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FOSTERING SPIRITUAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT.

There is so much violence and conflict in the world, it appears that we cannot convey our ideas and listen to each other mindfully. We have lost the art of loving speech, deep listening and compassion for others.

In order to have global peace, we need to stop, step back and pull up the roots of hatred. We need to take responsibility for our views, check our perceptions for authenticity and be willing to change. We can do this by gaining a better appreciation of how our perceptions, attachments and level of spirituality affect our interactions with our family, friends, community and world.

The ***Progressive Mindfulness Protocol (PMP)***[™] is one answer to how we can transform a stick used for violence, to a walking stick of compassion and lovingkindness. The ***PMP***[™] provides a neuropsychological, systematic model on how to spiritually grow. It is a model for developing a healthier mind and learning to care for those who have different views, practices and are perceived as our enemy.

The ***PMP***[™] provides us with the tools to successfully move through six mindfulness (spiritual) gates. As we enter a new gate, we shed the old habits, become aware of our ancestral stories, and reshape those stories and patterns through fresher eyes, clearer hearing and broader level of spirituality. Our ultimate goal is to arrive at ***Gate Six***, where we have clarity of our ancient purpose of caring for others and obtaining oneness.

In the past ten years, neurodevelopmental clinicians and researchers have provided us with the evidence on where emotions are processed (limbic system, prefrontal and temporal lobes) from in utero through adulthood. With the recent research of Aggleton, Scaer, L. Eliot, Schore, L. Miller, Pankseep, R. Davidson, Tancredi, A. Craig, Paulus, Critchley, C. R. Cloninger, and S. Lazer, we now have a deeper understanding that within each psychological and physiological milestone, there is a synchronous relationship between our spiritual values, our social relationships and our perceptions.

In 1988, Dr. Meyer designed and validated an ***Attachment and Loss Scale (A & L)***, which measured the early developmental levels from birth to adolescents. Using cognitive theorists (e.g. Piaget), object relations (e.g. Kernberg), the ego (e.g. Erikson), moral (Kohlberg) and existential (Rank, Yalom, May) paradigms, she developed the ***A & L Scale*** to assess adolescents' abandonment reactions to parental loss before and after

age five.

From 1988, Dr. Meyer collected the social history and developmental milestones of her patients. The patients came from different cultural, educational, family and religious backgrounds. They sought psychological treatment for anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress, bipolar and Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Listening to their stories, Dr. Meyer noticed that her patients had deeper wounds. As children or adolescents, they had either

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experienced being physically and/or emotionally abandoned by their parents, peers, spiritual and community leaders. They told her that they were angry at God and had lost their way.

Embracing her initial research of integrating cognitive, attachment and moral development, Dr. Meyer has expanded her understanding of moral development. Mostly through extensive case study analysis, and referring to spiritual philosophers and leaders (St. Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Merton, Luria, Luzzato, Zalman, Buber, Tolle, & Thich Nhat Hanh). Dr. Meyer identified six developmental *Mindfulness* levels: ***Bubble Dweller, Parallel Minds, Practicing Minds, Affiliated Minds, Global Minds and Nondual Mind.*** Within each mindfulness level, there are twelve moral values that foster movement from one to the next developmental mindfulness stage: **Rules, Judgment, Happiness, Suffering, Love, Salvation, Compassion, Generosity, Forgiveness, Truth, Practice, and Remembrance.**

Using the recent developmental neuropsychological research (e.g. Schore, Siegel, Porges, Hofer, Cassidy, Crichley & Davidson), Drs. Gratia Meyer and Janis Di Ciacco, over the past eight years, analyzed and correlated each item of the ***PMP's™*** three progressive developmental domains: ***Perception, Attunement, and Mindfulness.*** ***Perception*** is the ability to label, differentiate, reflect, analyze, and synthesize information into deeper internal and external interrelated energies. ***Attunement*** is the ability to adjust, respond and assimilate familial and new relationships. ***Mindfulness*** is the ability to expand and deepen the meaning of compassion and generosity..

In order to move from one mindfulness stage to the next, there also needs to be stability in the same developmental level of ***Perception*** and ***Attunement.*** Accepting Piaget's and Vygotsky's understanding that cognitive development is necessary for critical learning, the ***Perception*** items emphasizes cognitive growth and ***Attunement*** items supports attachment expansion. Through exploration and generalization, we enrich our awareness of interconnectedness.

To establish the validity of the ***PMP™***, Drs. Meyer and Di Ciacco compared the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAT), MMPI's and Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) psychological disorders. The scores of each of the three standardized tests appeared to cluster within each of the six ***PMP™*** levels. Further analysis, however, is needed to establish the statistical validity of the three ***PMP™*** domains.

The **PMP™** is a neuropsychological, systematic, predictable, sequential moral model that can assist spiritual teachers and leaders to help us expand our circle of caring from ourselves, our family, friends, community, spiritual friends and to all sentient beings. It is a model that calibrates and provides indicators for where we are functioning within three domains. It provides a developmental spiritual framework within which we can move toward enlightened beings through reflection, critical analysis and insight. It also emphasizes that in order to broaden our compassion, we first need to expand our attachments.

Gratia L. Meyer, Ph.D. and Janis A. Di Ciacco, Ph.D.© 2009