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**THE USE OF  
MORITA THERAPY  
TO RESTORE  
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL  
HEALTH OF TEACHERS  
DURING THE WAR IN UKRAINE**

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*Study guide*

*Part 1*

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The cover shows the window of gymnasium No. 7 in Nikopol,  
which has been under constant shelling since 24 February 2022.  
Photo by teacher Olena Hvozdkova.

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## Introduction

February 24, 2022 has influenced not only the history of Ukraine and its territory. This date has changed the whole world. It has changed dramatically and will continue to change.

According to the UN, more than 18.5 million Ukrainians have suffered as a result of the war. Tens of thousands of Ukrainians have died as a result of Russian aggression, and the number of victims is rising every day. About 8.5 million Ukrainians have left the country. About 13 million are forced to move from the combat zone to other areas of Ukraine.

Children suffer most from the war. More than 2,700 Ukrainian children have been killed since the war began. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian children have been forcibly taken to the Russian Federation by the invaders, tens of thousands of Ukrainian children have disappeared and could not be found, or may remain in the occupied territories. The exact number cannot be estimated at the moment.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, about 500,000 Ukrainian school-age children are abroad.

According to the UN, 5.7 million schoolchildren have been directly affected by the war, of which 3.7 million have not been able to attend school since the beginning of the Russian aggression.

What are the RISKS caused by the war for Ukrainian children?

The risks of war can be divided into two groups – external and internal.

The first group of risks is caused by external circumstances that have changed as a result of the war. These are the risks:

1. A fundamental change in the world, when the rule of force demonstrates a desire to replace the rule of law.
2. War and uncertainty of further global processes.
3. Prolonged stress such as constant missile attacks, occupation, threat of violence, etc.
4. Significant deterioration of living conditions such as destruction of houses and schools; moving to other territories; lack of electricity, heat, water, bad Internet connection, etc.
5. Changing learning environment such as inability to attend schools; lack of Internet; difficulty to have face-to-face communication with peers, etc.
6. Terrible crimes and atrocities of the army of the aggressor country, which all children of the world witness.

The second group of risks deal with the complex mental states and feelings which Ukrainian students experience during the war.

These are the risks:

1. Destruction of previous ideas about the world and the system of moral values.

2. Fear of dangers and severe trials.
3. Gradual emotional exhaustion such as mental instability, emotional reduction, etc.
4. Unpreparedness for perception of prolonged stressful situations during the war time.
5. Painful experience of being separated from family, relatives, friends.
6. Being out of the safety and comfort zone.

Is it possible to enhance the psychological well-being of Ukrainian students in war?

All Ukrainian children to a certain degree have suffered deep psychological trauma from February 24, 2022 and some children experience physical trauma. The war continues and inflicts physical and psychological trauma on children. Every month and every day of the war, the deep physical and psychological wounds became deeper.

Ukrainian teachers, too, have suffered significant physical and psychological trauma that requires help and treatment. In the situation of war, which is still ongoing, these traumas are becoming more numerous, deepened and added to. It turns out that teachers with war syndrome have to teach children with war syndrome. Can teachers help children in this situation?

Hence the question arises – is it possible to enhance the psychological well-being during the war? Can psychotrauma be treated if the war has not yet ended and children are experiencing more and more trauma every day? Should we do it? Maybe we should wait for the end of the war, and then begin to work on enhancing children's psychological well-being?

We all know that if a person breaks their arm or leg, treatment will be effective when the person is at rest and safe. However, what if there are no safe physical or psychological environment? Will this treatment be effective? What can be done for this person, in particular for the child? How do we help them in the process of regaining the physical and psychological health of children and teachers who continue to suffer constant psychological and physical trauma, live in stress for a long time? How much is possible in a war time?

We believe that it is necessary to act TODAY, to save not only physically but also psychologically Ukrainian children in the conditions of this terrible unfinished war. Teachers who have to teach children in schools also need psychological help.

We need to find effective technologies and methods to restore the psychological stability of teachers in a time of prolonged social instability. If we help Ukrainian teachers, we will help Ukrainian children.

History shows that during wartime, doctors often find productive ways to treat physical wounds. Likewise, teachers must find effective ways to help Ukrainian students psychologically during and after the war.

That is why we conducted a survey on the psychological state of Ukrainian teachers in January 2024, and created the Ukrainian Morita Therapy group to provide psychological support to teachers from different regions of Ukraine. During the trainings, we not only clarified the psychological state of Ukrainian teachers, but also found problems that need help to solve them, as well as an effective methodology for conducting trainings for teachers living and working in war.

In this manual, we will share with you the results of our survey, the materials we discussed during the trainings that were useful for Ukrainian teachers, questions from teachers and our answers, and tips that are useful for people in crisis situations. Our manual is the first in a series of manuals we plan to publish to share our experience. We hope that the Morita Therapy methodology, which has been tested during the war in Ukraine, will be useful in other crisis situations that arise from time to time in the world. Of course, we hope that a stable peace will soon come to the world, and Morita Therapy will help Ukrainian teachers and children overcome the consequences of the war and restore their mental health.

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We also say thank you to all the specialists and readers of this manual and would be grateful for your questions and advice.

Sincerely authors  
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## **Chapter 1.**

### **Morita Therapy: its history, principles and objectives**

Morita Therapy is a psychotherapy for the treatment of neuroses, developed by Japanese psychiatrist Shoma Morita in 1919. The books on Morita Therapy have been published in Japanese, English, French, German, Spanish, Chinese and Korean, and are being disseminated to North America, Europe, Australia and China. The efficacy of Morita Therapy in contexts of conflict has been demonstrated by empirical evidence, including the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in refugees who have experienced torture and the psychological reconstruction of individuals in Rwanda, a region marred by past mass atrocities. Morita Therapy has been demonstrated to be an effective approach in circumstances characterised by “extreme distress”. In other words, since extreme distress cannot be managed by human resources alone, Morita's philosophy of accepting reality as it is and taking purpose-oriented actions within it resonated with people who suffered from the war and contributed to their psychological reconstruction.

The search for identity and adaptation to a war environment represent significant challenges for Ukrainian youth. Adolescence is a period of distress, characterised by an exploration of identity and an examination of how one should live one's life. This can result in feelings of inferiority in comparison to others. In the case of Ukraine, concerns about personal safety, the security of family members and friends, and the prospect of losing one's home are inevitable, serving to exacerbate the challenges faced by this population. Some children will demonstrate resilience and adaptability, while others may exhibit greater difficulty in coping with the circumstances. If they are unable to cope effectively, they may experience a range of psychological and physiological symptoms, including insomnia, nervousness, a rapid heartbeat, stomach upset, anxiety, depression, panic attacks, and compulsive behaviour. Such symptoms are akin to those observed in individuals suffering from Morita neuroses. The ability to overcome fears and worries at this developmental stage will prove beneficial in later life.

What are Morita neuroses? Which individuals are most suitable for Morita Therapy? The term “Morita neuroses” is considered to be the most suitable for individuals who exhibit a range of pathological conditions, including obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), social phobia,



alcoholism, eating disorders, somatoform disorders, anxiety, panic, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and chronic pain. However, personality traits are of greater significance. Firstly, there is the issue of introversion. Those who are introverted are more likely to experience anxiety, sensitivity and a tendency to be hurt, to pay excessive attention to their health, and to find it challenging to adapt to new situations. It would be interesting to ascertain whether this is also the case in Ukraine, as is the case in Japan. Furthermore, individuals with obsessive-compulsive tendencies exhibit a proclivity for perfectionism, elevated aspirations, competitiveness, and a strong sense of pride. They also tend to prioritize personal and interpersonal wellbeing, as well as exerting control over their own and others' behaviors.

The objective now is to apply Morita Therapy's conceptual framework to comprehend the problem and implement a solution. The human mind is characterised by a coexistence of two opposing forces: the fear of death and the desire for life. It can be argued that various anxieties are reflections of the fear of death. The fear of death is invariably accompanied by a concomitant desire for life. Should the desire for life be robust, the fear of death will concomitantly intensify. These are intrinsic aspects of the human condition, analogous to the two sides of a coin. Should one attempt to eradicate the fear of death, it may in fact intensify, thereby creating a vicious cycle. The problem then arises. Two measures may be employed to address the problem. The first is to become aware of and accept emotions in a conscious manner. The second is to demonstrate a desire for life through one's actions. We will now proceed to examine the specifics of this matter in detail.

First, problem origin (where does the problem come from?)

Fear of death and desire for life are natural and every fear has a desire. If you're concerned about your own safety, you want to live in safety. If you're concerned about the safety of your family and friends, you want to live in love. If you have compulsive behaviour, you want to live clean and safe. If you have insomnia or worry about your body, you want to be healthy. If you have panic disorder, you don't want to die and you want to live. If you have social phobia, you want people to like you.

