

Paving the Way for Peace in the Middle East with Mind-Body Skills

*Truce talks are gridlocked, but this mission to provide trauma relief
to both sides of the conflict goes forward*

Washington, D.C.; Tel Aviv, Israel; Gaza Feb. 23, 2009. As truce talks drag on between Israel and Gaza, James S. Gordon, M.D., the distinguished psychiatrist who leads the Washington D.C.-based Center for Mind-Body Medicine (CMBM), will on March 4, 2009 lead an international team of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish mental health professionals into Gaza in a groundbreaking effort to relieve population-wide psychological trauma in that war-devastated Israeli-occupied territory. The team will arrive in Israel February 28, 2009 and make their way to a border crossing.

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've 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.

The center's pioneering program, which recently received a research award from the US Department of Defense, combines such mind-body techniques as meditation, guided imagery, biofeedback, and yoga with self-expression in words, drawings, and movement in a supportive small group setting

CMBM's program is a powerful force for peace 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, to orphaned children, mothers with 'failure to thrive' infants, and depressed, suicidal, and violent children and adults.

A wealth of data supports and informs 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. Dr. Gordon says, "This model is 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 Out of Depression* (Penguin Press; June 2008).

The results of CMBM's program are astonishing. 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 the first 500 children and 600 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.

After four days working with the CMBM faculty in Israel and visiting with people affected by the Palestinian shelling in Sderot and Ashkelon, Dr. Gordon and his team will enter Gaza. During the first several days, they will visit with some of the thousands who have sought out CMBM-trained counselors to help them deal with the loss of family members and friends. During the following five days, Dr. Gordon and his colleagues will supervise the 15-member CMBM Gaza leadership team as they prepare 150 more of the most committed mental health professionals, including school psychologists and school counselors, to offer CMBM's program to Gaza's devastated children and their families.

Journalists are invited to accompany Dr. Gordon as he meets with CMBM's Israeli staff prior to entering Gaza and visits Sderot, and as the team interviews individuals and families throughout Gaza. There will be opportunities for interviews with Dr. Gordon and his Palestinian leadership team, traumatized families who have been aided, as well as the possibility to observe the training program. A short 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>.

Dr. Gordon is a dynamic public speaker with a wealth of personal stories of children and adults he has helped find healing in the midst of loss and despair. A respected and world-renowned expert in mind-body medicine, he can bring the human aspects of this story to life in any medium—radio, television, or print—with a warm, knowledgeable voice and his wealth of experience. He is available for immediate comment and interview.

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