



Psychotherapy, Psychology, Psychiatry and International Policy: Professional Contributions and Personal Experiences about Mental Health and Wellbeing, Psychosocial Resilience and Peace

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“Life and love in the 21st century, from the intimate encounter to embracing the world” -- the title of the 8th World Congress of Psychotherapy held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris France in July 2017 -- aligns well with my invited presentations¹, with this paper based on those presentations, and further, with my work over many years on the theme that self-love leads to positive interpersonal interactions which then expands to constructive international relations that benefit the world.

The theme “the microcosm reflects the macrocosm” posits that the personal, interpersonal and international are interconnected, circular and spherical. Related to principles of physics, the kinetic energy of this interaction is vibrational, rotational and translational (e.g., moves from one location to another). Consistent with this theory, when people ask me what is the connection between me being on radio answering people’s questions about love and relationships for years, as documented in my book, *“The Complete*

Idiots Guide to a Healthy Relationship” (Kuriansky, 2002), spending years providing psychosocial support to survivors in disasters and conflict zones, as exemplified in my book, *“Beyond Bullets and Bombs: Grassroots peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians,”* (Kuriansky, 2007a) the link is clear: resolving conflict on any level has common denominators of communication and harmonizing energy.

This maxim has guided my work over the years as a clinical psychologist, cross-cultural research scientist, and media psychologist, to become a representative of psychology organizations at the United Nations which is involved in policymaking about mental health and well-being (MHWB) on the international level.

Such merging of personal, interpersonal and political levels expands the possibilities for contributions of psychotherapists and mental health professionals to the betterment of the world. My interns and students of Clinical and Counseling Psychology who have taken my class in “Psychology and the

¹My presentations included at the Pre-Congress Round Table on Peace, Empathy and Psychotherapy, and plenaries on “Mental Health and Well-Being, Advances at the United Nations and Events Impacting Psychotherapy,” “Psychosocial Support & Resilience in Cultures in Repeated Trauma: Lessons

from Earthquakes to Floods” and “From Enlightenment to Embracing the World: How East/West Practice Connects to Achieving the United Nations Agenda.”



United Nations” at Columbia University Teachers College find this expansion inspirational as a way to make a difference in the world.

Making a difference requires interventions but also policy to back them up and provide funding. My work over years has revealed the indispensable mixture of influencing policy as guiding principles and implementing programs “on the ground” and “in the field.”

Fortunately, high-level UN officials and government representatives increasingly acknowledged that while they can adopt statements, conceive compacts and draft documents that guide that define “the world we want” (a phrase used in such documents), it is the people in civil society and non-governmental organizations who do the hard work “in the field” and “on the ground”, especially for those most in need and at risk. Psychotherapists, psychologists and psychiatrists, as well as counselors and mental health professionals in many disciplines have a crucial role to play in this process.

The following sections in this paper describe both policy and programs I have initiated, led, or participated in, in service of the above process of implementing programs on the grassroots level as well as advocating with high-level partners on the intergovernmental level.² While this is my story, other stakeholders have contributed valuable efforts on the local, state and national level, since change comes from both “bottom up and top down on all fronts.

²Some topics of speeches and conferences are included in the body of this paper (instead of citing them into the reference

Communication Models, Common Components of Empathy, Understanding and Compassion

A fundamental common denominator for psychotherapists and diplomats is communication, based on essential components of empathy (the topic of the WCP conference), understanding, and compassion. Particularly valuable models used in counseling and conflict resolution that include:

Active listening, a method of listening and responding by giving full attention to what someone is saying, without being distracted, disputed, judged or changed the subject to oneself, and then repeating back what was heard to confirm understanding (Worthington & Fitch-Hauser, 2016).

Non-violent (NVC, or compassionate) communication, used in many international peace processes, that similarly involves the components of empathy and understanding. The four steps are: expressing facts, stating feelings, explaining needs, and making non-demanding requests (Rosenberg, 2002, 2005).

The Harvard Negotiation Process similarly takes emotions into account for effective conflict resolution. Five “core concerns” that motivate people -- appreciation, affiliation, autonomy, status, and role -- gauge needs and generate helpful emotions to reach mutually acceptable agreements between people (Fisher & Shapiro, 2006).

My own approach is rooted in multiple psychotherapeutic disciplines, including an analytic understanding of development, an existential overview, and techniques in gestalt and cognitive-behavioral models. In

section) due to their relevance to the topic, to elucidate points, or the highlight colleagues’ expertise.



research, especially about coping after a disaster, I include one of my favorite measures, Locus of Control (Rotter, 1995), to assess the degree to which one considers life as personal responsibility or determined by outside forces. While my view lies in the middle, survivors in more faith-based communities (as in Haiti after the devastating earthquakes) view destiny and God as a stronger determinant (Kuriansky, Zinsou, Arunagiri et al., 2015).

Unconditional Positive Regard, Love and Heart

Given the prevalence of natural and man-made disasters in the 21st century, several psychological principles are crucial for inner and outer peace. Overlapping with empathy (the word in the title of the WCP conference) is unconditional positive regard, namely acceptance of others by setting aside personal biases, that plays a critical role in effective personal, interpersonal and international communication (Rogers, 1956), the power of which I have seen over many years of giving advice to people of all ages on the radio (being known as the “Love Doctor”) as well as in negotiating. Unconditional love goes deeper, offering appreciation and affection without conditions.³ These concepts align with the theme of the campaign the Ambassador of Palau, Dr. Caleb Otto, and I have done throughout the United Nations intergovernmental negotiations for the UN Agenda 2030 for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as ensuing side events, namely that Mental

³Interestingly, people of all cultures pose enthusiastically for pictures, hugging partners and friends, in front of the “Love Sculpture,” a pop art structure that spells out

Health and Well-being is HWB at the “heart” of the sustainable development goals for a better world.



At the WCP Congress in Paris, UN representative Judy Kuriansky and intern Alexandra Margevich with board member from China Mingyi Qian and incoming board member Xiaoming Jia

International Conflicts and Terrorism: Opposite of empathy

Given practiced skills in communication and conflict resolution, psychotherapists, psychologists and psychiatrists have much to contribute to international conflicts. These continue to plague the world, in regions like the Middle East and parts of Africa, and in nuclear threats from North Korea and Iran. While perpetrators of terror aim to torture not only bodies but emotions – inciting fear as one of what’s called “weapons of mass psychological destruction” (James & Oroszi, 2015), their acts can also paradoxically bond people together. I’ve seen this happen when volunteering after school shootings and after the World Trade Attacks on 9/11 (Kuriansky, 2003b). Other experiences have similarly raised my consciousness. In Tehran in 2004, at a conference on “New Methods of Psychotherapy in Modern

the word love in big red letters, in midtown New York City (ironically, across my street).



Times, combining Eastern mystical techniques with Western practices” giving professional trainings and public lectures, it became clear that people living in oppressive regimes are vastly different from their government, and further, have the same questions and dreams as those in every other part of the world: they all want fulfilling relationships and a better life for their children (Kuriansky, 2004).