Second, exacerbation of the problem (elimination of unpleasant emotions, sensations and thoughts).

1) A vicious circle between attention and sensation

Attention is directed towards unpleasant emotions and sensations, wants to get rid of them, which led to stronger emotions and sensations.

2) A vicious circle as contradiction of thoughts

There's a difference between who you should be and who you are now. If you try too hard to become someone you're not, you'll end up confused.

Third, the measures.

1) Be aware of and accept (or acknowledge) emotions consciously

We first recognize the emotions behind the symptoms (e.g. anxiety, fear, shame, guilt) Then try to accept or acknowledge our emotions.

There is a law of emotions (if you let them be, they will naturally disappear over time): Observe and experience the flow of emotions is important, and you should wait).

2) Demonstrate the desire for life through actions

First, take constructive action. Take small and feasible goals, purpose-oriented attitude. Let the mood be the mood and do what needs to be done. Stop doing what you can't do and work on what you can do.

Second, reconsider our way of life. Escape from “the way things should be” (for example, “when I speak, everyone listens and agrees with me”) and deal with things flexibly and according to the facts.

Lastly, what is the criteria for judging action and way of life? The answer is to ask yourself, “Are they natural?” (“as it is”, in Japanese, “Arugamama”)

Now let`s do a case analysis. Please recall an example of a student who is hard to help. Or think of a problem you have. How could you use Morita Therapy to deal with it? The analysis procedure is, 1) Problem origin: What are the “fear of death” and “desire for life”? 2) Exacerbation of the problem: What are the two vicious circles? 3) Measures: What emotions we should be aware of and accept (or acknowledge) ? How can we demonstrate our desire for life?

Summing up, we encourage you to: Accept (or acknowledge) the fact of war as it is, accept(or acknowledge)your own fear and anxiety, engage in constructive things such as learning and education. Live each day, today and tomorrow, with hope and faith.

## **Chapter 2.**

### **Results of the survey of Ukrainian teachers (January 2024)**

Before we start group therapy for teachers, we conducted a survey to investigate the daily lives and mental states of teachers and students, as well as educational methods beneficial for teachers to support students.

In December 2023, interviews were conducted with three Ukrainian education-related university teachers. Based on the results, in January 2024 our team conducted a survey of teachers through Google Forms, encompassing elementary, junior high, and high schools across Ukraine. A total of 506 teachers (2.8% male, 96.4% female and 0.8% declining to answer) participated in this survey. Most participants (78.3%) were in or above their 40s, and most (89.1%) had been teaching for more than 10 years. Participants were drawn from 17 regions in eastern, central, southern and western Ukraine. There were 20 other participants who were displaced (teaching online) in 10 European countries, including Poland, Germany, Romania and other countries.

The survey included four parts: teachers' mental health, coping techniques being taught to students (successful and difficult cases), useful psychological trainings for teachers, and responses to Morita Therapy.

#### 1. Teachers' mental health

We measured two indicators: psychological distress and resilience. The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) was examined. 53.4% of the participants was above the cut-off point as suspected mental illness. This result suggests that the mental health of Ukrainian teachers was in a critical situation. Compared to when the war started in February 2022, 29.2% had improved their mental health, 42.3% were almost the same and 28.5% had deteriorated. This result indicated that the majority of teachers had not been able to recover from the shocking mental state they were in at the beginning of the war. Free text entry showed the reasons for this included hopelessness, the constant trials of war, inability to control emotions, loss of past and youth, fatigue, and decline in social morals. In contrast, reasons for the improvements (multiple responses) included: "I have started to evaluate events around me more realistically" (300 participants), "I have a concrete understanding of the situation and know what to do" (201 participants), "I am more solution-oriented"

(136 participants), “I have a routine” (101 participants), “I dive into work” (1 participant), “I believe in the victory and mercy of God” (1 participant).

Resilience was also examined. There are three factors representing Ukrainian teachers` resilience: behavioral ability and optimism, understanding others and self-understanding, and sociability. The mean values of each factor exceeded the theoretical middle value of 3, indicating that the resilience level of Ukrainian teachers was not low, particularly compared to their psychological distress. Compared to when the war started in February 2022, 30.0% had improved, 42.9% were almost the same and 25.1% had deteriorated. The reasons for these improvements included “I evaluate the events around me realistically” (300 participants), “I have become more resilient and solution- oriented” (136 participants). The primary reasons for this decline in resilience are as follows: “People have changed and become unpredictable (58 participants)”, “I feel hard to decide what is right and what is wrong now” (70 participants).

The results indicate a strong negative correlation between each factor of resilience and the K10, which suggests that an increase in resilience may lead to a reduction in psychological distress in Ukraine during wartime.

The results indicate that Ukrainian teachers have developed enhanced resilience as a result of the challenging circumstances they have faced during the war. In addition, further training can be provided to enhance teachers' resilience, in order to reduce their psychological distress.

## 2. Coping techniques being taught to students (success and difficult cases)

Techniques teachers taught their students to cope with anxiety and fear included “talking about everyday life” (287 participants), “telling them it is okay to be afraid” (258 participants), “talking about their fears and anxieties” (197 participants), “telling them not to be afraid” (64 participants) and “organizing creative events” (27 participants), “psychological techniques” (2 participants) and “switch to positive topics emotionally” (1 participant). The majority of teachers use methods that encourage students to look at everyday life, recognize fear as a natural emotion and discuss it openly with students. Creative activities are also used. On the other hand, some teachers teach students to “not to be afraid”. The teachers' responses showed that they are sincerely tackling the problems of their students through a process of trial and error.

Examples of successful cases (multiple choice) included “good communication with students” (399 participants), “creative activities with students” (260 participants), “small group events (watching films, discussing books, seeing plays)” (140 participants) and “share emotions, jokes and life stories” (2 participants).

Examples of difficult cases (multiple choice) included “students with a passive attitude to life” (270 participants), “students who had suffered great losses (family, friends, home, etc.) in the war” (217 participants), and “students' panic attacks” (119 participants), and “difficulty in understanding students' level of anxiety for they hide and avoid contact during online classes” (3 participants). The above results showed the constant ingenuity and hard work of the teachers.

### 3. Useful psychological trainings for teachers

“The idea that one should be prepared to be resilient” (265 participants), “breathing exercises” (206 participants), “relaxation exercises” (203 participants), “think about good & bad future scenarios and what actions should be taken” (150 participants), “conversation with psychologists” (125 participants).

### 4. Teachers' responses to Morita Therapy

We introduced Morita Therapy and asked participants if it was useful for anxiety management and resilience (multiple choice), 326 said it was useful for coping with fear and anxiety, 282 said it was useful for actively thinking about action and solving problems, 13 said it was not useful because they could think positively without it, and Ten participants said that it was not useful because it was difficult to understand. Most participants (95.5%) were observed to be responsive to and interested in Morita Therapy.

## **Chapter 3.**

### **Creation of the Ukrainian Morita Therapy group, its tasks and methods of on-line work**

#### 1. Ukrainian Morita Therapy group`s potential for effectiveness

The situation in Ukraine and the results of our research show that psychological support for teachers is important to increase their resilience and reduce their distress. We also found that 95.5% of the teachers in our survey agreed with Morita Therapy from the Eastern culture, which they had never seen or heard of before, and believed that Morita Therapy could help them to increase their resilience and improve their mental health.

How can Morita Therapy be shared with Ukrainian teachers? Within psychotherapy, group learning is considered to be a highly effective method. Groups are therapeutic in that they bring hope to the participants, reassurance through the realization of the universality that they are not alone, information from other members, altruism through the bonds that develop between members, etc. (Vinogradov&Yalom, 1989). In deed, Morita Therapy has a long tradition of group learning, where learners share their experiences and support each other as part of the therapeutic process. In the case of Ukraine, there are also circumstances in which many groups have supported the mental health of their members in the context of war.

Therefore, we were convinced to create the Ukrainian Morita Therapy Group.

#### 2. Tasks of the Ukrainian Morita Therapy Group

The main task: to help teachers increase their resilience and adapt to the current war environment and the future post-war environment. These can be divided into three tasks as follows.

1) Help teachers to cope with negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, inner pain etc.

2) Help teachers increase confidence and positive emotions, find various ways to restore energy.

3) Help teachers better support students through the above.

We have invited teachers from the eastern, central, western and southern regions of Ukraine and from abroad to join the group. Each region has its own difficulties and we want the content of the therapy group designed to be helpful to teachers from all regions of Ukraine.

### 3. Ukrainian Morita Therapy group`s methods of online work

Group therapy is essentially about the “place” where the members actually meet, and the atmosphere of the “place” affects the members in many ways. Therefore, online group therapy is difficult. However, in the current situation in Ukraine, the only way to connect is online, and many activities in Ukraine, including school education, are conducted online. The temperament of Ukrainians is also open and enterprising. For these reasons, we thought that online group therapy was likely to be effective.

