

# GAP Newsletter 2008

# Happy New Year!!

*Thought for the month:*

*“Children should live in a nation where they are not judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character” Dr. M.L.King JR.*



Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), American clergyman and [Nobel Prize](#) winner, one of the principal leaders of the American [civil rights movement](#) and a prominent advocate of nonviolent protest. King's challenges to [segregation](#) and racial [discrimination](#) in the 1950s and 1960s helped convince many white Americans to support the cause of civil rights in the United States. After his assassination in 1968, King became a symbol of protest in the struggle for racial justice.



## Coping with Stress and Surviving Challenging Times

**By Alan Cohen**

What better setting could there be for writing an article on ongoing stress!

Place - Middle East (Israel's northern border with Lebanon to be precise).

Time - the start of "War with Iraq II" following a long build up of military activity and an even longer period of uncertainty in the region.

Mood - mixed. People are fed up with war and violence, but live in the hope that one last action, one final decision on the part of the leaders, one step in the right direction, and things will at least start to look up, but in the meantime . . . .

The Community Stress Prevention Center (CSPC) has been looking at the effects of ongoing stress on toddlers, schoolchildren, and adults for over 20 years now. What started as a project with a small group of schoolteachers in a school in Kiryat Shmona in the north of Israel has turned into an international concern. At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s Kiryat Shmona was subject to regular Katyusha rocket bombing from across the border.

When the young educational psychologist Mooli Lahad (now professor of Dramatherapy and CEO of the CSPC at Tel Hai College) suggested to a school principal that the psychological needs of teachers and students should be considered, not only their physical needs, he was met with simple refusal. The principal claimed that they all knew what to do and how to do it (run to the shelters) and then, once back in the classroom, things continued as normal. The story goes that at that point in the discussion someone slammed a door and several classes ran together straight for the shelter, screaming and shouting. There was room to admit that nerves were frayed and that something could be improved.

The first small group of teachers met and together with Mooli they devised a series of ten lessons leading up to how to prepare for and act in a confined space under bombardment. The success of this program was proven, unfortunately rather soon, as once again the children were sheltering from more rockets. Those children and teachers who had partaken in the planning and the lessons showed less signs of disturbance than other classes. They were ready with activities to do in the shelters, they cried and shouted less, they worked together in group activities more, and were more helpful to each other. This provided the impetus for much wider ranging work in the community.

The next group to be focused upon, and indeed the focus of our attention in this article, was kindergarten-aged children aged three to six and their teachers. A similar process was followed in producing a booklet for kindergarten teachers containing information, exercises, and stories. This booklet was called "A protected kindergarten" - it sounds better in Hebrew - "Gan moogan"! Over the years we have been working with organizations - businesses, local authorities, and entire communities in planning how to be ready for stressful incidents, emergencies, and disasters. Unfortunately, over this period of time, some 23 years, we have also had much direct experience in intervention following emergencies and disasters of different scales and in many different places worldwide.

Let us look at the situation in the spring of 2003 and examine what we know about helping young children and their caregivers cope with stress that lasts for an extended length of time. I would like to note at this point that the emphasis in all our training activities is on the fact that humans from birth are born copers. They do their best to manage. They survive. Young children usually remain in remarkably good spirits in tough times. It does not mean that young children don't realize something is wrong. They catch on very quickly. However, just because some of them don't show signs of anxiety, it doesn't mean all is well and we can ignore the problems.

Even within a group of very young children we can identify different styles of coping with adversity. There will be those who are very aware of what's going on (their parents talk about it openly, have the television on freely, and encourage discussion). There will be those who have some vague idea that something is not right in their world; there may be disruptions to routine, there are worrying tones of voice, and there are messages floating around above them, without a parent or caregiver ever having taken the time to explain directly to the children what is going on. And, of course, there will be those who are blissfully unaware that anything out of the ordinary is taking place. This could of course be the routine to which they have become accustomed from birth, or indeed they may be dreamers in their own happy world.



# ***HAPPY BIRTHDAY***

**Jennifer- 1-7- 06**

*Kayla 1-15-04*

*Winnie 1-10-05*

*Marlenis 1-2-04*

*Jyra 1-03-05*

*Also our GAP staff;*

*Denise 1-25*

**Selas 1-16**

**Jame 1-30**



*Important dates to remember*



**January 21<sup>st</sup> 2008** The GAP Center will close in honor of Dr. M. L. King's birthday.

**January 22, 23, 24, & 25<sup>th</sup> 2008** the GAP Center will close for staff development training; we will reopen Monday January 28 2008 at 7: 00 am.

**January 30<sup>th</sup> 2008** Ms. Sharon Thompson will be here from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, giving out important information. Ms. Thompson will be here from 4:30 – 5: 30pm

