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“Conflict Transformation & Peace Building”: Anger Management and Assertiveness Building Workshop

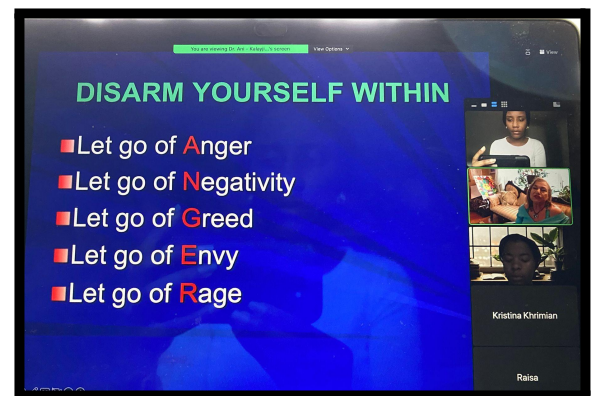
25 March 2023

Kiana I Smith

In the realm of Conflict Transformation & Peace Building, ATOP MeaningfulWorld is actively addressing the rising prevalence of trauma and crises by providing individuals with the necessary skills to heal and derive significance from their experiences. This includes programs aimed at managing anger and building assertiveness, crucial components in the process of overcoming hardship and achieving a state of peace and transformation. ATOP MeaningfulWorld hosted a transformative workshop led by Dr. Ani Kalayjian, a renowned trauma expert and Educational

Program Coordinator Anabel Content & Intern Kiana Smith. In the morning half of the workshop we started with a dynamic presentation and lecture from Dr. Ani. She opened up her presentation talking about Anger. First setting the atmosphere with a poem “Other Side of Love”. After she serenaded us with this poem so full of depth, warmth, and understanding, She delves into her lecture where she introduces the workshop's topic by first sharing that “Anger” is a universal emotion that everyone experiences. In a world where trauma and crises are increasingly prevalent, it is important to equip individuals with the tools they need to manage their anger effectively. Dr. Ani, a conflict transformation and peace building expert, suggests "the four steps to disarm yourself within" as a way to release anger and prevent it from controlling your body. These steps include letting go of anger, negativity, greed, envy, and rage.

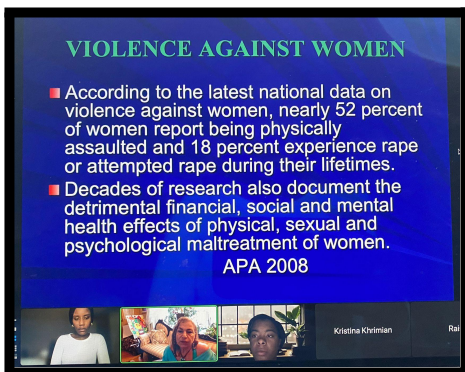
In addition to the four steps, Dr. Ani also recommends nonviolent communication as a tool for conflict transformation. She explains that nonviolent communication is a form of conflict management that can be used between individuals as well as between multiple countries. The eight steps for conflict transformation include knowing oneself and taking care of oneself, clarifying personal needs threatened by the dispute, identifying a safe place for negotiation, taking a listening stance into the interaction, asserting needs clearly and specifically, approaching problem-solving with flexibility, managing impasse with calm, patience, and respect, and building an agreement that works. Dr. Ani also emphasized that anger can impact an individual's health. Health Psychology by the American Psychology Association reported that young adults with short tempers have compromised lung function, even after ruling out asthma and smoking as possible reasons for lung dysfunction. Furthermore, people



who have been abused often rely on drugs and alcohol due to the stress that spurs neurological changes that make them believe that drugs are rewarding.

In addition to anger management, we also learned about the value of assertiveness. She explained how assertiveness can also be used to resolve conflicts effectively. If we are not assertive, we will then be passive or aggressive, both resulting in anger. Passive communication is indirect, self-denying, and blaming, while aggressive communication is controlling and blaming. Assertiveness can be seen as the middle point of both aggressive and passive communication. Assertiveness can be demonstrated through body language and verbal communication. Assertive body language includes standing straight, steady, and directly facing

the people to whom you are speaking while maintaining eye contact. Similarly, assertive communication includes 1. positive connection, 2. Sharing your observations, 3. sharing your feelings, and 4. stating what you expect, recommendations. These skills can be used to manage conflicts and build better relationships. By the end of the morning we were able to understand that anger management, nonviolent communication, and assertiveness are critical skills in conflict transformation and peace building. By learning to manage anger effectively, individuals can prevent it from controlling their lives and



impacting their health. Along with assertiveness, forgiveness was a vital approach for peace building. We discussed violence against women, and she shared personal trauma and experience attending an international conference on traumatic stress in Turkey in 1999. During the conference, she faced threats to her life, and to her family from the Turkish government, to prevent her from using the word "genocide" in her presentation. In article 301 in Turkey, no one is allowed to use the word Genocide, if they do, they are tortured and or killed like her friend Hrant Dink in 2007. Despite being forced to hide those words in her presentation, the word "genocide" was accidentally revealed during her presentation and caused negative reactions from Turkish individuals. However, despite receiving negative reactions and threats, Dr. Ani returned to Turkey to help during the 1999 earthquake, demonstrating her ability to forgive and not be deterred from government threats.

