




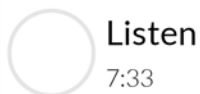
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Psychological First Aid Is Practiced In The Middle East

By ALLISON DUNNE • AUG 5, 2014


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Trauma experts from the Institute for Disaster Mental Health at SUNY New Paltz recently returned from their second trip to the Middle East. They directed workshops for Palestinians and Israelis. The work was in crisis counseling and psychological first aid. WAMC's Hudson Valley Bureau Chief Allison Dunne spoke with the institute director Dr. James Halpern.

The cross-border projects in the Middle East were funded by two United States Agency for International Development, or U.S. AID, Conflict Management and Mitigation grants awarded to the Institute for Disaster Mental Health. These are the only such grants to be awarded to an organization within the United States. They met in a secluded location near the Dead Sea in Israel, and Dr. James Halpern says the cultural mix is complex and intricate.

He says trauma experts from the U.S. met with about 30 mental health and educational professionals, who in turn trained 700 more in their communities, who will be in a position to



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better assist a distressed family member or neighbor and reduce the likelihood of blame and violence.

[/Dr. James Halpern.jpg](#)

Dr. James Halpern, director of the Institute for Disaster Mental Health

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Prior to the trainer training, the first workshop, notes Halpern, yielded something that is proving useful today — tip sheets for coping.


Halpern says he returned to the U.S. before the latest crisis erupted, and is now in almost constant contact with his colleagues in the Middle East via email and Skype.

As for what's next, Halpern's institute has applied for another grant from U.S. AID. He says they also are exploring the possibility of cooperative educational programs with Ben-Gurion University in Israel, where he has taught previously, and SUNY New Paltz.

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