

Biopsychosocial & Eco-Spiritual Model

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The Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Outreach Program developed by Dr. Ani Kalayjian utilizes the seven-step Biopsychosocial & Eco-Spiritual Model, through which various aspects of dispute, conflict, or disagreement are assessed, identified, explored, processed, worked through, and reintegrated with the lessons learned from the process. The seven-step model is at the core of all workshops (Kalayjian, 2002).

This innovative and integrative model incorporates various theories, including: psychodynamic, interpersonal (Sullivan, 1953); existential and humanistic (Frankl, 1962); Electromagnetic Field Balancing (EMF, Dubro & Lapierre, 2002); forgiveness and reconciliation (Kalayjian & Paloutzian, 2010); Learning Theory, flower essences, essential oils, and physical release (van der Kolk, 1987); and mind-body-spirit chakra balancing, prayers, and meditation. The following are the seven steps of the Biopsychosocial & Eco-Spiritual Model:

I *Assess Levels of Stress:* Participants are given a written questionnaire, the Harvard Trauma Checklist, the Heartland Forgiveness Scale, and other scales used in previous calamities to determine the level of post-traumatic stress symptomatology and other symptoms. In addition, questions pertaining to meaning and purpose in life are posed, based on Viktor Frankl's logotherapeutic theory.

II *Encourage Expression of Feelings:* One at a time, each member of the group is encouraged to express his or her feelings in the "here and now" in relation to the disaster or trauma that has been experienced. The predominant feelings expressed after both natural and human-made disasters are shock, fear, anger at the perpetrators or government leaders, and uncertainty about the future; prevalent behavioral reactions are flashbacks, avoidance behaviors, and nightmares and other sleep disturbances.

III *Provide Empathy and Validation:* Group leaders validate the survivors' feelings by using statements such as "I can understand..." or "It makes sense to me..." and share information about how other survivors from around the world have coped. Intentional therapeutic touch such as holding a survivor's hand is also used. Here it is reinforced that a survivor's feelings of grief, fear, anger, and joy at having survived are all natural responses to the disaster and need to be expressed. When trauma ruptures an individual's links with the group, an intolerable sense of isolation and helplessness may occur. Providing validation and empathy in such a group setting will correct these effects by reestablishing the mutual exchange between the individual and the group.

IV *Encourage Discovery and Expression of Meaning:* Survivors are asked, "What lessons, meaning, or positive associations did you discover as a result of this disaster?" This question is based on Viktor Frankl's logotherapeutic principles: There may be a

positive meaning discovered in the worst catastrophe, and there are lessons to be learned from the most difficult conflicts. The question is also based on the Buddhist assertion that it takes darkness to appreciate and reconnect with light. Again, each member of the group is invited to focus on the strengths and meanings that naturally arise out of any disaster situation. Some of the positive lessons that have been learned are: Interpersonal relationships are more important than material goods, nations should come together for the purposes of peace and solidarity, and releasing resentments is important, as is working through anger, achieving forgiveness, and taking charge of one's own life.

V Provide Didactic Information: Practical tools and information are given on how to gradually move back to one's home or workplace by utilizing the systematic desensitization process. The importance of preparation is reinforced and elaboration is provided on how to prepare. Handouts are given to teachers and prospective group leaders on how to conduct disaster evacuation drills and create safe and accessible exits. Booklets are given to parents and teachers on how to respond to their children's nightmares, fears, and disruptive behaviors. Assessment tools are given to psychologists and psychiatrists. Handouts are provided on grief as well as how to take care of oneself as a caregiver.

VI Promote Eco-Centered Caring: Practical tools are shared for connecting with Gaia (Mother Earth). Discussions and exercises about environmental connections are conducted. Ways to care for the environment are shared, starting with one's own environment and expanding to the larger globe. Participants are encouraged to be mindful of a systems perspective and think about how we impact our environment and how our environment in turn impacts us. A list of mindful acts is also shared to help participants co-create an emerald-green world.

VII Practice Breathing and Movement Exercises: Breath is used as a natural medicine and healing tool. Since no one can control nature, other people, or what happens outside of one's self, survivors are assisted in controlling how they respond to the disaster. This is an experiential section of the model. Survivors are provided with instructions on how to move their body to release fear, uncertainty, and resentments. Participants are also instructed on how to use breath toward self-empowerment as well as to engender gratitude, compassion, faith, strength, and forgiveness in response to disasters. Integrative tools are also introduced, such as flower essences, essential oils, chakra alignment, Electromagnetic Field Balancing, meditation, prayers, etc.

Dr. Ani Kalayjian is a Board Certified Expert in Traumatic Stress, the Founder and President of the Association For Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP) Meaningfulworld, Board Member of the UN NGO Human Rights Committee, Board Member of the Committee of Spirituality, Values, and Global Concerns (CSVGC-NY at UN), Chair of the Mentoring Committee of the American Psychological Association's International Division, author of *Disaster & Mass Trauma* (Vista, 1995), Chief Editor of *Forgiveness: Psychological Pathways for Conflict Transformation and Peace Building* (Springer, 2010), and Chief Editor of volume II of *Mass Trauma & Emotional Healing Around the World: Rituals & Practices for Healing and Meaning-Making* (Praeger, 2010). For more information, kindly visit www.meaningfulworld.com and contact DrKalayjian@Meaningfulworld.com.