



**The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP)**

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### **Mindful Leadership and Forgiveness Workshop**

**“For Giving” A Gift to Oneself  
Diego Bustamante**

**New York City, 15 February 2021**

On 30 January 2021, the Association for Trauma Outreach and Prevention MeaningfulWorld had a great workshop on Mindfulness and Forgiveness with many in attendance. Author of the best seller “Forget Me Not” and creator of the “7-Step Integrative Healing Model,” Dr. Ani Kalayjian kicked off the event with a very expressive poem inspired by her observations entitled “Enjoying the Mment.” The poem is about two separate people perceiving the same experience differently. One looks at snow with amazement, wonderment and excitement. The other is too clouded by past negative experiences and suffers in pain. Dr. Kalayjian concluded: “Don’t let your past destroy your present. Be in the moment and connect with your childhood curiosity. Embrace a carefree attitude with fun and laughter. Celebrate the moment and enjoy the aesthetic beauty before you.”

The lecture included information on the five shadows of life, service to self and others, mindful leadership skills, forgiveness myths, definitions, and benefits. “Service to the divine Mother & Father is crucial to finding a deeper understanding of the universe. Anything you give places you in the universe’s circular flow of giving and receiving, and you will find that what you’ve given comes back to you,” said Dr. Kalayjian. “Take good care of yourself: Be grounded, strong, balanced, and integrated to contain the positive energy of service as well as service to your family and the local and global communities.” As for forgiveness, it is shifting from the ego reaction of hitting back, to a mindful response, knowing that the other is also human, but is perhaps behaving not so mindfully.”

After a brief intermission, the Visionary Speaker of the event, the somatic healer Ali Fischer, facilitated a very soothing guided meditation in which she asked everyone to “feel free to pay attention to the sensations in your body, walk around, and focus on its needs.” The mindful meditation was individually based and focused on the varying needs and comfortability of each person. The session incorporated breathwork and guidance of one’s inner sensory experience, as well as enabling feelings of wellbeing and calm. Afterwards, Ali was awarded with an honorary MeaningfulWorld Visionary Speaker Certificate.

We then saw an awe-inspiring film on MeaningfulWorld’s humanitarian outreach mission to Haiti in 2019. The film highlighted MeaningfulWorld’s 16th relief mission to Haiti. “We go because the need for emotional intelligence and awareness is still so great due to dire living conditions, lack of resources, Horizontal Violence, oppression, and lack of stability in the government,” said MeaningfulWorld’s Vice President Lorraine Simmons. “Many turn to violence in an attempt to survive. In our workshops in Haiti they report that

they are victimized and don't trust one another. They experience anxiety, live in fear, and are often lonely.”

According to a poll conducted, 90 percent of people state they have witnessed or been directly impacted by domestic violence. During one of the recorded workshops in Haiti, there was a heated exchange between the men and women that reached a fever pitch when the men blamed women for dressing provocatively as an underlying reason for rape. Instantly, the women rose up from their seats and raised their voices of disapproval in solidarity against these oppressive and outdated views. Because of the dire need for emotional intelligence and mindfulness, Lorraine proudly shared that MeaningfulWorld's Haiti chapter has officially become a registered NGO in Haiti.

This thought-provoking film was followed by a heartfelt support group facilitated by Diego Bustamante and Andrew Dolinar. They used the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model to assess, identify, explore, process, release, work through, and reintegrate various aspects of traumatic exposure. During step 1 levels of stress and trauma were assessed, while in the 2nd step participants shared their concern over the new COVID-19 strain in America, unemployment due to the pandemic, stagnation in areas of creative expression, and aspects of romantic relationships, such as dating. Sadness was expressed over having to adjust to the “new norm,” being a single parent, and being in the same routine day after day.

Feelings of frustration ranged from 3 to 6 (10 being the most severe). Frustrations were addressed towards others who don't take the virus seriously, and therefore do not adhere to physical distancing regulations. Feelings of anxiety were identified by many. Another participant expressed a high level of grief (level 8) over losing a mother and a friend to the pandemic. During the 3rd step, many expressed empathy and joined in tears and hugs, comforting one another. Group members validated one another's pain, loss, frustrations, and anxiety. It was a very touching and emotional moment for the group and provided a deep level of catharsis.

The 4th step is the transformation from victim to victor. The question was: “What lessons or new meanings have you discovered?” What insights have you gained from your pain or experiences of sharing your feelings?” One person shared their anxiety and depression, and was determined and resilient in the face of her adversity. Another with feelings of frustration towards the stock market and corruption on Wall Street, found meaning in his indignation and considered the idea of using his voice constructively for a social justice cause. Another participant, who experienced profound loss, learned the value of appreciating those who are still around.

In step 5, we provided constructive resources and empowered one another. The following books were recommended: *The Doctor and the Soul* and *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl, *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz, *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff* by Richard Carlson, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living Now* by Dale Carnegie, and *Forget me Not: 7-steps for Healing our Body, Mind, Spirit, & Mother Earth* by Dr. Kalayjian. Other recommendations included Vitamin D, L-Theanine, light therapy, creative expression via poetry, and creating videos on Youtube and TikTok.

Step 6 focused on ecological consciousness. The question we raised was: “How do you nurture Mother Earth?” Participants shared that they do this by going for jogs, walking, going to the park, planting herbs and trees, eating organic foods, stepping out during the day, and being more eco-friendly to the environment.

For the final step, everyone was encouraged to participate in deep breathing and movement exercises for relaxation in Soul-Surfing, an uplifting physical release session. The session involved specific exercises designed to promote balance of chi energy and remove blockages from the body's chakras. These point-specific movements and postures help bring about emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. We concluded with a short mindfulness meditation.

The support group was a success and generated feelings of release, connectedness, belonging, socialization, empathy, and hope. Insights were generated, as well as releases of emotions filled with tears, laughter, and joy of lessons learned.

All health care workers, therapists, healers, sacred activists, and concerned citizens who are interested, please register for our next workshop on 27 February 2021. This workshop will focus on self-care and meaning-making.

Founded in 1990, the Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP) Meaningfulworld, charitable organization affiliated with the United Nations Dept. of Public Information, has achieved international recognition as a leader in training humanitarian outreach professionals as well as responding to two and a half decades of global and local disasters. ATOP is committed to health, justice, peace, transformation and global education promoting state-of-the-art scientific theory on peace, forgiveness, consciousness research, internship, and the development of technical skills to train mental health professionals, teachers, psychologists, art therapists, nutritionists, alternative medicine practitioners, clergy, nurses, mediators, interfaith ministers, and lay persons committed to service of the self and humanity. Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Outreach Teams have helped rehabilitate survivors from over 48 countries and 26 states in USA, making a daily difference in people's lives and helping to transform tragedy and trauma into healing and meaning-making through post-trauma growth, resilience, emotional intelligence, mindfulness, mind-body-eco-spirit health, visionary leadership, empowerment, artful collaborations, and establishing Peace & Forgiveness Gardens to create a new and Meaningfulworld view. We work locally and globally in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, The Caucasus, Europe, and South and North America.

**Our Motto: When one helps another, BOTH become stronger**