The training of the Ukrainian Morita Therapy group is conducted in English through an interpreter. This slows down the communication somewhat, but does not reduce its effectiveness. The trainer speaks in English, but the interpreter translate simultaneously into Ukrainian. In addition, the slides are also shown in Ukrainian, which makes it easier for the teachers to understand.

An important part of the training is not only the exchange of opinions, but also the exchange of teachers' experiences. Each teacher has his or her own unique experience, which they gained during the war. According to the teachers, it is very useful to share practical experience of solving real problems or realizing their emotions and their psychological state.

We use the following methods.

1) Before the therapy group. We listen to the teachers' questions on each topic beforehand and try to create learning content that addresses their reallife problems. This is because there is no point in a therapy group if it is not appropriate to the Ukraine's current environment in Ukraine.

2) The beginning of the therapy group. We start by relaxing the body. Touching our bodies will integrate mind and body and increase confidence.

3) The lecture part of the therapy group. Although based on Morita Therapy, various psychotherapies appropriate to the teachers' problems are also introduced, e.g. self-compassion and ambiguous loss. Each lecture also reviews the content of the previous lecture.

4) The practice part of the therapy group. By doing various exercises together, a sense of unity among the members of the group is also created, even though they are participating online on their own.

5) The discussion part of therapy group. We discuss with teachers how to deal with reallife problems.



## Chapter 4.

### Difficulties of Ukrainian teachers during the war and how to deal with emotions



Based on the survey of 506 teachers conducted in January 2024, and a meeting with 8 teachers from 5 regions in February, we observed the following difficulties faced by Ukrainian teachers. These difficulties can also be read as expectations, according to the concepts of Morita Therapy.

At the individual level, there are:

Difficulty 1: Fear of dying (including oneself, others and frontline warriors) in daily life, anxiety, unstable and negative mental state, while positive emotions are lacking. = Expectation 1: Want to control negative emotions such as fear and anxiety. Want to increase positive emotions.

Difficulty 2: Accumulation of fatigue (lack of internal energy) in daily life. Apart from the above-mentioned emotional exhaustion, this is due to the fact that teachers have very few holidays and that they have multiple roles (teacher, parent, friend and counsellor to the students). = Expectation 2: To build up internal energy.

Difficulty 3: Difficulty in finding meaning in life and work. = Expectation 3: Want to find meaning in life and work.

At the environmental level, there are:

Difficulty 4: Impoverishment of the physical environment (no water, no gas, minimal survival living, living in shelters, sirens). = Expectation 4: Want to maintain mental health in such an environment.

Difficulty 5: impoverishment of the mental environment (lack of constructive communication between people, existence of acts and ideas that show moral degradation). These create a feeling of isolation in people. = Expectation 5: Want to create constructive communication between hearts and minds, do not want their energy to be consumed up by feelings of disappointment at moral degradation.

Our group work takes into account the above difficulties and expectations. And together we create a “Ukrainian Morita Therapy”. Because today Ukraine is in the middle of the new type of hybrid war and no psychotherapy can be effective here just as it is. We wish eachteacher

to become an expert in this creative “Ukrainian Morita Therapy”. We wish you have more strength to live better yourself, to become more resilient and to help those around you.

### 1. Morita Therapy and emotions

Morita Therapy emphasizes the importance of dealing with “emotions.” It is a treatment method that works with emotions. Why does Morita Therapy emphasize emotions?

Many mental problems are caused by believing that certain sensations and emotions are abnormal and trying to eliminate them. This means deceiving your emotions. However, you don't have to do such an unreasonable thing; you can just face the emotions you are afraid of. In fact, by accepting emotions as natural, we no longer need to get caught up in them.

### 2. The nature of emotions

1) Emotions are a natural phenomenon in humans and cannot be controlled by the will.

Emotions that arise, such as nervousness in front of others, depression, anxiety, etc., are a natural part of human nature, and cannot be changed even if we try to change them.

2) It is impossible to selectively avoid feeling the emotions you dislike, such as anxiety, fear, and shame. Similarly, you cannot choose to feel only joy and pleasure.

Especially for nervous people, there is no emotion as unpleasant as their symptoms or anticipatory anxiety. But just as we cannot choose to eliminate them, and cannot choose to feel pleasant emotions.

(3) It is not necessary to judge the value of any emotion as good or bad. No matter how you feel, you don't have to blame yourself for it.

Emotions are a natural phenomenon, just like the weather that occurs at that time, and we have no choice but to accept them as they are. Just as we are not responsible for the weather, there is no need to blame ourselves.

### 3. The changing processes of emotions

1) If emotions are left alone or allowed to flow naturally, their course will form a chevron-shaped curve, rising and falling step by step until they finally disappear.

No matter how happy or sad you feel, they don't last forever; if you leave them alone, they will eventually disappear of their own accord. In other words, the emotions that arise are a natural phenomenon, just like the weather, so the only thing you can do is leave them alone.

2) Emotions become dull and numb when we get accustomed to the same sensation.

You may feel tired and painful to get up early in the morning at first, but if you keep doing it, it will become a habit. It becomes less painful. No matter how painful the trials are, if you endure them and persevere, you will get used to them and they will no longer be so painful.

3) Emotions become stronger when our attention is focused on them.

For example, if you get nervous in front of others, have a hoarse voice, or have shaking legs, if you try too hard not to shake, the important conversation will take a backseat and you will end up focusing on your shaking. However, the symptoms will become more and more severe.

4) Emotions are acquired through new experiences, and are further cultivated through repetition.

For example, a person with anxiety neurosis who is unable to drive a car can still reach his destination by boarding a train, even though he is experiencing an anticipated fear and heart palpitations. If you repeat the experience of being able to ride the train and acknowledge the achievement (fact) of taking the leap and reaching your goal, you will gain confidence. On the other hand, if you only focus on anticipated anxiety and pain, your fear of vehicles will increase.

#### 4. Relationship between emotions and actions

1) Emotions cannot be controlled by the will, but actions can be.

For example, a person with social phobia who says, "I get nervous in front of people and can't talk" may be able to talk about his symptoms at a group meeting even though he is nervous. This often happens. In other words, the act of "talking" is something you can definitely do as long as you have the will.

2) If you take the necessary action while feeling unpleasant emotions, the emotions will naturally flow away and only the fact that you took the action will remain.

If you do the necessary action while feeling unpleasant emotions such as fear and anxiety, a new feeling of accomplishment will arise. At the same time, the fact that you took the action and its results will remain, while the unpleasant emotions will be swept away.

3) Emotions are often changed by actions. But actions cannot be used to change emotions.

If we think “If you take action, your fear will go away,” we will end up thinking of actions as a way to cure our fear and anxiety etc., in other words, as a way to change our emotions. This is like putting the cart before the horse.

### 5. Ukrainian ways of dealing with emotions (our suggestions)

1) When fear and anxiety arise, accept them as natural and wait for them to pass (minutes, hours...). However, if the fear/anxiety is very strong or you are very tired, it is good to freeze it for a while. (What do you think? Have you had good or bad experiences?)

2) Teachers should not be ashamed to feel fear and anxiety and to express them moderately in front of students, being the one “as I am” (Arugamama). This allows teachers to empathize with students and have good communication. (What do you think? Have you had good or bad experiences?)

3) Do something that you can, in spite of fear and anxiety. For example, get involved in work or other tasks. It is important not to think that “doing this will make the anxiety go away” when you are doing actions. (What experiences have you had?)

## **Chapter 5.**

### **Overcoming inner pain, fear and hatred during the war in the aspect of ambiguous losses**



We have received valuable information about problems from our teachers. Overall, the problems fall into three main categories. The first is inner pain: the loss of a loved one, a beloved home, a past life, and these losses become big wounds that cause inner pain. Inner pain is also often accompanied by loneliness. The second is fear: fear for your life now, fear for your future life, and fear not only for yourself

but also for the future of your children; the third is hatred: Whether you can live with hate. These are all very important issues. And the three are related and can be thought of as coming from an external situation of ambiguous loss.

“Ambiguous loss” refers to “a loss that remains unclear and is neither resolved nor terminated” (Boss, 1999; 2006). There are two types: Type 1 is “psychologically present but physically absent”. For example, a family member has gone missing, your hometown has become a war zone and you have moved to another part of the country. It is unclear whether you will ever see your family member again or whether you will be able to return to your home town. Type 2 is “physically present but psychologically absent”. For example, a family member may have become addicted to alcohol or other substances, or may be seriously ill or unconscious. Or one may return to one’s hometown and home, but it has changed and one no longer fits in. The family, hometown or home is no longer connected to his or her mind and it is unclear whether they will ever be the same again. Neither type is a definite goodbye. It is the uncertainty that makes it very hard and difficult to cope with. I think the situation you are all facing now is exactly like that.

