

The Center for

Mind-Body Medicine®

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The Center for Mind-Body Medicine®

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NEWS RELEASE

Hope and Resilience in the Aftermath of Death, Destruction in Gaza

Mind-Body Skills Provide Trauma Relief for Tens of Thousands

Washington, D.C. – March 16, 2009 – James S. Gordon, M.D., the distinguished psychiatrist who leads the Washington D.C.-based Center for Mind-Body Medicine (CMBM), just returned from leading an international team of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish mental health professionals into Gaza in a groundbreaking effort to relieve population-wide psychological trauma in Gaza and nearby Israeli towns.



The homeless still shelter in tents

Dr. Gordon spent several days in Israel with counselors in Sderot which has been shelled from Gaza for eight years, and with CMBM's Israeli faculty, before he entered Gaza on March 4th. After visiting with bereaved families and with hundreds of people whose homes were destroyed in the recent Israeli war, he and his colleagues supervised their Gaza faculty in a poignant, powerful, life-affirming, and life-changing 5-day training of 150 of Gaza's most gifted and committed health and mental health professionals.

For the last seven years, Dr. Gordon and his CMBM team have been working intensively with the traumatized population in Gaza and Israel separately and jointly--they are the only organization doing so. During this time, they trained 300 Israeli professionals and 90 in Gaza to develop comprehensive, scientifically based programs that are effectively treating widespread posttraumatic stress disorder, major depression, anxiety, violence, and despair.



Hope amid despair and ruin

CMBM's program is a powerful force for hope for those living in Gaza. Before the recent Israeli invasion, CMBM's Gaza team, which has treated 15-20,000 children and adults, was providing up to 75 ten-week long mind-body groups every three months. In the aftermath of the devastation, the number of groups has tripled. The CMBM approach is currently also being offered to hundreds of families that lost members in the conflict and to the seriously injured, to orphaned children, abused women, mothers with 'failure to thrive' infants, and the depressed, suicidal, and violent.

CMBM's pioneering program, which recently received a research award from the US Department of Defense, combines mind-body

techniques of meditation, guided imagery, biofeedback, and yoga with self-expression in words, drawings, and movement in a supportive small group setting.



Dr Gordon works with a Gazan girl

During his eight days in Gaza, Dr. Gordon spoke with dozens of men and women who suffered loss of children and spouses, and with children disoriented and distraught from the deaths of parents, and the destruction of their homes, neighborhoods, and schools. He learned how families used mind-body techniques—meditation while bombs fell, shaking their bodies to relieve tension after a nearby battle, and family “check-ins” to share pain and sorrow—to find “hope . . . strength, resiliency, even power” (as one CMBM school psychologist put it) in the midst of despair.

A wealth of data supports CMBM’s unique, highly effective model, which has been used to help traumatized populations in postwar Kosovo, post-Katrina New Orleans, as well as Israel and Gaza, and is now being implemented on an increasingly large scale with US military returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and their families. “This model is,” as Dr. Gordon says, “welcomed by people of all ages and races around the world because it is educational, non-stigmatizing, and demonstrably beneficial. It can be easily taught and can be used by all people of all ages on their own.” Dr. Gordon describes this groundbreaking approach in his newest book, *Unstuck: Your Guide to the Seven-Stage Journey*



Unbelievable destruction and hardship

Out of Depression (Penguin Press; June 2008).

The results of CMBM’s program are well-documented and remarkable. A randomized controlled trial (RCT) on the use of the model with war-traumatized children in Kosovo—the first RCT of **any** intervention with war-traumatized children—was published in the prestigious *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* in 2008; it showed an 80% decrease in symptoms following 12 sessions of mind-body skills groups. Also, data collected on children and adults in the CMBM Gaza program revealed significant decreases in symptoms of PTSD and depression and anger and increased hopefulness in those who participated in CMBM groups, gains which were largely maintained even during the ongoing siege of Gaza at six months’ follow-up.



Remembering to relax at the CMBM Gaza training

With 15 trips to Gaza as well as Israel, and hundreds of in-depth interviews, Dr. Gordon has an intimate knowledge and authoritative understanding of Gazans’ remarkable capacity for resiliency, faith, and trust, as well as profound suffering. He is also deeply knowledgeable about the ongoing emotional devastation experienced by Israelis. Remarkably, in this stubborn conflict, he is capable of discussing similarities and differences between the Israeli and Palestinian experience of the situation. He is available for immediate comment and interview.

An article on Dr. Gordon’s work in Gaza which appeared in *The New York Times* can be found at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/13/health/views/13case.html?ref=health> and one on the recent training at <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2009/03/12/news/ML-Gaza-Postcard-Breathing-Deeply.php>

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