

Meaningful World

The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP)

135 Cedar St, Cliffside Park, NJ 07010

www.meaningfulworld.com

(201)-941-2266 | drkalayjian@meaningfulworld.com

Disaster Relief and Meaning-Making Workshop

20 November 2021

Kathleen Huang and Aileen Nigg

What is disaster relief? How do we make meaning—especially in difficult times such as now, with a global pandemic? The two go hand in hand. Often in times of disaster, the only way out is through finding purpose in our experiences. But how do we do this? On 20 November 2021, a MeaningfulWorld workshop of interns and professionals (shown right) met to discuss the answer to these questions. Dr. Ani Kalayjian, president and founder cheerfully greeted each participant from her poinsettia adorned share of the screen. A general sense of camaraderie characterized interactions between the group.

Dr. Kalayjian began the workshop with a moment of silence followed by her own poem about fireworks. Fireworks mesmerize their observers quickly, just as life does, she shared. But with the same swiftness that fireworks draw us in, they often disillusion us soon after. We don't return to that initial awe until we realize the show is ending. Dr. Kalayjian explained how we share a similar attitude towards life. As young people, we are in constant awe. But as we grow older, that appreciation for life starts to fade and only returns as we feel death growing nearer. To never lose that initial awe and excitement, Dr. Kalayjian elaborated, we must find a positive meaning in every day. This notion set the tone for the rest of the workshop.

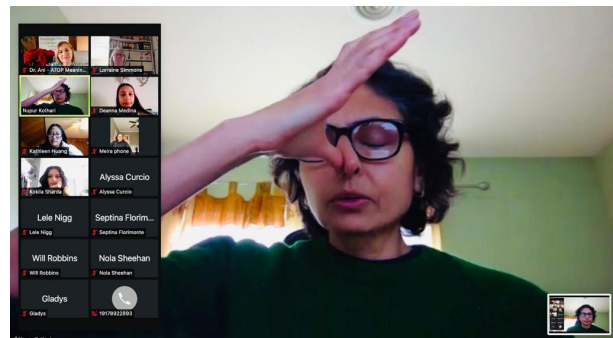
Next, Dr. Kalayjian shared a PowerPoint and lectured on post-disaster humanitarian outreach. The group discussed the impacts of trauma on individual lives and how this shapes individuals and shapes next generations. She explained the importance of educating the mind and the heart and shared supplements for wellness, such as turmeric and magnesium. She discussed the impact of forgiveness and reconciliation on recovery from PTSD and intergenerational trauma, then explained the dangers of negative emotions on physical health. Next, she gave a



6 THINGS THAT HAPPEN TO YOUR BODY WHEN YOU EAT TURMERIC EVERYDAY

1. Reduces Inflammation
2. Reduces CANCER Risk
3. Aids Digestion and Relieves Digestive-Related Problems
4. Promotes Brain Health
5. Promotes Heart Health
6. Alleviates Arthritis Symptoms

6 Things That Happen to Your Body When You Eat Turmeric Every Day. (2018, October 02). Retrieved from <http://zenith.org/health/6-things-that-happen-to-your-body-when-you-eat-turmeric-every-day/>



brief history of traumatology, starting with the first written records of trauma—found in an Egyptian physician’s notes dated around 1900 BC. Today, we define post-traumatic stress disorder by the DSM-V definition, which can be found [here](#). Dr. Kalayjian then explained the 5 stages of post-disaster coping.

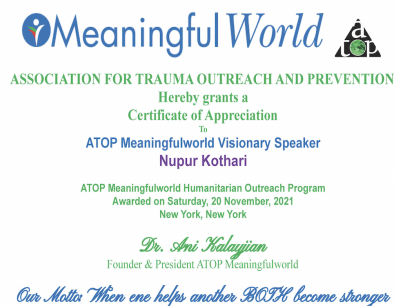
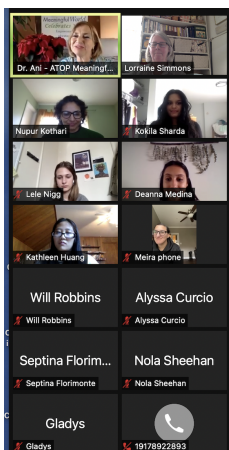
Meaningfulworld Visionary Speaker was Ms. Nupur Kothari, who discussed the importance of heartfulness meditation in an intellectually focused world and led the group through peaceful meditation. At the end of the meditation, we discussed as a group how we felt throughout the meditation. Then Ms. Kothari directed us towards the website for the [Heartfulness Institute](#). The organization promotes personal growth through the practice of meditation, which it regards as an experiential method of understanding the self. Through meditation comes the achievement of love, peace, and balance.

At the end of the meditation, Dr. Kalayjian and Lorraine Simmons presented Ms. Kothari with a certificate of appreciation.

Participants took a short break; they brought their lunch and watched a video from Meaningfulworld’s 2019 mission to Armenia. The focus of this 11-day mission was post war recovery from the sudden attacks of Azerbaijan on Artsakh & Armenia and decrease the nation’s high suicide rates through workshops on suicide prevention and the creation of a suicide prevention lifeline.

Following the lunch break, the attendees partook in a support group following the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model. Group members confidentially shared one specific emotion afflicting them, followed by the measurement of the intensity of their chosen emotions. Then they moved on to sharing their feelings, receiving empathy and validation from other group members. Participants were then encouraged to find a positive meaning in these experiences. Next, resources were shared, such as the *gratitude app*, *DailyOm*, reading several books including Dr. Frankl’s book on *Man’s Search for Meaning*, and many natural flower remedies and essential oils. As part of our 6th step, ecological consciousness, participants discussed ways to heal through nature and concluded with step 7, practicing Soul-Surfing exercises, and ending with a short meditation.

Workshop participants gave the following feedback. Intern Deanna Medina noted the positive impact of the workshops generally on her emotional awareness, and she said “Since [the meditation exercise in the workshop] I have been practicing meditation often and experiencing a new level of peace in my day-to-day life.” Another intern, Nola Sheehan, said that “[the]



monthly workshops have been an amazing experience that allowed [her] to gain useful skills,” such as mindfulness and meditation.

We hope you have a fantastic holiday season and we hope to see you at our next workshop on 29 January 2022, which will focus on peacebuilding, conflict transformation, assertiveness, anger management, and forgiveness. Kindly email edcoordinator@meaningfulworld.com to reserve your spot and visit www.meaningfulworld.com to learn more about our humanitarian work locally and globally.

About Us:

Dr. Ani Kalayjian founded ATOP MeaningfulWorld in 1988 in response to the devastation of the Armenian earthquakes. She observed international aid to Armenia and noticed its large focus on the physical aftermath of the disaster with little attention directed toward the long-lasting mental impacts of such a life-changing event. With her background in psychology, Dr. Kalayjian set out to create that support. Since then, the organization has offered specialized psychological services and resources in over 48 countries and 26 states in the USA with a focus on healing and love for self, others, and the environment.

At MeaningfulWorld, our goal is to prepare a generation of conscientious individuals who are guided by love, peace, passion, and meaning. *MeaningfulWorld* is dedicated to fostering a meaningful, peaceful, and just world in which every individual enjoys physical, mental, social, economic, and spiritual health. A sense of meaning, peace, and justice, although unique to everyone, is achieved through a transformational journey that integrates knowledge and experience with a sense of responsibility and reflection. We have monthly clinical workshops, annual humanitarian missions, and are accredited at the United Nations.