Given the terrorism that had been occurring in the world since 9/11, at the WCP 4th World Congress for Psychotherapy in Buenos Aires, I co-drafted a Position Paper with my fellow WCP board member Dr. Darlyne Nemeth a declaration for a “9th MDG” about “Freedom from emotional suffering” to add to the then-8 Millennium Development Goals. This was then distributed at the September 2005 conference of the UN DPI/NGO conference, and presented on a panel by colleagues on “*Introducing A Holistic and Practical Vision of Human Rights from different Perspectives: the Psychotherapy Perspective.*”

Healing divides, and generating empathy for the “other,” comes from finding common ground (Kuriansky, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005c). This became poignantly evident at the WCP conference in Vienna, Austria, in July 2002, when I was asked to mediate a heated debate in a panel of Israelis and Palestinians that transformed into pensive cooperation when I proposed collaborating on a book with chapters from each side on similar topics, like children, women, and identity, which later documented in the book, “*Terror in the Holy Land: Inside the Anguish of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*” (Kuriansky, 2006d). That effort further led to a collection of projects about the healing power of common ground, documenting dialoguing or working together in learning

computers, trekking, or playing basketball that facilitated friendship, understanding and peace, documented in the book “*Beyond Bullets and Bombs: Grassroots Peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians*” (Kuriansky, 2007a). Studies have shown that while some relationships became more troubled in the face of terrorism, others become stronger, reaffirming commitment (Kuriansky, Bagenstose, Hirsch et. al, 2009); in support of this, some hospitals even reported more babies were born nine months after terror attacks.



Talking to an Arab father in Ramallah after a terrorist attack



Comforting a child after 9/11

Consistent with the UN’s main cause to promote peace, every effort directly or indirectly addresses that goal (Kuriansky, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2007b, 2007c, 2008c, 2009a, 2009c, 2009d, 2009e). For so much work on peace issues at the UN and elsewhere, I was awarded the Friends of the



UN2011 Lifetime Achievement in Global
Peace and Tolerance.

East/West Integration

The integration of eastern and western approaches, that has long defined my work, greatly assisted both counseling and diplomacy (Kuriansky, 2003a, 2004a, 2004b; 2004c). An understanding and appreciation of both traditions from multiple cultural and religious backgrounds is especially crucial at the UN. To facilitate this, I have co-produced with partners, like the United African Congress, conferences at the UN for the 2017 World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development and during the World Interfaith Harmony Week (Billings, R. 2016; Kuriansky, 2017a).

Multistakeholder Collaborations: Supportive UN Member States

The realization of change requires a top down and bottom up approach, whereby executives and decision-makers of organizations must collaborate with grassroots groups. Consistent with this, the UN is focused on what's called PPP's, public-private partnerships, and what's called "multi-stakeholder partnerships," whereby people from varied aspects of society are needed to pool their efforts to achieve the Agenda 2030, with its ambitious goals to eradicate poverty, combat climate change, ensure health and education for all, gender equality, and peaceful societies (sustainabledevelopment.un.org).

Advocacy of psychologists on the intergovernmental level

Advocacy is the process by which an individual or a group actively present their

views or special interest to impact a cause that requires influencing others in social, economic or political systems and institutions. A campaign to accomplish this includes collecting research data and cases, preparing position papers and publications, identifying partners, and having meetings. Historically, individual psychologists have been involved in various UN-related activities for over half a century, but the concerted action was only undertaken in more recent years (Takooshian, 2008; Kuriansky, 2013a). Such activity has accelerated in part due to the intensity at the UN to define a new 15-year plan for "the world we want" (that became the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development), and psychologists like myself recognized that we had to play a role in defining this new world, as well as the formation of the coalition of psychology-related NGOs accredited at the UN (called PCUN, which I co-founded), which magnified efforts that any one group could do alone. As a result, I was able to engage colleagues, like Dr. Corann Okorodudu who stayed up some nights to help draft papers and others who occasionally joined me at meetings with important delegates.

Identifying "Friendly" governments

Throughout our campaign to include MHWB in the UN Agenda, and going forward, it is important to identify supportive governments. During the negotiations for the UN Agenda, Ambassador Otto, committed as a public health physician, who was the force garnering governments' supported to take MHWB down the field and over the finish line. His friendship with other Ambassadors and my concerted efforts identified other "friends" of MHWB; including Vietnam,



Cyprus and Greece, who were particularly supportive, as well as Benin Ambassador Jean Francis Zinsou on behalf of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Many other countries from regions all over the world had participated in the Friends of MHWB Group we had developed, and documented in a video about the campaign (Kuriansky, 2016h).



Ambassador Caleb Otto and Dr. Judy Kuriansky planning the intergovernmental campaign advocacy for the UN Agenda 2030



Dr. Judy and Jeff Huffines deliver the NGO advocacy to the Agenda 2030 co-chairs Ambassadors Kamau of Kenya and Donoghue of Ireland

In our follow-up events to keep the topic of MHWB prominent for countries, Ambassador Otto and I co-organized many side events about MHWB (described further below) involving our supportive countries and engaging others; for example, the Iraq Mission sponsored out event about unique applications of artificial intelligence and technology tools to close the mental health

gap (Kuriansky, 2017b;UNWebTV, 2017a); and with the Missions of Canada and Belgium in a major event about considering MHWB at the Heart of the SDGs which the Ambassador of Liberia also supported (UNWebTV, 2016), and another for the Commission of Social Development in 2017 about youth and poverty sponsored by the Missions of Belgium and Afghanistan (Kuriansky, 2017c;UNWebTV, 2017b). Canada, Belgium and Bahrain are now taking the lead in a renewed Friends of MHWB that Ambassador Otto and I have initiated, to move the mission forward. In an honorable and historic move, they have included me as a civil society representative, to provide the history and recommend strategy given my vast experience in this subject and events.

At the important Voluntary National Reviews submitted at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) held at the United Nations in July 2017, several countries' support stood out, including Cyprus (that had been especially supportive during the Agenda negotiation) as well as by Denmark and Monaco, Thailand and the Czech Republic. Portugal underscored MHWB especially among children and adolescents, with an exciting new initiative to mainstream mental wellness into schools. Belgium, Slovenia, Sweden and Qatar, underscored access to community-based mental health services. Thailand and the Netherlands are addressing depression; Slovenia and Japan accentuated dementia; and India cited the positive role of yoga. Belgium highlighted the work of their H.M. Queen Mathilde in advocating for mental health and well-being in her role as a UN SDG Advocate; for whom I had once co-organized a briefing.

Vietnam's commitment to mental health was evident in the active and invaluable



participation of then-Deputy Permanent Representative of the Vietnam mission to the UN, Do Hung Viet, in the campaign to include mental health and well-being in the UN Agenda 2030; the Prime Minister's pride in his countries' commitment to the wellbeing of the people in his address at the UN celebrating the 40th anniversary of Vietnam joining the UN; and in the First Southeast Asia Regional Conference of Psychology (RCP2017.org) held in Hanoi, Vietnam in November 2017 on the theme "Human Well-being and Sustainable Development."

Notably, The Ambassador of Vietnam to the UN, H.E. Nguyen Phuong Nga said in her address as a co-sponsor of the International Day of Happiness 2016 gala event that I produced, "Let us join hands in creating a foundation of happiness and well-being for our people all over the world, by taking concrete action to implement the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals – end poverty, promote peace, justice and social inclusion and protect the environment. Let compassion and love prevail over grief, discrimination and hate... we can only be happy if we make others happy."