#### Ambiguous loss causes continued psychological distress

Ambiguous loss causes a variety of problems, including inner pain, fear, loneliness, anxiety, guilt, helplessness and self-destructive behavior. We devalue ourselves, for example by believing that we cannot function as a parents or we are incapable of initiating new behaviours.

An important reason why ambiguous loss continues to cause psychological distress is that we have a variety of “ought to be” stereotypes. Such as “belief in a just world”, or a strong need to control oneself and others. For example, “The world should be just and logical”, “I/others must always be brave in dealing with problems”. These beliefs cause a lot of stress when people are faced with intractable problems such as ambiguous loss.

#### Dealing with ambiguous loss (Principles)

Live as you are, with ambiguity (with the idea of “thinking both A and B”). Thereby increasing the resilience of yourself, your family and your community. As you know, community is important because it is a psychological family.

What is “both A and B thinking”? Ambiguous loss is difficult to resolve, so binary thinking, such as choosing between A and B, is not helpful. Thinking that “it can be both/and” relieves psychological distress and tension. For example, Still loving the lost person (A), and make a new relationship with someone new or enjoy your life (B).

Please think about how you can rethink your own problems with both A and B thinking.

#### Dealing with “ambiguous loss” (Guidelines) (Boss, 2016, Kurokawa et al., 2019)

1. Recapture the situation: externalize the problem and reduce self-blame and other-blame.

(Good: Name your situation as ambiguous loss, using both A and B thinking)

(Bad: Immersion in revenge or hatred, martyrdom, shame, isolation).

2. Separate the uncontrollable from the controllable: Acknowledge that there are things that are unfair and things that cannot be done.

(Good: Admit that the world is not fair and that you cannot control loss from war, reduce self-blame)

(Bad: Admit that the world is not always fair and that you cannot control the loss from war, reduce self-blame)

(Bad: Hold on to fairness beliefs, self-shame, self-blame)

3. Reconstructing identity: letting go of the past and building a self to adapt to the new environment.

(Good:Flexible view of oneself, one's family and surroundings,)

(Bad:Hold on to fairness beliefs, self-shame)

4. Awareness and acceptance of ambivalent feelings: People may have conflicting feelings such as love and hate at the same time. People may have ambivalent feelings about their deceased family members, seriously ill family members or people around them. And they may feel guilty about themselves for having such feelings. It is important to be aware of these complex feelings and to accept them.

(Good: Be aware of and accept feelings of guilt, shame and anger, and discuss conflicting feelings with friends and professionals)

(Bad: Deny ambivalent feelings)

5. Find new attachments: This can feel like a betrayal of the loved one. However, it is not necessary to let go of the relationship with the person who has died (position them in the heart and let them be your psychological family). It is possible to keep them while having a new attachment.

(Good: Acknowledge that what has been lost is still present in your heart, but not as it was before. Acknowledge what you still have. Find a new person, community or psychological family)

(Bad: Shame, isolation, avoiding problems, seeking closure).

### Pain is sometimes helpful

We tend to think that inner pain and other distress should be eliminated, but the more we eliminate it, the worse the distress becomes (we mentioned the “vicious circle” last time). And when ambiguous loss occurs, pain is often helpful. This is because pain can be a chance for change. At a breaking point, where you can no longer bear it, you are forced to make changes.

### Self-reflective work

1. What is your most painful ambiguous loss at the moment?
2. What type is it (type 1, type 2)?
3. How have you dealt with it?
4. How will you going to deal with your ambiguous loss in the future?
5. Who are your psychological families?



## Chapter 6.

### How to cope with fear and anxiety



#### What are fear and anxiety?

Fear is an emotion that arises when overwhelming personal danger is clearly in sight. Anxiety is an emotion that arises when faced with an uncertain threat to one's value or meaning of existence (Lazarus, 1991). Both are part of our threat system.

Our emotions have three systems: Acquisition System (pleasure, achievement, excitement, enjoyment), Security System (fulfilment, security, connection with others), Threat System (fear, anxiety, anger, hatred, self-blame). The sum of the areas of the three circles is constant; as one gets larger, the other two get smaller. As fear and anxiety grow, the threat system grows, getting bigger and bigger. And the other two get smaller and smaller.

#### Fear and anxiety cause mental illness:

Specific phobia, social phobia, panic disorder, agoraphobia, generalized anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder, acute stress disorder, PTSD.

#### Dealing with fear and anxiety (from the perspective of Morita Therapy)

##### 1. Accept fear and anxiety and sometimes enter into fear

When providing psychological support to cancer patients in Morita Therapy, the concept is: "It is okay to be afraid of death. Live today constructively as it is".

Accepting fear and anxiety. Trying to get rid of fear and anxiety leads to the denial of the desire to live. Life always involves suffering. So when we suffer, we just suffer, and when we rejoice, we can rejoice deeply.

Getting into fear. When we are anxious or fearful, we are happy or sad, depending on whether we are in the mood or not. But as we know, the more we avoid fear, the more we fear, so we change our mindset and go into fear. Once inside, the opposite happens: they fade away. Because emotions are fluid. Have you experienced this?

## 2. Find the desire for life which is behind the fear and anxiety

You are often shocked by situations such as bombings and frontline warfare, and you experience a range of negative emotions many times a day, making you tired and exhausted. Your nerves are frayed. As a result, you may tend to forget your desires for life. What is behind fear and anxiety? I think it is the sense of achievement, joy, love and security that are in the acquisition and security systems we have just discussed.

## 3. Act constructively so as to demonstrate the desire for life

So what can we do now to seek the above? What can we do in the midst of unpleasant reality, our own fears and insecurities? You have dogs and cats, you talk to your children or do something for them, you find pleasure in your work, you garden or decorate, etc. And you can find and do more. Please try to find out. What can you do that is good for you, that gives you pleasure?

## 4. Making the most of your personality

If you have a fearful/anxious personality, what can you do about it? There is no such things as good or bad personality. The more nervous you are, the more seriously you take life. You can make use of your nervous personality in your life. For example, if you are anxious, you will make fewer mistakes and plan better. On the other hand, if you often make mistakes often and do not plan well, I believe you must prepare very hard, which will lead to good results.

### Managing psychosomatic symptoms

Fear and anxiety can cause various psychosomatic symptoms, such as heart palpitations, dizziness, gastrointestinal problems and hair loss.

1. First, consult a doctor to see if treatment is needed.
2. Break the two vicious circles.

1) Mental alternation: i.e. a vicious circle between attention and sensation.

The more attention you pay to your physical sensations, the more intense they become. For example, the more you scratch an itch, the worse it gets, and you may even become obsessed with trying to remove the scab. So what you need to do is divert your attention and focus on your action, on the things you need to do.

## 2) Contradictions in thought

You ask too much of yourself and carry an excessive burden (work, relationships). Or you are constantly frustrated by realities that do not go your way. This leads to a constant tension in both body and mind. So what you need to do is to change the attitude from “this is how it should be” to “this is how it is”. Deal with situations in a flexible way.

## 3) Work on the body

Rest your body well (no fiddling with mobile phones), move your body (mopping the floor, cooking, gardening, walking...).

## 4) Wait

Change your life as described above and let nature take its course, while devising various measures in your own way.

Through the above, redirect your energy from fighting fear, anxiety and psychosomatic symptoms to the realizing your desire for life. Live in the HERE and NOW. In this way, the natural healing power will turn things around, especially in the psyche. Believe in your natural healing power.

## Chapter 7.

### How to meet your true needs: the inner self and self-compassion



Last time, we were asked a question by our teachers. The question was: “I realize that there is a purpose behind every action I take - to satisfy a certain need. When I am nervous, it means that there is something wrong with my actions. Are there any techniques that can help us identify and define these needs so that we can learn how to manage our emotions in the future?” We realized that the real problem was that the teachers` actions were not satisfying their needs and, before that they felt unable to recognize their own needs. We think that many people, especially teachers and ourselves have had this experience. We act as we “should” act, but for some reason we feel anxious, frustrated and sad. Why is that? Because, it is not an action that satisfies our real needs. And we are not even aware of our real needs.

1. How to recognize our real needs?

2. How can we meet our real needs in order to save ourselves?

We believe that these answers relate to two psychological concepts: inner self and self-compassion.

When the inner self and the outer self differ, internal conflicts arise.

What is “inner self” (Mackay, 2020)? It is your thoughts, memories, emotions, and other aspects of your mind that make up who you are. It's the private, inner part of yourself that you generally do not share with other, the core of your being. Being aware of your inner self and how it interacts with your outer self is an important part of good mental, physical, and spiritual health. It's a crucial element to consider when working toward and maintaining balance in your life.

