

**To all members of the World Association for Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy**

11 May 2022

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Sometimes one day or one event is a turning point – in the personal and collective life. The 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 is such a date. There is a before and after. With the beginning of the war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, life is not as before, especially for our dear colleagues and friends in Ukraine.

War is one of the worst events that can happen during the lifetime of a human-being. Most of us have never experienced a war; our colleagues in Kosovo and Ethiopia (and maybe in a few other places) had – and still have - this horrible experience and know about its consequences. Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine is not the only war in the world, and innocent human-beings continue to suffer worldwide due to wars, ethnic and religious conflicts, material interests, prejudices, political powerplay, nationalism, extremism, tribal thinking, corruption etc.

As nearly half of our members are directly affected by this war, and its consequences are already felt around the globe, the Board of Directors would like to share some thoughts with all of you, living in 42 countries, in addition to its statement of 4 March 2022.

The brutal war against Ukraine triggers many emotions in every one of us: pity, anger, fear, depression, aggression, helplessness, speechlessness, numbness, or actionism. We must accept the fact that people show different reactions, and we should be careful, not to tell others how they should feel or react. But we must be careful and vigilant: We all are influenced by the information we get from the media and from our governments. As psychotherapists, we should have learned in our own self-discovery, that perception and information are often subjective, and we must use our mind to evaluate the information we get. At the same time, we want to emphasize that for any person, especially a psychotherapist, it is unacceptable to support and encourage violence, and military aggression – with all the suffering that wars bring. This contradicts the ethical principles of the profession of psychotherapists and the humanistic principles of Positive Psychotherapy. WAPP, as a professional community, condemns these manifestations. Our condolences go to every one of you who has lost a loved one during this war.

Whereas many people discuss the political, military, and economic aspects of this and other wars, for us psychotherapists other dimensions play an important role. We think about the human suffering during a war, and moreover, about the emotional long-term consequences on the mental health of people. As citizens, we are of course very connected to our countries, but at the same time we are not fully responsible for our governments' decisions. Sometimes we identify ourselves with decisions of our government, sometimes we oppose them. But as psychotherapists we work with people. The world is shaped by people, not by states. And people have a history, a past, a biography, they have a present and - hopefully - a bright future. And these are all topics where we must engage, especially in treatment and prevention. If not, transgenerational trauma will be given to the next generations.

At the same time, we in WAPP are not only psychotherapists, medical doctors, psychologists, and consultants – **we are Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapists**. We are global psychotherapists in a world-wide association. Our mission is to connect, to include, not to

exclude people. Our mission is to build bridges in a strongly polarized world, not to break down bridges. Our mission is to facilitate and go into dialogue, precisely at the moments when it seems impossible, or it is the most difficult. The war is a danger from outside, and the Ukrainian people show that how strong you can be, if you unite. Disunity comes always from inside. Therefore, now is especially important to unite in the tasks and challenges that we as global psychotherapists face around the world. There is so much work to be done!

It might be useful to reflect for a moment what our dear and esteemed Nossrat Peseschkian, the founder of PPT, would have done during such a time of crisis. Would not he remind us of the positive conception of human-beings in PPT, and that we should focus our energy on the things we have to do in our societies? Would not he see the present situation as a motivation to redouble our efforts to help our fellow-citizens? Would not he quote for us *“You are all the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch”*? Nobody will do our work for us. History shows that after a war or crisis, the focus is usually on the economic and material reconstruction, but what happens with the wounded souls and hearts?

We are all very fortunate to work in a meaningful profession. A profession which is needed more than ever. And with Positive Psychotherapy, we have the tools to help other people to live a dignified and meaningful life. Many people in the world, especially young people, are without hope. It is our task – despite all political events and decisions – to give people this hope. Let’s give hope to the world by reaching out to each other as human-beings. It is very encouraging to see that many of our Ukrainian colleagues have started, despite their own challenges, to help other citizens with psychotherapy and counselling sessions, and conducting seminars for other professionals. PPT and WAPP offer a variety of possibilities for each one of us to engage professionally, to get some further training, and to become even a better consultant or psychotherapist than before.

Good news at the end. There is a great desire to meet our dear PPT colleagues again. As an international in-person conference is not possible at this time, not only because of the war, but also of the travel restrictions for our Chinese colleagues, the pandemic and other reasons, there will be an **Online World Conference on Positive Psychotherapy** from 26-28 November 2022, with a very inspiring and interesting program. For trainers, there will be an **Online International Training Seminar** from 24-25 November 2022. Information about both events will follow soon.

We send you our loving greetings and best wishes wherever you are, and regardless of what circumstances you are living and working under. Thank you for being part of this global positive mental health movement, and together as global psychotherapists we will continue our important services to our fellow human-beings. We are looking eagerly forward to meeting all of you again.

*The WAPP Board of Directors*

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