



1st Annual New Bridge Worldwide Virtual Conference on Emotional Well-Being

Building Healthy Relationships in Everyday Life

Session descriptions and speaker biographies

Brain Development in Childhood and Adolescence: How It Affects Relationships and What To Do About It

– Presented by **dr. Milica Pejović Milovančević**

In this workshop, we will explore some crucial findings to support parents and professionals in their understanding of youth and building healthier relationships. The relational and emotional life of children and adolescents is complex. Internally, their brains go through various structural and hormonal changes and externally, they face a number of challenges (e.g., social relations, educational processes). These are often overwhelming, confusing, and difficult for them to cope with, resulting in functioning problems. Only in the last fifteen years are we beginning to understand what happens inside the brain during development as studies indicate regional brain changes and continuous changes in the connections between regions. Moreover, by clarifying the mechanisms of gene-environment interactions, we can evaluate our observations and draw implications for healthy relationship development.

dr. Milica Pejović Milovančević



dr. Milica Pejović Milovančević is a child psychiatrist and associate professor at the Department of Psychiatry at the Medical Faculty in Belgrade. She is acting director of the Institute of Mental Health, Belgrade, Serbia. She coordinates activities at the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia related to support of children with various developmental disorders, difficulties in development, and children exposed to violence. Milica is the president of the Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Related Professions of Serbia, a member of the Board of the European Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and is involved in professional associations of pediatricians and UNICEF. She has published papers on the JCR list and is author, contributor, editor, and reviewer for many books and journals. Milica can be reached at milica.pejovic@imh.org.rs.

Learning Inhibition: A “How To” Guide

– Presented by **dr. Danilo Pešić**

How do social and emotional factors influence the learning process, including in the classroom? Dr. Pešić will explore the often-neglected emotional and unconscious features of the learning process that have been neglected in the pedagogical literature. He will discuss how academic achievements and the learning process should be reconsidered in light of understanding that the core of classroom life is social and emotional. He will explain how mastering socio-emotional skills indirectly improves academic achievement.

dr. Danilo Pešić



dr. Danilo Pešić is a psychiatrist at the Institute of Mental Health, Belgrade, Serbia. He is a Teaching Assistant at the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Medicine. He is a Group Analyst, a member of the GASI (Group Analytical Society International), a Psychoanalyst at the end of training, and a member of the IPA (International Psychoanalytic Association). His expertise involves work with adolescents and problems of adolescents' identity

Peer Group Relationships in Adolescence

- Presented by dr. Katja Košir

In this presentation, we will explore the characteristics of adolescents' peer social dynamics. Striving for popularity represents a crucial motive behind bullying behavior. However, popularity is a concept based on social hierarchy - to be highly popular requires the use of strategic behavior. Research shows that the right combination of prosocial and aggressive behavior is often crucial to achieving high popularity. In peer groups with more students with high popularity goals, more hierarchically organized peer relationships with a higher level of bullying are usually established. The presentation will focus on the role of professionals in supporting peer relationships that enable students to achieve a high status in the group in ways that support inclusive peer culture.

dr. Katja Košir



dr. Katja Košir, a PhD in psychology, works as a lecturer at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, at the University of Maribor. She works with future teachers, psychologists, and (inclusive) pedagogues. In addition, she participates in the teacher education training program (PAI). She is the head of the Center for Lifelong Learning at the Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor. As an implementer of various trainings for professionals in the field of education, she strives to transfer scientific findings into practice and to effectively integrate and co-operate between the academic community and educational institutions. She is an associate editor at the scientific journal *Horizons of Psychology*. Katija can be reached at katja.kosir@um.si.

Emotional Wellbeing at School: The Role of Relationships in Student Engagement

- Presented by **Joanna Bylinka-Stoch**

What makes one child willing to learn and the another avoid it at all costs? Why might one student understand what the teacher says, and another, even if very intelligent, seems not to hear the teacher's words, or doesn't show much initiative? In this workshop, we will analyze and answer these and other interesting questions. We will explore The Neufeld Model of Student Engagement which is rooted in the relational developmental approach and takes into account the context in which the child grows up, as well as attachment and emotional needs, which are the engine of the maturation process.