Civil society partners (like the United African Congress and Give Them a Hand Foundation) have also been valuable, to engage missions in many side events, e.g., the Missions of Jamaica and Monaco in a side event during the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62) honoring rural women and specifically Jamaican athlete Novlene Williams-Mills who earned Olympic medals and meanwhile was a breast cancer survivor; the Missions of Ethiopia and Indonesia joined Jamaica in our event on Interfaith Harmony Week; and the Mission of Sierra Leone partnered with me in the side event on continuing

psychosocial attention to Ebola and other infectious diseases during the Commission for Social Development.

Human rights

Fundamental to advocacy at the UN is that MHWB is a human right. Holding the 2017 WCP conference on the topic of empathy and peace at UNESCO supported this point, given the agency's purpose to contribute to peace and security, and given that the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in Paris, in 1948. Similarly appropriate, at the UN Department of Public Information/NGO conference in Paris, the panel that I organized led to a special journal issue on "*Models of Mental Health and Human Rights in celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights for All*" with many models about peace, human rights and education (Kuriansky, 2009e; Kopeliovich&Kuriansky, 2009; Kuriansky&Alladin, 2009). In many other presentations, I was sure to include an emphasis on human rights in mental health (Kuriansky, 2005e, 2008b; 2013a, 2014a).

In a major affirmation, in July of 2016, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a Resolution on Mental Health and Human Rights, led by Portugal and Brazil and co-sponsored by many countries, signaling commitment by countries to address human rights in mental health (United Nations General Assembly, 2017). This builds on WHO's "Quality Rights" campaign which I have reported on several years ago (Kuriansky, 2012d).



Setting the Stage: Personal Process to Policy

Trained and working as a clinical psychologist and research scientist, I never expected to do advocacy about policy. But looking back – as any respectable Freudian would do -- seeds were sown in youth, e.g., in my 8-year old desire to “change the world” (when asked what I wanted to be when I grew up), and as a junior high school student answering “Yes” to the school newspaper reporter’s question, “Do you want to be the first woman President”, elaborating that “I want to serve my country” (while all other girls at the time said “no,” they want to raise a family or don’t want the responsibility. Then, too, on a White House tour as an adolescent, my father pushed me to be at the front of the line and to ask questions, especially if the President appeared, and my mother told me to wait when Broadway actors exited the theatre, to tell them my opinion of the play. In Junior High, I joined the debate team, despite preferring rapport and seeing both sides of the story to arguing one side. Surprising to me, I usually won, regardless of the topic. Later I realized that this exercise was less about arguing and more about convincingly stating my case. Propelled further in this direction, when I came to be regularly on television as a talk show host or commentator, producers often cast me in debates (for example, even once to debate about Timothy Leary who was touting cryogenics).

My debating took a sharp turn into diplomacy, when asked by the IAAP Executive Director Ray Fowler and later WCP President Alfred Pritz to become a UN NGO representative. I agreed, despite not really knowing what was involved, but following my tenet of saying “yes” and

figuring it out later, I observed the system, asked advice, and figured out my individual formula and toolkit for advocating. A key factor was being driven by the passion to promote the value of psychology to world problems.

Appreciation goes to colleague Deanna Chitayat, then representing APA at the UN, who urged me -- after a caucus meeting she called of psychology organizations during the Commission for Social Development in 2012 -- to go out and convince delegates of the importance of psychological research and practice to their deliberations about the eradication of poverty. Apparently, she was impressed when I spoke up about recommending support of indexes of well-being to measure development other than GDP, being supported by the Bhutan government and others, that had sadly been removed from the *UN Human Development Report*. Again I said “yes” without really knowing what exactly to do, but with an intern in tow, went into the meetings and began talking to delegates of countries like South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Italy, Chile, France, Egypt and Mexico, (specifically noting when delegates used words in their statements like “empowerment” and “social well-being”), informing them about statements about poverty developed by the Psychology NGOs accredited at the UN and encouraging them to include references to the importance of psychological issues in the eradication of poverty in the final draft resolution (Kuriansky 2012a).

Negotiating two crucially important international instruments

Two issues have been predominant in my advocacy at the UN: mental health and well-being, and psychosocial resilience.



Mental Health and well-being

Over many years, capitulating in two intensive years from 2013-2015, 193 members of state governments at the United Nations were negotiating what was being called the new global Agenda for Sustainable Development. This resulted in the adoption of 17 goals and 16 targets, as I mentioned, to attain “the world we want,” including to eradicate poverty, combat climate change and ensure gender equality, health and education for all, and peaceful societies. During the process, it became pressing to me that mental health and well-being urgently needed to be included in this ambitious document. The process to achieve the goals as an intense effort, with a critical step being to find an Ambassador at the UN who would champion the cause, since civil society could advise and request, but the delegates of the UN missions would ultimately decide among themselves and vote. After many meetings and approaching many delegates, I finally found the perfect partner in the Ambassador of Palau (I’ve mentioned above), who was as passionate as I am, as a public health physician who also had family members with mental health challenges. After arduous months of (no sleep) planning, writing position papers, meeting with delegates, and forming a Friends of Mental Health and Well-being Group for strategy advice, the campaign reached a groundswell and the wording we wanted to take hold (Forman, 2014; Kuriansky, 2016f). Delegates were even surprised that such a topic got attention in the midst of major issues like poverty, although all admitted to me that they just hadn’t thought about it before even though it “made perfect sense,” especially given that MHWB affects so many people and the agenda, after all, it is about and for the

people. During the closing session of the adoption of the Agenda, I was stunned and deeply honored to be publicly acknowledged in his closing remarks by the negotiations co-chair, Ambassador Macharia Kamau of Kenya, who had so skillfully managed the two years of intergovernmental negotiations (Kuriansky, 2016b). To honor all the major delegates’ hard work and success, I hosted a spectacular gala celebration at the Friars Club (Luce, n.d.).

The success is historic, in three mentions that will impact people and support the field of psychology and psychotherapy forever: envisioning a world “where physical, mental and social well-being are assured” (paragraph 7); describing the new agenda whereby “To promote physical and mental health and well-being, and to extend life expectancy for all, we must achieve universal health coverage and access to quality health care (paragraph 26), and promising to “promote mental health and well-being” (Target 3.4). Increasingly, MHWB is being seen as a cross-cutting issue that is fundamental to achieving all the other lofty goals.

Advocacy never stops. Efforts have to keep the issue alive as news events and other priorities emerge. To follow-up with our campaign, Ambassador Otto and his wife Judy (a public health Ph.D.) and I organized three side events to advance the awareness about MHWB at the **heart** of the SDGs. These were an enormous amount of work, with much brainstorming, planning, outreach, and meetings, considering setting our own bar so high, to continually interesting, compelling and unusual events (attendees kept telling us that were unique and entertaining for the UN), that included participation of many stakeholders (Ambassadors, UN agencies, civil society, youth, media and others) as well as videos,



and unique and original cultural performances.