What is the “outer self”? It is what you present to the world, the parts that you choose to allow others to experience, such as your appearance, characteristics etc. Your outer self is like a shell, designed to protect and support your inner self as you deal with the demands of school, work, home, and other external concerns. This outer world can be demanding.

Take time to consider whether the aspects of your outer self are consistent with the values, expectations, and perceptions of your inner self.

The inner and outer selves sometimes don't mesh, and this conflict can cause extreme discomfort. Essentially, you maybe thinking one thing (in your inner self) but behaving differently (in your outer self). The greater the conflict, the greater the difference between what the inner self believes is right and what the outer self does. This conflict ultimately causes stress that can damage the mind, body, and spirit.

### Types of internal conflicts

#### 1. Moral conflict

This occurs when our personal ethics and values are put to the test. For example, a person believes in being truthful and honest. Yet, they are prepared to tell a lie to save a life or friends. Moral conflict occurs when you are caught between two opposing sides and try to fulfil both regardless of the consequences.

#### 2. Self-image conflict.

You want to be, and are seen to be, a generous and flexible person. This is the outer self. However, your inner self is sensitive, straightforward and unforgiving. So what do you do when people ask you to do something you don't want to do, or when they hurt you? Do you put up with it, refuse it or get angry?

#### 3. Other conflicts: religious, political, interpersonal, love...

### How can we recognize inner self and deal with conflicts

1. Acknowledge your inner conflict and think about what you really want

When you feel bad after doing something, you can acknowledge your conflicts, and the duality of your mind (inner and outer values). Allow yourself to think both A (inner self) and B (outer self). And think about what is best for you in the moment. It is a challenge, but maturity and strength will help you go through this stage.

There are several ways of getting to know the inner self. For example, what choices would have made you happy and satisfied? Or what choices would you have made as a young child? Or what choice would you have made if you had not thought about other people's wishes or fears for the future?

## 2. Calm down

Calming your mind allows you to detach and gain clarity easily from the situation at hand. It is not a way to escape from the problem but to put yourself in a place of peace until you can accurately see what comes next. Some activities that can help are breathing exercises, music, reading, playing an instrument, cooking, meditation, listening to positive affirmations, or observing nature. If you are at work, get some fresh air or take a deep breath.

3. Do not rush to solutions. Understand the problem first, then act with determination.

Understand more deeply what needs to be done. Understanding the problem requires a deep insight into yourself and a willingness to accept the truth, not what you want.

## 4. Have self-compassion

Self-compassion has three elements: Kindness to self, common humanity and mindfulness.

Kindness to yourself: Are you kind to yourself when things go wrong? Do you soothe yourself in the same way as you encourage your best friend?

Common humanity: This is also called the “equality view” in Morita Therapy. This means that you believe that all humans are flawed and make mistakes.

Mindfulness: This is about accepting your thoughts, feelings and sensations in the here and now, without resisting or avoiding them.

### How to be mindful, especially how to accept hard feelings?

#### First, face hard feelings “just a little”!

There are five stages of emotional acceptance (Germer, 2009): Resistance: “Get away from me!”, Exploring: “What I feel”, Tolerating: “I don’t like it, but still can tolerate it”, Allowing: “OK, I can make a space for this feeling”, Befriending: “What can I learn from this?”

These can take a long time, so waiting is important.

#### Second, deal with hard feelings by

1) Label the feelings: “This is anger”, “Fear is coming on”.

2) Notice the feelings in the body: “My stomach is tense”, “I have a pain in my stomach area”, “My chest hurts”.

### 3) Soothe, calm and allow (of the body and feelings)

Now, let`s do some exercises (Neff & Germer, 2018):

You can lie down or sit up. In a comfortable position, close your eyes and take three relaxed breaths and place your hands on your chest or anywhere else you feel safe. Remind yourself that you are in the room and that you are entitled to kindness.

Think of a mild or moderately difficult situation that you are facing at the moment. Stress in a relationship, problems in class, etc. Don't choose a too hard or too easy problem. Choose something that causes you a little stress when you think about it. Visualize the situation. Who is there? What is happening?

#### 1. Label the emotion.

What emotions do you have when you think about it? Label them. For example, sadness, grief, confusion, fear, despair. If there are several emotions, label the strongest one. Then repeat the labels in a gentle voice, as if you were acknowledging a friend who is feeling the same emotion: "This is sadness", "This is grief".

#### 2. Notice the emotions in the body

Next, extend your awareness to the whole body.

Remember the painful situation and try to find out where there is tension or discomfort in the body. If possible, choose a part of the body where you feel the strongest. This could be a tense muscle, a feeling of emptiness, chest pain, etc.

In your mind, gently lean into this place. Become aware of the sensation as it is.

#### 3. Soothe, calm and allow

Now, soothe the part of the body where you feel the painful emotion. Relax and release muscle tension with the sensation of being in warm water. Soothe, Calm and allow. Don't try to change the feelings, just gently support them.

Next, calm yourself in the difficult situation. Place your hands on your chest or other areas of discomfort and feel your hands gently touching, warmth and tenderness flowing from your hands into your body. You can imagine your body as your childhood`s body.



Do you have any words to say to a friend who is suffering in the same way? “I know it's hard to feel this way”, “I'm thinking of you”. Say these things to yourself.

(If it gets hard, you can always open your eyes and stop for a moment. It's OK to just breathe).

Finally, allow the discomfort to be there. Make space for the discomfort and don't try to push it away. Allow yourself to be who you are, to be present. It is OK to just be in the moment.

You can repeat the cycle of soothing, calming and forgiving with your feelings. Each time try to feel all the emotions more deeply, just as they are.

Now, finish the exercise and turn your attention to the whole body. Feel what you feel and be yourself as you are in this moment.

\* Some people find it difficult to locate the body. One reason is that some people are more sensitive to physical sensations than others. Others may be paralyzed if their emotions are too strong. In any case, you should pay attention to sensations such as a feeling of discomfort.

\* If you feel overwhelmed, you can stop for a while until you feel safe and comfortable again. Healing takes time and your limits should be respected. Go slowly and you can go far.

## Chapter 8.

### How to maintain your energy up during the war?



#### Difficulties in maintaining energy

You spend your days under shelling and sirens, your working hours are hard and you have to support the students. You are drained of energy and may be burnt out. It is very difficult to maintain the energy and recharge your energy during wartime.

We think that one way to maintain energy is to reduce energy depletion and the other is to replenish energy. Both are important.

First, reduce energy depletion. Energy is drained a lot in wartime, just to get on with work and life. The wear and tear of adapting to such an environment is difficult to reduce. On the other hand, what is the consumption that can be reduced? We think it is the wear and tear within ourselves. One example is anticipatory anxiety. In other words, a state of nervous waiting for something bad to happen. The other is impatience and self-doubt about escaping reality. You may be tired and unmotivated and want to run away from the reality of work, life, unpleasant relationships and so on. This is a state of impatience and self-blame.

Second, replenish energy. If you are passionate about your work, you can work hard, but you can also burn out after working hard. The pre-war methods of replenishing energy, such as watching films, reading, SPA and travel, singing, dancing and doing fun things, have become ineffective. Now there are only a bunch of little pleasures, and you may be wondering whether they will really replenish your energy.

#### How can we maintain energy?

To reduce energy depletion, it is important to 1) reduce anticipatory anxiety, 2) find meaning in what you do, and 3) reduce self-blame (live life as it is).

To replenish energy, it is important to 1) find meaning in enjoyment and 2) be engaged in the present.

In summary: 1. reduce anticipatory anxiety (anxiety about anticipating the occurrence of something bad); 2. find meaning in both work and enjoyment; 3. live life as it is; 4. be engaged in the present. Let's look at how to do this, one by one.

### 1. How can we reduce anticipatory anxiety?

Many teachers say that they are always waiting for something bad to happen, even if nothing has happened yet. They have anticipatory anxiety due to the long war. Teachers may have become obsessed with anticipatory anxiety because they want to manage the anxiety and worry and have become so focused on the opposite. In many cases, it is the anticipatory anxiety of “being” or “likely to be” that intensifies the fear, rather than the actual bad thing that is going to happen. However, even when they try to put these thoughts out of their minds or to avoid feeling anxious, they become increasingly obsessed and fixated on them. Furthermore, anxiety can prevent them from making plans. And the inability to plan intensifies the anxiety. A vicious circle ensues.

There are many ways to reduce anticipatory anxiety, but the premise is to acknowledge that the future is not something that can be completely controlled. This is particularly true during war, but also when we are not at war. When you actually experience it, you learn to deal with it in a flexible way, but you can't think about what hasn't happened. On the other hand, planning allows you to control some of the future as you see fit, so it is better to plan without expecting perfection.

