



The Association for Trauma Outreach and Prevention (ATOP)
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Post-Trauma Healing & Meaning-Making Workshop **25 February 2023** **Kiana I Smith**

In a world where trauma and crises are increasingly prevalent, ATOP MeaningfulWorld is taking mindful action by equipping individuals with the tools they need to heal, transform, and find meaning in the aftermath of hardship. MeaningfulWorld hosted a transformative workshop led by Dr. Kalayjian, a renowned trauma expert & President & Founder of ATOP Meaningfulworld. The workshop delved into the different kinds of trauma and crises, including accidental, natural, and human-made traumas. But first to ensure all participants, both in person and virtual, were provided a safe and healthy environment, the room was comfortable, inviting, and full of windows overlooking a garden, creating a relaxing atmosphere. The space was adorned with orchids in different colors, and the jade plant was in full bloom, while candles releasing aromatic fragrances and essential oils were infused all around, giving attendees a feeling of inclusion and embracing them with love and healing. Dr. Ani, began the day sharing a poem she wrote on “Let love transform you.” She then shared her expertise on disaster relief, informed by her extensive experience in conducting Humanitarian Relief Missions in 50 countries and 26 states in the USA.

In addition to trauma response, the workshop also focused on self-care techniques, with participants learning about key strategies to promote healing and well-being. One such technique was the use of the acronym **FAST**, which stands for **F**orgetting past negative beliefs, being **A**ctive learner, transforming the negative **S**tate (emotionally & environmentally), and **T**eaching what has been learned. Participants were also introduced to essential oils, flower remedies, and other natural resources to help support their bodies' healing, while also emphasizing the importance of being grounded to the earth and mother nature.

Throughout the workshop, participants were encouraged to share their experiences and insights, creating a supportive and empowering interactive environment. During the workshop, Dr. Ani presented the 7-step Integrative Healing Model, which involves assessing levels of traumatic stress, expressing emotions, seeking empathy and validation, discovering positive meaning, gathering information, connecting with Mother Earth, and practicing deep breathing and movement exercises such as yoga or the integrative model Soul-Surfing ([Access the Soul-Surfing video here](#)). It is crucial to evaluate one's emotions daily to become aware of them and find ways to release negative feelings and learn positive lessons.

Participants found the 7-Step Integrative Healing model to be very helpful in

understanding how to process negative emotions and overcome trauma. Showing a wide spectrum with how the model can be applied in different contexts, such as in personal relationships, workplaces, and communities. The acronym for EQ is **IDEAL**: **I**dentify your emotions (measure 0-10 severe), **D**escribe, **E**xpress, **A**ffirm and **L**et go.

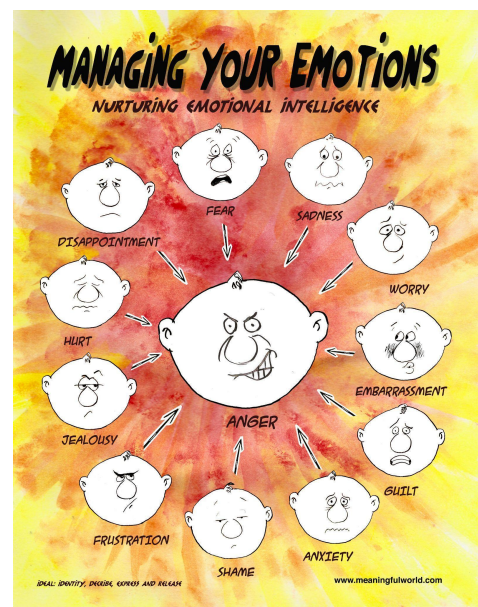
One of the most memorable moments from the workshop was when Dr. Kalayjian shared a quote that stuck with us. She said, "Everything is energy. Your thought begins it, your emotion amplifies it, and your actions increase momentum." This quote helped us understand the importance of being mindful of our thoughts and emotions and how they can affect our actions and behavior. She invited us to release the **ANTS**, **A**utomatic, **N**egative, **T**hought**S**. She then continued by saying success & happiness is attained naturally when 3 H's are aligned: **H**eads, **H**earts and **H**ands. Dr. Ani's 7-Step Integrative Healing model was used in the afternoon healing group, for it provided participants with a framework to express their negative emotions and transform them into lessons learned. Through this model, the group was able to empathize with one another and learn ways to transform negative emotions into positive ones.

SEVENSTEP TO FORGIVENESS FOR SELF LOVE



During lunch, as we all gathered both in person and virtually over our meal, we also were able to watch a video on the [14th annual Haiti Humanitarian Mission ATOP](#) in 2019. In 2010, our teams began disaster relief work immediately after the devastating earthquake that killed over 278,000 Haitians. During this mission ATOP was able to provide trauma counseling and training to local community leaders, educators, and health workers. The goal of this mission was to build local capacity to manage psychological trauma and promote psychosocial well-being among the Haitian population affected by disasters. The team provided training sessions on trauma-informed care, stress management, and self-care to approximately 500 Haitian professionals and direct healing with 200 individuals using evidence-based interventions. The mission was successful in building local capacity, promoting psychosocial well-being in the Haitian population and established a Meaningfulworld chapter in Haiti.

In the Healing group, participants had the opportunity to practice empathy by openly sharing their emotions in a safe, non-judgmental therapeutic environment. By sharing their feelings and receiving validation and empathy from others, at the end of the healing group, most attendees reported a remarkable decrease in their negative emotions, such as anxiety, disappointment, and sadness. The workshop also focused on lessons learned, including the difference between empathy and sympathy, and how to offer empathy without giving advice, without comparing ourselves with them, and without distracting. Participants gained a deeper understanding of the importance of active listening, acknowledging feelings, and showing genuine concern for another's well-being without attempting to solve or 'fix' their problems. Additionally, the group learned about the



therapeutic benefits of natural remedies such as plants and essential oils (Lavender for relaxing, rosemary for protection, and rose for joy) in promoting healing and relaxation. Our team shared helpful resources, such as weekly support groups, to aid participants in their self-care and healing journeys. MeaningfulWorld began offering free weekly Zoom support groups in March 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, and continues to offer them to support individuals both locally and globally. To further promote a healthy mind and body, the workshop included stretching for flexibility and **Soul-Surfing**, concluding with a meditation to help participants feel centered and calm.

In conclusion, the workshop was an incredible success, providing participants with a deeper understanding of trauma response and valuable tools to promote healing and well-being. Attendees learned new methods of self-care, including journaling, meditation, empathy, Soul-Surfing, gratitude app, and mindfulness meditation. MeaningfulWorld remains dedicated to promoting peace, health, and well-being on a global scale and will continue to host workshops locally (which are open globally through zoo, as we had a participant from Rwanda to join us) and events that empower individuals and communities. Our upcoming workshop on 25 March will focus on Conflict Transformation & Peace Building, and we urge you not to miss it.

Kindly visit www.meaningfulworld.com to read our most recent publications, to access a variety of handouts facilitating healing and establishing daily rituals.



Dr. Ani with her mentor Dr. Viktor Frank