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WHAT IT'S  
ALL ABOUT

**BIZBYTE**

70 PERCENT OF AMERICAN WORKERS ARE "NOT ENGAGED" OR "ACTIVELY DISENGAGED" AND ARE EMOTIONALLY DISCONNECTED FROM THEIR WORKPLACES AND LESS LIKELY TO BE PRODUCTIVE.

## First, I'd like

to shatter the myth about other fields providing greater earnings; if you're good at what you do, there's potential in most fields.

As to your question, I'd first like to give you an understanding of what the mental health field requires, and then the facts about what you can expect there.

There are two broad groups of mental health professions. The first, which includes social work, marriage and family therapy, and mental health counseling, requires only a master's degree. This generally takes between two to three years to acquire after completing college. Some strong social work programs, including NYU, will often accept applicants without college credits because of their success with bright *kollel* men. If you do have college credits, you'll have more programs (including *frum* ones) available to you.

The second group, which is psychology, requires a doctorate. Getting into these programs is tougher; you'll need a BA (a yeshivah in New York cannot supply one, but in New Jersey you may be able to get one) and will be competing against many other applicants. These programs involve three years of school, one year as an intern and at least one year to write a dissertation.

Now let's look at the differences in both earning potential and demand for the two.

In social work or mental health counseling, you'll most likely start off in a hospital, nursing home, clinic (Jewish or general), or the public school system. The institutional positions offer a full-time salary and benefits, but most clinics offer only a fee per service and no benefits. Nevertheless, the salary will most likely be on par with middle class earnings; social workers are starting at the mid-\$40,000s to \$50,000 a year. After a required number of supervised practice hours (varying among the professions), you can start your own practice, and if you're successful, you can earn about as much as a psychologist in private practice does.

Going onto psychology, your starting salary will be roughly \$20,000 more than it would've been in the master's-level mental health professions. In addition to the institutional jobs available to the first group of professionals, people with doctorates in psychology may also have the opportunity for college teaching. If you open your own practice or branch into another area of psychology, the earning potential is even greater.

To answer the question about demand: the demand for social workers and psychologists is growing at an average rate, while the demand for mental health counselors in particular is growing at twice the average rate for jobs in general. If you are well qualified, you shouldn't have a problem finding a good position.

The fact that you're a male should work to your advantage! Many programs are more willing to take men because fewer of them are applying, and many men in the yeshivah world prefer to see a male mental health professional over a woman. If you speak Yiddish fluently, that is also an advantage.

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Have a dilemma for  
our *parnassah* experts?  
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*This column will appear once a month.*