### 2. How can we find “meaning for me” in both work and enjoyment?

You are dedicated to your work. The various things that teachers have to do in the work have social meaning. The tasks in life also have meaning for the family. However, there are also unpleasant things that you may see as “my duty” and not be aware of the “meaning to me”. For example, unreasonable rules at work, very difficult tasks, being around unethical people. Thinking about “meaning for me” and acting on it reduces energy depletion. Sometimes you cannot find any meaning in doing this, but there is also a meaning in “doing what needs to be done”.

The same is also true of enjoyment. Reading books is not as concentrated as it used to be, and the fact that you can no longer relax with the enjoyment you used to have may be because you don't find it meaningful. There may be a voice in your mind that says, “Now is not the time for fun, there is no point in having fun in this kind of environment, we should be doing more important things”. However, even the smallest enjoyment is actually deeply significant. They may be temporary and small, but they add up to something big that lasts for a long time and gives us the energy to survive. Strive for more “small pleasures”,

appreciate them more and be thankful for them. Do not compare them with pre-war pleasures. We are sure you all have different experiences of what things to do. For example, when I feel down, I keep a diary. If the facts and feelings are hard, just write a little about them and write more about the solutions. The solutions may not work, but writing them down at least makes me feel that there is hope. And you could massage your face or body a little, brush your hair slowly, or cook a special meal for yourself. Making yourself feel good and pleasing yourself is meaningful. Morita Therapy says “no value judgements”, and other psychotherapies say “no thoughts of value”. In other words, good things, however small, have meaning and value.

### 3. How can we live “as it is” and 4. How can we commit to the present?

To live “as it is” (Arugamama). We have a notion of “what we want to be” and “what we should be”. An impossible “to be” image, even if achieved, crumbles at the slightest failure, as the next world that awaits us demands constant effort. This lowers our self-confidence and causes us to feel angry and tormented. We may be angry with ourselves, saying “how pathetic”, or we may be angry with others, saying “why don't you acknowledge me?” Since we cannot take such anger out on others, we can only blame ourselves and fall deeper into depression. So how should we behave? Live life “as it is”, as Morita Therapy calls it; when there are difficulties, speak kind words to yourself, treat yourself with care. Make no distinction between yourself and others. Help others and help yourself.

To commit to the present. We need to concentrate on the present to free ourselves from the pain of the past and fear of the future. Live HERE and NOW, no one can hurt you, you are safe. There is a peaceful, happy aspect of your life and a healthy part of your body at this moment. Focus on this moment, not a minute ago, not a minute later, but NOW.

### Practice (Neff & Germer, 2018)

Here we do compassion meditation. Compassion meditation is a Buddhist tradition in which you wish for the happiness of yourself and others, and for the liberation of yourself and others from suffering. Everyone should sit relaxed. You can also lie down. Close your eyes halfway so that you can see a little in front of you. Breathe slowly.

(Meditation practice) “May I be safe”, “May I be happy”, “May I be healthy”, “May my worries and suffering cease”. (Three times)

The practice of compassion meditation begins with a wish for one's own happiness. Relax the body and repeat the four phrases at intervals

that feel comfortable. If you get distracted, simply recognize that it is a thought or feeling, let it go and return to repeating the phrases. Warm, tender feelings may arise, which you hold in your mind and return to repeating the phrases. As you get used to it, gradually expand the target to include benefactors, close people, neutral people (people who have no positive or negative feelings), people you dislike, and all living beings ....., and say, “My benefactors, close people, strangers, people I dislike, people who hate me May all living beings be happy` .

When you are deeply sad. Your head is full of self-blame, “I wanted to do this, I`m no good at this, I can't do anything else”, and you may start to cry. At such times, imagine yourself with compassion and say, “You are so depressed that you are crying. I know exactly how you feel”. Then, after a few gentle breaths, repeat the rhythm of your breathing, phrases of your choice, such as “May I be free from grief”, “May I accept this pain without thinking that I am bad or wrong”, “May my thoughts be thoughts of compassion”. During meditation, you may notice various body sensations, moments of calmness, and you may also notice that you are able to let go of “sadness” or critical thoughts. This is an example of how, even with difficult emotions, you can accept yourself “as you are” by increasing self-compassion.

When you are tormented by anger. Even in meditation, you may be looking for what is wrong and say things like “Oh no, I'm not concentrating” or “I don't feel kindness”, “I can't concentrate”, “I can't feel kindness”, etc., and then you may tend to get angry again, saying, “I'm meditating, I shouldn't be angry”. When you accept the “angry” self as it is, as in the case of sadness, you can also notice the “angry” self and meditate on compassion, using phrases such as “May I be calm” or “May anger and frustration not arise in my heart”.

As self-compassion increases, you become aware of and accepting of many things and become aware of what is really good for you. The number of objects for which we feel gratitude and happiness increases, such as close people, loved ones and the nature that nurtures us. And you realise that the time you spend properly caring for and loving the people, animals, things and nature you love is precious. When we extend our feelings of compassion from ourselves to all living beings, we realize that we all have one thing in common in that we are ultimately beings with life, and that the form of happiness is to accept each other “as we are” and support each other.

Prayer “The Art of Small Steps” (by Antoine de Saint Exupery)

*We can improve our every day by small steps. If we want to go straight to the goal, everything seems hopeless. Let`s do this prayer together.*

*Lord, I`m not praying for miracles and visions, I`m only asking for strength for my days. Teach me the art of small steps.*

*Make me clever and resourceful, so that I can find important discoveries and experiences among the diversity of days.*

*Help me use my time better. Present me with the sense to be able to judge whether something is important or not.*

*I pray for the power of discipline and moderation, not only to run throughout my life, but also to live my days reasonably, and observe unexpected pleasures and heights.*

*Save me from the naive belief that everything in life has to go smoothly. Give me the sober recognition that difficulties, failures, fiascos, and setbacks are given to us by life itself to make us grow and mature.*

*Send me the right person at the right moment, who will have enough courage and love to utter the truth!*

*I know that many problems solve themselves, so please teach me patience.*

*You know how much we need friendship. Make me worthy of this nicest, hardest, riskiest and most fragile gift of life.*

*Give me enough imagination to be able to share with someone a little bit of warmth, in the right place, at the right time, with words or with silence.*

*Spare me the fear of missing out on life.*

*Do not give me the things I desire, but the things I need.*

*Teach me the art of small steps!*

## **Chapter 9.** **Q & A with the teachers**

This chapter is based on questions asked by teachers and the answers we gave during the lectures. Readers may have similar questions. Our answers may not all be correct or complete. However, we sincerely hope that after reading them, you will feel lighter and hopefully be able to improve your daily life.

### **1. Morita Therapy and children**

**Q1:** Is Morita Therapy only for adults or can it also be used for children?

**A1:** Morita Therapy can be used with children. If they understand and agree with the concepts of Morita Therapy, then the therapy will be helpful for them. Morita Therapy is particularly helpful for children with neuroses, and these children often understand and agree with it better.

### **2. Past, future and now**

**Q2-1:** It's hard for me to let go of the terrible past that constantly worries me. I am also scared of the future, which is unknown. I would like to learn to live today, now, and enjoy what I have.

**A2-1:** It is really hard to let go of the past. Have you ever seen the American film “Superman”? In the end, Superman gave his lover a kiss and made her forget everything that had happened between them, to help her let go of the past. We all want that kiss. But we have another magic tool—the kiss of Time. Time can ease our pain, bit by bit. When the terrible past comes back to you, acknowledge your negative feelings, and hold them for a while. Tell yourself “This horror cannot hurt me now. At this moment, and here, I am safe”. Imagine a loved one embracing you and what he or she will say to you at this time. You are tired, exhausted, but you are making progress and gaining wisdom and courage to survive. Don't blame yourself for not always doing the right thing and enjoy the life you have now. You're in the process of improving your psychological state.

**Q2-2:** How can I stop living with “rose-colored glasses” and unfulfilled hopes?

**A2-2:** Please, don't stop hoping. Our hopes may not be fulfilled at once or in a short time, but they are seeds, and when the time comes, they will grow up and become real, like trees. Rose-colored glasses are not bad



if they sometimes bring us happiness. Keep them in your heart and do what you can now. Wait for the day when they will be useful again. That day will come.

### **3. Anxiety, panic attacks and fear**

Q3-1: How do you deal with a panic attack that occurs suddenly?

Q3-2: When events occur that I cannot control but affect my life, I get nervous, my hands shake, my heart races, and my breathing is rapid. How can I control myself, not harm my health and stop being afraid?

Q3-3: Every time I hear the news about the deaths of Ukrainian patriots, strong and determined, each of whom was a bright personality, my heart shrinks, my hands drop, and I want to scream out loud.

Q3-4: When information about the shelling and casualties appears, I feel panic on a physical level.