Joanna Bylinka–Stoch

Joanna Bylinka–Stoch is a psychologist and psychotherapist. She completed doctoral studies at the Department of Psychology at the University of Warsaw and is preparing to defend her doctoral thesis. In her practice and scientific research, she focused on the topic of psychosomatics, working as a psychotherapist with people suffering from various civilization diseases (Western Disease), and chronic diseases, cooperating with the Una Medica Center for Nutrition and Lifestyle. Based on Dr. Gordon Neufeld's approach, she has specialized in working with parents and couples. She finished a 2-year internship program with Dr. Neufeld and now she is a Neufeld Institute Faculty member and The Regional Director of The Neufeld Institute Poland. She collaborates at Słowikowo – a Support Center of Child Development in Poland. Joanna can be reached at joanna.bylinka@neufeldinstitute.pl.

Emotional Intelligence and Development of Relationships in Everyday Life: The Search Inside Yourself © Approach

- Presented by **Vesna Kostić**

This Search Inside Yourself© (SIY) workshop is an inspiring introduction to the mindfulness-based emotional intelligence training program developed at Google and backed by the latest neuroscience. Facilitated by an SIY Certified Teacher Vesna Kostić, two mindfulness-based emotional intelligence domains will be explored: self-awareness and empathy. This interactive workshop covers the neuroscience supporting mindfulness and emotional intelligence, the role of attention training in enhancing focus and developing empathy, and some foundational exercises to focus attention, calm the mind and enhance connection and compassion. While practicing these skills we are at the same time laying a foundation for healthier relationships. We will discuss some inspiring practical applications that participants can incorporate into their relationships immediately.

Vesna Kostić

Vesna Kostić is the founder and has been director of the Mindfulness Center Belgrade since 2014 and the Belgrade Yoga center since 2008. Vesna is the only certified Search Inside Yourself© teacher in Serbia, certified by the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute. She was certified in 2014 as the first Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program teacher in Serbia. This program is considered one of the most efficient programs in the world for stress management, attention development, communication skills, and developing empathy. She is a member of the International Mindfulness Federation as well as the International Mindfulness and Meditation Alliance. Vesna has been a licensed yoga instructor since 2008. She led a series of intensive international programs for overcoming stress and conscious attention development in Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Germany, Nepal, India, and Montenegro. Vesna can be reached at mindfulnessbeograd@gmail.com.

The Importance of Building Community in Order to Build Diverse Meaningful Relationships

- Presented by **Jane Rumsby**

In this workshop we will focus on how diversity can push us out of our comfort zone. Learning how to appreciate people who are different from ourselves helps build healthy communities. Exclusion creates division and disharmony among people and can poison relationships, which eventually leads to societal breakdowns. Jane will show us how inclusiveness leads us to exploring new ways of being with ourselves and others. And it's through these discoveries that we can more peacefully co-exist in the ever-increasing diversity of our world. .

Jane Rumsby

Jane Rumsby is a wife, mother, friend and educator and holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Education from the University of Southampton and in Psychology from Open University, both located in the UK. She has worked in education for 44 years and has taught children at nursery school level up through high school. She has also worked as a school counselor. In addition to her time in schools, Jane has done work as a group therapist and on an anxiety and suicide help lines. She is a storyteller to adults and children and has given workshops internationally. Jane is a strong advocate for human rights and is presently training to provide Mindfulness Workshops. She can be reached at janerumsby17@gmail.com.

Empathy Strategies to Promote Healthy Relationships

- Presented by **Paula Bernal**

In this workshop we will come to understand the relationship between prosocial behaviors and personal well-being by learning strategies to increase empathy and compassion in our children. Fostering these skills is a path for coping with difficult situations and helps develop better relationships with oneself and with others. These strategies also promote social skills and contribute to a better world. This workshop will focus on what we as parents, educators, and counselors can do to help our youth navigate stormy social waters.

Paula Bernal

Paula Bernal is the School Counselor at the International School of Belgrade. She is an educational psychologist with a BA in Psychology and an MA in Educational Psychology from New York University. She also has an EdS in Educational Leadership focused on Inclusive Education from the University of Kentucky and has a specialized Certificate in Gifted and Talented Education. She has worked with children and families for over 23 years as a school counselor and psychologist. She has also worked with children with special needs and advanced learners. She is the mother of an 18-year-old. Paula can be reached at pbernal@isb.rs.

Improve Your Relationships with Mental Fitness

– Presented by **April Scott**

Mental fitness is your capacity to respond to life's challenges with a positive mindset rather than becoming upset or stressed. Did you know that there are ten saboteurs in our brains that get in the way of healthy relationships? All of us have two to three top saboteurs working against us, regardless of our age, culture, or background. When you strengthen the three core mental muscles that lead to mental fitness, you weaken those saboteurs. In this session you will learn how to improve your own mental fitness and how to harness the five Sage super-powers that help us thrive in relationships.