They include:

* A major event about “*Mental Health and Wellbeing at the Heart of the SDGs: Concrete Means of Implementation*” held on Sept 7, 2016 with the mission of Canada and Belgium as major sponsors and supportive commentary from Liberia and Panama, Timor-Leste and Micronesia (Luce, 2016; UNWebTV, 2016; Otto, Kuriansky & Otto, 2016). Besides remarks from these UN officials about the importance of MHWB, especially in light of extreme poverty, high rates of depression and suicide, and displaced persons worldwide, programs were showcased that addressed MHWB in various populations and settings worldwide, from a faith-keeper of the indigenous Iroquois Confederacy demonstrating healing rituals to an international humanitarian organization describing programs to address trauma of Syrian refugees. The founder of Grand Challenges Canada, funded by the government to then provide support for programs worldwide, like an African group that reaches out to the community by offering mental health “chats” on local benches. Emotion filled the room as a young girl spoke of her suicide attempts and now efforts to build a school to teach young African girls about mental health. This contrasted the celebration of a performance of an original anthem, “Happy People, Happy Planet,” written by my music partner, Russell Daisey, and myself. In his keynote remarks, Ambassador Otto said, “*The heart is a great enabler. For the next 15 years, I want everyone to think of the sustainable development goals as the affairs of the heart.*”

* Another event on “*Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing for Youth as a Strategy for Social Integration and Poverty*

Eradication” was held in February 2017 during the UN Commission for the Division for Social Policy and Development of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA/DSPD) (Kuriansky, 2017c; Otto, Kuriansky & Otto, 2017b; UNWebTV, 2017b). This continued the tradition of combining high-level remarks with academics and practitioners doing concrete programs “in the field” around the world, supplemented by video. The event started powerfully with a gripping original play by youth from the Susan Rybin Studio of Drama, about a young man beset with school and family trouble. The presenters, all my friends, described their efforts to provide psychosocial support for youth in regions from Africa to Afghanistan to America. The Hope and Health Vision program on the border of the troubled region of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo offers psychosocial support, education and food, fun and a feeling of “family” through group activities, to street children, former child soldiers and children in poverty and at-risk. For similarly troubled youth in Afghanistan, the “Tabish” organization provides comprehensive health and psychosocial counseling services and psychological first aid. In the U.S., The Character Connection Initiative promotes key character traits through practices of mindfulness, courage, and curiosity, making a commitment to integrity and perseverance, and expressing gratitude, generosity, and compassion.

Ambassador Otto highlighted how “youth must be nurtured in body, mind and spirit,” Deputy Permanent Representative of Belgium reiterated their country’s commitment to promote mental health, and the Director of DSPD/DESA Daniela Bas, whose department had just published “*Mental Health Matters: Social Inclusion of*



Youth with Mental Health Conditions,” noted that mental health and well-being is integral to social development and poverty eradication; that young people suffer from mental health conditions in silence and stigma; and that more research is needed to establish effective programmes.



(left to right): Pascal Buffin, Deputy Permanent Representative of Belgium to the UN; David Marcotte, SJ, Ph.D., The Character Connection Initiative; Jean-Marie Vianney Bazibuhe, founder, Hope and Health Vision; Judy Kuriansky, Ph.D., event moderator; H.E. Ambassador Katalin Bogyay, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the UN; H.E. Ambassador Dr. Caleb Otto, Permanent Representative of Palau to the UN; (front) Daniela Bas, Director of the Division of Social Policy and Development, UN-DESA.

* A third event to continue the promotion of MHWB at the heart of the SDGs, that Judy Otto and I organized, was on “*Artificial Intelligence and Technology Tools for Mental Health, Well-Being, and Resilience: Bridging the treatment gap in the cases of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Hispanic workers in the USA and youth in humanitarian crises*” (Otto, Kuriansky & Otto, 2017a; UNWebTV, 2017a). Held in May during the UN Science, Technology and Innovation Forum, programs were showcased that apply increasingly popular AI and technology tools to bridge the treatment gap whereby an estimated one-in-four people worldwide suffer from a mental

health condition during their lifetime yet less than 20% get the care they need, especially in low resource and humanitarian crisis settings.



Panelists (left to right): Ms. Ruxanda Renita, UN Assistant UN Secretary-General Thomas Gass, Dr. Judy Kuriansky, Dr. David Luxton, Ms. Julie Edgcomb, Dr. Caleb Otto



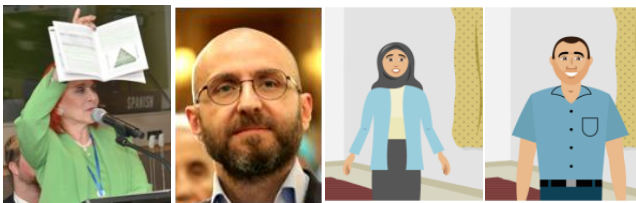


UN Assistant Secretary-General **Thomas Gass** highlighted the importance of mental health to human well-being and the SDGs, and the uniqueness of this side event.

Ambassador Otto underscored that technology tools must be embedded in a holistic health system that supports mental, physical, social and spiritual health.

AI expert Dr. David Luxton, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington described virtual therapists counseling a Vietnam veteran with PTSD. While predicting AI as the wave of the future in mental health, he warned against depersonalization and legal and ethical issues.

Other compelling examples of AI application were described; in Lebanon, by psychiatrist Dr. **Rabih El Chammay**, head of Mental Health at the Ministry of Public Health in Beirut; a plan in northern California to pilot AI-based texting software to deliver mental health services to Spanish-speaking transient workers; and the “PASSA” project engaging youth to use technology tools for disaster risk reduction.



Dr. Kuriansky shows the Lebanon Strategy booklet; Lebanon’s Dr. el Chammay; virtual therapists

Respondents were enthusiastic and impressed. Deputy Permanent Representative of the Mission of Canada to the United Nations Michael Grant noted being “spellbound by the potential,” and Mr. Hassan Abbas, Counsellor of the Mission of Lebanon to the UN, noted interest to learn more about these initiatives in his country and to further collaborate.



(left to right) UN Deputy Ambassador of Canada Michael Grant, and Counsellor of the Lebanon Mission to the UN Hassan Abbas

Advocacy about Psychosocial Resilience

While governments and stakeholders at the UN often talk about “resilience” in the face of disaster (a term used commonly in psychology) and about “building back better” (a term used increasingly at the UN), this refers to infrastructure, like reconstructing buildings, following building codes, and establishing early warning systems. Thus, my second major advocacy at the UN has focused on promoting “psychosocial resilience” meaning the welfare of people (Masangkay, 2015). Slowly, recognition of the importance of emotional aspects of resilience has



increased. For example, at a recent two-day donor conference after the tragic hurricanes that I was invited to attend, a few mentions were made of emotional needs of the survivors, and of the importance of “hope.” The international instrument that forms the backbone for this advocacy is once mention in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, where paragraph 33 (o) calls for “[enhancing] recovery schemes to provide psychosocial support and mental health services for all people in need.”

My devoted efforts in disaster recovery began in 1989, when I first got involved in recovery efforts after earthquakes in San Francisco and then Australia, and intensified over years of leading missions for psychosocial recovery, including the model of the Global Kids Connect Project that connects provides simple coping and empowerment tools meanwhile also being fun (Kuriansky & Jean-Charles, 2012). My policy efforts intensified in 2007, while I was on the executive board of the NGO Committee of Mental Health, and co-drafted many statements about this issue which led to advocating at the conference of the International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva, Switzerland, submitting a written statement, and making an oral statement at the concluding meeting. The latter resulted in a major lesson in assertiveness, as I had to approach the secretariat with persistence to secure the last remaining speaker slot. This same strategy was necessary on many other occasions at UN meetings.

