

# The Center for Mind-Body Medicine

## *Healing the Wounds of War*

Millions of people throughout the world suffer from the psychological aftermath of trauma. Buildings may be replaced and infrastructure rebuilt, but to rebuild the hearts and minds of men, women and children requires a different kind of skilled intervention. After a traumatic experience, people need help to overcome their isolation, to mitigate the psychological consequences of the trauma and to again find meaning and purpose in their lives.

The approach developed by the Center for Mind-Body Medicine (CMBM) has proven effective in enabling children and adults to recover from traumatic episodes. This comprehensive program employs mind-body techniques in a group model, and has been refined over twelve years through clinical application. Simply put, it helps people who have experienced trauma to resume a normal life and to once again become effective members of their communities.

### *What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?*

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was not officially introduced as a diagnosis until 1980, however PTSD is a worldwide problem, reaching alarming proportions in countries torn by violent conflict.

When faced with trauma, mind and body mobilize for defense. People who are confronted with a traumatic event or a life-threatening situation experience what is commonly known as the 'fight or flight' response. This biological response to immediate danger causes the release of high levels of stress hormones. These hormones speed up the heart rate and breathing, flood the bloodstream with glucose for energy, slow digestion, redirect blood flow to the muscles and tense them in preparation to either fight or run.

Most people have experienced this biological survival response fleetingly. Difficulties, however, begin to develop when this stress response continues long after the

presence of danger. If one still feels threatened, then stress hormones continue to flow. Physical functions as well as emotional and mental functions are altered. Post-traumatic stress disorder may be one of the consequences.

The symptoms of post-traumatic stress include increased irritability, difficulty concentrating and insomnia, intrusive thoughts, images, nightmares and flashbacks, as well as persistent avoidance of things reminiscent of the trauma. PTSD is associated with suicide, work impairment, depression, anxiety, alcohol and substance abuse, and other chronic health problems such as hypertension and pain syndromes.



*Children in Gaza City, July 2005*

### *What is Mind-Body Medicine?*

Mind-body medicine focuses on the interactions between mind and body, and the powerful ways in which emotional, mental, social and spiritual factors can directly affect health. Mind-body techniques – such as meditation, biofeedback, imagery and relaxation – use the conscious mind to directly affect the workings of the brain and the rest of the body. The techniques exert their effect on the hypothalamus, the switching station in the brain, which exercises control over the autonomic nervous system (which controls heart rate, blood pressure, etc.), the endocrine (glandular) system and the immune system.

The scientific literature on these approaches is now rich and robust. Studies dating from the late 1960s show the power of these techniques to balance the hyperactivity of the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system (the "fight or flight" response), which is implicated in many physical and emotional diseases and conditions. Practitioners promote relaxation through stimulation of the parasympathetic nervous system.

More recently, scientists have been able to show that these techniques create beneficial changes in many of the body's physiologic responses (including blood pressure, stress hormone levels, pain response and immune functioning). Their use has produced significant clinical differences in conditions as diverse as hypertension, HIV, cancer, chronic pain, and insomnia as well as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Conventional treatments for anxiety, depression and PTSD, such as psychotropic medication and individual or family psychotherapy, are expensive, labor-intensive, and often unavailable. In addition, these approaches have their limitations. Medications may suppress symptoms but do not

eliminate them; and psychotherapy provides neither the group support nor the opportunities for empowerment so crucial for healing from PTSD. Such partial remedies do not equip people to continue to heal themselves.

### *What is the Healing the Wounds of War (HWW) Program?*

The Center for Mind-Body Medicine has pioneered the use of self-care, mind-body skills and group support in war and post-war situations to treat PTSD, extreme anxiety and ongoing depression. Through its *Healing the Wounds of War (HWW)* program, it encourages and guides people who have felt helpless in the midst of war to experience and regain their own power to help themselves. Not only can it relieve psychological trauma but it also promotes permanent changes in attitude and behavior. This can help prevent chronic emotional and behavioral problems and physical illness.

Using established and scientifically valid approaches, the CMBM model has proven effective in diverse populations: war-traumatized children in Kosovo; troubled youth in American schools; post-9/11 New York City firefighters; war veterans; military and diplomatic personnel in hostile situations; and those suffering from severe or chronic illness. Designed as an educational group model, it is non-stigmatizing, and therefore encourages participation from those who may be averse to traditional counseling or “therapy”.

