

ABBA – Na'amat Center for Fathers- at the GLICKMAN CENTER

FOR CHILDREN AND MOTHERS/Ronit Lev-Ari, Professional Advisor to the Na'amat Fathers Center

Na'amat was the first organization in Israel that treated violent couples based on the unique concept that if we women want to defend women, it is important that we also treat the man. The treatment of men at Na'amat in the mid 1980's was based on the understanding that in order for the woman to be able to live securely and liberate herself from the threat of a violent or obsessive spouse, whether during their lives together or whether in a crisis and dangerous situation of wishing for separation, there is great importance in providing support to the man, whose dangerousness in most cases stems from a fragile emotional makeup and the lack of tools for emotional regulation of crisis and stressful situations. With a view to the welfare of the woman and the goal of dealing with violence in the family deeply and thoroughly, Na'amat has for years maintained a treatment and support system for violent men.

It is clear to everyone that the good of the children and the good of the entire family require reasonable dialogue between both parents, even if they are separated, and that a continuous, healthy and beneficial relationship between the father and his children contributes to the entire family.

Today, fathers are interested in showing more involvement in their children's lives, and they are willing to take a more active part in the work of parenting. However, many fathers feel that they lack the tools, have difficulty finding their place within the modern family and find themselves bewildered and alone in the challenging role of - being a father.

Na'amat recognized the developing need for creating a safe and inclusive space for fathers and their children, and it decided to establish, for the first time in Israel, a unique center for fathers.

Indeed, in line with Na'amat's feminist worldview, we believe that gender equality is achieved only when men are partners to it, and the path to this partnership passes through good communication between the sexes, in confident parental identity and the understanding that we all benefit from the partnership.

The Na'amat Center for Fathers will provide a response to the real needs of men: To the feeling of loneliness and loss during and after the divorce process, the lack of tools for fatherly communication with children of various ages etc. At the Center, training, guidance, consultation and support will be provided individually and collectively. The objective is to become the community space in which activities for fathers will take place with and without their children.

Dr. Yair Apter will manage the Center. Yair has conducted remedial groups for violent men at Na'amat for 23 years, and he is excited about establishing the Center, also because his doctorate dealt with the subject of fatherhood.

And on a personal note, I will tell you that at this time I am involved in a difficult story of the daughter of a close friend. I am sure that if the father of my friend's grandchildren had an address for support and guidance, the father, who is in severe emotional turmoil, would have channeled his distress constructively and thus would have spared harm to his wife and children.

In summary: The name "Na'amat" appears in the Center's title. To me this is a strong statement. Na'amat is identified as a movement active in the struggle for the empowerment of women. Within this struggle, Na'amat has always advocated a holistic concept and endeavored to provide a response to all the "players" in the complex and challenging puzzle of the family and relations between the sexes.