More recently, I advocated about psychosocial resilience at the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai Japan in 2015 where governments adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. There I presented on the Ignite Stage about my model of

psychosocial support in Haiti (assisted by my two interns Joel Zinsou and Quyen Nguyen) (United Nations Office for Disaster Reduction, 2015), advocated with many delegates, helped draft civil society statements, and importantly, was selected to make a statement during the main closing stakeholder session, where I presented the importance of distinguishing "psychosocial resilience" from "structural resilience" (Kuriansky, 2015).



Dr. Judy Kuriansky making statement about psychosocial resilience at the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai Japan

In continuing this effort, I was required to go to the follow-up meeting at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Cancun, Mexico, 24-26 May 2017, where I pursued more interactions with government delegates, as well as gave Ignite Stage presentations and workshops and led a 2-hour workshop/interactive session in their block on "Intergenerational Issues" in Disaster Relief for the UN Major Group for Children and Youth. Again, in the spirit of involving young people (and having assistance in the big effort!), I brought a youth with me, my assistant Alexandra Margevich.



Advocating about psychosocial resilience at the World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction in Cancun Mexico: Dr. Judy Kuriansky presenting with Dr. Alexandra Margevich on the Ignite Stage; advocating with a delegate; conducting a workshop at the exhibit booth for the UN Major Group for Children and Youth

Ambassador Otto and I had originally included support for psychosocial resilience in our intergovernmental campaign during the negotiations for the UN Agenda 2030, but eventually focused our efforts on mental health and well-being. We picked up this issue at the Sendai conference, with a masterful coordination of timing to have H.E. Francis Matsutaro, the Ambassador of Palau in Japan on the roster to deliver our statement at the intergovernmental meeting (when only governments could speak), punctuated with my own statement at the multi-stakeholder meeting (where selected civil society representatives could speak) (Kuriansky, 2015; UNWebTV, 2015).

Since effective advocacy requires the support of high-level officials, it is fortunate

that the head of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (www.UNISDR.org) for years, Margareta Wahlström, was supportive of mental health, evidenced by her participation in the panel I co-organized on the topic at the ISDRR meeting in Geneva. When she stepped down, she told me “Dr. Judy, you must continue to advocate for this important issue for psychosocial support.” Fortunately, when I approached her successor, Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Disaster Risk Reduction Robert Glasserat the Cancun meeting, he agreed with me that more attention must be given to psychosocial issues (this is consistent with his former role as Secretary- General of the humanitarian organization, CARE International), paving the way for more connection with him and the UN agency. Civil society meetings also offer opportunities for advocacy. At a panel on “Recent Mass Destruction of Hurricanes: Facing the Devastating Impact of Climate Change” organized by the NGO committee on Sustainable Development September 29, 2017 not long after the devastating multiple hurricanes, three UN Ambassadors of countries in the affected Caribbean region (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and Trinidad and Tobago) attended and spoke of the devastation in the region, and were impressed by my presentation about the importance of psychosocial support for survivors of such natural disasters.



Panel at the UN about the devastation of the 2017 hurricanes in the Caribbean



For effective change, you have to work on all fronts, with all stakeholders, and on any occasions. Thus, I have presented about psychosocial resilience at innumerable professional conferences, including of WCP (in Austria, Argentina, Australia, China, and Paris) and at many UN conferences. At the latter, I would listen carefully to speakers to determine their receptivity or interest in emotional crises of survivors, approach them with an elevator pitch (a short exposition of the issue, equivalent to an elevator ride), and exchange business cards for further contact. For example, at the donor conference about the Caribbean hurricanes, I connected with a representative who had mentioned a contact of his who was planning a research project about emotional needs of survivors. This is critical considering that much evidence-based research is needed on this topic, in order to provide documentation for increased government policy and also funding.

My current efforts are also focusing on bringing attention to the imminent tragedy of the Pacific Islands that are in danger of submerging into the ocean due to rising sea levels as a result of climate change. Judy Otto, and one of my graduate students from my class in “Psychology at the United Nations,” Nicole Prasad, and I presented about this issue at the 2017 American Public Health Association conference and planned a research study to prove the importance of attention to his matter in government policy and at the UN (Otto, Kuriansky & Prasad, 2017). The people who suffered loss of their homeland from this tragedy are being known by a new term, “climate refugees,” that powerfully reflects the serious problem. An important goal is to ensure that this is reflected in the UN Global Compact on Refugees.

The importance of psychosocial resilience is substantiated by my innumerable missions to countries around the world for survivors of major disasters or children and adults living under extreme conditions, e.g., after earthquake in China, the tsunamis in Japan and Sri Lanka, the hurricane in Haiti and the typhoon in Vietnam, as well as for Syrian refugees in Jordan and various community groups during the Ebola epidemic in West Africa; and in my own country and city (e.g., after Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy). Quantitative studies and qualitative reports have shown the immediate and long-term emotional needs of survivors, presented in many videos posted on my Youtube channel, at many conferences and in innumerable articles, only a small sample of which are noted here (Don411, 2015; Kuriansky, 2010, 2012b, 2012c; 2013a, 2013b, 2016d; Kuriansky & Jean-Charles, 2012; Kuriansky & Margevich, 2017; Kuriansky & Nemeth, 2013; Kuriansky, Polizer & Zinsou, 2016; Luce, 2010).

These are based on my toolbox of techniques, adapted for each culture (Kuriansky, 2008a). Years of psychosocial support trainings and workshops since the Haiti 2010 earthquake have shown the value of such interventions over the long-term for emotional recovery, and also the value of training volunteers in order to build capacity and achieve sustainability (Kuriansky, 2017e, Kuriansky, Zinsou, Arunagiriet al., 2015; Kuriansky, Margevich, Jean-Charles & Daisey, 2017).

My Themes

My advocacy work described above and in this paper focused on two themes:



- 1) the 3 S's: overcoming silence, shame and stigma. This is very evident in projects to overcome depression and suicide, and all mental challenges.
- 2) the 3 E's: education, empowerment and entrepreneurship. This was predominant in the girls' empowerment camp that colleagues and I developed in Lesotho, in partnership with the First Lady of Lesotho at the time, and other civil society NGOs on the ground, as a result of my meeting with the First Lady when I hosted the First Health Summit of First Ladies of Africa in which my role was the Director of Psychosocial Programs for US Doctors for Africa (Berry, Kuriansky, Lytle & Vistman, 2013).



Stress reduction activities in trainings post-earthquake in Haiti



Empowerment exercise with teens after the tsunami in Japan



A training workshop for orphan children in post-typhoon Vietnam



Desensitization training after the tsunami in Sri Lanka



Well-being trainings for teachers in the Caribbean Island of Sint Maarten



Leading training for community rebuilding in Sierra Leone during Ebola



With Syrian refugees in Jordan, activity in Global Kids Connect Project whereby children draw pillows sewn by their mothers



An exercise in sustainability in the Girls Empowerment Camp Lesotho

Similar results are evident in the cases of epidemics, as shown in my work in Sierra Leone during and after the Ebola epidemic, documented in my book about Ebola (Kuriansky, 2016g), and in a comparison between natural disasters and epidemics (Kuriansky, Margevich, Jean-Charles & Daisey, 2017) and after the SARS epidemic in China (Chan, Chau, Kuriansky et. al., 2016).