The Center for Mind Body Medicine (CMBM) is a non-profit 501(c)3 educational organization dedicated to reviving the spirit and transforming the practice of medicine. Based in Washington, D.C., the CMBM was founded in 1991 by James S. Gordon, M.D. Dr. Gordon, who is a Clinical Professor in the Departments of Psychiatry and Family Medicine at Georgetown University Medical School, has been a leader in the field of mind-body medicine for more than 30 years. He served as Chairman of the White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy and first Chair of the National Institutes of Health's Office of Alternative Medicine. Dr. Gordon continues to direct the CMBM and this program.

### *How Does the HWW Program Work?*

By using a training-of-trainers model, the HWW program maximizes an important strategy: sustainability. Health professionals and community leaders are first taught mind-body techniques to address their own personal stress and trauma. They then teach what they have learned to their peers, who in turn integrate the techniques into their own work with communities, patients and clients. The training and the positive changes that result from it are integrated into the established and ongoing mental health programs, and ultimately into the entire system of mental health care.

*Phase I of the project is administered and implemented by CMBM international faculty and staff.*

**Outreach.** CMBM identifies local partners – organizations and government agencies working with trauma victims – and they jointly choose 60-70 potential participants for an initial training program. Participants are selected based on their ability to become leaders and trainers and to influence change in their organizations. Local administrative staff implements the program.

**Initial Training.** Dr. Gordon and senior CMBM international faculty lead the initial six-day training program. This training teaches the science and practical experience of using mind-body medicine, psychological self-care, and group support. It includes extensive scientific material on the biology and physiology of stress and trauma. Participants also do experiential work with biofeedback, imagery and meditation, and learn to use drawings, journals and movement to express feelings and thoughts.

**Advanced Training.** After allowing a few months for participants to practice these techniques and experience results from their use, CMBM holds a four-day Advanced Training with these same professionals. Here they have the opportunity to actually *lead* (with supervision) the same small groups in which they were trained a few months before. During this training, they attend interactive panels on issues related to teaching mind-body skills, and receive individual and group consultation on how to successfully apply the approaches in their own work.

*Phase II transfers leadership responsibility to a local faculty.*

**Leadership Training Program.** The most skilled and gifted graduates of the advanced training program participate in an intensive leadership training to prepare them to lead the next phase of training for their peers. As these local faculty members themselves become the trainers, they are provided with stipends for their involvement in the training program.

**Local Faculty-Led Training.** Under close supervision and consultation with Dr. Gordon and international CMBM Faculty, the local faculty trains a new group of health and mental health professionals, thus creating a critical number (120-150) of skilled professionals who will further disseminate this practical set of skills.



*Dr. Gordon at Kosovo faculty-led training, 2001.*

### Phase III provides support to our local faculty.

CMBM provides ongoing supervision, consultation and training as needed to the local faculty so they can continue to train and supervise other professionals. During the third phase of the program, CMBM helps them to integrate the program into their existing infrastructures – hospitals, trauma and community mental health clinics, medical schools and private practices.

**Program Evaluation.** Every aspect of the program – from effects of the training on participants to their subsequent work in their communities – is evaluated. The evaluation protocols are developed by CMBM jointly with local, independent colleagues who are leaders in research and evaluation.

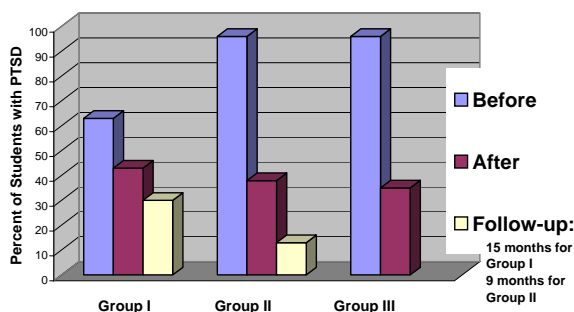
### The Kosovo Experience

This innovative approach to working with PTSD and the ongoing stress of war began in Kosovo in 1998 during the Serbian offensive. Since then, more than 800 Kosovar health and mental health professionals, teachers and community leaders have been trained to deal with their own stress and trauma. They in turn have taught these self-care techniques to thousands of men, women and children traumatized by the loss of family members, as well as to thousands of survivors of massacres, rapes and beatings.

Now, through Kosovo's World Health Organization (WHO)-funded community mental health system, the CMBM approach has become an integral part of treating and teaching victims of trauma in Kosovo. Our local faculty - leading Kosovar psychiatrists and psychologists – continues to train and consult with all mental health professionals in the community mental health system. This represents the first time that the approaches and techniques of mind-body medicine have been formally recognized and integrated into a nationwide system of health and mental health care.

