

Anxiety, Depression and Stress Management

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Learning spiritual behaviors as a means to reverse harmful epigenetic changes resulting from domestic violence


Excessive stress can epigenetically alter an individual's DNA and affect mental health. For instance, women who have been exposed to domestic violence have been found to have psychopathological alterations in their behaviors and in their hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis functioning. However, these changes are reversible, because people can change their genetic makeup by changing their thoughts and beliefs. This provides an opportunity for domestic violence survivors to acquire behavioral and cognitive practices that support healthier epigenetic modifications in the expression of genes. The use of strategies centered on spirituality has been proposed as a skill that can enhance resilience, which is the ability to adapt to stress and adversities. Similar to the epigenetic mechanisms involved in excessive stress, resilience can also alter gene expressions, which can support healthier neuropsychological functioning. For victims of domestic violence, enhancing their spirituality through prayers, meditation, or cognitive reframing

can lead to neuropsychological changes that can offset the negative psychopathological alterations that occur during excessive stress. A study that frames spirituality as a buffer for stress caused by domestic violence could be significant in further illuminating the power of thoughts and beliefs in influencing our neurological functioning.

Speaker Biography

Maysar Saredine is an architect, a businessman, a philosopher, and a psychologist. He completed his doctorate in Depth Psychology with an emphasis on Community, Liberation, and Ecopsychology at Pacifica Graduate Institute, California. His dissertation topic was an attempt to understand the dynamics of violence in Lebanon and the Middle East, specifically domestic violence against women, and to provide possible solutions that could be integrated in a more holistic way in society. He is the founder of The Inner Space (www.theinnerspace.me), and a Professor of Psychology at both The Lebanese American University (LAU, Lebanon) and Phoenicia University (PU, Lebanon). Maysar Saredine is interested in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed and in applying insights in a wide variety of organizational development and transformation; His motto in life is, "EDUCATING FOR THE PURPOSE OF LIBERATION."

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