Other Important Issues

Considering MHWB as a cross-cutting issue, research and practice of mental health professionals have much to contribute to the other pressing issues at the UN and in the world. For example, in light of the UN Agenda's primary goal to "leave no one

behind," humanitarian work psychologists focus on approaches to reduce poverty and improve employment opportunities, through motivation, incentives, trainings, and opportunities for businesses and populations like the homeless and people with disabilities. While economists have long had a voice at the United Nations, often talking about behavioral economics that builds strongly on psychological principles (e.g., three economists edited the editions of the World Happiness Reports and often speak about psychological advice, and economists launched the Well-being Society in London that I attended) but increasingly, psychologists have been having valuable input on the UN issues about economic development.

Psychologists and other mental health professionals also have much to contribute to preservation of the environment and planet, evidenced in the fact that science and psychology are essential co-determinants of climate change and disaster recovery (Nemeth, Hamilton & Kuriansky, 2012), and in research about place attachment and pro-social behavior (e.g., environmentally-responsible behavior) underscored in the field of ecopsychology, documented in the book and my chapter on UN policy about nature and well-being, "*Ecopsychology: The Intersection between Psychology and Environmental Protection*" (Nemeth & Kuriansky, 2015; Kuriansky, LeMay & Kumar, 2015).

Psychologists are also contributing towards research and program, for example to the UN Secretary-General's initiatives to end trafficking and all forms of violence against women and to efforts to support the dignity and emotional security of migrants and refugees (leading up to major UN Global Compacts), given shocking high numbers and conditions of displaced



persons, refugees and migrants refugees. The campaigns for “global or citizenship” are boosted by psychological studies revealing the importance of “Big Five” personality traits, like being high in empathy and caring. In May 2016, I co-organized and participated in the conference on the title of “Educating Global Citizens about Mental Health, Well-Being, Empowerment, and Resilience to Achieve Sustainable Development for All at All Ages,” with discussions using psychology principles and practices (i.e., emotional well-being, empowerment, and consensus-building) in advocacy, formal/informal educational settings, and media campaigns to inform and motivate global citizenship for achievement of the SDGs in their personal lives and communities. My ongoing participation and leadership on behalf of psychology in the NGO committee on Migration and Refugees is fueled by the emergence of what’s being called “climate refugees,” referring to millions of people being displaced by the natural disaster like those described above.

Health became a priority at the UN during the Ebola epidemic, revealing pressing needs for psychotherapeutic interventions to reduce widespread public panic and help communities cope with extensive deaths, fears and stigma. In response, as PCUN chair, I convened an Ebola Task Force, and participated in an educational conference organized by the UN/ECOSOC-accredited NGO, Voices of African Mothers, on “Ebola, Facts Myths and Reality,” and a major side event with PCUN colleagues, ambassadors and UN agency representatives (like WHO, UN Women and UNICEF) on *Eradicating the Ebola Epidemic: Psychosocial Contributions to Combat Stigma, Promote Well-being, Mental Health and Resilience: Policies and Practices to Protect the Global*

Community. During a mission to Sierra Leone during the epidemic, collaborating with other NGOs to provide psychosocial support, I co-developed a manual for trainings on resilience and empowerment for caretakers to work with children and subsequently edited the anthology, “*The Psychosocial Aspects of a Deadly Epidemic: What Ebola has Taught Us About Holistic Healing*,” that includes contributions from government officials, psychosocial experts and other stakeholders on the ground and in the diaspora (Kuriansky, 2016g).



Leading a workshop with a burial team in Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak

While the Ebola epidemic has thankfully ended, the emotional scars linger, consistent with research on all post-disaster events (Kuriansky, 2016e). Although attention at the UN (and media) has turned to other pressing current events, my commitment to awareness raising of ongoing trauma persists. Fortunately, in 2018, the Mission of Sierra Leone at the UN agreed to sponsor a side event during the UN Commission on Social Development about the issue, entitled, “Achieving Poverty Eradication by Sustainable Health, Well-being and Education: The Case of Ebola in West Africa and other Epidemics and Disasters Worldwide.”

Mental health professionals need to work together



Since collective efforts multiply achievements, a colleague UN NGO representative Corann Okorodudu and I co-founded a coalition of our psychology-related NGOs accredited at the UN, to which WCP is a member

(<https://psychologycoalitionun.org/>).

Besides collective advocacy efforts, writing statements and organizing events, PCUN is involved in planning annual Psychology Days at the UN, bringing together stakeholders at a conference to highlight the contributions of psychological science and practice contributes to the UN agenda, as well as to exchange ideas and establish partnerships on global issues. Themes have included “*Promoting Well-being in the 21st Century: Psychological Contributions for Social, Economic, and Environmental Challenges*” (at which I was kindly recognized for the success of including MHWB in the Agenda); *From Vulnerability to Resilience: Using Psychology to Address the Global Migration Crisis*”; and “*Reducing Health Inequalities Within and Among Countries: Psychological Contributions to the United Nations Post-2015 Global Agenda.*”



Ambassador Otto receiving an award (at far right), with IAAP's Judy Kuriansky, Psychology Day Co-chairs Ayorkor Gaba and IUPsyS UN representative Sonia Suchday and ICP/IAAP representative Florence Denmark

Raising awareness about the global agenda and psychotherapists' role is also important within the profession, at regional meetings and international conferences. An increasing number of sessions at such conferences are being presented about issues high on the UN agenda. At the European Congress of Psychology (ECP), I co-organized symposia like “Implications of the successful advocacy of psychologists at the United Nations to influence the new Sustainable Development Goals.” As refugeeism is a major topic at the UN, I co-organized a panel at ECP about “*Psychotherapy and psychosocial support interventions with refugees,*” and presented on “*Psychosocial Intervention during a Medical Mission for Syrian Refugee Children in Jordan: Experiences and Lessons Learned and Importance for the People, Psychology Professionals and the International Community,*” about a recent mission to Jordan to provide psychosocial support to Syrian refugees with a humanitarian aid organization, the Atlantic Humanitarian Relief, assisting medical doctors and training trainers to work with children (Kuriansky, 2017d). My student from Columbia University Teachers College, Michelin Aboukasm, who went on that mission presented about her experiences and lessons learned. California State University psychologist Dr. Jessica Lambert provided background about “*Trauma-focused therapy for refugees with PTSD & depression: An overview of the research,*” and Dr. Samuel Antunes from the Portuguese Association of Psychologists in Lisbon described a unique partnership with the Red Cross on “*The Burnout Prevention Program for psychosocial technicians working on hosting and integration of refugees.*” And at recent annual conferences of the American Psychological Association, a



symposium on “Resiliency Workshops Can Help People Start Over After Environmental Trauma,” offered an opportunity to highlight “psychosocial resilience,” and anniversary reactions after traumas, addressed by the trainings done with neuropsychologist Dr. Darlyne Nemeth over years in Louisiana to help people cope with Katrina even years later. Nemeth’s concept of resilience is useful: Learn from the past, Be firmly grounded in the present, and See ourselves in the future (Nemeth & Olivier, 2017). Another symposium addressed *Global Approaches to Trauma Prevention and Intervention—Policy and Practice*, with international contributions, about Lebanese refugees, Liberian survivors of Ebola, and my models from diverse cultures, as well as a Media First Response training.