April Scott

April Scott, ACC, MBA, is a certified Executive Coach with more than 20 years' experience in multinational corporations – such as Boeing, Mattel, and Toyota – as a people development specialist and with global clients as a leadership coach. She helps professionals develop themselves, cope with workplace challenges, build better workplace relationships, and improve their overall effectiveness. She received her MBA from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and her BS in Communications from Georgia State University. April is a co-founder of New Bridge Worldwide and is becoming certified as a Mental Fitness / Positive Intelligence coach. She can be reached at april@newbridgeworldwide.com.

Living a Mobile Life: How to Build Relationships That Matter

- Presented by **dr. Urška Žugelj**

Do you hate saying goodbye? Have you just moved from another country, or are you relocating soon? Are you or a member of your family losing a friend who is moving across the ocean? If you live a mobile life, some version of this might be familiar. Moving places or staying behind when loved ones leave is often a rupture in one's social life. Moreover, relocating is recognized as one of the biggest risk factors to emotional wellbeing, academic achievement, and work performance. We will explore the characteristics of healthy relationships and ways to cultivate them. Finding connection and meeting one's relational needs can turn the stresses of mobility into an opportunity for building resilience. We will address some surprising solutions to staying close even when apart.

dr. Urška Žugelj

dr. Urška Žugelj, PhD, is a psychologist, coach, body psychotherapist, and lecturer. She earned her BA and PhD in psychology from the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia. She holds a coaching certificate from QED in Prague, Czech Republic, is a student at the Neufeld Institute (Canada), and is finishing her psychotherapy training at TepSyntsis, Belgrade, Serbia. Her specialties are developmental relationships, attachment issues, trauma and personal growth and healing. Currently she is teaching developmental psychology courses at the University of Maribor, Slovenia. Urška is also a co-founder New Bridge Worldwide where she is focusing on supporting individuals, parents and school professionals in international settings. She is a mother of four currently living in Belgrade, Serbia. Urška can be reached at urska@newbridgeworldwide.com.

Healthy Communication: It Starts in the Family

- Presented by **Elisabeth Escobar**

Good communication is the foundation for healthy relationships. This workshop will focus on healthy vs. unhealthy communication patterns and how these communications can affect one's self-esteem. We will look at four different Parenting Styles and each style's pros and cons. Many people try to stuff, deny or control their emotions and this workshop will help participants learn more effective ways of communicating. Participants will learn how to work through difficult topics and situations so that each family member can grow to possess emotional management skills.

Elisabeth Escobar

Elisabeth Escobar received her Master of Psychology degree from Columbia University in New York City. For the past 30 years, she has worked in a variety of settings such as Addiction Treatment Programs, colleges, K-12 schools and presently is in private practice. She is a certified Positive Discipline Counselor and she has done extensive work with anxiety and relationship issues. She works with parents, children, couples and families and enjoys working with people who want to make changes such as quitting smoking and losing weight, to changing jobs or making other life decisions. Elisabeth is co-founder of New Bridge Worldwide and you can reach her at elisabeth@newbridgeworldwide.com.

How Adolescents Search for Identity and Navigate Crucial Relationships

– Presented by **Maja Lyon**

Adolescence represents a unique stage of development in which the body, its hormones, and cognitive and emotional capacities undergo dynamic transformations. This workshop discusses the challenging and complex processes of change for adolescents. Participants will discuss how to stay one step ahead of an adolescent, and how to understand what lies behind the observable. This includes examination of the different factors that influence adolescents (parents, peers, school, identity confusion, heritage, identification, authority, negative authority, shame, ideals, (cyber) bullying, etc.) as they pursue a declaration of their own identity and autonomy in the run-up to adulthood. .

Maja Lyon

Maja Lyon is a Group Analyst and Psychoanalytical Psychotherapist under supervision and a student member of the GASI – Group Analytical Society International. She has worked for almost 25 years in healthcare, communications, and psychotherapy. She is a Psychologist and has a Master's degree in the Theory of Culture and Gender Studies at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade. She is a co-founder of the Centre for Psychosocial Education Alma Nova. Maja is also a co-founder of New Bridge Worldwide and can be reached at maja@newbridgeworldwide.com.