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Review of Christy Kane's Presentation

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Reframing Trauma . . . Increasing Peace

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Dr. Christy Kane discussed the subject of trauma and peace through a neurological perspective, highlighting the effects of trauma on the brain as well as emphasizing the necessity of engaging in proactive and preventative care. Going beyond the neurological emphasis, Dr. Kane presented a model of care comprehensive in its scope, expounding on the importance of the multiple facets of what it means to be mentally healthy.

Much of Dr. Kane's presentation aimed to cultivate a perspective shift when it comes to how people view mental health. She posited the importance of emphasizing the neurological aspect of mental health, as it is often the case that mental health is an issue of an impaired neurology, just as the physical pain people experience may be the result of some impairment in the physical body. Just as we typically do not associate a simple broken bone with a high level of negative connotations, we should also not associate people's mental health problems with a high degree of stigmatism. Viewing our psychic issues in this way may allow us to eliminate a great deal of added yet unnecessary mental and emotional weight. In fact, Dr. Kane pointed out, the term mental *health* itself is so often associated with mental *issues* that at times they may seem synonymous. Her desire to prioritize the health aspect, rather than the issue aspect, is what has led Dr. Kane to declare that "mental health is (literally) who we are," instead of being the culmination of our inner struggles.

As reframing our ideas on mental health may yield positive results, Dr. Kane posited that a reframing of how we see trauma will do the same. Trauma is certainly a mental health problem that carries with it a particular kind of stigma. To many in our culture, trauma is very closely associated with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)—again, to the point that at times these terms seem synonymous. Dr. Kane explained that she understands trauma as being bigger than just the highly specific diagnosis of PTSD. She defined trauma as "a deeply distressing or disturbing experience or experiences, occurring when a person is overwhelmed by these events and circumstances and responds with intense fear, horror, and helplessness." In other words, trauma can be thought of as a range of experiences existing on a spectrum.

Because of this, it is possible that many traumatic circumstances are experienced daily. We can examine this claim through abundant evidence in support of it. We see increases in youth seeking mental health assistance, adults grappling with depression, anxiety, and substance abuse, an increase of child abuse and domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, greater social isolation, and a decrease in life expectancy overall. It is unfortunately the case that there is no shortage of mental health concerns right now, and each of these health concerns can fall within the range of traumatic experiences.

Advancements in the field of neurology have provided us with a greater understanding of how trauma affects the brain, particularly during developmental periods and adulthood. Dr. Kane showed how trauma can affect the left and right hemisphere differently, thus resulting in shifted prioritizations and altered behavior.

We should also reframe our approaches to treatment. While many types of treatments have been implemented across the years, Dr. Kane showed that too many of them are reactive instead of proactive, focusing on treatment instead of prevention. Dr. Kane advocated for prevention by adapting a holistic approach. Dr. Kane encouraged prioritizing and engaging in practices cultivating social and emotional well-being, cognitive and physical health, and spiritual attentiveness. All of these things taken together, rather than individually targeted, would lead to more proactive prevention and, thus, more effective trauma treatment. In this way, we can further promote peace among those who so desperately need it.