In Russia

Of great significance, important conferences about mental health are being organized in a country where the government might seem oppressive to mental health, and yet five ministers showed up to speak at or moderate panels, at the impressive Congress on Mental Health: Meeting the Needs of the XXI Century held in Moscow in 2016, for which I had the honor to edit and read a final declaration of solidarity and commitment of all mental health professionals (<http://www.mental-health-congress.ru/en/>). A follow-up is planned for 2018. Also impressively the Professional Psychotherapeutic League in Russia in Novosibirsk, Siberia is very active in trainings, conferences, and book publishing, in which I have continually collaborated. (Boulycheva, Lyakh, & Kuriansky, 2014; Kuriansky, 2016d; Kuriansky & Minkovich, 2014; Kuriansky & Pronina, 2013; Kuriansky&Zinsou, 2014).

Other Major Advances

Support for MHWB has been given a major boost at high-profile conferences and initiatives.

“Out of the Shadows” by the World Bank/World Health Organization

A historic two-day conference was held in April 2016 in Washington D.C., sponsored by the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO) on the topic “Out of the Shadows: Making Mental Health a Global Priority.” My invited address about “Engaging Communities, Engaging Governments: Taking Action for Mental Health,” highlighted the urgency to continue the successful partnership between civil society and governments, to achieve the goal of moving mental health from the margins to the mainstream of the global development agenda. Programs around the world can be scaled up if well-funded were presented, and commitment to investment in mental health services, was impressively made by the Finance Minister of Canada.

WHO World Health Day at the UN in 2017 focused on mental health and specifically, “Depression: Let’s Talk,” with presentations from UN Ambassadors from Canada, Belgium, Sri Lanka, Zambia, and Trinidad and Tobago, UN agencies and academia. (Billings, 2017; UNWebTV, 2017c). With staggering statistics about the prevalence of depression and suicide worldwide, the theme consistently pointed out the value of talking in order to get needed help. Much attention was focused on the problems of youth; in that regard, the Ambassador of Canada powerfully shared about his son’s depression after his girlfriend’s suicide. My own presentation emphasized what I call the 3 S’s: stigma,



silence and shame – that needed to be overcome, and showed a video produced with my youth assistant Joel Zinsou on youth speaking about their struggles (Kuriansky, 2017f). After extremely monumental efforts by WHO, two resolutions were passed by the UN General Assembly calling for Universal Health Day, and a major summit to be held on the issue in 2019 that will greatly advance mental health care for all (United Nations meetings coverage and press releases, 2017).



Speakers at WHO World Health Day on “Depression:Let’s Talk” (left to right): Deputy Permanent Representative of the Canada UN Mission Pascal Buffin; Dr. Judy Kuriansky; Ambassador Dessima Williams, former Ambassador to the United Nations from Grenada, now Special Adviser for Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Office of the President of the general Assembly; H.E. Ambassador Perera of the Sri Lanka UN Mission; H.E. Ambassador Marc-André Blanchard, Permanent Representative of the Canada UN Mission; WHO at the UN Executive Director Dr. Nata Menadbe

UN Commissions and Summits

Successful advocacy requires consistent active participation. As such, I have continued to draft or co-write advocacy statements for important UN Commissions (which I have signed WCP on to as a co-

sponsor), and to co-organize events coincident with these major UN meetings, mixing academic research presentations with cultural performances. These have included a side event at the Commission on Social Development on “*The Impact of Climate Change on Children’s Health & Well Being*” and an event on “*Women’s Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Post-2015 Agenda*” during the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), with a Jamaican-Haitian youth singer, Indian-born dancers dramatizing women healing and Chinese-born musicians interpreting women’s empowerment (Billings, 2015). Another event I organized and moderated, at CSW addressed projects of First Ladies of Africa, with a choir of youth singing another original song by my musical partner and me about the UN campaign “Every Woman, Every Child” (Kuriansky, 2014; Kuriansky & Daisey, 2013). The UN Department of Public Information has an NGO section that holds weekly briefings, events, and conferences, as well as working groups of civil society colleagues with whom I have collaborated. The video about youth and mental health at the UN produced by Kuriansky was shown. In conjunction with The World Humanitarian Summit held in Turkey in May 2016, I contributed commentary and edits to the health sector, and wrote a blog on the theme popularized by WHO, “No Health without Mental Health” (Kuriansky, 2016a).



Event during UN Commission on the Status of Women about First Ladies projects, organized and moderated by Dr. Judy, with an African choir

Happiness at the UN

Happiness is an important component consistent with the theme of empathy of the WCP meeting. This topic has become highlighted at the UN, with a UN resolution calling for the annual celebration of the International Day of happiness every 20 March. I have organized and also been a presenter at several of these events at the UN. In 2016, I produced a major spectacular day-long celebration of the International Day of Happiness sponsored by the UN Missions of São Tomé and Príncipe, Palau and Vietnam, as a tribute to the Kingdom of Bhutan, that initiated the UN General Assembly resolution for the International Day of Happiness (Kuriansky, 2016c). The event featured high-level speakers and performances of dance and music, including an original song “Happy People Happy Planet” with stuffed globes, called Hugg-A-Planet, adorning the stage and being gleefully tossed through the audience. The outstandingly educational and entertaining event (the lies of which many attendees said they had never been to at the UN or elsewhere) drew ambassadors, UN representatives, NGOs, and many civil society groups like the Lions Club, and celebrities, including James Bond 007 actor Daniel Craig (Luce, 2016).



Presenters and Performers at the 2016 International day of happiness

The next year in 2017, I spoke on the panel sponsored by the Mission of Iraq, with the Ambassador of Hungary and the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Former President of the General Assembly His Excellency, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser. The former Ambassador of Iraq to the UN, who organized the panel, H.E. T. Hamid Al-Bayati, had been influential in getting the UN General Assembly to adopt the resolution for the International Day of Happiness (Lusby, 2013). At this event, I showed the video about “Transforming Trauma to Healing, Hope and Happiness” that I produced with my assistant and youth representative Joel Zinsou, that shows techniques from my toolbox used in projects for psychosocial healing from natural disasters, poverty, epidemics, refugeeism, in Africa, Haiti, China and Japan, and in Jordan with Syrian refugees (Kuriansky, 2017e).



Panel at the International Day of Happiness at the UN, left to right: Hungary UN Mission Ambassador Katalin Bogyay; IAAP UN rep Judy Kuriansky; H.E. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations; Iraq UN Mission Deputy Permanent Representative Mr. Mohammed Sahib MejidMarzooq; and former Iraq Mission UN Ambassador Hamid Al-Bayati.

These events built on a historic high-level conference in 2012 held at UN headquarters about happiness as a new paradigm for measuring development besides GDP, hosted by the Mission of Bhutan to the UN that I was invited to and the event launched attention to the issue on the international stage (Kuriansky, 2012e). Recently the baton was taken up by the Mission of the United Arab Emirates, very significantly with the appointment of a Minister of Happiness in the government in the Prime Minister's office, Ohood Al Roumi, and the UAE's hosting a Dialogue on Happiness in February 2016 and 2017 in conjunction with the World Government Summit, held in Dubai in February 2017 and 2018, which I was honored to be invited to. Besides presentations, working groups addressed issues like measurement, education and policy (the one I contributed to). At the 2018 meeting, Global Happiness Council and their report were launched to advocate and champion the happiness agenda.