Q3-5: How can I reduce my fear of driving?

A: Your anxiety and panic attacks have various triggers, such as uncontrollable negative events, deaths of your admired people, bad news about the war. You feel yourself uncontrollable physically and mentally, and this uncontrollable feeling makes you blame yourself and increase your anxiety and fear. Do you remember the two vicious circles we learned about? One is “attention and sensation”. You took your attention on the sense of body, then you have more symptoms. Another one is “contradiction of thoughts”, that you think you shouldn’t have fear while having fear is natural. In Morita Therapy, we do not focus on the treating panic attacks. Firstly, you should know that your symptoms are not diseases of the body, but by your mental state. Secondly, we have methods to do. Our lesson “Coping with fear and anxiety”, please read it. Thirdly, believe in your natural healing powers!

And for each teacher, I would like to say something. Teacher Q3-1, you said about burying dead people every day and your family member was in the army. Try to talk to him in your heart, or write something to him and keep it, it will also help you. And do something good for him. Teacher Q3-2, what things do you feel uncontrollable? Maybe you need to separate things into controllable and uncontrollable ones. The war has made a lot of things uncontrollable. Try to expect and do things that you can control. Teacher Q3-3, Ukrainian patriots have fortitude, even if they died, their spirit will be remembered and will pass on. They have affected you and you can believe that there are many people like you, encouraged

by them, that these people including you, will save this country. Teacher Q3-4, the information about the war is not good. But you have to go on, life goes on every day. Do what you can. If the information makes you sick, sometimes turn it off and surrender to God. Teacher Q3-5, you have fear of driving. What`s it like? How about trying to drive a short distance, to somewhere you really want to go or need to go? If you can bear it, go on for longer. If not, stop and try again next time.

#### **4. Loss and pain**

Q: A member of my family has died. I am abroad and will return to my hometown in a few months. How can I ease the pain of loss, how can I overcome the fear of loneliness? I want to go on living, to enjoy every day, but the pain and the fear are destroying me.

A: You have lost both your family member and your beloved hometown, and you have to live in a foreign country. You have lived under occupation for nearly 2 years. Your family member worked for the government, so you had to hide him from the Russians and worry all the time. After so many terrible events, you regained your freedom while he died. That is too painful an experience! You cannot hope. Anyone in your situation would feel the same. Now you can go back to hometown but it is no longer a loving place as it used to be. You may have to face more painful things again. But you are working, taking care of your students. You want to enjoy everyday life again, which means you still have the strength and desire to seek happiness.

Please acknowledge that it is the situation made you feel so painful and lonely, that it was not your fault and that you couldn`t prevent the bad things from happening. Acknowledge your feelings towards this family member and other people. You may have ambivalent feelings because he may sometimes sacrifice himself or your family for other people`s welfare. Please don`t blame yourself for anything including your feelings. You can both keep him in your heart, and enjoy your own life, enjoy each day. You don`t have to forget him, and don`t think that being happy is a betrayal to him. He wanted you to be happy. The future is ambiguous. You needn`t look into the future if you cannot. Just do what you can. Coming back to your hometown and see his belongings will hurt you, it is true. But if it is the reality, you have to go into it. Try to do some preparation for coming home, something good, something you love to do. God will also prepare something good for you, although you do not know it at the moment.

## **5. Guilt**

Q5-1: How can a person who lives far away from the shelling get rid of guilt and feels that he or she is not helping those who are fighting or those who have suffered enough?

Q5-2: How do you come to terms with the fact that you can't bring back the past and accept what is today without pain? My parents` story... Two years ago, they were full of energy, and now they have aged like ten years. I constantly think about whether I could have saved my parents.

A: Teacher Q5-1. I think you have enough reasons to live far away. It is not your fault. Everyone should do things he or she can, which is the best way to contribute to Ukraine. You cannot control other people`s thinking or your guilt, so please try to acknowledge your guilt. In the meantime, tell yourself that you are doing good things for Ukraine, and give yourself the love that others could not.

Teacher Q5-2. Your parents` story is very sad. And I am moved by your love for them. We all have times when we regret that we could have done better in the past, while in each time, we have already done the best. Everyone has their faith. Some have a happy childhood while others do not. Some have success in life while others have many failures... Your parents have their own lives, and a kind daughter who cares for them. Do what you can, to love them. You cannot change or control the uncontrollable.

## **6. Lethargy**

Q6-1: As long as there are urgent things to do, I do them. But as soon as I come to a stop, I don't want to do anything else, my hands give up, my mood is bad, I don't want to communicate with anyone. I just want to lie down and sleep, even though I don't really want to sleep.

A6-1: You work hard, you help the students, you bring up your family. You are tired, exhausted. Your body wants you to lie down and rest, and sometimes your mind does too. If you find that you are really tired, take a rest. If you don`t really want to sleep, how about moving your body a little? For example, do some exercises or just map the floor. Once you start moving your body slowly and rhythmically, your autonomic nerves will adapt. Try this and remember to concentrate on what you are doing, but not to think about other things while you are doing it. Be HERE and NOW.

## **7. Hatred**

Q: During the war, how can one not “fall into” to hating everything Russian? Are there any methods of distinguishing between “friends” and “foes” without being consumed by hatred?

A: It is very difficult to distinguish between friends and enemies without hatred. Because in our evolutionary process, we hated the enemies and had fear of the enemies to help us fight or flee and then we survive. Hatred is natural and adaptive in evolution. But too much of them will also destroy us. Accept the hatred in yourself or in others as a natural thing, but do not get caught up in it. Leave the circumstance of hate, if you feel uncomfortable.

## **8. Protecting yourself**

Q8-1: How can I learn to protect myself and not give my energy to strangers?

A8-1: You may help people who you do not know well and sacrifice yourself. Why can't you reject them? Think about it. Is it something to do with your inner conflicts?

Q8-2: I have noticed that I work very hard during the war to think less about the war. How can I learn to switch to rest?

A8-2: Most of you may have the same problem. Try to get out of your environment for a while and do something different, a little trip to the country side, or visit some old friends, or take up painting or something new, or something you liked 20 years ago. Try to get out of your routine for a while.

Q8-3: How can we accept, come to terms with the destruction of the main value- human life and health- during the war?

A8-3: We can acknowledge it but we cannot accept it. You can tell yourself that “This situation is not right. I feel angry and afraid, and everyone here feel the same way. I am not alone”. The destruction during the war of the most important value - human life and health - is not acceptable, never. Acknowledging this means that you can feel pain, and try very hard to hold on, and wait for it to end.

## **Chapter 10.** **Some advice**

### **How to keep stability in unstable environments?**

Morita Therapy emphasizes that one should behave according to 1) our goals (“do things we need do”), 2) the environment (“Summer is hot and winter is cold, we don’t deny and just do proper things in summer or winter”). But not according to our mood or emotions.

### **The best way to keep stability during the war**

The best way to keep stability is not to control the emotions to be stable, but try to behave according to 1) the goals and 2) the environment. When evening comes, you begin to feel fear. But you concentrate on your goals, work, helping others or relaxations (relaxations are essential goals too, to calm the sympathetic nervous system and enhance the parasympathetic nervous system). And suddenly the siren rings (environment changes), you go to the shelter or some places safe. These periods of time are full of fear, irritation and may be boring too, but you behave according to the environment, and you should praise yourself in the meantime or after. Then when this is over, you go back to continue things you were doing or go to sleep.

### **How to and can we control emotions?**

Morita Therapy’s thinking is that we cannot control our emotions, because they are natural, but we can use “the law of emotions” to deal with them. The law is that, if we don’t do anything about the emotions, don’t deny or avoid them, just feel them and do things we should do, they will disappear naturally. The emotions are fluid, they move freely, come to you and then leave you. But if we want to control them, they will be intensified and stay longer. You may wonder how long it will take for the emotions to disappear. It may be a few minutes, a few hours, depending on personalities and events, as well as our acceptance of the emotions. The last one is the only thing we can control. So keep practicing letting the emotions be fluid is important.

### **About “the freezing emotions”**

It is said to be not good in normal ways of psychology. Because it stops the fluid of emotions and may cause other emotions. But when you don’t

have the energy and strength to feel the emotions, you can use it. It is like an emergency treatment, which is effective but not normal. We should deal with things flexibly.

The “freezing emotions” is one of the ways to reduce the negative impact of negative emotions. For example, if a surgeon is very excited about bad news, he will not be able to perform a good operation. If a pilot is under stress, he will not be able to fly an airplane. It's very important to learn how to sort of move away from negative emotions in a different direction during war. “Freeze emotions” means avoiding negativity and not producing negativity. To try to forget, to withdraw, to abstract, to switch to something else.