After Dr. Ani's informative and expansive lecture we transitioned into a 30 minute interactive presentation from our *Visionary Speaker, Karine Arshakyan* on Art Therapy and Neurographica. During

her presentation she explained how Neurographica was a form of art therapy that uses marker pens, colorful pencils, and paper. She described how the art that is created is centered around four elements: a wavy, non-repeating "neural line," a regular geometrical shape (e.g., a circle, triangle, square), colors, and words. Ms. Arshakyan shows an example of a completed project, which they describe as a map of their goals and dreams. They explain that creating a Neurographica artwork can help with self-discovery, expanding one's comfort zone, and identifying resources. She also mentions that this type of art can appear abstract and busy, but it



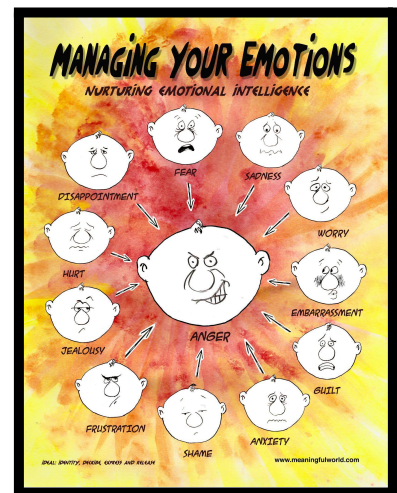


holds a lot of emotions and conclusions. At the end of Ms. Arsbakyan's demonstration the participants were not only informed and educated in an artistic way to express and show our feelings but understand the intersections and intricacies from them. We also were able to see beautiful art that she had created as she explained the purpose of each stroke and line. It truly was an eye opening and magnificent piece..

Throughout the workshop, participants were encouraged to share their experiences and insights, creating a supportive and empowering environment. During the workshop, Kiana Smith with the helpful guidance of 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.

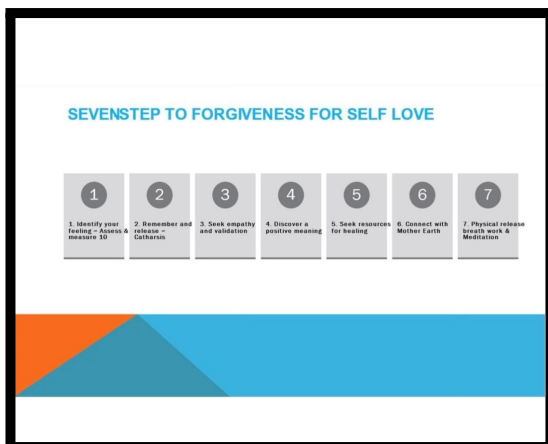
The 7-Step Integrative Healing model was deemed highly beneficial by the participants in terms of managing negative feelings and recovering from traumatic experiences. The model demonstrated versatility in its application, as it was found to be useful in various settings such as grieving & loss, challenges in academic institutions, family stress, and community support.

One of the most memorable moments from the workshop was when Dr. Kalayjian shared a quote that stuck with us. She said, "Don't do it with an attitude. Do it with gratitude." This quote helped us understand the importance of being mindful of our thoughts and emotions while also being conscious to always do your best. She shared that in spite of what's happening outside, always do your best, the best that you can. Dr. Ani's 7-Step Integrative Healing model really helped reinforce the 4th step of "discovering positive meaning", allowing the participants to reflect on the positive with their own personal emotions that they had expressed during the session. This moment provided participants with a framework to express their negative emotions and transform them into positive ones. Through



this model, the group was able to empathize with one another and learn ways to transform negative emotions into positive ones.

After a relaxing meditation, participants practiced empathy by openly sharing their emotions in a safe, non-judgmental therapeutic environment. Each individual shared their feelings and received validation and empathy from others. Most attendees reported lower negative feelings (such as worry, disappointment, and sadness) by the end of the session. Dr. Ani and the ATOP team provided helpful resources





such as weekly support groups, helpful remedies to help address some of the issues and emotions the participants presented. The remedies she shared were CALM. It is a relaxant that helps with memory and a great detox for the body. It is recommended to take at bedtime especially with its relaxing and calming effects. Other remedies she mentioned were L-Theanine, Star of bethlehem, and Mustard flower essence. MeaningfulWorld also offered the resources of their support group. They began offering free weekly Zoom support groups in March 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, and continues to offer them to support people locally and globally.

In conclusion, the workshop was an incredible success, providing participants with a deeper understanding of how to manage anger and build assertiveness, which are crucial components in the process of overcoming hardship and achieving a state of peace and transformation. Remember “Peace begins in our Souls.” Attendees learned new methods of self-care, nurturing peace within, including meditation, empathy, Soul-Surfing, and mindfulness meditation.

ATOP MeaningfulWorld remains dedicated to promoting peace, health, and well-being on a global scale and will continue to host workshops and events that empower individuals and communities. Our upcoming workshop on 29 April will focus on Mindful Leadership & Forgiveness, and we urge you not to miss it.

When participants complete the 4 modules and 4 experiential aspects of this humanitarian and self-care training, the graduation will take place at the United Nations on 8 June. Kindly email EDCoordinator@Meaningfulworld.com and visit www.meaningfulworld.com