At the UAE Dialogue on Happiness in Dubai (right to left): UAE Minister of Happiness Ohood Al Roumi; Dr. Judy Kuriansky; Othman Al Madani, Director of Happiness in the Minister's Office; and Colonel Aziz Al Amiri, Chief Happiness and Positivity Officer at the Ministry of Interior

At the event held at UN headquarters on the 2017 International Day of Happiness which was hosted by the UAE, impressive statements highlighted the important role of governments in securing the happiness and psychological well-being of the people, in cooperation with citizens. The UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed emphasized that happiness and well-being are essential for the achievement of the SDGs, a Buddhist monk from Thailand noted his country's idea for "happiness bank" whereby a government could encourage communities to do small things, which can ensure communal happiness, and Minister Al Roumi explained concrete actions in the UAE including appointing 60 positivity officers throughout all government entities with cabinet assessments, and a focus on customer services by re-labelling those to "Happiness Services" and consistently requesting customer feedback evaluations through rating images of happy or sad faces. Noting his country's concept of "good living" as a constitutional principle, the Ambassador of Ecuador to the UN declared that research from Michigan State University, Chicago University and Indiana University recognize Ecuador as the most empathic country in the world – a statement that stood out significantly to me, as this



recognition of empathy was aligned with the theme of the WCP Congress.

Anti-Bullying

The increase in the incidence of bullying throughout the world with its deleterious impact on youth has garnered attention at the UN. At an event in May 2017 at the UN Church Center, organized by the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development-New York, that I moderated, the Deputy Ambassador of Mexico to the UN, H.E. Mr. Juan Sandoval-Mendiolea gave an erudite overview of the bullying problem and his country's commitment to address the issue. Impassioned presentations about their personal experiences were made by panelists, including Bruce Knotts, Director of the Unitarian Universalist Association and Chair of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, about being bullied for his sexual preferences, and by several youth, including student Fatma Ismail who was taunted about wearing a hijab; teen pop star Meredith O'Connor, who was teased about being tall (yet eventually got a modeling contract); and singer-songwriter Sophia Angelica who debuted her new anti-bullying music video. Lisa Picker came from St. Louis to tell her story about being the mother of her 18-year old son Liam who was bullied, became depressed and took his own life. A recording was played of the original musical composition of Liam performed by international Japanese pianist Gohei Nishikawa, whose bonding with the family, along with Liam's plight and his mothers' commitment to help prevent similar tragedies, brought tears to many attendees' eyes.



*Panelists at the anti-bullying event sponsored by the
NGO Committee on Sustainable Development-NY*

Youth and Mental Health

The UN increasingly places a high priority on the participation, value and voice of youth, especially given that over half the population of many countries are under age 25, ensured by the Secretary-General's appointment of a youth envoy. The video I produced with assistant Joel Zinsou "*Youth and Mental Health: Youth and UN Ambassadors Speak Out*" dramatically shows the urgency of attention to youth and efforts of UN governments and bodies (Kuriansky, 2016h). Over the years in general, students have become increasingly interested in international issues (Kuriansky&Gielen, 2012).

Youth played a major supportive role during my campaign during the formulation of the UN Agenda, with my assistant Joel Zinsou, then an undergraduate psychology student, working endless hours with me researching for statements and preparing advocacy materials and arranging meetings. My Smith College summer interns, Quyen Nguyen and Monica Kim, and also Paul Harrington, also provided valuable assistance to me during the negotiations, showing impressive commitment.

The interest of youth has become evident in my new course at Columbia University Teachers College on "Psychology and the



United Nations.” Students have opportunities to meet high-level UN officials and join NGO Committees at the UN. In one session that was particularly amazing, showcased two very major issues by guest speakers (both colleagues and friends), namely, about a government’s impressive commitment to mental health and wellbeing, by Ambassador Michael Grant of the Mission of Canada to the UN, and the other about the private sector involvement in mental health and well-being, by Craig Kramer, Chair of the Global Campaign on Mental Health for Johnson & Johnson (an exceptionally important topic since the need for private sector (corporation and business) partnership is currently inadequate yet crucial in order to achieve the SDGs (Bena&Kuriansky, 2015). The students have also initiated impressive projects, like starting an NGO for veterans, planning a project for Jordanian youth, research harassment against women in Kuwait, and developing a new platform to communicate with Chinese youth about counseling research and advice. Another student came to a regional conference in Hanoi Vietnam with me and presented a poster about her health education project in Africa. Joel Zinsou produced a poster about “*Action and Advocacy by Psychologists for Mental Health and Well-being in the SDGs at the United Nation.*” Intern Janell Lin came to the Well-being Conference in St. Maarten. Teaching assistant Alexandra K. Margevich accompanied me to post-hurricane affected Haiti to implement a training course and presented about the train-the-trainers project and “*Providing Psychosocial Support in a Culture Doubly Devastated by Natural Disaster: The case of Haiti*” at many conferences, including the WCP congress in Paris and the ECP Congress in Amsterdam.



My class Spring 2017 on “Psychology at the United Nations” with guest lecturers Ambassador Michael Grant of the Mission of Canada to the UN, and Craig Kramer, Chair of the Global Campaign on Mental Health for Johnson & Johnson

Conference on Well-Being in Sint Maarten/St. Martin

Given the increasing acknowledgement of well-being for youth, at the UN, a Caribbean Well-being Conference was held in the island of Sint Maarten (before the horrific hurricanes) on the theme, Best Practices in Promoting Student Wellness: Bringing the child, family, school and community together. About 300 teachers, educators, counselors from the Caribbean and the United States and some local government representatives participated in sessions about ADHD, bullying, mindfulness, and social-emotional learning. I led interactive sessions on *Resilience and Empowerment of Youth: Workshops for Teachers, Counselors and Parents*, teaching psychosocial techniques that are healing, fun, and meaningful to build youth self-esteem and interpersonal connection. While the techniques can be implemented simply in many educational and community settings, they are founded on solid psychological principles. The participants resonated with



the saying, “Believe it. Conceive It. Achieve it,” that reflects proven brain theory.

The Role of Media

Stakeholders at the UN are increasingly mentioning the important role of the media, to promote the Agenda 2030. Journalists from media outlets around the world – accredited to be part of the UN Correspondents Association -- have offices at the UN to report on events regularly. As a “media psychologist” I have written and spoken extensively about the role of media in world peace and disaster recovery (Kuriansky, 2009b; Kuriansky & Montcastle, 2011a, 2011b), for which I received the 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for Media Psychology and Technology (Division 46) of the American Psychological Association. Some TV shows focus on specifically on UN events and contributors, one of these being Global Connections, hosted Bill Miller who has interviewed me many times, discussing and showing samples of my programs around the world (Miller, 2016).



Interviewed by Bill Miller on Global Connections TV about my projects and UN work

The Way Forward

At the United Nations, meetings are usually concluded with declarations of “the way

forward” meaning next steps. The way forward from all the above include:

- advancing advocacy for mental health and well-being, increasing government policy and appropriated funding
- paying attention to all activities at the UN and in related agencies and by stakeholders, to continue to contribute to all issues and crises on the UN agenda
- promoting programs on the ground that address mental health and well-being, to be researched to become evidence-based, as well as to be recognized, acknowledged, and scaled up to be applied and adapted in many cultures
- continuing to advocate for psychosocial resilience as distinct from infrastructural resilience
- increasing awareness about mental health and well-being in the public
- integrating education about mental health and well-being at all levels in all education settings
- increasing participation and integration of the contributions of psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists, as well as psychological, psychotherapeutic and psychiatric research and practice to all global issues
- knowing that our voice as professionals counts and making it heard
- working together as colleagues towards the above goals



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