### **What should we do if we can't stop the world from changing?**

We need to learn to live in an ever-changing, dangerous world. We need to learn to measure our physical and mental strength and act accordingly. We may have to act decisively at times. We must think through and have several options for the development of events, so that in the moment of danger we can realize the one that will fit the situation. Of course, it is impossible to foresee everything. But it is still better to think through different options. This is a safety cushion.

### **We have to be flexible**

It is very important in time of war to be flexible in an unstable situation. In wartime there is no absolute right and wrong. We cannot clearly assess our actions during war, but we act as we get (sometimes spontaneously, spontaneously, even emotionally), as the specific situation suggests. This can be compared to the actions of soldiers at the front. After all, they cannot always act according to a clear plan. To survive, they have to adapt to the situation.

### **Any action is always better than inaction**

Movement is very important in war. If you stop, the enemy will kill you. And if you move, you have at least some chances to save yourself. In hybrid warfare, this “rule of motion” is important not only for soldiers, but also for those in the rear. If a person sits in one place, does nothing but worry about bad news, he will die, if not from a missile, then from deteriorating health.

### **As for controlling emotions**

Normal life is not worth controlling them. But in an abnormal, absurd world, one cannot survive without it. During a war, a large flow of negative emotions falls on a person. And if this flow is not controlled, you will not be able to work, or live, or even breathe. At a minimum, you need to reduce the amount of news, do not think that something bad will happen (because it has not happened yet), do not increase conflicts (because there are already a lot of bad things around), fill your inner world with positive impressions and emotions (e.g. nature, animals, art, etc.) and so on.

### **About emotional control**

When the emotional flow is too big and dangerous, it needs to be frozen. (Like you stop bleeding in an emergency medical setting). If you can tolerate it to some extent, it is better to let it flow. The criterion may be whether you can continue to work or perform activities while feeling emotions.

### **Can teachers work during wartime?**

The work and activities are important. Some require effort, while some are relaxing. Both are needed. When you give a lecture, it is a joyful but labor-intensive experience for you, and for the audience it is a relaxation that satisfies their intellectual curiosity. And your interactions warm each other up. Such work and activities are wonderful!

### **In times of war, it is important not to be alone**

Loneliness increases anxiety and nervousness. Therefore, it is very important for a person not to be alone with his problems and danger, but to seek space for communication and joint activities.

When people are together doing something valuable, everyone's fear decreases. That's like a phenomenon in social psychology, that when people are in their group, they make morerisky decisions. It is the power of a group. and that's why Morita Therapy uses groups a lot (such as Hakkenkai). When you support students, you are calm. That's "being oriented toward the objective", not "being oriented toward the feelings". It's the most essential treatment of Morita Therapy.

### **When you don't have the strength to smile during a war**

If you haven't enough energy to smile, please don't do that. We cannot control our emotions. We can just let them come and they will go away soon, if you keep concentrating on the NOW moment. Trying to smile while you're not comfortable is a kind of emotional labor.

Many people need you, and you need to be positive to convey strength to them. But everyone has limitations, we can't do everything perfectly. And other people can understand you when you're not smiling. Don't be too hard on yourself. We are not only professionals, but also human beings. Our weakness sometimes evokes a feeling of humanity, which also encourages and helps others.

### **Even in dangerous situations, we need things that make us happy**

In times of war, it is not only important to save our lives, but we also need things that make us happy and give us hope. It can be nature, creative activities, improving the home space. It is very helpful that despite the difficulties, people do not lose their desire for beauty and order. It is very important to do something every day that improves life.

### **If you feel physically tired, find three things you can be thankful for**

During dangerous and difficult situations, all people get tired and feel fatigued. Sometimes it feels like there is no strength at all. However, you still need to find the strength to restore your inner balance, you need to find inner energy. One effective way is to find things for which you can thank God. This technique allows us to learn to appreciate what we have.

### **Clean the space around you**

In times of chaos in the world, thoughts and emotions become confused, and a person gets lost and can't find a foothold. When you do not understand what is happening in the world, and do not know what to do and where to go, you need to start by clearing the space around you. The simplest actions - mop the floor, clean the room, put the kitchen in order, wash the dishes - will give us the power to think. A clean space helps make thoughts and feelings clearer. Even if you don't find a solution in a particular moment, you will still feel better.



### **Doing good things and not reacting to a bad situation**

In a difficult situation, it is important to learn not to react emotionally to events, but to focus on a specific goal, on what needs to be done in that particular situation. This is goal-oriented behavior. When you do something by focusing on it, you feel much better about yourself. Don't think about the future, just do what you can. Live in the HERE and NOW. Have faith in God and in yourself.

### **It is important to remember the rule of “HERE and NOW”**

“HERE and NOW” is a good way to accept and let go of negative emotions. In this moment, here, no one can hurt us, nothing bad is happening, unless we get caught up in the pain of the past or the fear of the future.

### **Everything that doesn't kill us makes us stronger**

Dangerous situations, strange as it may sound, have a certain positive effect. They make a person stronger and wiser. A person constantly learns something even in a dangerous situation, gains experience and then uses this experience to survive physically and emotionally. Of course, it is a difficult experience. But it gives one the strength to live in the future. This is evidence of growth, post-traumatic growth of a person.

### **Why is it important to engage in creativity always, even in times of war?**

The absurdity that occurs during war is dangerous not only for the physical existence of the personality, but also for its inner state. In order for the personality not to be destroyed, it is important to engage in any creative activity. Anything can become creativity - creating poems, growing flowers, embroidery, drawing, etc. During creativity, one focuses on the purpose and also creates beauty as opposed to absurdity and chaos. Also creativity allows one to maintain personal integrity and the ability to remain in the zone of normality in an abnormal world.

## Conclusions

These conclusions are preliminary because the war in Ukraine continues. Accordingly, the psychological state of Ukrainian teachers is changing; its dynamics must be monitored in order to adapt the methodology for restoring the psychological health of teachers.

The war in Ukraine has had a significant impact on the mental health of Ukrainian teachers. The survey we conducted in January 2024 showed that their mental health had deteriorated significantly. More than 53.4% of Ukrainian teachers are in a suspected mental illness state of distress; even in the third year of the war, they cannot adapt to the changed conditions, which cause them anxiety, depression and other negative conditions. The psychological state of Ukrainian teachers is influenced by external factors (rocket attacks, physical losses, destruction of schools and houses, deterioration of living conditions, forced relocation to other territories, etc.) and internal factors (unpreparedness for crisis situations, lack of necessary skills to manage emotions during war, depletion of physical and mental strength, decrease of internal energy, etc.) At the same time, Ukrainian teachers demonstrate a high level of resilience. Despite difficulties, they continue to responsibly fulfill their professional duties, teaching and supporting children under military conditions. During the war, teachers accumulated significant experience of physical and mental survival, which needs to be explored.

As the war in Ukraine is not over and the level of distress among Ukrainian teachers remains quite high, they need to be provided with ongoing psychological support. Restoring the mental health of teachers will have a positive impact not only on them, but also on the children to whom they need to give strength, confidence and hope.

The methods of traditional Japanese Morita Therapy has been found effective in restoring the psychological health of teachers during wartime. In the above survey, 95.5% of Ukrainian teachers who had read an introduction to Morita Therapy said that it would be beneficial to their mental health and resilience. Morita Therapy is a therapy good at dealing with anxiety and fear, and doesn't try to take them away. Ukrainian teachers are living in an environment that always causes anxiety, fear and distress, which cannot be taken away. In addition, its methodology is being developed and enriched by the Ukrainian

experience. We invited teachers from the eastern, central, southern and western regions of Ukraine and from abroad to join our group. According to the teachers, it is very useful to share practical experience of solving real problems or realizing their emotions and their psychological state.

Morita Therapy has a long tradition of group learning, and we have found that online group classes are very useful for Ukrainian teachers. Group classes allow them to acquire new knowledge and skills related to Morita Therapy, to communicate productively, and also to go through difficulties together, to exchange experiences and to find solutions to difficult situations during the war.

During the trainings (February - July 2024), the most acute psychological problems of Ukrainian teachers during the war were identified. These are such problems as maintaining internal energy, experiencing losses, instability of emotional state, communication with children, maintaining psychological balance in military conditions, etc. We have based our group study on the above issues and intend to explore them further in the future.

We have found the combination of the theory and practice of Morita Therapy with the experience of Ukrainian teachers, lectures and discussions, specific questions and advice from the trainer and other group members is very effective during the training sessions. At the end of each session, everyone's mood improved, the discussion became lively and a warm feeling enveloped everyone. We would like to pass this warm feeling on to all Ukrainian teachers. We believe that even in a time of prolonged social instability, there are still ways to restore our teachers' psychological stability.

The experience of conducting group classes of Ukrainian Morita Therapy will be continued in the future. A new survey on the psychological state of Ukrainian teachers will be conducted in order to clarify the methodology of psychological support for them.

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