*"This program has done more than any other to give us the tools to help our families and communities heal from the trauma of war."* Afrim Blyta, MD, Director of Neuropsychiatry, Prishtina University Hospital, Kosovo.

Posttraumatic Stress in Kosovar High School Students



A research study on 139 children in the Kosovo program shows impressive results. A group of teachers CMBM trained in 1999 has been implementing the program with their students. Teaching mind-body skills in a group format, the teachers are seeing a significant decrease –

from 88% to 38% – in the children's levels of PTSD as measured before and after participation in the 6-week program. The results of this study were published in the *Journal of Traumatic Stress* (April 2004), the premier scientific journal in the trauma research field. Results of a randomized controlled trial will soon be available.

### The Middle East

In 2002, CMBM was contacted by major organizations currently working with psychological trauma in Israel and Palestine, including the government-funded Israel Centre for the Treatment of Psychotrauma and a leading Palestinian trauma organization. Each had learned of CMBM's work in Kosovo, and was looking for guidance. Although the requests were separate, their pleas were remarkably similar. "We are very good at working with individuals, but we are completely overwhelmed by the current situation. We need to train our staff to be able to expand our work to help thousands of people, especially children. Can you help us?"

*Healing the Wounds of War* began in the Middle East in 2002, developing partnerships with leading organizations: the Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma, the Israeli Ministry of Education, Hadassah University, Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, Ben Gurion University, United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the Red Crescent Society and the Palestinian Ministries of Health, Education and Social Welfare.



"Chaotic breathing" at Israel training, 2004.

Outreach, development and training programs are now completed in Israel and Gaza. The CMBM model is becoming widely disseminated throughout both regions as CMBM graduates begin to take their training into their workplaces and communities. Studies on the effects of the training have shown reduced anger, confusion, depression and anxiety; less burnout among the professionals trained; and more compassion, hope and optimism about the future.

CMBM plans to train approximately 400 leaders in health and mental health, teachers and community leaders in Gaza and Israel within three years. All participants attend the program *free of charge*. Using the Kosovo model, by 2008 the CMBM approach will be integrated into government agencies and non-governmental organizations in the fields of health, mental health and education throughout Israel and Gaza. In each region a core, local



faculty will continue to provide ongoing training and supervision with CMBM consultation.

Through the Center for Mind-Body Medicine's *Healing the Wounds of War* program, significant psychological healing and hope will come to a region that has suffered for decades in violent upheaval and conflict.

### Testimonials

*"My fervent hope is that Dr. Gordon and his staff will be able to continue to bring benefit to hundreds of Israeli trauma professionals, thereby impacting large numbers of traumatized citizens."* Naomi Baum PhD, Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma

*I thank the group from America for coming here to help the Palestinian people – to help them to lessen the stress, to lessen the violence, and to help us to live a normal life with others.* Najat Al Astal, PhD, Hospital Manager for the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, Khan Younis, Gaza

*"As the (Israeli) professionals build their resiliency and prowess with this work, the CMBM will be blessed with facilitating broad societal change and upgrading human behavior and quality of life throughout the world by spreading the teaching of this program."* Rabbi Immanuel Yosef Legomsky, MA, Neurotherapist, Israel Trauma Care

*What you've done for the first time is to give me a little peace and the experience that I and the situation, the struggle between Palestinians and Israelis, can change.* Abdel Hamid Mochaib, BSc., Gaza Program for Psychological Health



CMBM faculty with Kosovar children, 2001.

*This work has been featured in People, Natural Health, Clinical Psychiatry News and the AMA News and on CNN.*

### Future Program Expansion

The work of the CMBM has attracted interest and requests for training from around the world, including professionals working with:

- ❖ Hurricane survivors along U.S. Gulf Coast
- ❖ U.S. Veterans returning from war
- ❖ HIV/AIDS in South Africa
- ❖ Child soldiers in Liberia and Sierra Leone
- ❖ Survivors of war in Rwanda, Afghanistan

**Help CMBM bring healing from psychological trauma to the people of these areas. The Center for Mind-Body Medicine is a charitable 501(c)(3) organization. Your gifts are 100% tax deductible.**



Children in Jebaliya refugee camp, Gaza, 2005

### Leadership Supporters of the HWW Program

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