I try to help when I am needed. Being Jewish means to me that I am part of a rich culture and history, I am a minority which I think has given me a humbling perspective. Being Jewish has taught me faith, loyalty, strength and standing up to adversity. Being Jewish and a part of Temple Emanuel means that I have a second family and a supportive community. Being Jewish to me, means that I can go anywhere in the world and walk into a synagogue, sit next to a stranger and feel a common bond and likeness, that we share something. Being Jewish makes me feel proud.

Reflections: Who has been the biggest influence in your life and why? What is one thing people would be surprised to learn about you? What is your proudest moment? Is there anything you would do over if you had the chance? Looking back, what is the best advice you would give your younger self? What are the most important lessons you have learned in life?

My mother has been the biggest influence on me. I admire so many things about her. She is strong, smart, practical, motivated, punctual, focused, and tireless. She taught me kindness, compassion, understanding, and acceptance. I think one of her most influential moments with me was a time she sent me to my room as a child. While in my room, I wrote on a piece of paper, "I hate my mom so much!" When she came in my room, I quickly stuck the paper under my mattress. She sat on the floor next to me to talk to me and she saw the paper sticking out. When she read it, she said, "I'm glad you wrote your feelings down. You got them out without screaming or yelling." I felt so ashamed for writing that, but she didn't shame me at all. She didn't make it about herself or make me feel guilty or like I had to take care of her and she didn't dwell and she never brought it up again. We just moved right on from that moment and I remember feeling overwhelmed with love for her, thinking that she was the most incredible woman in the world and I that I was going to grow up to treat others in their times when they were feeling low in one way or another, the same way she treated me.

When I studied abroad in Sevilla, Spain, a bunch of my friends went to Morocco. My dad asked me not to go. He was nervous because a few years before, some exchange students had been kidnapped. I was not nervous and ambivalent. I did not go and instead had a wonderful day at the beach in Cadiz, but I do regret not going. I wish I could recreate that and do that over.

The advice I would give my younger self would be to be brave, be decisive and to follow through.



Would you like to share your story? Please contact Irma Cole at irmacole26@gmail.com We would love to learn more about all our temple members! Thank you Jodie for being this issue's featured profile!