

Meaningful World

Dr. Kalayjian lectures at St. Peter's Preparatory High School on Meaning-making

On 7 October 2021, Dr. Kalayjian, Meaningfulworld's CEO, was invited to give a presentation to the senior graduating class at the St. Peter's Preparatory High School in Jersey City, NJ. Greg Morrissey invited her to share research and scholarship on Meaning-making, and her experiences of studying with Dr. Viktor Frankl.

Dr. Kalayjian started with a question: Why Meaning? What is your meaning in life? Over fifty young boys in two senior classes participated. They were eager to share their views and raised several intelligent questions. The most frequently shared Meaning expressed were family, friends, the Prep, loyalty; less frequently shared were football, positivity, making parents proud, repaying family for what they have done, driven with purpose, God, my dog, positive experiences, having fun, love, honesty, and life itself.



Dr. Kalayjian shared about her upbringing, the childhood traumas growing up in Syria, the generational trauma of Genocide, being threatened in Turkey, and the bullying in America to name a few. Meaning is a central to a healthy living. Dr. Viktor Frankl, a Viennese Psychiatrist, is the author of *Man's Search for Meaning*. Dr. Kalayjian met Dr. Frankl in 1989, right after her research on coping with Ottoman Turkish Genocide of the Armenians. She was experiencing many symptoms of secondary traumas witnessing the experiences of the survivors, and asked Dr. Frankl for help. He said, "We can find a positive meaning in the most difficult and traumatic situation." He distinguished the Global meaning Vs Meaning of the moment. Meaning-making is the ability to make sense of the nonsense that often happen in life. It is a shift in attitude and embracing that which is in the present. Remember, we first need to heal the trauma, before rushing to discover our meaning. We cannot make sense of the world when we are in anger, resulting from disappointments, frustrations, hurt, jealousy, sadness, and anxiety, to name a few.



Students had great questions, such as:

1. "Were you denied entrance to any country?" Well, we had long delays at airports, Israel airport was the longest, but at the end, we entered all 48 countries in 7 regions of the world with no problems.
2. "How do you protect yourself?" This was a question addressing vicarious or secondary trauma. We have an entire module addressing self-care as well as healing secondary trauma
3. "How long do you stay in each country?" It depends, anywhere from 12-20 days for each team.
4. "Why did you choose these dangerous countries to volunteer and take a humanitarian team?" another great question. It is because these countries have the greatest needs, and they have no mental health care givers, psychologists, nor social workers, or psychiatric nurses. They may have one psychiatrist for a million of people.
5. "We are seniors and younger classmates come to us for guidance. With the pandemic we have witnessed a lot of depression, suicidal behaviors, and anxiety. Who is going to help them after we leave?" of course, this is a very important question. The school has a counselor, it would be best to discuss their emotional needs with a counselor.

Mr. Morrissey stated: "We are beyond lucky to know and connect with you. Such a great life changing talk, I commit to supporting this incredible work at Meaningfulworld."



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